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Giambattista Vico and the antecedents of the understanding paradigm

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Abstract: From the distinction stated by von Wright in the already classic text *Explanation and Understanding*, the work by Giambattista Vico (1668 – 1744) is analyzed in the light of his criticism to Descartes and the distinction between “criticism” and “topics”. It is not risky to say that Vico’s proposal of the activity proper to topic, linked to the use of language, rhetoric and eloquence is closer to that which von Wright locates within the “understanding paradigm”; whereas criticism, identified with the Cartesian method, privileges abstraction, logical deduction and mathematical analysis; this is to say, all that is linked to the knowledge of nature. The great difference between topics and criticism, in the end, lays on the criterion of truth proper to each perspective: while criticism finds the truth in the natural world’s exteriority, in something men do not do; conversely, the only form of truth in the realm of topics is as “made truth” or “verum factum”; i.e., the truth we ourselves make as historical, linguistic, culture-creator, political- and social- life agents.

Key words: Giambattista Vico, verum factum, understanding paradigm, topics, criticism.

Resumen: A partir de la distinción planteada por von Wright en su texto ya clásico *Explicación y comprensión*, se analiza la obra de Giambattista Vico (1668 – 1744) a la luz de su crítica desarrollada hacia Descartes y la distinción que realiza entre “crítica” y “tópica”. No es aventurado decir que en la propuesta viquiana la actividad propia de la tópica, ligada al uso del lenguaje, la retórica y la elocuencia, se acerca más aquello que von Wright ubica dentro del “paradigma comprensivo”; mientras que la crítica, identificada con el método cartesiano, privilegia la abstracción, la deducción lógica y el análisis matemático; es decir, todo aquello ligado al conocimiento de la naturaleza. La gran diferencia entre tópica y crítica radica, al final, en el criterio de verdad propio de cada perspectiva: mientras la crítica encuentra la verdad en la exterioridad del mundo natural, en algo que los hombres no hacen; en cambio, la única forma de verdad en el terreno de la tópica es como “verdad hecha” o “verum factum”; es decir, la verdad que nosotros mismos hacemos como agentes históricos, lingüísticos, creadores de cultura, de vida política y social.

Palabras clave: Giambattista Vico, verum factum, paradigma comprensivo, tópica, crítica.
Introduction: explaining and understanding

The almost classic text by Georg Henrik von Wright titled *explanation and understanding* (1980) exposes in a summarized manner the existence of two great traditions in the sphere of the theory of knowledge in Occident; one that he calls “Galilean tradition”, which is mainly kindred to the patterns of causal mechanical explanation —which we might simply call “explanation”, heeding the German word *Erklären*¹ — proper to natural sciences (particularly in physics); the other, called “Aristotelian tradition”, which is rather connected with the theological and finalist elucidations —which we may simply call “understanding”, *Verstehen* in German— and that we might link to social sciences and humanities.

The Galilean tradition in the sphere of sciences discourses along the mechanistic perspective in the efforts to explain and foresee phenomena; the Aristotelian tradition discourses at the rhythm of its efforts to understand the facts in a theological or finalist manner (Von Wright, 1980: 20).

Indeed, the division stated by von Wright works as an “ideal type” in the Weberian manner; this is to say, these two spheres perhaps in practice are found scarcely in a “pure state”, and as expressed by Paul Ricœur (2002), in reality we rather state a circle wherein every explanation implies certain previous understanding of that which one wants to explain; whereas, every understanding effort does not avoid the possibility to explain that which one tries to understand.

According to von Wright, the explanation is a schema of knowledge mainly interested in the *how* of the phenomena; this is to say, to give an account of the way in which they occur, their efficient causes, without calling upon any finality —the astronomer does not wonder, why does the sun rise?, he instead asks, what makes the sun rise in the east? The response would leave every reach for finality and would concentrate on the mechanics proper to the earth’s rotation. Conversely, the understanding is interested in the *why* and *what*

¹ Attributed to Johann Gustav Droysen (1808-1884), German historian, the distinction between *Erklären* (explaining) and *Verstehen* (understanding).
for of the phenomena, as it cannot detach certain finality in the phenomena that it observes, because of the particularities of its object of observation —for instance, a sociologist who studies the organization of the workers on a strike cannot but recognize they are not mere atoms mechanically moving in the space, but subjects who have their own interests and motivations and, as a matter of fact, are already carrying out an interpretation on the their own reality.²

To sum up, it seems that along the history of the models of knowledge, at least in Occident, there have been two lengthy traditions, one that utilizes causal and mechanical schemas of explanation, and the other that interprets the phenomena in understanding terms, which are bound to certain finalities of functions.³ Nonetheless, it is necessary to clarify that —something that the very von Wright states— calling the first tradition “Galilean” and the second “Aristotelian” does not mean that they have its own origin in Galileo and Aristotle, respectively; instead, von Wright thinks of Galileo and Aristotle as paradigmatic cases of each tradition. Frequently, seeking the origins of an idea or concept does not only turn out to be tricky, but also something which in some way or another falls in the domains of fiction. As Nietzsche already suspected, in the origin are usually expressed the interests of that who seeks to justify their own perspective; maybe it would be worthier to talk about antecedent, however not in the conditional logic sense or of efficient cause, but simply as that which glimpses a more current idea, in the nebula of a series of gestures that are temporarily in the anteroom of such an idea, yet without causing or conditioning it.

² To this “double” interpretation the researcher carries out on phenomena that imply subjects, who make their own interpretation of what they live and perform, Giddens and Habermas call it “double hermeneutic”.
³ In this point the case of biology is interesting, as Kant, precisely in Critique of Judgment, had pointed out the large difficulty of accounting for the phenomena of life without appealing some non-intentional end.
Liberalism and democracy from Norberto Bobbio’s perspective

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Abstract: In the present article an analysis is developed, approached from the political philosophy, on the conception the Italian philosopher Norberto Bobbio (1909-2004) outlined about two of the most important political traditions produced by the western culture and which are, without a doubt, pillars upon which modernity has been built: democracy and liberalism. From this perspective approaching and encounter points are identified, the same as the tensions that energize the relationship between democracy and liberalism as well as some contradictions that spur Bobbio’s thought.

Key words: Democracy, liberalism, political liberalism, liberal State, liberal democracy.

Resumen: En el presente artículo se desarrolla un análisis, abordado desde la filosofía política, en torno a la concepción que el filósofo italiano Norberto Bobbio (1909-2004) planteara acerca de dos de las más importantes tradiciones políticas que ha producido la cultura occidental, y que son, sin duda alguna, pilares sobre los que se ha edificado la modernidad: la democracia y el liberalismo. Desde esta perspectiva se identifican aproximaciones y puntos de encuentro, lo mismo que las tensiones que dinamizan la relación entre democracia y liberalismo, así como algunas contradicciones que permean el pensamiento de Bobbio.

Palabras clave: democracia, liberalismo, liberalismo político, Estado liberal, democracia liberal.
Introduction

When we refer to the relationship between liberalism and democracy we commonly suppose or suspect that both political categories are close to each other, either because they are too familiar to us or because, in other words, they are very common. The intertwining that we suppose between them is nourished, obviously, by any discursive and ideological charge that, in the daily life acts, is spread having as source different origins (mass media, political speeches, demonstrations, et cetera). Don’t we even mention a democratic-liberal Weltanschauung? Don’t we even refer nowadays to a liberal democracy that not only stands triumphantly, but which is also pompously said to be healthy?

Obviously, one thing is to take for granted that this relationship between liberalism and democracy exists, and another one, as it corresponds to the intellectual work that the political philosopher has to perform, is to demonstrate and clarify its meaning, to clarify at which historical moment and how the fusion took place, which divisions can be determined, what tensions arise, which bridges or ideological rapprochements ease establishing a conciliation that we could call effective, as well as which conditions of the political environment in the society encourage controversy. It is necessary to tackle these and other concerns given their significance and complexity. The analysis and reflection on these two political practices around which the current social and economic life revolve becomes a more important situation after the fall of the real socialism that left liberal democracy without its natural antagonist.

