

# Going beyond management: the agenda of democratic governance and the silenced change in Brazil

**Fernando Filgueiras**

Escola Nacional de Administração Pública

Brasília / DF — Brazil

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais / Departamento de Ciência Política

Belo Horizonte / MG — Brazil

This article aims to analyze the agenda of the reform of the Brazilian State adopting an exploratory and normative perspective, observing the models of public management arising from the Brazilian historical experience. The country's experience enables thinking about the institutional history of construction of public administration, highlighting the changes and the challenges posed in state-building processes. In addition, the article discusses the relationship between public administration and democracy, in view of the concept of democratic governance. Finally, the article analyzes what we name "silent change in Brazil", highlighting the uncoordinated way the process of change incrementally takes place, imposing challenges to the governance of the construction process in the Brazilian public sector and challenges in updating the agenda of reform.

**Keywords:** democratic governance; managerialism; reform of the state; participation; accountability; state capabilities.

## Indo além do gerencial: a agenda da governança democrática e a mudança silenciada no Brasil

O objetivo deste artigo é discutir a agenda de reforma do Estado brasileiro em uma perspectiva exploratória e normativa, observando os modelos de gestão pública decorrentes da experiência histórica brasileira. Observar essa experiência histórica possibilita pensar a trajetória institucional de construção da administração pública no Brasil, com destaque para os processos de mudança e para os desafios impostos ao processo de construção do Estado. Além disso, o artigo discute a relação entre administração pública e democracia, tendo em vista o conceito de governança democrática. Por fim, analisamos o que nomeamos de mudança silenciosa no Brasil, destacando a forma de acordo com a qual o processo de mudança ocorre de forma incremental, mas descoordenado, impondo desafios ao processo de construção da governança no setor público brasileiro e à atualização da agenda de reformas.

**Palavras-chave:** governança democrática; gerencialismo; reforma do Estado; participação; *accountability*; capacidades estatais.

## Yendo más allá del gerencial: la agenda de la gobernanza democrática y el cambio silenciado en Brasil

El objetivo de este artículo es discutir la agenda de reforma del Estado brasileño en una perspectiva exploratoria y normativa, observando los modelos de gestión pública resultantes de la experiencia histórica brasileña. Observar esta experiencia histórica posibilita pensar la trayectoria institucional de construcción de la administración pública en Brasil, con destaque para los procesos de cambio y para los desafíos impuestos al proceso de construcción del Estado. Además, el artículo discute la relación entre administración pública y democracia, teniendo en cuenta el concepto de gobernanza democrática. Por último, analizamos lo que denominamos de cambio silencioso en Brasil, destacando la forma de acuerdo con la cual el proceso de cambio ocurre de forma incremental, pero descoordenado, imponiendo desafíos al proceso de construcción de la gobernanza en el sector público brasileño y a la actualización de la agenda de reformas.

**Palabras clave:** gobernanza democrática; gerencialismo; reforma del Estado; participación; rendición de cuentas; capacidades estatales.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Brazil's recent experience in the public administration sphere has been living within a paradox. It can be said that since the reform of the State that took place in 1995 there have been incremental gains in the public sector's institutional change process. However, those incremental gains have not been sufficient, on their own, to contain the enormous wave of criticism and mistrust of the public sector that exists and that contributes to its burgeoning legitimacy crisis.

This article sets out to conduct a theoretical and normative discussion of democratic governance with a focus on the Brazilian experience. The democratic governance agenda was been a hidden and silent force behind the politics and organization of the Brazilian public sector. Consequently, it has created a momentum that has rendered it incapable of thinking through changes in the organization of the public sector or in the exercise of politics. The quality of government and public policies associated to problems with the legitimacy of the exercise of power are cross-cutting issues in this matter. The hidden nature of the agenda for the reform of the State has actually led to a state of inertia in the public administration whereby the incremental gains in management have not catalyzed the changes envisioned or a permanent process of institutional review and development of the organizations that make up the public service.

As stated above, the present text is of a theoretical and normative nature. In the first section will be discussed the history of the construction of Brazilian public administration to contextualize and delineate the set of problematic issues and the centrality of democracy in the process as a whole. In the second section will be discussed the democratic governance model, identifying its main elements and the centrality of a new reform agenda oriented by a critical view of the New Public Management model. In the third section will be discussed the construction of governance in Brazil and the hidden reform agenda. Special attention is paid to those processes in which construction has advanced and to the challenges in the path of transforming that agenda into an element that shapes the Brazilian institutional and administrative development process.

## 2. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE BRAZILIAN STATE AND ITS PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The constitution of the State and public administration in Brazil recognize three distinct phases: (1) the patrimonialist model; (2) the Weberian bureaucratic model; and (3) the managerialist model (Bresser-Pereira, 2001). These models represent three ideal types of organization of the Brazilian State that provide normative and cognitive orientation for understanding the historical construction of public organization. However, as they are ideal types, they comprise a cognitive aspect that determines that the reality is actually more of a complex hybridization of characteristics of all three models than a rigid, sequential construction, as it has been presented.

