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**THE "WAR ON POVERTY" PROGRAM (1964) IN THE USA:
BUREAUCRATIC REACTION TO A NON-BUREAUCRATIC
ORGANIZATION. HOW TO CHANGE BUREAUCRACIES?**

Abstract

The War on Poverty in US began in 1964. The Office of Economic Opportunity, the administrative core of the program, disappeared in 1974. Even though more than 30 years have passed, there are still important lessons to learn from this experience. From the policy side, the complex implementation of a program that involved not only federal and state agencies, but citizens and citizens' organizations as well. This situation is something we are dealing more and more in current days, with an administrative reform pushing to develop new relationships between citizens and government. From the organizational point of view, the War on Poverty has lessons. One of the most important is the capacity to reform bureaucratic organizations in order to be flexible and innovative. The rules of the institutional game, and the rules of the organizational game make this adventure an important challenge for any reform attempt. The following paper aims to be used in undergraduate and postgraduate courses in order to develop analytical capabilities in organizational analysis of public organizations (not necessarily decision-making).

Resumen

El programa de "Guerra contra la Pobreza" que comenzó en 1964 en Estados Unidos tiene interesantes lecciones para los intentos de reforma de las burocracias hoy día. Desde el punto de vista de las políticas públicas, la complejidad intrínseca de implementación de programas que involucran no sólo a diferentes agencias gubernamentales federales, sino locales también, además de ciudadanos organizados. Desde el punto de vista organizacional, la Guerra contra la Pobreza tiene importantes lecciones, que tienen que ver con la capacidad de reformar organizaciones burocráticas para ser flexibles e innovadoras. Las reglas del juego institucional y también las reglas del juego organizacional hacen de tal aventura un reto de amplias dimensiones. El presente estudio tiene como finalidad ser usado en cursos de licenciatura y posgrado para desarrollar capacidades analíticas de la dinámica organizacional del sector público (si bien no necesariamente para la toma de decisiones).

Introduction

The War on Poverty in US began in 1964. The Office of Economic Opportunity, the administrative core of the program disappeared in 1974. Even though more than 30 years have passed, there are still important lessons to learn from this experience. From the policy side, the complex implementation of a program that involved not only federal and state agencies, but citizens and citizens' organizations as well. This situation is something we are dealing more and more in current days, with an administrative reform pushing to develop new relationships between citizens and government. From the organizational point of view, the War on Poverty has lessons, not only regarding the implementation of complex programs dealing with intergovernmental relationships, but with the impact of organizational dynamics and institutional design of complex governmental programs.

For "old" students of Public Administration, curiously, the analysis of this old governmental program might yield important lessons regarding the capacities of creating a "new" type of bureaucracy: more flexible and innovative. Also, new students might learn important analytical discussions stemming from an "old" program trying to develop innovative ways of doing the public business. (new students may realize also that not necessarily "new" means better than "old").

The aim of this paper is both to uncover these possible lessons and to develop an organizational case study useable in undergraduate and graduate programs of Public Administration and Public Policy for practicing organizational and policy analytical capacities (not necessarily decision-making I would say).

1.1.- Antecedents

In 1964, the United States was preparing a major public effort to reduce poverty. In fact, the original political rhetoric used by different public officials enhances the idea of *eliminating* poverty and the causes of poverty.

At the core of the proposals that gave life to the War on Poverty program lays an innovative idea: to develop a non bureaucratic option to help citizens to self-organize as a way to create a social path out of poverty. The organized participation of poor people helped through a governmental flexible agency was the substantive strategy of the program.

The Community Action Program (CAP) was created by one section (Title II) of the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964. The primary objective (using the official rhetoric) was to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of affluence, by opening to everyone the opportunity to work and the opportunity to live in decency and with dignity. A second objective was to involve and organize the poor into local community action programs to combat local poverty conditions (Givel, 1991).

CAP was ambiguously defined in Section 201, which stated that the purpose of the Title II "is to provide stimulation and incentive for urban and rural communities to mobilize their resources, public and private". Section 202 defined CAP's attack on poverty in terms of (1) mobilization and use of public and private resources (2) provision of services and assistance (3) maximum feasible participation by... (4) coordination and administration of these programs by public or private nonprofit agency (Clark & Hopkins, 1968, p.22). This mobilization and the important criteria of "maximum feasible participation" were never operationalized in the act. However, they had important organizational and political consequences. The program defined an innovative governmental structure to run the program itself: to put the core of the program (financial resources, agencies, and personnel) "outside" the traditional bureaucratic institutions and procedures (federal secretaries and state agencies basically).