After all, such task involves the knowledge aspect, both in the ethical imperative that encourages us to continue speaking about things that have already been said, a part of it which is to assume detachments or controversies with ideas or points of view that are not shared, and with regard to the expectations that arise based on what is expected to be said. To take part in the theoretical debate as well as in the production of knowledge, whichever

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1 The present article is part of the research project the author develops inside Culture and Politics Group (Grupo Cultura y Política), which he belongs to. Said group is ascribed to the department of Philosophy of Universidad del Cauca and is recognized by Colciencias in Category B.
the topic is, does not set us in the position of neutral or dispassionate subjects, but in the position of individuals who cannot establish radical detachments to the concerns that the political flux poses, an issue of utmost importance if we bear in mind the future of our societies.

For instance, when we have the belief that we have just spoken little about a specific problem, that we have barely taken charge of it, not only can we cast doubt on the roles that have been performed, but we shall also understand that to undertake a task of conceptual clarification (extremely necessary) is, at the same time, big and challenging. But if we consider the opposite situation, that is, when we suppose we talk about something with great intensity, we don’t infer that there is more clarity or that the doubts had been cancelled once and forever. On the contrary, the invitation to the philosophical debate, as open and lasting attitude, leads us to continue asking questions, to continue persisting in finding new ways to comprehend, to continue looking for new alternatives of interpretation, because political philosophy definitely cannot be understood as a reason clause.

In any case, a debate about liberalism and democracy cannot be considered settled. This fact brings us face to face contemporarily with the presence of two political traditions that despite tending to be universalized\(^{2}\) as in the economic field capitalism globalizes, and nevertheless (that is, despite its almost unquestionable supremacy) its achievement stops being exempt of risks, difficulties and incoherences. As an example of this we could mention that democracy, understood as a way of intervention in the decisions of the society according to equity and participation principles, is being undermined by neoconservative and neoliberal tendencies in our countries. Tendencies that not only put on the same level the political struggle for power and the economic logic of the market and the individual calculation (MacPherson, 2005), they have also launched the preventive politics of the government of the elites\(^{3}\).

\(^{2}\) This universalization would be equivalent to the expansive waver of the democracy that Huntington explains (1994).

\(^{3}\) Antonio Ocaña (1991: 39) speaks about the democradura to make reference precisely to the configuration of the democracy as the government of elites.
Health and sickness in the marsh of Chignahuapan: a paleo-pathologic study of the ancient Valley of Toluca, Mexico

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Abstract: During the Epiclassic period (700-900) in the old marshy zone of the Chignahuapan Swamp in the Upper Lerma basin, now the head of municipality Santa Cruz Atizapan, State of Mexico, an island society with a lacustrine way of life was developed, in which the interrelations’ equilibrium was determined by the swamp resources’ use and the marshy difficult conditions. The skeleton morphoscopic analysis from the burial archaeological site “La Campana Tepozoco”, shows a series of pathological evidences which allow us to learn the general health conditions of former inhabitants of the place. The present research approaches the knowledge of the diverse conditions of existence, where the way of life impacted on health and nutrition of this population's members, dwellers of the marshy zone of the old Valley of Toluca Swamp.

Key words: bio-anthropology, lacustrine way of life, Epi-classic period, stress, cribra orbitalia.

Resumen: Durante el periodo Epiclásico (700-900 d.C.) en la antigua zona pantanosa de la ciénega del Chignahuapan de la Cuenca del Alto Lerma, ahora cabecera municipal de Santa Cruz Atizapan, Estado de México, se desarrolló una sociedad isleña con un modo de vida lacustre, en la cual su equilibrio estaba determinado por la interrelación con el aprovechamiento de los recursos de la laguna y las difíciles condiciones del cenagal. El análisis morfoscópico realizado en las osamentas provenientes de los entierros del sitio arqueológico “La Campana Tepozoco” arrojó una serie de evidencias patológicas, que permiten conocer las condiciones generales de la salud de los habitantes del sitio. La presente investigación nos acerca al conocimiento de las diversas condiciones de existencia, donde el modo de vida impactó en la salud y nutrición de los miembros de esta población de la zona pantanosa de la antigua ciénega del Valle de Toluca.

Palabras clave: bionatropología, modo de vida lacustre, Epiclásico, cribra, hiperostosis.
Introduction

The archaeological site wherefrom the materials under study come is the one called “La Campana Tepozoco” (The Tepozoco Bell), seated upon what once was part of the marsh of the Basin of the Upper Lerma, in an important lacustrine habitat where a series of artificial rocky islands which modified said environment, and where this important island society bloomed; this society took advantage of all of the resources provided by Chignahuapan lake. The place is located within the municipal territory of Santa Cruz Atizapan, in the State of Mexico; it is located between 19 degrees 10 minutes north latitude and 99 degrees 30 minutes west longitude from Greenwich Meridian. It limits to the north and east with the municipality of Santiago Tianguistenco, toward the south and west with Almoloya del Río and Calimaya, and it has a height of 2680 meters above sea level (Nieto, 1998: 52).

The archaeological inspections carried out both at surface level and in the stratigraphic diggings allowed recovering evidence corresponding to the end of the Classic (650-750 C.E.) and Epi-classic (750-1000 C.E.) horizons. It is noteworthy pointing out that both moments are associated, respectively with the apex and fall of Teotihuacan, which correspond, at the time, to a noticeable increment of settlements in the Valley of Toluca during the Epi-classic.

In the present work we will only focus on the pathologic analysis of the recovered remains from a bio-cultural perspective.

Materials and methods

The materials used in this document come from the excavations carried out during the different in-field seasons which correspond to the years 1979, 1997, 2000, 2001 and 2003.

The material comprehends 44 burials, among which there are 37 primary (those which in the moment of the in-situ exploration the skeleton was found in a correct anatomic relation) and seven secondary; these do not show an anatomic relation, caused by the total removal, leaving the bones grouped in an irregular manner (Romano, 1974: 89); 65 individuals were counted, from which some have an associated offering.
The skeletons were analyzed on an individual basis, identifying the segments or osseous structures in the cases where it was possible —most of these bones were in good preservation state—, in order to determine sex, age and the pathologies that are the main part of the this work, important data because of the lacustrine medium where the archaeological site is. To evaluate the health state of the sample several pathological indexes that allow us to understand the general conditions of life of the inhabitants of “La Campana Tepozoco” during the Epi-Classic cultural horizon were used.

Distribution of the sample

In the first place a distribution of ages at death, as well as the identification of the gender to construct the table of life of the individuals represented in the sample were carried out (Civera and Márquez, 1998).

Age and gender

To determine the age the ossification of the cranial sutures (Meindl and Lovejoy 1985), the modifications of the auricular surface of the pelvis and of the pubic symphysis (Lovejoy et al., 1985) and dental wear were used (Ubelaker, 1989). In the case of infants teething and dental development was used (Bass, 1974), the longitude of long bones and teething (Ortega, 1998), and the fusion of the epiphysial processes were used (Bass, 1974; Brothwell, 1987).

To determine sex morphoscopic characteristics of the pelvis and cranium, such as mastoid apophysis, the morphology of chin, forehead, and the projection of the superciliary arches were considered (Bass, 1974; Krogman and Iscan, 1986; Brothwell, 1987; Ubelaker, 1989).