Beginning with patrimonialism, it has been a concept of fundamental importance in Brazil as an analytical and theoretical instrument to build an interpretation of the formation of the State. The assumption is that Brazilian political tradition does not respect the separation of the public and the private and, accordingly, the Brazilian case is not an example of a modern State legitimized by impersonal, rational norms. Patrimonialism, more than a type of organization, would be more of a system that legitimizes the government in the light of privileges, in the context of society of the estates of the

realm-type, inherited from the Iberian world. In the lineage of Brazilian political thinking derived from Faoro, patrimonialism is a typical problem of the State and embraces a structural vision that enables it to reproduce itself, albeit with some hints of modernization (Schwartzman, 1982).

On the other hand, there are authors like Sérgio Buarque de Holanda who underscore the fact that patrimonialism is not restricted to the State alone but is a societal problem. According to Buarque de Holanda, patrimonialism results from a culture of personality whereby there are no rules of impersonality governing the relations in the sphere of society or those between society and the State (Holanda, 1995). That patriarchal political culture is supposedly inherited from the Iberian world and constitutes a society structured around cordiality, whereby action is not based on rational criteria but, instead, on criteria originating from the irrationality of emotions.<sup>1</sup> Breaking with that past and the forms of personalism that reproduce themselves in concepts such as patrimonialism, patriarchy and cordiality constituted one of the lines of interpretation of Brazil. The projects for modernizing the State, the economy and society at large involved the idea of breaking free from our Iberian past and of asserting a modern model of state organization based on impersonality and rationality in the relations between State and society (Werneck Vianna, 1999).

In the course of the 20th century, Brazil gradually took on a modernizing posture centered on the pursue of elements of rationalization and cultural transformation capable of orientating a project intended to design the public sphere in accordance with the principles of capitalism and development. On one hand it would be possible to state that such a rupture with the past has never taken place in Brazil, given that it does not embody the same nuance of the patrimonialism concept as that presented by Weber. Brazilian patrimonialism turned its look to the future, taking on a modernizing project that would keep patrimonialism hidden and, accordingly, not legitimizing itself on the basis of the past (Schwartzman, 1982). On the other hand, the modernizing project in Brazil would have the State as its concretizing element, insofar as it consolidated the separation of the means of administration from the exercise of government posts and positions. The State, over and above society, took on the role of the Republican subject, capable of creating a public policy doctrine (*odre public*); a project for democracy that involved the transformation of society (Werneck Vianna, 1999).

The change effectively took place with adoption of a bureaucratic Weberian model for the organization of the State. The first moment was the creation of the Public Service Administrative Department (Departamento Administrativo do Serviço Público — Dasp) in 1938. The creation of the Dasp was based on the personnel system reform and the establishment and simplification of administrative systems and government budgeting activities in alignment with a bureaucratic model, with the aim of improving the efficiency of the public service (Marcelino, 2003). Within the project of modernization from the top, the Brazilian public administration reform was centered on the Executive Branch and its technical capacity to which it attributed the task of conducting the reforms in accordance with a project that was centralizing and authoritarian, aiming at formal rationality (Cardoso, 1982:48).

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<sup>1</sup> This association of Sérgio Buarque de Holanda with the patrimonialism line of interpretation is not taken for granted among other interpretations of Brazil. It stems from Antônio Cândido's interpretation of Buarque de Holanda's work *Raízes do Brasil* (Roots of Brazil) whereby Cândido considered Buarque de Holanda's reading of Weber's works to have been made in a patrimonialism perspective. Actually, Holanda addressed the concept of patriarchy, which is centered more on the privatization of power than on the existence of the State as such or the question of any kind of legitimizing process. In that regard see Cândido (1995).

The increasing disorganization of the Dasp that accompanied the reconstruction of democracy in 1946 led to the nomination of non-career employees in the civil service, disorganization of government budgets and of purchasing and control mechanisms and, lastly, to the burgeoning inefficiency of the management model implemented (Marcelino, 2003). With the enactment of Legal Decree 200 in 1967, during the military dictatorship, the Weberian public administration model was replaced by a development-oriented model. In the context of developmentalism, the expansion of the State intervention in the economy and the setting up of indirect administration were fundamental elements for ensuring the continuity of the modernizing project and the elimination of the patrimonialism of the past. As a result, indirect administration entities proliferated in the form of foundations, public corporations, mixed economy entities and autarchies (Bresser-Pereira, 2001; Marcelino, 2003).

The indirect administration model was guided by the idea that the enhancement of public service efficiency would necessarily require the adoption of public administration models more closely aligned with the private sector models. The aim of the indirect administration model was to decentralize Brazilian public administration, diffusing it to every corner of the country. In addition, there was a de-bureaucratization project that would seek to facilitate bureaucratic processes, making them more agile and in that way consolidating a greater degree of efficiency and agility in the administration (Beltrão, 1982). However, the developmentalist model became a hostage in a process of interaction with a society strongly impregnated with privatization. The constitution of bureaucratic rings connected State and society around private interests, maintaining, yet with some modernizing features, the system of privileges typical of the Estates of the Realm regime (Cardoso, 1982).