The original idea of CAP was that the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), the administrative agency for CAPs, would exist outside the encrusted bureaucracies of the regular federal departments and would appeal directly to the people, especially the poor, for their ideas and intuition into breaking the cycle of poverty (Edwards, 1970, p.81). This approach was envisioned to be flexible, temporary, and to serve as a catalyst for the social change. However, as we will see, it also created complex ambiguities and, therefore, crisis, conflict, and struggle, first with the political establishment, second with the established bureaucracies, and third with community interest groups.

An analysis of the historic process of the OEO and the CAPs is saturated with characteristic situations of political and administrative struggle. Within the context of USA's polyarchy (Dahl, 1971), the OEO and the CAP dealt with a complex problem (poverty), using an unclear objective as a weapon, and based on an innovative organizational setting. These are the characteristics that make the War on Poverty of the 60's a still interesting topic to study.

The option to run the OEO and the CAPs outside the bureaucratic track was a big fight among different groups since the beginning. Several public officials of different public departments, fought to influence and control poverty programs with traditional procedures, actually limiting the OEO only to direct responsibility in four programs. In addition, OEO was required to negotiate the development and implementation of the other programs with the established bureaucratic institutions. Governors and local authorities began to see OEO's "outsider" role as a danger to their political position. The participation of the poor was also a major dilemma. Participation was seen for some as a jeopardizing process against the political establishment. Others, inside the OEO itself, wanted faster achievements and learned that participation implies to manage large quantities of complex groups and individuals, each with its own ideas and procedures, with uncertain short and long-term results.

In 1967, the Green amendments radically changed the OEO strategy and position. Maximum feasible participation disappeared as a program criterion and, in

its place, appeared a new emphasis on greater coordination between the established public institutions and elected officials. The initial idea of flexibility and antibureaucratic organization was abandoned. In 1973, Howard Phillips was appointed with the instructions to terminate OEO activities and dismantle its structure.

What happened? Why an innovative organizational and policy structure ended this way? Why a program that wanted to be less bureaucratic (may be postbureaucratic following the current jargon) failed? Why a program with such good intentions and based on participation of citizens failed to develop order and instead, in several cases, developed disorder, even riots in some cities?

1.2.- The Problem

The search for new alternatives for public action has been an important part of the theory and practice of public administration, searching for options that really work. The recent discussion of the National Performance Review, chaired by Vice President of US Al Gore, is a good example of this type of search (Gore, 1993).

The preoccupation about the inefficiency of the bureaucracy and its inability to achieve results when confronted with complex public problems is very old. Consequently, there have been numerous efforts to find a different way to address difficult problems and maintain accountability within the democratic arena.

The alternative of building a non-bureaucratic organization inside the governmental apparatus, with enough flexibility to be capable of finding innovative ways to resolve a complex problem with several actors involved, is one alternative that should be studied in depth.

The experience of OEO and the CAPS, provides a good case study of how intricate forces affect a governmental agency that operates outside the bureaucratic track. Also it provides an opportunity to observe the process of bureaucratization of this kind of alternative —the return to the bureaucratic control and the “normal” institutional parameters of control and evaluation. At last, an analysis of this experience should provide ideas of the critical issues to be considered in new efforts to reform the bureaucracy.

The main question to follow through the analysis of the case would be:

“Why and how a non-bureaucratic organization in the public sector could end up after some time inside the normal bureaucratic track?”.

A “non-bureaucratic organization” is defined as a governmental organization that runs outside the established bureaucratic departments to implement unique, essential governmental programs.

1.3.- The Hypothesis for the Analysis

The nonbureaucratic organization tries to resolve large complex problems that require flexibility of action and organizational structure and empowerment of different groups. However, flexibility creates crisis and struggle inside and outside the bureaucracy. Empowerment facilitates the expression of new interests and creates complex demands. When confronted with complex demands, different groups inside the bureaucracy and the political establishment use their power and strength to push for greater formality and rigidity, actions that destroy the premises for flexible action and the use of non-bureaucratic organizations.