*Cribration orbitalia and porotic hyperostosis or sponge hyperostosis;* these indicators are useful to evaluate the presence of disorders related to nutritional deficiencies from the lack of iron causing anemia. Said injuries are characterized by the appearance of points on the cranial surface as a response to the expansion of the diploë and the consequential thinning of the external layer of the cranium, thus leaving the former exposed. The injuries in the cranial vault are given the name of *porotic hyperostosis* or *sponge hyperostosis* whereas those observed in the inner surface of the cranium are called *Cribration orbitalia* (Goodman and Martin, 1993).
Institutional intervention and the learning of bagger children in supermarkets in Tijuana, Mexico

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to examine the approaches of intervention from the institutions involved in the Programa de Atención Institucional al Desarrollo Integral del Menor Empacador en Tiendas de Autoservicio (PAIDIMETA). This social program was implemented by governmental and private institutions as a response to the increase in the number of children who pack shopping in supermarkets and as a strategy to protect this infantile population. From the consecution of interviews with the children, parents and civil servants, and the revision of secondary data, we analyze these forms of intervention and the most significant learning of the empacadores with experience in the field is emphasized. It’s argued that these approaches of intervention to these institutions should be evaluated. The author emphasizes two principal points: i) working children need new strategies of intervention to improve their labor and educational welfare; and ii) it’s necessary to reconsider children, not as passive receivers of social programs, but as social actors, with the right to fully participate in the decisions that affect their life in labor, family and school.

Key words: City Tijuana, baggers, approaches to intervention, child’s learning.

Resumen: El propósito de este artículo es examinar los enfoques de intervención de las instituciones involucradas en el Programa de Atención Institucional al Desarrollo Integral del Menor Empacador en Tiendas de Autoservicio (PAIDIMETA), del estado de Baja California. Este programa social fue implementado por las instituciones gubernamentales y privadas, como respuesta al incremento de niños que acuden a empacar mercancías en los supermercados, y como una forma de protección a esta población infantil. A partir de la realización de entrevistas a los menores, padres y funcionarios, y la revisión de datos secundarios, se analizan estas formas de intervención y se resaltan los aprendizajes más significativos de los empacadores con la experiencia del trabajo. Se argumenta que los mecanismos de intervención de estos actores en el PAIDIMETA deben ser evaluados. La autora enfatiza en dos puntos: 1) los niños trabajadores necesitan estrategias de intervención que contribuyan a mejorar su bienestar educativo y laboral; y 2) es esencial reconsiderar a los niños no como receptores pasivos de los programas sociales, sino como actores sociales, con el pleno derecho a participar en las decisiones que afectan su vida en el trabajo, la familia y la escuela.

Palabras clave: Ciudad de Tijuana, niñas y niños empacadores, formas de intervención, aprendizajes de los niños.
Introduction

In Latin America there are nearly 30 million children and adolescents who work (International Labour Organization, 2006); according to estimations by the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Computing (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, INEGI) for the Mexican case, 3.3 million minors are workers; aged from six to fourteen years of age (INEGI, 2004).

Some researches show a general overview of the labor activities performed by these minors; in a study on working children and adolescents in a hundred Mexican cities (2002) it becomes evident that there are 94,795 minors working in the main urban centers of the country. Most of them are boys, 65.2% (61,803); while girls sum up 34.8% (32,922).

The activities they are devoted to are classified into four basic groups: first, 38.9% (from 6 to 17 years of age) works as a “bagger” (courtesy clerk) at supermarkets; second, 31.1% works in trade-related activities, especially ambulant and on the street; third, 16.6% works in square markets helping their parents and adults; and fourth, 13.4% carries out tasks regarded as self-help and mendicancy, such as car-washers, windshield cleaners or street clowns.

The results from this study show that packing the shopping in supermarkets has become one of the most representative activities in the

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1 In this article we show part of the research results contained in the master’s thesis called: “the role of labor and family in bagger children in the supermarkets of the city of Tijuana” (El rol del trabajo y la familia en las niñas y niños empacadores en los supermercados de la ciudad de Tijuana); which was presented as a requirement to accomplish the degree of Master in Regional Development in Colegio de la Frontera Norte. At the time this work is part of a broader study called: “Earning, Living, Learning: A Case Study of Children’s Work in Tijuana Supermarkets”, where Colegio de la Frontera Norte, San Diego State University and University of California participated. The author of this article took part in said research as a student/grant holder.

2 In this study, Federal District was not considered among the cities where the counting of working children was carried out. In 11 urban centers there is a concentration of more than 2000 children who work; the main cities in descending order are: Monterrey, Guadalajara, Tijuana, León, Puebla, San Luis Potosí, Toluca, Torreón, Querétaro, Ciudad Juárez and Tehuacán.
national scenario, as for the number of children who do that. Likewise, working is an experience which has always been common among children from popular urban sectors, it is one of the multiple resources used at their households to obtain subsistence means and it has become along different generations an important way of socialization (Estrada, 1999: 175).

For the specific case of the city Tijuana, it has been documented that 3000 children work in different activities, a figure that may rise to 5000 in school holidays (Secretaría del Trabajo, 1989). Out of this number, bag children in supermarkets are circa 1200 (Grey and López, 2003: 2).

The activity of the children called “baggers” appeared in the 1980’s decade; in this period trade and service sectors were transformed to introduce national products. National supermarkets and convenience stores were established in Tijuana creating a structure of opportunities for working children (Grey and López, 2003: 3); the children, mostly, attend four chain-store supermarkets in the city to pack merchandise, namely: Calimax, Gigante, Comercial Mexicana and Casa Ley.3

In Tijuana the work of baggers is regulated by the Program of Institutional Support for the Integral Development of the Child Bagger in Supermarkets (Programa de Apoyo Institucional al Desarrollo Integral del Menor Empacador en Tiendas de Autoservicio, PAIDIMETA).4 The authorities of the State of Baja California and the National Association of Supermarkets and Department

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3 Twenty years back in Tijuana there were not supermarket chains; families did their shopping in street markets and in specialized stores in San Diego (U.S.). The conditions that foster supermarkets were the processes of industrialization and the federal policies that in the 1980’s decade build roads to connect border cities, such as Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez with the rest of the country. The introduction of national products into the border markets was carried through the establishment of large supermarket firms (Aitken, 2006: 384). Currently, in Tijuana the growth of the commercial sector is reflected on the proliferation of supermarket stores with the expansion of the urban area, and a greater number of stores with retail sales associated with U.S. firms, such as: Costco, Smart and Final, Office Depot and other (Aitken, 2006: 384).

4 The institutions that signed this agreement are: Dirección del Trabajo y Previsión Social del Estado de Baja California (Direction of Labor and Social Prevision of the State of Baja California), Sistema Estatal para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia de Baja California (State System for the
Os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento do Milênio e as ações voluntárias: em questão os esforços individuais e o processo de individualização

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Abstract: The fulfillment of the millennium goals established by United Nations has been on the agenda since 2000. There are a lot of divergences concerning the ways, actions and more adequate agents to put practices and forms of action into effect in order to achieve the MDGs. This article will deal with discussions, propositions, actions, procedures of programs (UNDP, UNV) linked to UN’s concern on the role of volunteers on the expansion of actions which may increase the number of people involved with MDGs. Its purpose is to understand the social and political effects of this way of assigning the volunteers a considerable importance in a context of multiple attempts of emptying the role of the State as well as of the social struggles in this process of constructing mechanisms to fight absolute poverty and social problems.

Key words: Millennium Development Goals, individualization, voluntarism.

Resumen: El cumplimiento de las metas del milenio, propuestas por las Naciones Unidas, ha estado en la agenda pública desde el año 2000. Son muchas las divergencias acerca de los caminos, de las acciones y de los agentes más adecuados para que sean efectivas las prácticas y formas de actuar, que permitan alcanzar los denominados ODMs (Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio). En este artículo serán consideradas las discusiones, las propuestas, las direcciones, los procedimientos de programas vinculados (PNUD, UNV) a la ONU, en relación con el papel del voluntariado en la expansión de acciones que elevan el número de personas involucradas en los ODMs. Se trata de comprender los efectos sociales y políticos, en este modo de atribuir al voluntariado un peso expresivo, en un contexto de múltiples tentativas de exonerar al Estado de su papel y de las luchas sociales, dentro de este proceso de construcción de mecanismos de combate a la pobreza absoluta y los males sociales.