With the end of authoritarian rule and the transition to democracy, from 1985 on, the administrative model set up by Decree 200 fragmented by its increasing disorganization and disarticulation. Authoritarianism had created a technocratic vision and aggravated Brazilian public administration's historical problems, resulting in loss of financial control, lack of accountability of authorities and bureaucrats, improper political influence in the bureaucracy, in addition to excessive fragmentation of public companies and a loss of focus on governmental performance (Abrucio, 2007).

In view of those problems, during the New Republic a set of reforms was planned designed to maintain the earlier commitments to modernization made in the course of Brazil's Republican history. To combat the legacy of the authoritarian regime, the main changes came with the advent of the 1988 Constitution in which an entire chapter was specifically devoted to the political-administrative reform of the State. The 1988 Constitution established a commitment to civil service reform to be achieved by means of the universalization of the meritocracy and citizen participation (Abrucio, 2007).

During the Collor government, an administrative reform was promoted, driven by a supposed *caça aos marajás* (hunt down the Maharajas) which attempted to recompose and organize public management mechanisms, and fight the corruption that was devastating the Brazilian public service. Immediately there was an incorporation of those governmental functions that were under indirect administration to direct administration. There was also an avoidance of the proliferation of state companies and foundations that did not have their own financial resources and an effort was made to gain greater control over them. The main feature of Collor's administrative reforms was dismantling the state machine to "shrink" the body of government staff. Voluntary redundancy plans were adopted as a solution for the problem of the State's fiscal crisis in view of the Federal Supreme Court decision

that reducing civil servants' salaries was unconstitutional. Collor's subsequent impeachment and the failure of his reforms revealed that the central issue for any idea of a broader reform of the Brazilian state would be the problem of governability (Skidmore, 1999).

Against that historical background, a profound criticism of the Brazilian bureaucratic apparatus emerged and drove a reform of the administration associated to a management appeal. The criticism was that bureaucracy was eroding the efficiency of organizations due to its internal dysfunctions. Literal adherence to the rules in the form of strict compliance with the regulations had led to a Weberian-type bureaucracy and a vision of the world that produced adverse side effects that boosted problems (Friedberg, 1995). Furthermore, the bureaucratic model was said to have fostered the appearance of a series of sub-organizations within the overall bureaucratic organization, leading to the total de-coordination of activities and policies (Selznick, 1957). In the light of such criticism, the new public management model came to the fore, gained vigor in the Brazilian experience and was adopted as the horizon of change.

The administrative reform conducted by the Mare in 1995 sought to redefine the sectors of State activity, reinforcing ideas of the democratization of the State and managerial mechanisms configured around the adoption, by the public sector, of private sector administration models (Mare, 1995). In regard to the managerial model adopted and the differentiation of the sectors of State activity in society and in the economy, the administrative reform of the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government adopted the New Public Management model whose objective was to adapt Brazilian public administration to the needs that had emerged from the globalization of the markets, to the increasing presence of international legislation in trade and to the improvement of managerial mechanisms. The changes were implemented in a way that ensured that government activities would be based on a form of public administration similar to the administration conducted by the private sector, which meant that the citizen would become a client of the services provided by the State (Bresser-Pereira, 2001).

Fernando Abrucio (2007) states that in spite of the various mishaps that occurred along the way, the government administration reform achieved progress in regard to managerial mechanisms and a cultural change inside the Brazilian civil service, so that it is possible to identify substantial changes in the course of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's two terms of office. However, the reforms did not go entirely unscathed on their road to success. Abrucio identifies the gains stemming from the managerial innovation implemented by the administrative reform as being: fiscal management of the State, which brought with it gains in public sector cost-benefit ratios; innovations in the spheres of sub-national governments that introduced the managerial paradigm in their public policies; the creation of more refined mechanisms for evaluating public policies; the public sector's adoption of planning, not only in a technical sense, but involving the integration of government programs and projects; the adoption of electronic government, which progressed most notably in the states, with the introduction of electronic tendering and bidding processes and the organization of information (Abrucio, 2007).

As Abrucio suggests, there is still a need to reinforce four central vectors of the Brazilian administration reforms, namely: (a) professionalizing the Brazilian bureaucracy, especially among those occupying strategic posts; (b) efficiency of the services provided; (c) effectiveness of public policies; and (d) accountability and enhanced transparency in the relations between State and society (Abrucio, 2007). In regard to this last vector identified by Abrucio, it is worth noting, in spite of the

reforms and the progress stemming from the institutional innovations, corruption is still a recurrent practice, keeping up the patrimonialist aspect of State-society relations (Motta, 2007).

The implementation of the New Public Management model in Brazil assumed that public management should be based on the professionalization of management, a preference for quantitative indicators and explicit performance measuring standards, quantitative control over results, distribution of resources according to policy performance, decentralization of bureaucratic activities, competition among the State's agencies, managerial flexibility, discipline in expenditure, cuts in direct costs and the establishment of limits to the costs of bureaucratic transactions (Pollit, 2003:27-28). Thus, by assuming that public administration should be based on private sector administration, the management paradigm also assumes that policy should be based on the economy, in alignment with the theory of market failures which has, as the central problem to be addressed, the question of efficiency (Bozeman, 2007).