2.- Office of Economic Opportunity: The Beginning

This part describes the strategic visions that crafted the War on Poverty program. The objective is to illustrate the general political and organizational context that shaped the design and implementation of the program. It is in this context that the War on Poverty generated particular areas of uncertainty, given certain legislative ambiguities and the way that the different departments fought to establish and implement a particular vision of the program itself.

2.1.- Origins of the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act: Youth Program of R. Kennedy and "Gray Areas" of Ford Foundation

Running the office of the presidency after the assassination of President Kennedy was a complex task. There is a natural tendency to observe the Johnson legislative program as a compendium of programs either started by Kennedy or at least studied by his administration. Johnson also faced the fact that major domestic bills initiated by Kennedy were stalled in Congress. Nevertheless, Johnson sent a program to Congress that was his own and which, for various reasons, would not face resistance, even from the Republican party. The program declared a formal "war" against the causes of poverty. The program would only be terminated when the "war" was really won.

The war on poverty found its basic definitions in the Mobilization for Youth Act of 1961 and the Ford Foundation "gray areas" program (Moynihan, 1969, p.56-7). The war on poverty could only be waged if an operationalizable and observable concept of poverty was developed.

In the "gray areas" program, Ford Foundation gave aid to slum areas, helped to sponsor community improvement projects initiated and implemented by local organizations. The Foundation insisted that private local agencies applying for funds should have the broad support of community leaders and that the agencies must

either raise or promise contributions that would match the foundation grant (Levitan, 1969, p.19).

On the other hand we have the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime. This Committee was established in 1961 and chaired by Attorney General Robert Kennedy. Its goal was to reduce juvenile delinquency by developing the job skills of slum youth, therefore organizing the community to improve its members' capabilities. Its experience suggested that once communities succeeded in developing effective plans, they found problems in obtaining federal funds, which were distributed on fragmented basis, each under different criteria and not easily adaptable to the multipurpose approach of the Juvenile Delinquency Program (Levitan, *op. cit.*, p.20).

These two programs were the basic background for the War on Poverty in practice. In order to eliminate poverty it's indispensable to have a solid definition that narrows the scope and perspective about poverty itself. Due the limitations of resources and the necessity to obtain results, poverty should be attacked *in situ*; with the participation of the poor; and, most importantly, in a case-by-case fashion.

We have to consider that by the time (1964), the USA was expending 15 billion dollars annually on welfare programs. No more money was in the deal. The "war on poverty" had to find a way, with budgetary flexibility, so it could act globally, but without a major spending increase.

These two programs offered some answers. It was possible to obtain results, in a short period, with participation by the poor and *ad hoc* planning. This required coordination of different agencies. However, two important points have to be emphasized: the programs required flexibility from the bureaucracy already working in welfare (to match the different necessities of each community) and also participation by "aliens" (i.e., bureaucratic outsiders) in the decision making process.

The bureaucratic struggle to control these areas of uncertainty began. A program defined by its flexibility, and its need to go outside the normal bureaucratic track, nevertheless had to look for they way out through negotiating with diverse bureaucratic institutions.

2.2.- The First Bureaucratic Struggle: Definitions of Boundaries

The necessity of coordination in the War on Poverty program among different agencies produced complicated negotiations and several conflicts for the Office of Economic Opportunity. The original legislative proposal drew this line of coordination arbitrarily. Under the Economic Opportunity Act, OEO had the responsibility for coordinating more than just the programs initiated by the Act. Diverse sections of the Act provided the statutory basis for OEO's role as a Governmental coordinator of all antipoverty efforts. The OEO's director (the first one Sergeant Shriver) coordinated the antipoverty efforts of all segments of the Federal Government and was empowered to obtain data and reports from other agencies. He

was authorized to create an information center for all federal antipoverty programs, and could require all agencies to give preference to projects that were part of Community Action Programs (Levitan, 1969, p.57).

Fulfillment of these orders clearly confronted OEO officials with other bureaucratic agencies. Important divergences appeared right at the beginning of OEO actions, involving different branches of the federal administrative structure. The Agricultural Department had strong reasons to believe that the real agency in a poverty war was precisely the one in charge of agriculture issues. Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) maintained that the new programs were similar with those that agency already had. HEW was especially worried that the new proposal would absorb or serve as substitutes for their pending legislation. They argued that the 1956 Amendment to the Social Security Act authorized them to make grants for coordinated community services programs.