Palabras clave: Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio, individualización, voluntarismo.
Introdução

Demonstrar-se-á, neste artigo, que o Programa dos Voluntários das Nações Unidas (UNV), criado em 1970, em Assembleia Geral¹, inscreve-se no âmbito de um amplo processo cuja finalidade é responsabilizar individualmente a todos pela busca de solução para os problemas gerados socialmente² (Bauman, 2001; Beck, 1992). Este tipo de percepção acerca da importância dos esforços individuais ganhou um formato mais bem delineado na segunda metade do século XX.

Pode-se dizer que isso ocorreu em razão do aprofundamento de uma individualização que se tem imposto desde a emergência da época moderna, mas que tem adquirido novos traços a partir da década de 1950. Não se deve supor que as ações voluntárias ganharam terreno mais fértil somente no século XX, já que elas, mesmo no Brasil, surgiram muito antes. As primeiras santas casas, seguindo o modelo de Portugal, foram implantadas no país ainda no século XVI, as quais foram consideradas como a inauguração das práticas filantrópicas e voluntárias no período colonial.

Há, todavia, que se destacar que as ações voluntárias adquirem um significado absolutamente renovado desde que o Estado passou a atuar como incentivador, fiscalizador, financiador, ao menos em parte dos recursos, das denominadas práticas voluntárias. No Brasil, especificamente, isso ocorre, de forma regular e continuada, a partir de 1930. É interessante observar que, no decorrer do século XX, principalmente a partir da Declaração Universal dos Direitos Humanos da ONU, em 1948, passam a ganhar forma as associações que objetivam implantar o voluntariado no mundo todo. Afirmando ter por base a declaração de direitos firmada no pós-guerra, algumas organizações passam a dar substancialidade à idéia de que o voluntariado tinha de ser visto como um conjunto de ações que visavam a combater as mazelas sociais (fome crônica e aguda, analfabetismo, doenças, epidemias,

¹ “O Programa UNV trabalha com as agências das Nações Unidas (NU) e outras organizações de desenvolvimento através das delegações nacionais do PNUD espalhadas pelo mundo” (O QUE é o UNV, UNV/PNUD, 2004).

mortalidade de crianças, falta de assistência médica, entre outras) em diversas frentes de intervenção.

Como a Declaração Universal de Direitos Humanos, de 1948, estabelecia que a igualdade de direitos deveria ser o norte da vida social, passaram a emergir, com uma força renovada e com maior respaldo do poder público, as ações voluntárias. Ocorre, então, uma impulsão de tais práticas, as quais iriam ganhar ainda mais força desde que, em 1970, a Assembleia Geral das Nações Unidas criou o UNV. A ONU, como uma comunidade internacional organizada, ao chancelar as práticas voluntárias, reforçou a expansão dos denominados esforços individuais no combate aos problemas sociais gerados de modo sistêmico. Isso pode ser detectado, até mesmo, através de empenhos como o da International Association for volunteer Effort que, em 1990, teve a iniciativa de estabelecer alguns princípios de ações através da Declaração Universal do Voluntariado.

A Declaração Universal do Voluntariado afirma que a decisão voluntária está apoiada em motivações pessoais cujo objetivo principal é participar na vida da comunidade tendo em vista a melhora da qualidade de vida e a busca de um mundo mais justo e menos violento. Uma das formas sugeridas, pelo documento acima mencionado, para a criação de um mundo menos injusto e mais pacífico, é a atuação voluntária para incentivar um desenvolvimento econômico e social mais equilibrado. A atuação na geração de empregos e de rendas é, então, um dos objetivos principais a ser perseguido por aqueles que se engajam nas atividades voluntárias. Considere-se também que os voluntários devem “encorajar a transformação do compromisso individual em movimento coletivo” (Declaração Universal do Voluntariado, 1990).

Ressalte-se que a própria percepção de movimento coletivo, expressa na declaração do voluntariado, inscreve-se numa visão também assentada na individualização, uma vez que concebe o movimento coletivo como algo fundado na soma de compromissos individuais. Ou seja, sugere-se que a construção de espaços coletivos de luta pode ser derivada de soluções individuais que se situam, muitas vezes, muito distantes de

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3 A Assembleia Geral da ONU, em 17 de dezembro de 1985, estabeleceu o dia 05 de dezembro como o dia internacional do voluntariado. O ano de 2001 foi definido pelas Nações Unidas como o ano internacional do voluntariado.
Non-violence in conflict zones; Peace Brigades International

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Abstract: This paper has the objective to investigate the Peace Brigades International (PBI) work and its contributions to the field of nonviolent international conflict management in situations with high levels of violence through the protection of human rights’ activists. Currently, many civil society actors increasingly contribute to conflict transformation and peace-building through nonviolent international interventions. With 27 years of existence, hundreds of activists protected in eleven countries, and twelve projects developed along its history, PBI is one of the most successful cases in the world. Due to the structure developed since its creation and the work methodology used by this organization, PBI contributed to the nonviolent conflict transformation through the protection of human rights’ activists and organizations which were under threat of violence. This action allows the individuals and organizations’ empowerment. This work strengthens human security and expands the nonviolent movement in those places where it works.

Key words: nonviolence, nonviolent international intervention in conflicts, human security, civil society.

Resumen: Este artículo pretende investigar el trabajo de Brigadas Internacionales de Paz (Peace Brigades International - PBI), y las contribuciones que esta organización realiza en el campo de la gestión internacional noviolenta de conflictos en situaciones con altos niveles de violencia, mediante la protección de activistas de derechos humanos. Actualmente, muchos actores de la sociedad civil contribuyen a la transformación de conflictos y a la construcción de la paz, a través de intervenciones internacionales noviolentas. Con 27 años de existencia, cientos de activistas protegidos en 11 países y 12 proyectos desarrollados a lo largo de su historia, PBI es uno de los casos más exitosos. Gracias a la estructura que ha desarrollado desde su creación y a la metodología de trabajo que utiliza, PBI ha contribuido a la transformación noviolenta de conflictos, mediante la protección de activistas y organizaciones de derechos humanos que sienten la amenaza de la violencia, y posibilitando el empoderamiento de individuos y organizaciones locales. De esta forma fortalece la seguridad humana y extiende el movimiento de la noviolencia en aquellos lugares donde trabaja.

Palabras clave: noviocaencia, intervención internacional noviolenta en conflictos, seguridad humana, sociedad civil.

ISSN 1405-1435, UAEMex, num. 48, September-December 2008, pp. 120-143
Introduction

The present article aims at analyzing the case of Peace Brigades International (PBI)\(^1\) and its contributions to the field of non-violent conflict transformation at an international level in situations with high levels of violence. In order to achieve this, some reflections will be made around non-violence,\(^2\) as well as on the transformations to which the international community is assisting. These two aspects facilitate the participation of the civil society in the resolution of conflicts. Later on we will study how PBI works and, finally, we will present some results that this organization has achieved.

PBI is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that works in the human rights field; it supports many threatened activists with the objective of increasing their levels of security and contributing to the non-violent conflict transformation and to the extension of the realm of justice and the culture of peace. It is a NGO that keeps teams of volunteers deployed in the field as international observers in conflict areas. By applying a non-violent strategy it manages to deter many violent acts, broadening thus the space where the advocates to human rights develop their activism in conflict zones.

Thanks to its valuable contribution, PBI has successfully allowed many human rights activists to develop their work in safer and more open conditions, making possible the deployment of local processes of non-violent conflict transformation, enabling them to follow their own flows and to increase the levels of human security of the towns affected by conflicts. This way, PBI helps stopping violences and spreading positive peace.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) One can find more information about PBI in its website: <http://www.peacebrigades.org>.

\(^2\) The term non-violence is broadly analyzed by professor López (2004a).