In Brazil, the new management model brought with it a series of marginal gains that were incorporated to the State's public actions. It did not, however, represent a complete break with the bureaucratic model. According to Bresser-Pereira (2007), although the managerial changes that were introduced did lead to institutional, cultural and administrative changes, it cannot be considered that a rupture with the bureaucratic model occurred because, among other reasons, it can reasonably be questioned whether the Brazilian experience ever actually composed a bureaucratic model in the Weberian mold (Carneiro and Menicucci, 2011).

The reform that was conducted by the Ministry of Federal Administration and State Reform (Ministério da Administração Federal e Reforma do Estado — Mare), brought with it economy of scale, a reorganization of the public service and a re-directing of the policy/political agenda towards changes in the administrative machine. Those changes made it possible to achieve efficiency gains in public policies, better planning and budget control mechanisms and the introduction of public service regulatory mechanisms and practices that were new to Brazil.

The advance of state reform, starting with the Lula government, outlined a Weberian redemption of the bureaucracy, in order to strengthen the professionalization of the public service, to build the autonomy of bureaucracy and the solidification of careers. The Lula government's reform strategy was to strengthen the center of government, promoting the thrust of the strategic core careers by creating the Careers of the Management Cycle. In addition, there was a strong recomposition of the workforce with the valorization of salaries in the public sector and creation of new professional and specialized careers, such as in the area of social policies, infrastructure and regulation (Cavalcante and Carvalho, 2017). The government has favored competitions for the careers of Management Cycle in order to strengthen the management mechanisms, value the income obtained by these careers and ensure institutional autonomy of the bureaucracy. The Lula government has followed up on a fundamental aspect of New Public Management, which is to ensure bureaucratic autonomy for careers with decision-making power and responsible for the implementation of public policies (Souza, 2017).

By strengthening the center of government through the provision of careers outlined in the management cycle, the government opted to ensure bureaucratic autonomy, associated with the delineation of the insertion of this bureaucracy and the strengthening of participatory institutions. The aim was to build synergy and insertion of this bureaucracy with society, in order to solidify a conception of public interest capable of qualifying policies and services, in order to establish means for democratic

governance. This synergy between bureaucratic autonomy and participatory institutions would strengthen the capacity of the State to formulate public policies, in order to establish complementary links (Offe, 2009). Capacity building would occur in accordance with the increased autonomy of the bureaucracy, associated with its political and participatory insertion in the implementation arrangements. The perspective of strengthening governance would occur with the sum of bureaucratic autonomy and political and relational capacities with civil society (Pires and Gomide, 2016).

Efforts were made to promote a management reform perspective, aligning bureaucratic development, New Public Management mechanisms and promoting transparency. Associated with this, a governance perspective that promoted the synergy between an autonomous bureaucracy and participatory institutions in civil society was developed. These changes, during the Lula administration, represented necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for scheduling a comprehensive conception of management reform. Institutional changes, within the federal bureaucracy dimension, occurred. However, they were apart from a comprehensive, coordinated and solid agenda of institutional change.

The state reform agenda encountered a moment of paralysis and inflexion. The current context of economic and political crisis in Brazil, the growing disorganization of the public service and a context of decision paralysis due to the political crisis pose the following problem that surrounds the public administration: what is the new context of change and which model of public administration aligns with the contemporary challenges of development? Why should public administration constitute a new model that aligns efficiency gains and changes in the administrative machine with new, more decentralized, citizen-oriented management standards?

### 3. THE MEANING OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

The entire discussion of the question of governance is built around the fact that interaction between State and Society must be considered in the public administration sphere, in a way that ensures that there are mechanisms to enhance the quality of public policies and services, and the quality of the political regime in which the administration operates. Besides the problems of public organizations, the concept of governance also embraces the issue of public actions, which means that the administration is not circumscribed by the managerial dimension alone, but also by a political one (Bevir and Rhodes, 2013). The citizens' adoption of a more critical stance as a result of the democratization process and the respective freedoms, has led to the emergence of a position of contestation and a demand for transformation in the spheres of management mechanisms and political regimes (Norris, 2011). In that sense, the expansion of mistrust of the administration and of the political institutions, and the heightened perception of corruption within administrators' transactions and in large-scale public ventures, coupled with coordination problems and low levels of information would, supposedly, be recurrent problems in democracies that directly affect the sphere of administration (Offe, 1999; Phar and Putnam, 2000; Hardin, 1999; Dalton, 2004; Levi, 1998; Klingeman and Fuchs, 1995). In that regard, there would be new demands on the public service in alignment with the critical stance of citizenship regarding to the democratic deficit of the public organizations, insensitive, as they are, to the terms of social justice (Norris, 2011).

A high degree of mistrust of the institutions and an acute perception of the malfunctioning of the public machinery are associated to the idea of a democratic deficit. The supply of public goods

and services is hampered by the inefficiency, inefficiency and ineffectiveness of public policies, by archaic and heavily bureaucratic public services, by the lack of professionalization, training and qualification of servers, by systemic corruption and by public management models that do not perceive the administration's ability to add public values and its connection to the political system. In this context, the governance concept gradually took the form of a mechanism to criticize the New Public Management models. Furthermore, the concept of governance seeks to expand the scope of public administration activity beyond the merely managerial aspect, providing administrators and managers not only with suitable mechanisms and instruments for their administrative tasks but also with political capabilities to enable them to act in the collective interest.