Representatives of the Department of Labor opposed the inclusion of the youth work component in the CAP, because that could be a substitute for the pending Youth Employment Act. The problem of defining the structure of the new program turned out to be a battle. Some wanted to coordinate the whole program; others fought for secure a piece of budget for their own control (Levitan, *op. cit.*, p.21).

As the dispute over the dimensions of the program began, department and agencies intensified their lobbying for the responsibility of implementing the proposal and "the maximum feasible share of the program for their clientele" (Levitane, *op. cit.*, p.23).

Agriculture claimed that since one-half of the poor were in rural areas, then one-half of the money should go to Agriculture programs. Commerce and Interior obtained a share of the program with weak arguments on how that money could be used (Moynihan, *op. cit.*, p. 63). The most complicated conflict was between Labor and HEW. HEW wanted to run the program under a new department of its own. The other alternative was to create a new agency, headed by a council composed of cabinet members chaired by a presidential appointee. HEW pushed to have a major role in the direction of the program. Labor opposed handing over the responsibility for the program to a sub-cabinet official. Labor urged that a single cabinet officer be placed in charge, and offered itself as the institution that could chair that agency.

President Johnson appointed Sargent Shriver to negotiate all these alternatives and define the final structure. And in spite of the difficult task, due to the complex debate that had formed between the diverse agencies involved, two weeks after, Shriver's appointment, the direction and scope of the poverty program were more or less agreed.

The basic solution was to define a coordinative agency, headed by Shriver, with some direct responsibilities and to divide other responsibilities between the different departments and agencies.

At the end, the OEO had a very distinct and special administrative organization. The agency had operating responsibility for specific programs: urban Job Corps centers, Community Action, VISTA, and migrant workers. This allowed

OEO a position on the staff of the Executive Office of the President. Other programs under the OEO, however, were delegated to the other departments or agencies, including the Agriculture Department (part of Job Corps conservation centers and rural loans), Labor Department (Neighborhood Youth Corps), Interior Department (the balance of the conservation centers), and HEW (adult basic education and work experience).

The first block of areas of uncertainty (basically clear boundaries between bureaucratic turf), were partially controlled. The war on poverty, a program that was expected to make a lot of noise and not spend much money, required an innovative approach. The nature of the program required the coordination of different agencies, agencies that undoubtedly would fight for their positions and, very probably, would run the programs in the same old bureaucratic fashion. Then the following step was to define the nature of the program core: OEO pushed to implement a program under the philosophy of the Ford Foundation community program and the Youth programs. This was meant to push the bureaucracy to do something different, through different administrative approaches. However, due to the fight that took place among agencies, it was necessary to create a specific agency. This agency would have been a coordinative agency in the Executive Office (with power) but one that did not break the different administrative roles of other, more established agencies up. This coordinating agency directed its own programs and oversaw programs directed by the traditional agencies. All these resolutions were based upon very ambiguous formal statements about the coordinative capacity of the new agency.

The traditional departments and agencies had what they wanted: a share, a part of the program to run themselves. The innovative organization out of the bureaucratic track had to prove that it could successfully run the special program with "maximum feasible participation", spending a limited quantity of money, with limited time to spare and an immense objective: "destroy" the conditions that create poverty.

2.3.- The Strategy: Military Rhetoric and Consensus

"So here is the Great Society, and it is time and it is going to be soon, when nobody in this country is poor... It is time... when every boy and girl in this country... has the right to all the education that he can absorb... It is time when man gains full domination under God over his own destiny"

Lyndon B. Johnson. October 27, 1964. Pittsburgh.

The War on Poverty cannot be understood without explaining the important symbolic role that rhetoric played. The rhetoric of a "war" was very inspiring for some people, and had the advantage of giving different political and bureaucratic actors enough discretion to manipulate this rhetoric in different ways.

Maybe the problems that OEO faced would have been different if this political definition of the task was expressed in other terms. Here is not the place to discuss the role of rhetoric in the success or failure of the EOA. Rather it appears important to observe the symbolic role that this rhetoric played in defining the areas of bureaucratic struggle.

It is useful to remember that areas of uncertainties are defined as normative or strategic positions that actors take as a platform for action, manipulating uncertainty to increase the degree of discretion they enjoy. The War on Poverty program and the particular interagency relations among bureaucracies forged and delineated some critical areas of uncertainty. Of particular importance those regarding the measurement of results.