\(^3\) The concept of positive peace has been developed by Johan Galtung from the peace research field, by establishing a relationship between the peace concept, not as opposite to war (negative peace), but as opposite to violence. By distinguishing between direct violence and structural violence, the positive peace concept arises. It considers peace as a dynamic and constant process, which is linked to the social justice concept in a broad sense and with reduced levels of violence, as well as with the concepts of development and human rights (Galtung, 1985).
Conflicts, non-violent conflict transformation and civil society

PBI is a NGO focused in non-violent conflict transformation in highly violent contexts, and its case shows the increasing interest that the international society has in non-violent alternatives in order to resolve conflicts in a more efficient way.

We start from the verification that one of the innate characteristics of human beings, a product of life in society, is the constant existence of conflictive relationships with their fellows. Conflict that is present in human relationships has been tackled in two completely different ways by humanity. Sometimes, conflicts have been resolved with the help of violence. In some other occasions, the means used to resolve differences between different human communities or inside them have been of non-violent character.

If we take a look at the history of human societies, it’s easy to recognize the great dependency that politics has had on violent means (Schell, 2003: 21). Its characteristic tool will be an army and its highest expression: war. The use of violence allows the existence of oppression situations and also that of imbalance in human relations by making possible the domination of certain human beings. Nevertheless, the costs of this way of resolving conflicts are very high for human societies, since violence causes high damages in different spheres and it requires a great effort to keep a system of relations based on inequality.

History also provides successful and failed attempts of alternative ways of making politics and resolving conflicts without the use of violence. The independence of India thanks to the non-violent processes promoted by Gandhi or the fight for civil rights of Martin Luther King (Schell, 2003: 28) can be used as examples of important political achievements reached without using violence. And non-violence supposes a political philosophy centered in the negotiation of conflicts without using any violence identified by Galtung.4

When we use it, we talk about non-violent conflict transformation in

4 Galtung (2003: 20) identifies the existence of three kinds of violence: direct, structural and cultural.
Civil Service Reform in comparative perspective: the case of local government change in Mexico and the United States

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Abstract: This case study compares civil service reform efforts in the State of Mexico and Summit County, Ohio. In the case of Mexico, the U.S. Civil Service system is viewed as an ideal model. Historically, recruitment and selection of government employees has been the most controversial and politically charged personnel endeavor. Thus, this case examines the political environment within which civil service reform is being attempted in both jurisdictions. Valuable lessons have been learned. First, and foremost, is that civil service reform is a slow process. In the United States full implementation of civil service precepts took several decades. Secondly, the greatest single failure of both the system in Mexico and Summit County is the lack of clear career paths for professionals. It must be remembered that civil service systems are career systems, designed to offer the opportunity and possibility of a career in the public service free of political or other influences.

Key words: civil service, public service, government.

Resumen: Este estudio de caso compara los esfuerzos de reforma en el servicio civil en el Estado de México, México, y el Condado de Summit, Ohio, Estados Unidos. El sistema de servicio civil en Estados Unidos es visto como el modelo ideal. Históricamente el reclutamiento y selección de empleados gubernamentales ha sido el esfuerzo más controvertido y con mayor carga política. Así, este caso examina el ambiente político dentro del cual la reforma del servicio civil se lleva a cabo en ambas jurisdicciones. Se han adquirido conocimientos valiosos; en primer lugar, de manera principal, se entiende que la reforma en el servicio civil es un proceso lento, en los Estados Unidos la completa implementación de los preceptos de servicios de carrera necesitó varias décadas; en segundo lugar, la mayor falla en ambos casos es la falta de trayectorias claras hacia la profesionalización. Debe recordarse que los sistemas de servicio civil son sistemas de carrera, diseñados para ofrecer oportunidades y posibilidades de una carrera en el servicio público libre de influencias políticas o de cualquier otro tipo.

Palabras clave: servicio civil, servicio público, gobierno.

ISSN 1405-1435, UAEMex, num. 48, September-December 2008, pp. 144-183
Introduction

Creation of civil service systems in Europe and, then the United States, in the nineteenth century were seminal acts in the evolution of “professional” government. Whereas the nineteenth-century concern was to find people to fill government jobs (i.e., recruitment), the twentieth-century concern was to match the skills of the recruit to the demands of the job (i.e., selection). Our modern understanding of objective, merit-based civil service systems rests on assumptions of neutral objectivity of selection processes. Neutral selection includes job analysis and position classification, (Cox et al., 1994).

But what happens if there is no objectivity? Or if this pursuit of objectivity produces results that are politically or socially undesirable? Herein lie the questions to be considered in our examination of civil service change efforts in the State of Mexico, Mexico and the County of Summit, Ohio. Both the state government (and by constitution the municipal governments of the state) and the county government are struggling with reform efforts. Both “judge” the depth, and, therefore, the “quality,” of their reforms against the standards of a classic civil service system.

Classic systems treat personnel processes as mechanistic operations. Employees are recruited from a pool of applicants, meeting pre-established guidelines. The hiring process is circumscribed by restrictions on information; employment applications as well as interview questions are carefully screened to avoid illegal questioning while making certain that any bona fide occupational qualification questions are included. From this perspective fundamental tenets of personnel practice are simplistic. Absenteeism should be reduced; employee turnover is deplored. Hiring is to occur based summarily upon the applicant’s “fit” with the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) as defined in the position classification guidelines. Promotion is to be based on merit. While in most cases, a personnel manager could organize his or her office using this “by-the-book” and somewhat robotic approach, the manager

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1 We wish to acknowledge the work of Ma. Esther Morales Fajardo and Martha Laura Hernández Pérez without whom this work would not be possible. We also want to note the vital assistance provided by Ma. Esther in serving as a translator for aspects of this research. We are grateful for the support provided by both of them and thank them for their efforts.
learns nothing of why the employees behave as they do. This approach to personnel management ignores the context in which people work — a critical element to any understanding of public sector personnel practice.

Using our experience with and interviews of those involved in civil service reform in Mexico and Ohio\(^2\) we propose to develop an assessment of the state of local government personnel practice. To achieve this goal we must first introduce theoretical influences and understand the historic context for the evolution of current personnel practices in both jurisdictions. Our goal is to help merit system reformers recognize not only what government personnel practice is, but also what it is becoming. The necessary first step, then, is to understand where it came from.

*Theoretical basics elements*

The primary theoretical inputs for this paper are based upon the idea that classic civil service system is a mechanic standard, which ignored the people and their context. According to Cox, Buck and Morgan (1994), the neutral selection of personnel includes job analysis and position classification. However, that neutrality many no longer be present. So, for them it is necessary to examine personnel performance in order to understand better the process of changing the civil service system.

Classic civil service system treats personnel processes as a mechanistic operation as if only the knowledge, skills and abilities were enough for improving practices. Berman, Bowman, West and Van Wart (2001) emphasized the context of the people work as a decisive component beyond understanding of public sector personnel practice. The personnel practices would be the elements which begin the examination of civil service system performance.

In the same way, Dresang (1984), Nigro and Nigro (2000) and Shafritz, Hyde and Rosenbloom (1986) provide a dynamic view of personnel practice management and places there at center of government activity. For them, the government does not exist independent from its employees. The people who work in government determine, in large part, the kind of government we have. Conversely, government works the way it does because of its personnel systems.

\(^2\) Those interviews were doing during September 2002 at State of Mexico and October 2002 at Ohio.
Five myths on professional service career in Mexico

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Abstract: The recent appearance of civil service in Mexico, both in federal public administration and local public administration, has created myths about the real implementation and culture in contrast with what this institution must be. This essay has the objective to explain five myths about civil service based on facts and evidences. The article is divided into three sections: 1) What sort of people should be part of bureaucracy? 2) five civil service myths; 3) conclusions.

Keywords: professionalization, professional service career, public administration, bureaucracy, myths.