Many contestations of the New Public Management Model occurred in which the governance concept was the main basis for criticism and proposition. The perspectives of network governance and meta-governance generated waves of theoretical reflection on the concept, acknowledging the importance of the connection between the State and society (Rhodes, 2012, 2007). The International agencies were the first to widen the scope of the criticisms with the governance concept forming the ballast for the development of new actions and conceptions of public service. The World Bank adopted a view of governance in the light of the principal-agent theory, according to which the question of incentives should be manipulated for the construction of reforms that foster greater efficiency, efficacy, rule of law and mechanisms of transparency and accountability (World Bank, 2004). Although delegation problems are central to the concept of governance, the principal-agent perspective is restrictive and does not absorb the complexity of governance processes.

While New Public Management is based on the premise that competition among government bodies, slackening operational standards in public policy formulation and implementation, result-oriented control, budget definition according to performance, and the outsourcing of support (non-core) activities are of fundamental importance and applicable to different administrations in different contexts, the governance concept proposition acknowledges the importance of institutional construction. The applicability and universality of those propositions for various political and economic contexts is questionable, especially in the developing countries (Grindle, 2004; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004; World Bank, 2004). In addition, New Public Management starts from a conception of erroneous public management autonomy. By assuming an estrangement from the political system, the concept of autonomy as a management tool to achieve efficiency ignores the dynamics of the public sector. A balance between management autonomy and a democratic order is needed in order to provide structural elements focused on institutional contexts (Olsen, 2009).

In other words, universal solutions are not feasible when the institutional contexts do not allow the government to do the basics. The idea that government should do the basics led the OECD to define the concept of governance as the conditions of service provision and the importance of the quality of public services. In that light, the public sector reform and transformation agenda should be directed more to the front office (meeting the needs of the citizen) than the back office (administrative aspects). The public sector governance proposal contemplated by the OECD implies a new tendency centered on: (1) reallocation of resources from the administrative areas to the services areas and areas associated to the latter; (2) integration and coordination between public policy formulators and implementers; (3) coordination and implementation of cross-cutting policies and avoidance of overlapping; (4) founding of public bodies for the establishment of process-operating units that ensure that the



citizen only needs to seek out one agency to have his problem attended to; (5) sharing of support services; (6) definition of operational standards; (7) separation of budget definition and results assessment; (8) control of results by means of a permanent dialogue with society giving preference to qualitative indicators over quantitative ones; (9) reduction of the complexity of information and enhancement of transparency; and (10) improvement in service provision to individuals and companies through the intense use of new technology. Those 10 actions identified by the OECD mean that governance-oriented administrative reforms should not be seen as a panacea for the public sector, but, rather, as a set of actions and premises whereby the 'basics' guide government action but also generate incremental gains of scale by cutting down bureaucracy in public services and policies in the light of a citizen-oriented vision. Such a vision expands the quality of government and of public services, bringing with it greater legitimacy to the State apparatus and overcoming the context of institutional mistrust (OECD, 2015).

The definition of governance transcends the managerial and administrative mechanisms aspects. It represents a process that connects mechanisms of administration to the political and infrastructural aspect of authority. In that sense, Fukuyama defines governance as being "a government's ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services, regardless of whether that government is democratic or not" (Fukuyama, 2013:350). The way Fukuyama puts it, what is central to defining governance is the State's ability to execute the policies and services it offers to society. That State capacity, according to the author, must be related to the degree of institutional autonomy. Autonomy consists of the institutions' capacity to conduct public actions regardless of particularistic directives. The interaction of capacity and autonomy constitutes an optimum point at which it is possible to constitute government and administration processes of the highest quality. Excessive autonomy can harm governments just as low levels of capacity can lead to paralysis. However, the interaction of states' capacity and autonomy constitutes an optimum point at which economy of scale over and above the national context can actually depreciate the national government's capacity to provide good quality goods and services to the citizens (Fukuyama, 2013).

Fukuyama proposes that governance is independent of the democratic or despotic nature of the government. However, that in the case of developing countries, that interaction between public sector organizations and democratization has occurred more intensely. The construction of governance mechanisms has been the driver of the democratization process insofar as society does not necessarily democratize the administration but the administration collaborates towards democratization by constituting new social capacities, connecting social movements in government policies and actions, empowering the citizenry, and in activism and forms of deliberation in which public reason is important. The governance concept is synergic with the democratization process, whereby new forms of citizen empowerment are directed and orientated by the constitution of changes in public administration.

Governance is only possible if it is duly recognized as being an essential democratic gain. That is to say, contrary to the cases of the Weberian model and the New Public Management model, it is not possible to think of governance outside of the political and institutional context of democracy. The governance concept affirms government's capacity to constitute rules and services in an efficient and skillful manner. The efficiency agenda, however, will be irrelevant if it is not inscribed in the government's intentions and its legitimacy for carrying out public actions. Accordingly, the concept of

governance becomes inseparable from its qualification as democratic. While public services efficiency and efficacy need to be boosted to ensure effective governments, at the same time, those governments need to be legitimated, instilled in publicly constituted authority and motivated by public interests (Rose-Ackerman, 2004).