This rhetoric called for total victory, created the confidence that the war was winnable, and influenced the definition of the "enemy" as an intergenerational cycle of poverty rather than defects in the economic and political system (Zarefsky, 1986). The declaration of war made it easier to enlist in the "army" and also made it difficult for someone to oppose the campaign.

The general definition of the "enemy" saw the poverty as a phenomenon arising from the lack of skills to work of the young people. This is a first cut, a first reduction of complexity, a narrow definition of poverty acute with the very limited budget available (Beclee, 1979, p.187). This might explain the necessity of community action as the main vehicle of transformation: a wide problem, reduced to a situation of lack of skills for work and reduced even more through the focus on young people. However, the real problem of poverty remained wide one: not only young people, not only in rural areas. Therefore the strategy to encourage the people participation was an important answer for this dilemma of several kinds of poverty. Participation would lead to a general strategy for all purposes, without augmenting the budget necessary to "fight the war".

In short, the war on poverty defined the scope and strategy of action (general war, benefiting a limited population with specific characteristics, using participation as a key instrument). It also generated expectations of "conquest" and "defeat", creating a general problem that would lead to conflicts between the different parts of the bureaucracy and the interest groups that community action generated.

3.- OEO: Flexibility and Ambiguities, The Power Dilemma

The OEO was born with a special structure and political position. Political rhetoric gave OEO a big problem to solve. However, the bureaucratic struggle and defense of administrative spaces and capacities of decision left the OEO also with a very complex conflict between its official beginning inside the bureaucratic arena and the real strategic space in which the agency operated: the diverse groups of participants. To be outside the bureaucratic track was indispensable if the program was to obtain fast and innovative results with a limited budget. Being outside also became the major reason why the agency could become insolated and in conflict with other

agencies. Without the support of the major public departments and agencies, the OEO would be soon attacked by the political interests affected by the antipoverty agency's actions and policies.

Community action was its vehicle for obtaining results outside the bureaucratic track, but also the vehicle that directed this program down a road toward collision with political interests and bureaucratic organizations, the potential and indispensable supporters for the future existence of OEO.

3.1.- Maximum Feasible Participation (MFP)

Maximum feasible participation is a synthetic topic to explain the general political and administrative situation of this program. The controversies, disputes, and struggles to define it, reveal the structure and composition of the forces that would later delineate the profile of the War on Poverty.

The Community Action Program, the core administrative corps to manage the "maximum feasible participation" (MFP), was defined in sec. 202 (b) as one

(1) which mobilizes and utilizes the public and private resources of a community in a comprehensive attack on poverty; (2) which provides services, assistance and other activities of sufficient variety, scope, and magnitude to give promise of progress toward elimination of poverty through improving human performances, motivation, and productivity; (3) which is developed and conducted with the MFP of residents (Moynihan, 1970, p.88).

President Johnson wanted action, not planning, wanted nationwide scope, not targeted areas. He wanted rapid results. MFP seemed to provide the solution, giving the answer to a difficult problem: participation by people who could give essential strength and legitimacy to the government's action. It was expected also that participation would lead to fast results.

However, to interpret and make participation operational for bureaucratic action required a debate and discussion among different agencies and even some local elective officials. Diverse authors (Moynihan, *op. cit.*; Givel, 1991; Kramer, 1969) have identified four different interpretations of MFP each one identified with different groups:

- a) A structure for organizing the poor, as envisioned by the Ford Foundation, coordinating the federal agencies providing input about how local agencies should administer their funds.
- b) Expanding the power structure, empowering each Community Action Agency (CAA), encouraging democratic process and independence. This was the position of most of the advocate and pressure groups.
- c) The social action approach: the poor were an underdeveloped political constituency that needed stimulation and nurturing. Poverty would be

perpetuated if the poor continued to be an ineffective pressure group. Saul Alinsky was the major mentor of this struggling and conflictive position.

- d) Assistance for the power structure: to provide jobs, to help young people to improve their skills, like Shriver's Peace Corps. The poor were the consumers that gave feedback, advice, and suggestions. This was the general position of OEO, thinking that their powerlessness would be attacked by an administratively controlled redistribution of power (Donovan, 1973, p.43).