Resumen: La aparición en años recientes del servicio profesional de carrera, tanto en el gobierno federal como en algunos estados de la República Mexicana, y la construcción de una cultura ad hoc han estado acompañadas de una serie de mitos. Concretamente entre lo que acontece en el deber ser y su contraste con lo que la realidad ha dictado en su implementación. Este artículo tiene como objetivo principal explicar tales mitos, a partir de lo que los propios hechos han venido a demostrar en los últimos años. El artículo se encuentra dividido en los siguientes apartados: 1) ¿De qué personal se compone la burocracia?, 2) cinco mitos sobre el servicio profesional de carrera, 3) conclusiones.

Palabras clave: profesionalización, servicio profesional de carrera, administración pública, burocracia, mitos.
Introduction

The appearance of the phenomenon of professionalization via the construction of civil service or professional service career (Martínez, 2005a) in governments and public administrations in Mexico is a recent phenomenon and, thereby subject to revisions, reorientations and possible reforms. Even if it is true that institutions of sectorial character such as the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (Mexican External Service), Federal Electoral Institute (Professional Electoral Service), Agrarian Court (Professional Agrarian Service) went first in the race, undoubtedly, the most attractive laboratory is still professional service career in federal administration. The reasons to think of it are obvious: in the first place, because it concentrates the largest number of public servants, circa three million in public centralized and parastatal administrations; because it is the main management instrument of the president of the Republic, where the most important public policies for the whole country are designed and implemented; and because said service is centered on a essential sector of positions of the administration, from general director to outreach (36000 positions) (Secretariat of Civil Service, 2008) (Secretaría de la Función Pública). But also because professional service career, due to both its nature and the sphere it is inserted in, is susceptible to possible modifications caused by changes in the government. For instance, not long ago it was shaken by one of them, as a result of the 2006 election and the change in the highest office, and therefore in the changes of State secretaries.

In this respect, it is important to point out that before an absence of a culture of professionalization, a series of myths has been constructed around what a professional service career is and means; such myths are linked, to a large extent, to the behavior of this sort of institutions in other countries,

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1 Understand professional service career as that employment system where people enter the public sector through their own merits and with the same opportunities. However, deep inside said terms are the same, as of now we can point out that professional service career is the modern version of civil service, mainly as it incorporates elements of managerial nature as competences, performance evaluation, the intensive use of information technologies, among other elements.
however in Mexican reality as well as in the particular issues presented they head toward another direction or simply have crumbled down. So nowadays we face a situation of contrast; on the one side, we have the situation of how professional service career must be; and on the other, how it is operating in reality.

This article is interested in exposing the myths constructed around professional service career, not only at federal level, but also at the level of the States of the Republic; comparing them with that must-be of the administrations; and seeing which the possible paths are. The work is divided into the following sections: 1) what sort of personnel does bureaucracy comprise?; 2) Five myths on professional service career; 3) conclusions.

**What sort of personnel does bureaucracy comprise?**

Contemporary bureaucracies, preceded by solid administrative culture, usually work with different sorts of public servants: designed politicians, staff who carries out both political and administrative functions, staff with strictly administrative functions, unionized or base staff, et cetera; even if they operate with different logics based on the nature of their positions, among them prevails a series of institutional arrangements that allows this entire heterogeneous structure to work as a harmonized whole; bound to the existence of an axiological component, which produces a sharing of values, in this case proper to a public bureaucracy, such as, among the most important: legality, ethics, transparency, efficiency, et cetera.

Hence, in every bureaucratic organization, the division of labor, functional hierarchy divided into positions that perform diverse roles, as well as the level of specialization of the members appear as elements that operate as an “apparently” harmonized whole that, in a rational way through routines, processes and fulfillment of regulations, reaches the different objectives of the organization (Weber, 1962). All of this in the framework of a sort of template or descriptive model (Peters, 2003) which responds to the “logic of the adequate”; indeed, said scenario is not exempt from possible tensions and problems, which will be analyzed further.

Not in so many words, it is the formal schema upon which most of occidental bureaucracies have been inspired; of course, linked to the formal
aspects proper to the organization. For this, one of the main topics is, among other, that of how the positions are distributed according to the functional hierarchy, and what the level or percentage that would correspond to the different spheres of staff is. On this point, we agree with Guy Peters (1995: 90) on the fact that the controversy of political designation or designation by merits—to mention the central examples—is a question of rank. Virtually all the political systems have certain level where designations are clearly political—frequently “policy-making” positions—and also have positions which are usually accessed through some sort of merit system. Therefore, the problem is to know how far in the ladder of administrative hierarchy designations by merits can be made, or at least not openly political, or how far the limits of political designation go. This is the heart of the issue.

Notwithstanding, if we had to resort to a simple schema, where we had to show the way a bureaucratic structure is organized, this would be as follows:

Graph 1

Bureaucratic structure

Politicians

Administrative

Operative

Source: own elaboration

Thus we find politicians, administrative and operational staff. Of course under this traditional schema there is usually between these divisions a much more sophisticated classification of positions, which might be extremely diverse and even unique based on the particular characteristics of some bureaucratic structures. So linked to the categories of staff displayed in the pyramid, we have to add this template other sorts of staff, be it staff who carries out advising and supportive tasks, professional service outsourcing, etc (Dussuage, 2008).
The emergence of the relation between rural development and gender

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to encourage the reader to a theoretical reflection on the main productive and political strategies of the model of rural development that exists nowadays in Mexico. Based on the historical causes of it, it is debated on the incorporation of the gender perspective to the policies of rural development; special emphasis is provided to the link between rural women and development. Therefore, there is a debate on the relational construction between rural women and public policy that the government carries out.

Keywords: rural development, gender, public policy, development.

Resumen: El propósito de este artículo es invitar al lector a una reflexión teórica sobre las principales estrategias productivas y políticas del modelo de desarrollo rural que actualmente existen en México. Con base en los antecedentes históricos de éste, se problematiza en torno a la incorporación de la perspectiva de género a las políticas de desarrollo rural; particularmente se pone énfasis en el vínculo entre mujeres rurales y desarrollo. Para ello se debate sobre la construcción relacional entre las mujeres rurales y la política pública que lleva a cabo el gobierno.

Palabras clave: desarrollo rural, género, política pública, desarrollo.
Introduction

From the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals, the third one is considered as that which would promote equality between genders and the autonomy of women. This promise that would have to include several spheres of social impact to achieve said objective by 2015, does not only imply to achieve public actions on the side of the governments. It also means to create spaces of theoretical and academic reflection on the location of women and the gender topic in the styles of rural development proposed from the international development agencies, governments and other theoretical-academic paradigms.

In view of such situation, the purpose of this article is to show and acknowledge the diachronic evolution of the location of gender and women in the development of the rural environment. Especially in the framework of the main theoretical approaches and public policies that provide attention to the farming lands and to the development of the rural territories in Mexico.

In order to write this article, a documentary research was performed. It included the revision of some public programs on rural development; as well as the review of literature that provided account on the evolution that has taken place in the last decades on the concept of rural development, and on how women are considered or not in the development proposals. And if that is the first case, under which assumptions the development models and public policies institutionalize woman and gender in the discourses as part of those proposals and experiences. The article is divided in three large sections: the first refers to the evolution of the notion of rural development, the second specifies the relation between gender and development, as well as the institutional experiences in Mexico, and lastly, some final reflections are presented as a conclusion.

Brief recapitulation on rural development

The modernization in the development

Throughout contemporary history, Mexican governments have created development strategies that posed dilemmas on: how to abandon rural underdevelopment, from which theoretical perspective achieve it, what goals to follow, what the social, political and economical priorities are, among others.
To a greater or lesser extent, rural development schemata consider economic, social or essentially technical approaches. Such paradigms of development, frequently opposed to each other in an extreme way, have been subject of the ups and downs of the fortune of political and ideological projects, a situation that makes their understanding more complex.