Democratic governance embraces not only the development of economic aspects but also criteria that seek to qualify its management mechanisms, according to non economic factor such as subjective happiness (Frey and Stultzer, 2000), citizen support for government (Anderson and Tverdova, 2003) and democratic stability (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006). In Rothstein and Teorell's definition, governance recognizes the qualitative aspect of government in the light of public policies and services supply that recognizes the value of equity as a founding principle of the political regime and a fundamental public value of the administration (Rothstein and Teorell, 2008). Democratic governance is an administration model that is open to the public and which directs its policies and services to the citizen. Democratic governance is the administration model that goes beyond the managerial sphere and in which the quality of public services matters for citizenship. Democratic governance means administering *in public* and what matters, in addition to efficiency and efficacy, is the legitimacy of the State's actions, bearing in mind public policies and services capable of fostering equity and adding public value to the State's action (Bevir, 2010). Democratic governance brings together three elements that are important for the constitution of public management: (1) the state's implementing and coordinating capacity; (2) transparency and accountability mechanisms; and (3) political participation mechanisms.

The concept of democratic governance is multi-faceted (Peters and Pierre, 2016). Furthermore, as it is being adopted, both in the academic world and within international institutions, it provides an agenda of change driven by the association of the state's capacity to fully exercise government, on one hand, and mechanisms of permeability and openness to society's interests, on the other. The elements of bureaucratic autonomy are inserted in a more open and more plural concept of the public interest (Evans, 1995). Embracing that concept of democratic governance is the affirmation that the quality of government matters, taking quality to be its capacity to act and produce equitable results for society at large, impermeability to corruption and the fully legitimate exercise of public authority (Rothstein, 2010).

The democratic governance agenda challenges governments and institutions to constitute the quality of their performances in society. In our view, the elements that compose democratic governance strengthen not only public policy and services' efficiency and efficacy but also the public authority of the administration in a manner that aligns its capacity to constitute rules and public policies and to provide services to society with the greater public interest (Bozeman, 2007). Constituting the legitimacy of the public authority vested in the administration means going beyond the managerial sphere and the results indicators, but it also means that quality matters, especially in a democratic context in which the citizens are more critical and demand that institutions exercise their authority to the full in plural, political contexts that address their interests, opinions and perspectives.

First of all, democratic governance requires participation and deliberation mechanisms capable of aligning the public interest with the mechanisms for planning projects related to policies and services that government provides to society. Political participation and deliberation mechanisms enhance the legitimacy of the governance process and serve to constitute a perception of greater equity in decision-making processes in the light of the mounting contestation of representative regimes. The innovation of democracy is based on a pragmatic process that creates participative institutions that

make the decision-making processes less permeable to the interests of big groups and other less inclusive interests of society. Participation expands democratic inclusion, creating a perception, on the part of the community, of a greater degree of fairness/justice (Fung, 2015).

Secondly, state capacities have to do with the ability of governments to implement policies and services directed at the citizen that produce equitable results associated to efficiency and efficacy in solving problems. State capacities, provided they are linked to the public interest, should be based on an intrinsic autonomy whereby the public authority can influence the decision-making process, and on a State bureaucracy that acts to implement policies and services (Evans, 1995). That implies that there must be fortification of the mechanisms and spheres of policy coordination, spaces for permanent dialogue with society for monitoring and evaluating results and improved use made of new technologies. Administration must not be thought of as being driven exclusively by economic results or by the quality of expenditure, but instead, be thought of in terms of social justice, equity and effectiveness.

Lastly, democratic governance strengthens transparency and accountability mechanisms. It is important to emphasize that accountability and transparency are not synonyms. Transparency refers to a greater availability of information that allows the public at large to judge the added value resulting from the state's policy and services implementing capabilities. Information is strategic capital in the context of democratic governance insofar as it makes feasible greater deliberation and a more open decision-making process involving all the parties concerned. Accountability means the process of holding public agents fully responsible for their acts and it involves the performance of institutions that control the actions of all other institutions, imbued with authority to charge, judge and punish public agents whenever their actions stray from serving the public interest (Filgueiras, 2016).

Democratic governance in this context represents an agenda for changes in public administration, where the quality of governments is important if public policies and services are to be more efficient and effective, but also legitimate and endowed with full public authority. The democratic governance agenda goes beyond management, combining management mechanisms with the conditions of openness and legitimacy, considering not only economic results but indicators that allow the measurement of qualitative values and social justice factors. The quality of public policies and services matters to the citizen and has constituted a silent agenda, which is not driven by customized management packages, but by the capacity of governments to respond effectively, efficiently and legitimately to the demands of citizenship.

#### **4. DISCUSSION: A SILENCED REFORM IN BRAZIL?**

In the context of Brazilian society, June 2013 was a moment of inflection. The wave of protests against governments was disseminated in society by the following factors: (1) tremendous distrust in regard to the representative political institutions (Moises, 2008); (2) the denouncement of the appalling quality of public services and policies and the call for a solution; and (3) the constant denouncements of corruption (Filgueiras, 2015). The instability created led to a context of political crisis associated to an economic crisis in which inflation and high prices reemerged. Those protests were strongly catalyzed by inequalities and by feelings of privation in the social sphere (Mendonça and Fuks, 2015).