The reality that MFP lived during the action of the CAA was confrontation and struggle. The "neutral" approach to the problem sought by OEO, created conflict and struggle over reshaping the power structure. The extreme options were to reshape this constituency from a pacific and negotiated administrative approach to the total conflictive and struggling approach advocated by Alinsky. However, the major complexity was that the real initiator of this struggle against the establishment was the government itself. A residentially supported action, with an innovative, flexible, ambiguous and weak governmental office, generated a complex battle to redefine the distribution of power among diverse actors in communities.

The difficult political situation that CAA generated and the necessity to obtain rapid results were the initial and short-term problems that OEO confronted.

3.2.- Problems with Official Administrative Organizations and Interest Groups

Practically every OEO program had correlative programs in other governmental agencies. Even the neighborhood centers, supposedly a CAP creation, were preceded by the settlement houses, though these were few. Several coordinative problems appeared leading to conflicts between different parts of the administration. Different interests generated different approaches to the problem. The Labor Department fought to control all the programs related within "its" field, and also urged to rationalize the development structure of all the diverse programs. The National Association for Community Development proposed to position all the programs under the CAP's logic arguing that it was only by community action that the poverty problems could be resolved (Levitan, 1969, p.54). This scramble it's only one indicative to show the differing positions regarding the implementation process of the program.

The flexible and innovative strategy that OEO generated required that its action could go through agencies, localities, and local authorities, ignoring the established political boundaries and elected public officials.

The first political institution affected was local government. The states occupied a reduced position in EOA, which was designed to give OEO maximum flexibility in dealing with state, local or private organizations. This element was a

clear issue under struggle, because the states and other local authorities would try to sabotage the actions of CAA. Also the concept of community action implied that the states were not relevant for more than advisory or supportive role (Levitane, *Op.cit.* p.60).

The governors kept a specific form of veto to assure that their own political position would not be jeopardized by other kinds of policies. Altogether, ten states used 30 vetoes, or one for every 550 grants made by OEO during its first three years. The mayors as a group wanted to maximize the flow of federal antipoverty dollars into their cities while minimizing the degree of federal intervention in local customs (Donovan, *op. cit.*, p.45).

At the local level, EOA was very innovative. CAA intended community and social planning and implementation. CAA was an umbrella organization for resources and action.

However, the problem of representation appeared as substantial. Defenders of community action pushed for big autonomy within "their agencies" while local authorities sought to appoint several public officials into the Board of Directors of these agencies. The legitimacy of CAA was very difficult to reach in the face of this struggle for power.

The dilemma of CAA was that empowerment of the poor and their organizations meant a threat to the establishment. The struggle between diverse advocate organizations to maintain decision-making autonomy and diverse local and state authorities reached, in some places, levels of violence and extreme conflict (Kramer, 1969, p. 265). The dilemma between providing services or organizing the poor appeared as the basic contradiction in the actions of CAA. The planning mode, sought to use economic funds and persuasion to develop and coordinate social service, in a nonconflictive way and with clear evaluation from the government. The community action approach that tried to organize the poor to resolve the problems, redistribute power and prepare the people to pressure for change. All these strategic conflicts were part of the struggle to dominate and regain the control of the diverse "independent" programs managed by OEO.

3.3.- From Community Action to Rapid Results

OEO found promptly itself towed in opposite directions. From one side, militant reformers were demanding a radical revolution of the existing political and social system. On other side, established officials and politicians became increasingly hostile. The more members of disadvantaged groups were brought to the hold of political participants, the greater the potential negative impact in established leaders (Levitane, *op. cit.*, p.100).

The dead-end was intricate: if OEO insisted on MFP in its programs, the political establishments protested. To the extent that it yielded to political realities and compromises, it faced rejection by the interest and advocate groups.

One of the options to give legitimacy to CAA, was to build a democratic process to access the organization as a Board Members. This strategy could give strong support and legitimacy to OEO. However, the 5% participation that could obtain from the poor at the moment of the vote was a big failure.

The other option was to be more flexible: participation by diverse methods. However, the administrative and operative disparities gave an important argument to their opponents (Zarefsky, 1986, p.130).

After the riots in July 1966, the House excluded OEO employees from an otherwise across-the-board Federal paid raise, and began the systematic fiscal harassment against OEO (Moynihan, 1970, p.156).

The dilemma was too big for the OEO. If the agency fought harder for its constituency, for more involvement with the targeted persons and groups, it would suffer greater conflict from the official institutions. If the agency sought more attachment with the government agencies, the diverse organizations and groups in different communities would accused it of betrayal (Kramer, *op. cit.*, p. 265).