The dilemmas that have been proposed to overcome the “rural backwardness” were focused on a very old debate on the economy that revolved on the following question: development or growth? This situation is not strange considering the polysemy of the rural development category which allows a heterodox theoretical debate, not only in the academic circle, but also in that of politics.

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 1999) the concept and practice of development in general, and the rural development in particular, went through three well-defined stages since 1950 and through a transition: the economic growth stage (1945-1965), that of economic and social development (1965-1980); the transition (and confusion) created by the crisis of the State of well-being (1980-1990); and the current stage focused on human development (from 1990 and on).

The strategies and theoretical models of development respond to certain historical moments that do not provide homogeneous and agreed definitions nowadays. Nevertheless, most of the contemporary conceptions about development retrieve elements of analysis from different theoretical models that allow legitimizing “intellectually” a way of development, without there being a single “solution” to its problems.

At present, the practice of development still follows a pattern related to the “theory of modernization”. According to Gardner and Lewis (2003), industrialization, the transition from sustenance agriculture to commercial plantations and urbanization are key phenomena in that process. Modernization is, essentially, “evolutionist”; countries are conceptualized as organizations that go through different stages of a linear path that inevitably leads to an industrialized, urban and ordered society.

Different anthropologic studies in Mexico debated the dilemma of the pros and cons of the modernization of the national rural areas. For Gamio, the critical point of its problem (low subsistence levels among the rural
Gordian knots of the labor reform in Mexico: the debate on them in the LVIII and LIX legislatures of the Senate of the Republic

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Abstract: The debate on the Mexican labor reform in the framework of the LVIII and LIX legislatures of the Senate of the Republic, during the 2000 – 06 six-year period, did not have a substantial nature with regard to the agenda established at the beginning of the 80's, whose central plan was to adapt the Federal Labor Law from a context of a closed economy and strong state investment in strategic areas, to another of open economy and a prevalence of private investment in the key sectors. The superficial nature of the terms of the legislative debate in the Senate is owed to the promotion that the Department of Labor made of a reform that responded to the ideas of the Mexican employers. Among those ideas, the following stand out: the fall in the costs of hiring and dismissal of workforce and more limitations for the organization of workers in unions. This proposal, at the same time, disregarded the expositions made by the independent unionism and several academicians with regard to the autonomy of the labor courts, the removal of the capacity to arbitrate that the executive has, the promotion of the democracy and the union liberty, as well as the bilateral flexibilization in the terms of the hiring and dismissal of workers.

Keywords: labor reform, Senate, political parties, unions, employers.

Resumen: La discusión de la reforma laboral en México en el marco de la LVIII y LIX legislaturas del Senado de la República, durante el periodo que abarca el sexenio que va del 2000 al 2006, no tuvo un carácter sustantivo en relación con la agenda establecida desde principios de la década de 1980, cuyo planteamiento central fue adecuar la Ley Federal del Trabajo de un contexto de una economía cerrada y de fuerte inversión estatal en áreas estratégicas, a otro de economía abierta y con predominio de inversión privada en los sectores clave. La superficialidad de los términos de la discusión legislativa en la Cámara de Senadores se debe a que desde la Secretaría del Trabajo se impulsó una reforma laboral que respondía a los planteamientos del empresariado mexicano, entre los que destaca: la disminución de los costos de contratación y despido de la mano de obra y más limitaciones para la organización de trabajadores en sindicatos. Esta propuesta, al mismo tiempo, desestimó los planteamientos hechos por el sindicalismo independiente y diversos académicos, como la autonomía de los tribunales laborales, quitándole la facultad de arbitraje al Ejecutivo, el impulso de la democracia y la libertad sindicales, así como la flexibilización bilateral en la contratación y despido de los trabajadores.

Palabras clave: reforma laboral, Cámara de Senadores, partidos políticos, sindicatos, empresarios.
The purpose of this work is to recount the terms of the debate on the labor reform among the political parties with representation in the LVIII and LIX legislatures of the Senate. The central argument establishes that the way in which the government led the debate on this subject from the Department of Labor created a dynamics that canceled any possibility of dialogue and eliminated the possibility of obtaining a proposal supported by the consensus of the involved actors; particularly because the purpose of the official part was, from the beginning and in the light of the results, to support the employer’s agenda, whose culmination in a labor law would be supported by a scenography of a plural discussion table.

The consequences of this strategy were, in the case of the legislative debate in the Senate, that the approved initiatives were of superficial nature with regard to the needs, and that, with exception of the changes made to the Law of the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS), each party established its own agenda. Moreover, even inside the parliamentary groups, proposals for the labor reform that reflected legitimate positions were made inside the parliamentary groups, but they were very specific and, therefore, of a particularist nature.

This work is divided in three parts. In the first one, an explanation on the reasons that make a labor reform necessary are provided, in it, it is highlighted that the change from a closed and protectionist economy to an open one, affects the economic patterns of functioning of the companies, since their competitors, essentially international, have more technological advances, and their selling, distributions and cost strategies are much more sophisticated. In this respect, the Mexican labor law is left behind as it was designed for a captive market, for companies that supported their production in the intensive use of workforce and poor technological development, and with the support of unions to which they provided an important legal capacity to have control over the workers as well as coercion against employers.

Although said schema favored low labor conflictivity and a significant capacity of consumption on the side of the workers, since stability, social security and redundancy payments were guaranteed to them at the moment of being hired, it also gave rise to difficulties within the companies, since
they had to make changes in the labor organization and to introduce new technologies, above all during critical economic circumstances, that were caused by the union opposition.

On the other hand, it also gave rise to the subordination of the trade unions, particularly those affiliated to the unions supervised by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). The subordination was to the policies in labor matters and to the unilateral decision of the employers in all that was related to the hiring, use and dismissal of the workforce. In the worst scenario, the coercive capacities of legal kind in favor of the unions favored the emergence of “protection contracts” and of “letterhead unions*”. Their purposes have been to avoid the creation of the authentic unionism, to eliminate any possibility of a contractual conflict and, therefore, the renounce to labor rights, as well as to extort money from both employers and workers in exchange for the benefit that it implies for the latter to have access to employment, and for the former, the evasion of different legal obligations in the labor scope and the guarantee to have “control” over workers.

In the second part of this work, an account is given of the way in which the debate on the labor reform started and of how almost by the end of the second year of the presidential government of Vicente Fox, the Secretariat of Labor rejected the proposals made by the National Workers’ Union (UNT), Authentic Labor Front (FAT), the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and several independent specialists, and instead, with the support of PRI, National Action Party (PAN) and Ecologist Green Party of Mexico (PVEM), decided to promote the employer’s proposal, known as Abascal Law. In general terms, the main lines of Abascal’s Law establish that any change shall point exclusively to reduce the cost of the workforce by eliminating, as far as possible, the rights acquired in terms of social security and benefits as well as the authentic intermediation of the unionist representation through a more strict control of the register of the labor organizations (Alcalde, 2003).

Considering its essential points and from the perspective of the official position it is clear why to marginalize the alternative proposal: that companies’

* It refers to unions that exist mainly for bureaucratic purposes.
Participation and political associationism: new analytical proposals

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According to the vast available bibliography, political participation has been defined as a primary component of the concept of democracy and a fundamental dimension of the democratic political systems. This sort of visualizing political participation has stated a key question: why do some citizens take part in political life whereas others do not? The theoretical and empirical research has generated numberless explanatory models and hypotheses. As of the 1960’s, the analyses distinguished the importance of the social and attitudinal characteristics of the subjects; later, but mainly after the 1990’s, the studies have started to adopt new approaches that assume the introduction of explanatory elements linked to the social and political context where the individuals act (p. 209).