What is actually at stake, however, is not that part of the public policies unfolded by governments is in check, but rather, it is the quality of the democratic process in the systemic sphere and

the reproduction of injustice. The protests only became possible because they converged around the confrontation of a diffuse perception of injustice that is reproduced in Brazilian society. In that context of inequality, what was at stake in the protests was the quality of democracy and the quality of government. The common thread running through the public complaints, presented as repertoire of the manifestations, was the denouncement of corruption in the sphere of the Brazilian political system.

That criticism of the quality of democracy is based on the fact that the political system is highly permeable to corruption, indifferent to society's real interests and has been captured by the interests of the big corporations. The criticism of the government, on the other hand, stems from the fact that the public administration offers very poor services to the citizens and public policies are inefficient and fail to deliver. The whole process is permeated by a strong perception of inequality and an equally strong perception of corruption (Rothstein, 2010). In the fight against corruption, there is a clear perception of social injustice and the fragility of the rule of law. That has created a link with the idea that corruption is the rule in public service and in representative politics, thereby degenerating the legitimacy of the democratic regime and of the government (Filgueiras, 2016b).

Paradoxically, that aspect of the perception of the public administration's permeability to corruption and of the low quality of the government and the democracy is far removed from recent institutional changes that reflect a hidden and uncoordinated governance agenda. The paradox resides in the fact that the public administration in Brazil has passed through processes of institutional change in each of the elements embraced by the governance concept. Those changes, however, have been uncoordinated and have not established their coherence around a common objective. The process of institutional development has taken place in the dimensions of policy participation, the state's capabilities, and transparency and accountability. The agenda of change has unfolded in a context of silent reform. The changes fail to constitute a coherent arrangement that is directed at achieving better quality public services and better quality public policies. As a result, those institutional changes, although they bring with them important innovations in public administration and for democracy, have not been capable of responding to a new set of demands from society, especially those related to the quality of the government.

In regard to political participation, the Brazilian State has managed to produce important innovations connecting State and society by means of institutions that use participative forums to integrate social movements, advocacy groups, activists and representatives of civil society with representatives of various governments (Ramos and Faria, 2013). That process of amplifying participative institutions first arose from the centrality of the 1988 Constitution. On a secondary level, it also stemmed from innovations that were introduced incrementally, such as public hearings, participative budgets and public policy councils (Avritzer, 2012). The innovations occurred mainly in the public policies sphere, especially in social policies. More recently, they have been adopted in government planning mechanisms such as the recent Pluriennial Plan 2016-2019 in which the setting up of inter-sector forums introduced elements of participation into public budgeting processes.

In regard to transparency and accountability mechanisms, the Brazilian case is that of an incremental institutional development process. First of all, starting from an institutional emptiness, active horizontal accountability institutions were constituted (Taylor and Praça, 2014). In addition, legislative changes have been adopted since 1988 that have increased public transparency (Loureiro, Teixeira

and Prado, 2008) and have given greater power to accountability institutions, especially in the fight against corruption (Melo, Pereira and Figueiredo, 2009). However, their performance, which was not coordinated with the public administration at large or with governance processes, ended up by imposing controls that actually reduce the margin for action and innovation in the sphere of public administration, creating impediments to development (Anechiarico, 2010). The performance of these horizontal accountability institutions has been marked by considerable lack of coordination, a dispute for the good opinion of the wider public and for control over information (Filgueiras, 2015).

Lastly, state capacities in Brazil are fluid and diverse, insofar as the federal public administration includes some institutions with high bureaucratic capacity and others with low capacity. On one hand there are institutions with a high degree of autonomy in which practices like corruption and forms of personalism persist in spite of the progress achieved by the managerial reform. On the other hand, there are institutions that constitute veritable “islands of excellence” in the public sector (Bersch, Praça and Taylor, 2016). That diversity and the multifaceted nature of state capacities in Brazil reveal the persistence of a professionalization agenda in public service, the recognition of meritocracy, the development of careers and the strengthening of the administrative bodies’ autonomy in relation to personalism. The “islands of excellence” referred by Bersch, Praça and Taylor (2016) have not led to any significant improvements in the service provision. Management of state finances and the control and planning of public policies have improved. Those improvements, however, fail to reach the ordinary citizen directly because they affect the street-level bureaucrats very little and management continues to reproduce poorly structured careers, low salaries and dissatisfaction.

It can be seen that progress has occurred not only in the sphere of public administration but also in each element of governance. The progress has been incremental and aimed at strengthening the public apparatus. However, the silent agenda has operated without the changes leading to any significant structural or systemic transformations of the public machine. The changes that resulted from the managerial reform were undoubtedly important, but did not create the necessary and sufficient conditions to establish governments qualitatively capable of offering robust public policies and services that would meet the citizens’ demands. The overall result has been gains in efficiency but the reproduction of managerial deficiencies, stemming from the diversity of state capacities and the strong presence of corruption, has degraded the government’s legitimacy for implementing policies and services.