"The paradox of the CAP is this: the program need, and have received, support from government, i.e. the established order; yet their very effectiveness depends on challenging the same order and transform society itself" (Clarck&Hopkins, *op.cit.*, p235).

The internal bureaucratic fight might be attached here as the other part of the problem that OEO faced. The programs that were non-managed by the OEO were also defended by the public agencies as properties, avoiding any interference by OEO. The capacity of direction that the Act wanted to create for OEO was very difficult to achieve. The coordination of federal agencies reluctant to be "coordinated" by an ad hoc agency demonstrated the power of the structural bureaucracies to change or to adapt themselves in order to face threats for their political influence.

In order to face successfully these challenges, OEO had to show a wide capacity for achieving results promptly. The Act provided that every community with poor people was entitled to a CAA. With almost every community eligible for CAP dollars, distribution of funds on the basis of poverty population was virtually impossible (Levitan, *op. cit.* p.199-20).

The disproportion was enormous. In 1967, New York received a \$115.1 mill. grant to serve a potential of \$93 per poor person, while Chicago with only 383,000 officially poor people received \$80.3 mill (\$210 per person). Illinois received \$39.4 mill. while Alabama with almost the same number of poor received \$17.5 mill. The way that the Act provided organization to OEO, allowed that well-organized communities with important resources obtained more money than poorly organized communities (Levitan, *op. cit.*, p.121).

Eighteen months after the founding of OEO, 1000 CAAs had been established. However, in the second year of CAP's operation, its financial obligations began to reduce dramatically its increasing. The results from innovative and self-organized approaches were much less than the original ones expected. Under the pressure to

produce results, the agency grew increasingly impatient to wait for innovative approaches from the community. OEO decided then to create prepackaged national programs among which communities could browse for something. This approach clearly violated the initial requirement that the local planning was the basic and indispensable system to resolve real problems. The community action began to pass to a second best also for OEO in front of the pressure to obtain (and maybe most important for the agencies) to show results.

One important outcome from this situation was that Congress forced important changes in the program in order to avoid more inter agency conflicts and social riots. Given the fact that the national programs (those mostly managed by "traditional" agencies) were easier to evaluate and that the political conflict practically did not exist on those cases, for the Congress was very clear that the CAA was more a problem than a solution. By fiscal year 1968, more than six of every ten CAP's dollars were allocated to the "national programs" (Levitan, *op. cit.* p. 125). OEO had returned to the bureaucratic traditional track.

4.- 1967 Amendments: The Return to the Bureaucratic Track

In march 1966, President Johnson, worried for the political struggle against OEO and some political violence in some cities, changed the rhetoric and talked about a strategy against poverty (Moynihan, *op. cit.*, p.156).

In 1967 Congress curtailed the autonomy EOA had originally conferred on CAA. The Green amendment (in honor of its original mentor Representative Edith Green of Oregon) provided a different definition of the of the basic proposes and function of CAA:

- Significantly and meaningfully involve the poor in developing and carrying out anti-poverty programs.
- Mobilize public and private resources in support of anti-poverty programs.
- Coordinate efforts throughout the community...
- Plan and evaluate both long and short-range strategies...
- Serve as an advocate of the poor on matters of public policy and programs that affect their status...
- Encourage administrative reform and protect individuals or groups against arbitrary action.
- Conduct in its own right or delegate to other agencies the development and conduct of programs financed through Economic Opportunity Act funds or other available funds". (OEO, 1968, p.5).

The concept of MFP had changed indeed to a more ambiguous one, but this definition at least allowed a more specific definition in the political arena. Therefore, the new rules of composition of the Board of Directors were:

- “1. One-third of the membership must be public officials (elective or appointive) provided that that (sic) number of people is available and willing to serve...
2. At least one-third of the membership must be representatives of the poor selected by democratic procedures...
3. The remaining members of the board must be members or officials of business, industry, labor, religious, minority, welfare, education or other major groups...
4. The total membership of the Board may not exceeded 51.
5. No individual, other than a public official, may serve on a Board more than three consecutive years or more than total of six years.” (OEO, *op. cit.*, p.8).