In this new framework of search, development and theoretical and empirical debate Instituciones, movilización y participación política appears; a book by Laura Morales Diez de Ulzurrun, researcher-professor of the department of Political Science of Universidad de Murcia. This volume has several merits: firstly, it approaches the analysis of the pertinence or affiliation to some political groups as a dimension of political participation; secondly, it carries out a systematic review of the theoretical and methodological models available to study political participation and pertinence; thirdly, it makes a compared exam of the affiliation or political associationism in 17 democracies: 15 European (Occidental Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden) and two North American (Canada and the United States); and fourthly, Instituciones, movilización y participación política proposes a model of analysis that articulates factors of individual and contextual nature in the explanation of political associationism.

1 Instituciones, mobilización and political participation: this book is a revised and extended version of the doctoral thesis which, under the same title, the author presented in the Department of Political Science and International Affairs of Autonomous University of Madrid, in 2004.

2 Until very recently the available studies were referred to associationism in general, they did not make any distinction between the groups and associations, and even when they analyzed associationism or political activism at the level of the parties and unions.

3 The information used in the empirical analysis comes from several databases, yet mainly from Encuesta Mundial de Valores, Eurobarómetro and Encuesta Europa de Valores.
From that perspective, the author develops several topics. The first is theoretical and methodological. Laura Morales builds the answer to the question of what political associationism is, in several steps: at first she reviews and discusses the available bibliography; then, she defines associationism as the membership in those groups formally organized of citizens who pursue a collective good and who have as a main objective influence on the processes of adoption of political decisions, either by means of their intervention in selecting governmental staff or in their activities, the introduction of topics into the political agenda or the transformation of the values and preferences that guide the adoption of political decisions (p. 30).

And finally, she offers a solution to the problem of how to measure associationism and which data to use. In accordance with the author, the operative measure is founded on two criteria: that which distinguishes between those who belong and those who do not belong to a political association; and that which distinguishes those who belong, characterized by the uni- or multi-associationism, and those affiliated to a traditional political organization —e.g., political parties or unions— or to one of a new kind —e.g., groups of communal action, groups of women, pacifist movements, et cetera— (p. 82-95). This proceeding allows establishing four categories: those who do not belong to any group or political organization; 2) those who only belong to traditional political groups; 3) those who only belong to new political groups; and 4) those who belong to both new and traditional groups (p. 190).

With this theoretical and methodological base, Laura Morales approaches the second problem: What do the data from 1990 World Survey on Values and from 1999-2000 European survey on Values report? According to the author (chapters 2 and 3), a first observation of the data allows underscoring some conclusions; let us mention two. The former distinguishes that belonging to political organizations had rather steady levels along the last decades of

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4 The problem of measuring the political associationism linked to social capital has been revised by Laura Morales (2002): in her article “Associational membership and social capital in comparative perspective: a note on the problems of measurement”, in *Politics & Society*, no. 3, pp. 497-523.
XX century; because of this, “we cannot talk about a generalized growth, yet neither about crisis or generalized decline” on belonging to political groups (p. 94). The latter states that political associationism noticeably varies among the 17 occidental democracies, to the extent that the existence of three patterns is evident: the first, proper to United States, Canada and some Central Europe countries, it is characterized by high levels of associationism and activism; the second, proper to Scandinavian countries, it presents high levels of associationism, however fundamentally passive; and the third pattern, proper to the countries of southern Europe, reveals a marginal number of associated people, yet they unfold very intense levels of activity in political organizations (p. 95).

It is from these findings that Ms. Morales develops the third problem that is summarized in two questions: which aspects help understand better why some citizens partake of politics through organizations and other do not? And how do we explain the existence of conspicuous disparities at the levels of political affiliation in occidental democracies? (p. 337). The answer is constructed based on two theoretical models: the classic (chapter 4), which centers the explanation on the individual features; and the new proposals (chapters 5 and 6), which seek the explanation in the factors external to the individual. The systematic and detailed explanation of both models follows a number of steps: a) it presents the theoretical scheme that guides the empirical analyses; b) it reviews the hypotheses constructed “in academic research on each of the explanatory variables” of associationism; and c) it analyzes with data from the 1990 World Survey on Values and 1999-2000 European Survey on Values, the validity and usefulness of the theoretical models (pp. 137-138).

The classical studies on political participation —oriented by the line of research proposed by Sydney Verba and Norman Nie— have established the existence of important relations determined by characteristics of the individuals and the inequalities in participation. A first factor stands out

5 The classical work by S. Verba & N. Nie is Participation in America: political democracy and social equality (Harper and Row, 1972); this was followed by another more ambitious: S. Verba, N. Nie & J. Kim (1978), Participation and Political Equality: a seven-nation comparison, Cambridge University Press.
the socio-economic characteristics (such as age, gender, social stratum, education, religiousness, the size of the residence place, et cetera). A second factor underlines the attitudinal variables or civic and political orientations; as stated by the author, this model recovers a set of variables related to the individuals’ psychological implication—in its affective (interest, efficacy and importance given to politics), cognitive (information and political knowledge) and behavioral (political discussion) dimensions,—, interpersonal trust, scale of values (e.g., materialism-postmaterialism), and the orientations towards social change (p. 176).

The empirical verification of these variables by means of data from 1990 World Survey on Values and 1999-2000 European Survey on Values referred to the 17 occidental democracies demonstrates that “although they are certainly important, the social and attitudinal characteristics of the individuals do not permit satisfactorily understanding why some are associated in organizations and others do not” (p. 208). In other words, the classical model seems to be insufficient to explain political associationism.

The new theoretical proposals—linked to recent developments in the theory of new social movements—displace the analytical axis of the individual characteristics to the impact of the sociopolitical contexts in individual decisions on integrating to a political association (chapter 6). According to Ms. Morales, two factors are strategic: the opportunities of participation the political system provides, and the patterns of mobilization of the structure of political opportunities. In the first case, three dimensions of the structure of political opportunities are rescued (pp. 230-254): 1) the access points to the political system; 2) the fragmentation of political elites; and 3) the porosity of the bureaucratic decision-making system. In the second three elements of the mobilization context are established (pp. 254-288): 1) direct mobilization and visibility of organizations: organizational structures and mobilizing action; 2) cognitive mobilization: structures of cleavage

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6 In relation to construction and operationalization of these two factors and six variables distinguish the theoretical and methodological contributions by Italian Donatella de la Porta, Dutch Bert Klandermans, Austrian Hanspeter Kriesi, German Dieter Rucht and American Sidney Tarrow.
and polarization; and 3) the organizational inheritances from the past: the consolidation of the mobilizing structures. The statistical examination of the variables of the sociopolitical context on the basis of the aforementioned surveys demonstrate that the structure of political opportunities present a clear relation with the levels of associationism in occidental countries; likewise, the patterns and traditions of mobilization that are produced in these countries also seem to have an evident relation with the propensity of their citizens to organizationally participate in politics (pp. 288-290).

The last problem —or in more precision, the contribution of Laura Morales— is formulated in chapter seven. It is a proposal of an analytical model which seeks to explain the participation and political associationism based on the impact of four sorts of factors. On the one side, factors related to the very individuals: their political orientations and the resources they have; and on the other, factors related to the context where the citizens decide and act: the opportunities to participate they are given by the political structures and processes of mobilization which the organizations that surround them carry out. From this set of factors, our author underscores the importance of contextual factors; in her own words: “the importance of the political context and, specially, of the degree of aperture of the political institutions of each country, is of such a magnitude that an explanation of political participation of the citizens that ignores them is incomplete” (p. 326).

To sum up, Instituciones, movilización y participación política: el asociacionismo político en las democracias occidentales is a substantive contribution to the field of knowledge, and thereby a book of compulsory reading. Researchers will find a systematic and updated review of the available theoretical approaches and numerous suggestions for the compared use of international databases — such as Worldwide Survey on Values. Students have a book that allows them to systematically access a field (participation) and a subfield (political affiliation), a processed bibliography and classified according to approaches, as well as a vast set of hypotheses, concepts and variables which have oriented the study of political participation.
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