The dissolution of government legitimacy directly affects its authority to resolutely implement policies and actions that could be acknowledged by the citizens. The silent agenda of reforms has hidden political and structural decision-making, relegating it to the condition of an uncoordinated, incremental and almost ineffective process, in terms of constituting an agenda for the reform of the State. Without the accompanying political decision, the reform agenda has been silent and hidden, and those conditions have not resulted in a more robust and coherent institutional development process. The perspective of reform with democratic governance in Brazil was silenced, so that the main problem occurred in the institutionalization process of change.

The State reform projects involve thinking about how institutions can and should be, adapted for human purposes to function well (Simon, 1970). Institutionalization should be seen as the creation of organizational arrangements (Egeberg, 1987), in order to understand how and with what they

are able to handle problem solving and results production (Underdal, 1995). Institutional changes presuppose the will, knowledge, and power of political actors, representing a solution to a series of problems, within a consensual system, or imposition by the political elite, in a coercive way. Institutions arise, are maintained or transformed according to the proposals of relevant political actors (March and Olsen, 1995, 1998). It is necessary to consider that the direction of institutional change is indeterminate (March and Olsen, 1998). Incremental changes involve permanent learning and the possibility of dealing with errors, but can be lost in the course of small changes if they are not coordinated between actors of the bureaucracy and actors of the political system. In the case of Brazil, a bureaucracy that increased its margin of autonomy was able to build synergy with civil society and promote incremental changes. However, the conception that autonomy in relation to the political system would be a sufficient condition to produce efficiency and effectiveness of services and public policies undermined its capacity to constitute knowledge and bridges with the power of political actors.

The challenge for the construction of democratic governance in Brazil is to establish the bridge between its different elements and to build synergy between institutional changes, civil society actors and political actors, coordinating institutional innovation initiatives in public administration. In the case of Brazil, the synergy with civil society was important for the incremental advances of the public administration, in the direction of democratic governance. However, it was not able to constitute an agenda within the political system, lacking coordination, institutionalization and legitimacy. In the context of the political crisis that began in 2013, the result was a silencing of this reform agenda, implying a return of the changes. The political crisis has blossomed in a context in which the silencing of democratic governance may imply a context of institutional paralysis, undermining the incremental advances that had hitherto been in vogue in Brazil. The growing bureaucratic autonomy found no balance with the legitimacy of the political system.

The democratic governance agenda should work with the coordination of the change process, aligning the incremental gains around institutional strengthening of the government to address the problems of social injustice, corruption and management failures. Without neglecting the problem of government legitimacy, little progress will be made to change the citizens' perception and make the process of change result in a better balance between public management and democracy.

## 5. FINAL REMARKS

The silencing of the state reform agenda ended up producing an inertia of the public administration, in which the additional management gains did not result in the catalyzing of changes and in a permanent process of institutional revision and development of the organizations that compose the public service.

The democratic governance agenda represents a conception of the institutional development of the public administration surrounded by its inseparability with the democratic regime. The prospect of bringing to the center of the debate the problem of democratic legitimacy of governments means that policies and services are directed at citizens and that governments have enough authority to add value to public action. Democratic governance, in this sense, presumes an incremental process with regard to the decision-making and experimentalist process regarding implementation. There are no ready-made prescriptions and the perspective of democratic governance must align a pragmatic conception that involves the process of changing citizenship. A pragmatic and experimentalist conception

should promote incremental changes in which gains are added to public action, without resulting in a fixed direction, but a process of permanent monitoring and revision of goals and objectives.

To qualify governments' actions around the plural values of democratic societies means to reestablish legitimacy at the center of an authentic public interest that empowers management to implement its actions. Hence the pragmatic and experimentalist character of the model of democratic governance. Associating participation, state capabilities and transparency and accountability means thinking about a set of changes that are capable of strengthening the administrative machine, in view of the servants who plan, implement and monitor permanently the addition of public values to the action of the State.

The silenced state reform needs to be set up as an agenda, so that coordinated structural changes can occur, capable of giving the government full legitimacy to constitute its public authority. Implementing this reform agenda requires political decision-making and the process of coordinating institutional change already in place, aligning these processes of change with the objectives of citizenship. Adopting this model in Brazil means bringing the issue of the legitimacy of governments and the state machine to the center of the debate on public administration. Going beyond managerial means giving the administrative machine conditions of legitimacy that go beyond effectiveness and efficiency, promoting a balance with the conditions of the democratic regime. It means adopting qualitative approaches that are capable of bringing together defined and citizen-centered capacities, which is not only a consumer of services but an individual who has rights and duties in the context of a democracy. But these reforms must also be embedded in the context of power relations and institutional structures that organize collective life.

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### Fernando Filgueiras

PH.D. in Political Science from the University Research Institute of Rio de Janeiro (Iuperj). Director of Research and Graduate Studies of the National School of Public Administration (Enap). Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG). Researcher of the INCT - Digital Democracy. Researcher of the Institute of Advanced Studies of the University of São Paulo (USP). E-mail: fernandofilgueiras@hotmail.com.