The CAA concept of MFP and local planning returned to the control of the official public organizations. CAA must be an agency of the state and local government, or a nonprofit agency designated by them (Edward, 1970, p.83). If the state and local government failed to specify a CAA, OEO director was empowered to select a nonprofit organization as CAA. Whatever the constitution of CAA, it was dictated to have a governing board not exceeding 51 members and divided balanced among three sets: public officials, democratically selected representatives of poverty areas and other groups (Sections 210 and 211 of the 1967 Act).

The original concept of community action was forced to deal with the normal bureaucracy and political structure of the states and localities as well of federal restrictions. The role of empowerment citizens left the place to a role of coordination lead by local administrative structures, and the war on poverty finished as a strategy against power. The normal course of a public action was recuperated under the control and supervision of traditional public administrative structures.

Conclusion: The Antibureaucratic Option for Public Administration. Lessons and Future Developments

The EOA of 1964 and the political process that this bill inaugurated generated also a very complex situation to deal with: a public structure, defined to empower the poor and its organizations, outside the control of the administrative bureaucracy and elected politicians in states and localities.

The unorthodoxy of the program generated several risks into the diverse bureaucratic establishment.

“The program from the beginning was unorthodox in several respects, each unorthodoxy implying a correspondent risk. A new executive agency, rivaling the Bureau of the Budget as a presidential coordinating arm, was established under a charismatic leader. The risks were that the President would remain committed and alert... that the leader would remain charismatic, that the internal administration would probe at least adequate to a large task, and that there would be not centrifugal forces... There was a deeper unorthodoxy, a political one: the involvement of the poor in decision-making. The risk was that the concept would have strong presidential support and that the Congress would be willing to tolerate a rather new

kind of special experimentation in localities and neighborhoods" (Donovan, *op.cit.* p.79-80).

The rhetoric did not allow protests or concerns: who would be against a policy that wanted to eliminate poverty, "the big enemy" of US? However, diverse groups of administrative bureaucracies assured their spaces with particular programs, and in practice abstained to give any capacity to OEO to coordinate "their" programs. The elected politicians fought to recuperate control of the programs that OEO, as an "intruder", introduced in "its" cities and localities, arguing federal intromission in local problems and lack of political control that had led to riots and violence. Also, the group that controlled the OEO needed to show rapid results abandoning the political capacity (planning from the bottom of the society and the real, specific communities), outside the government, that had gained.

The uncertainty generated the effort to reduce it by artificial methods: new rules and recuperation of control. The 1967 amendment did this, recuperating the control in the board of directors, giving the power to the mayors, and reducing the independent capacity of CAA.

Two major extremes could be obtained from this study and the hypothesis that led to it: on one hand, the non-bureaucratic option for governmental action is doom; on the other hand, the non-bureaucratic option is an important tool to break the bureaucratic inertias. The first option advocates the great difficulty to defeat the strong organizational inertias and the power of the defenses of the bureaucracies. The privatization (for profit or for non profit) is the only alternative. The minimalist state maybe the theoretical framework. The second option may lead to study in depth the capacity of these innovative organizations to mobilize the bureaucracy to a new role and structure, with confidence in the capacity of reform of the government.

The option to give control over the groups and outside the bureaucratic track is still open, because is unavoidable in front of the complex reality that we are dealing with. Although, the transformation of the bureaucracy is not easy and would be difficult to have confidence about the first efforts. Might be better to have a pessimistic expectative of this strategy reforms, gaining the experience about the methods of recuperation of the control from the bureaucracy from the uncertainty areas that any reform proposal will yield.

In this case we could find two basic variables that need to be studied in depth:

- a) Flexibility. The nonbureaucratic organizations are needed because their flexibility in order to achieve complex tasks. However, this flexibility could generate problem of boundaries and uncertainties, crisis in the political framework of authority and crisis of the bureaucratic power. Two of the possible questions here is, is it possible to maintain flexibility creating at the same time conditions for to assure the different actors clear boundaries and authorities? Or is the flexibility an instrument to break inertias and rebuild the power structure?

- b) Participation. Participation could be seen as an instrument to redefine the processes and the structures, encouraging motivation and commitment. However, participation could also lead to problems of efficacy and crisis in the political framework. These lead to more rigid structures and return to bureaucratization. Is it possible to make people participate and obtain long-term results with efficiency and efficacy? or is the participation and instrument only to begin the work and then should leave the space for a more formalized decision-making process?

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