

Governance and Observatories as Public Policy Designers

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Abstract: This document is the beginning of an investigation that aims to develop a tool that provides an evaluation of the information generated by specialized institutions in order to give a diagnosis and analysis. By doing so, the information with which government decisions are made would be properly assessed. Through a social economic observatory, we believe that transdisciplinary studies that affect knowledge generation regarding social and economic events would be possible, taking into account the territory and thus, improving the decision-making processes. Therefore, it is intended to develop a matrix that allows specific multidimensional analyzes to be carried out in the State of Puebla, its Municipality and its Metropolitan Areas. This investigation will make an approach to the theoretical bases and a meticulous review of the methodologies and indicators presented by the aforementioned institutions.

Key words: governance; observatory; public policies

JEL codes: H

1. Presentation Development

1.1 Introduction

The creation of an Economic-Social Observatory allows to set up, from an established organism, transdisciplinary studies from the territory in the economic, social, urban, institutional, political and environmental fields in order to evaluate information generated by events and problems of the society with the purpose of influencing directly on its quality of life.

With this, it will be possible to establish analysis methodologies and research tools to collect, systematize, analyze and diagnose information from the social sector. Moreover, this will contribute to achieve the production of applied research that will serve to improve the decision-making processes of the social sector's claims. Additionally, it will create efficient information systems and will help to integrate different knowledge or research approaches. To achieve the above, it is necessary to investigate what are the indicators generated by specialized institutions such as the Mexican Institute of Competitiveness (IMCO) and the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL), in the economic, social and territorial fields.

Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the methodologies for creating a Data Dictionary taking into consideration the systematization of information of the institutions, regarding the variables and indicators for the measurement of the aforementioned areas. In addition, the generation of an information matrix on the selected

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variables for the creation of indicators that allow specific analyzes with a multidimensional nature at state, municipal and the metropolitan areas of Puebla for their sociodemographic and economic characteristics. The ultimate goal is to present a proposal and generate ideas for answering the questions that address Puebla's economic and social problems with a territorial perspective.

Therefore, the document was articulated, firstly, to understand the importance of the State and the development of the problem that motivated this article supported by the theoretical approach of the public and collective decisions and government action. Consequently, issues such as the governance transparency pillar, the importance of observatories as a means of citizen participation and the definition of indicators are developed and discussed. Finally, a series of reflections are being presented as conclusion.

1.2 The Importance of Understanding the State and Its Government Forms

One of the traditional definitions of State is the one that refers to the set of institutions, it is to say as organizations and rules, where the power for making valid decisions for the community lays. Therefore, it is pertinent to specify that not the entire population is part of the State, in that sense, only a proportional part of the society conformed of politicians, legislators, and judges are part of the State, the rest of the society has been traditionally called out"¹ and It differs from the state.

Classics authors like Hobbes², define it as the act of voluntary assignment from each individual of their rights in order to create a very powerful entity which is able to force each member of the community to embrace the laws or rules of coexistence. They do this in order to secure the minimum level of personal, work and family security, as well as the possession of their properties. Hobbes calls "the state of nature"³, to the State's lack of existence, therefore, a situation of anarchy⁴, what we commonly understand as "law of the jungle". This is how the Hobbesian state of nature works: an entity must be created with all members of the community with sufficient force to make the law enforcement possible. In other words, the State must have a coercive power, that allows the application of punishments to those who break the rules of social coexistence.

The differences between State and Government are necessary, since these concepts are often used as synonyms, and this overlapping creates confusion. The definition of government is a group of people who provisionally take control of the State for decision-making and the application of regulations for social coexistence. That is why the head of state represents the protocolary and symbolic form to the nation, as well as being responsible for making public decisions. Both concepts are closely related but essentially different.

Nowadays, both, the State and the Mexican Government suffer from a crisis, which is why third generation entities such as civil society observatories play an important role in the observation, diagnosis and incidence in the possible solutions of economic and social problems that afflict individuals, at the presence of a Failed State⁵.

¹ From the Social Sciences perspective, the diversity of people with the category of citizens is designated. Collectively, they act to make decisions in the public sphere that determines every individual who is outside the governmental structures. This is conceived as the organized social living space that is voluntarily self-generated, independent, autonomous from the state and limited by a legal order or set of shared rules. It involves citizens acting collectively — in a public sphere — for their interests, passions and ideas, exchanging information and reaching common goals.

² XVIII Century English Philosopher.

³ A situation in which every individual is free to do whatever he or she wants but at the same time, will be exposed to the abuse of others.

⁴ It etimologically means "without power".

⁵ The States with more political or economic power and extraterritorial interests, their information services and specialized study centers increasingly consider deficient States as one of the most serious challenges to International Security. "Along with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism, says Gareth Evans, president of the International Crisis Group, crime in the states is one of the three biggest security problems of the first decades of the 21st century." Two billion people

Figure 1 shows how the State reform and Mexico's public administration have occurred in historical terms and in a conceptual way. This affects various areas such as the economy thanks to the liberation of the markets, the political issue of democracy as a form of government, the legal aspect with constitutive reengineering and the administrative one with the modernization of the public administration. Within the new State's formation rationalities, are the governance models due to the fact that state should not and cannot do everything. Some limitations are the technically possibility, the economically viability, the socially acceptable, the politically capitalizable and the legally permissible. Governance is conceptualized as a society that governs a government that governs, having — as it should have always been to citizen participation as a central axis — unlike governability that refers to a government that governs as the one that has been lived throughout these years, without taking citizenship into account.

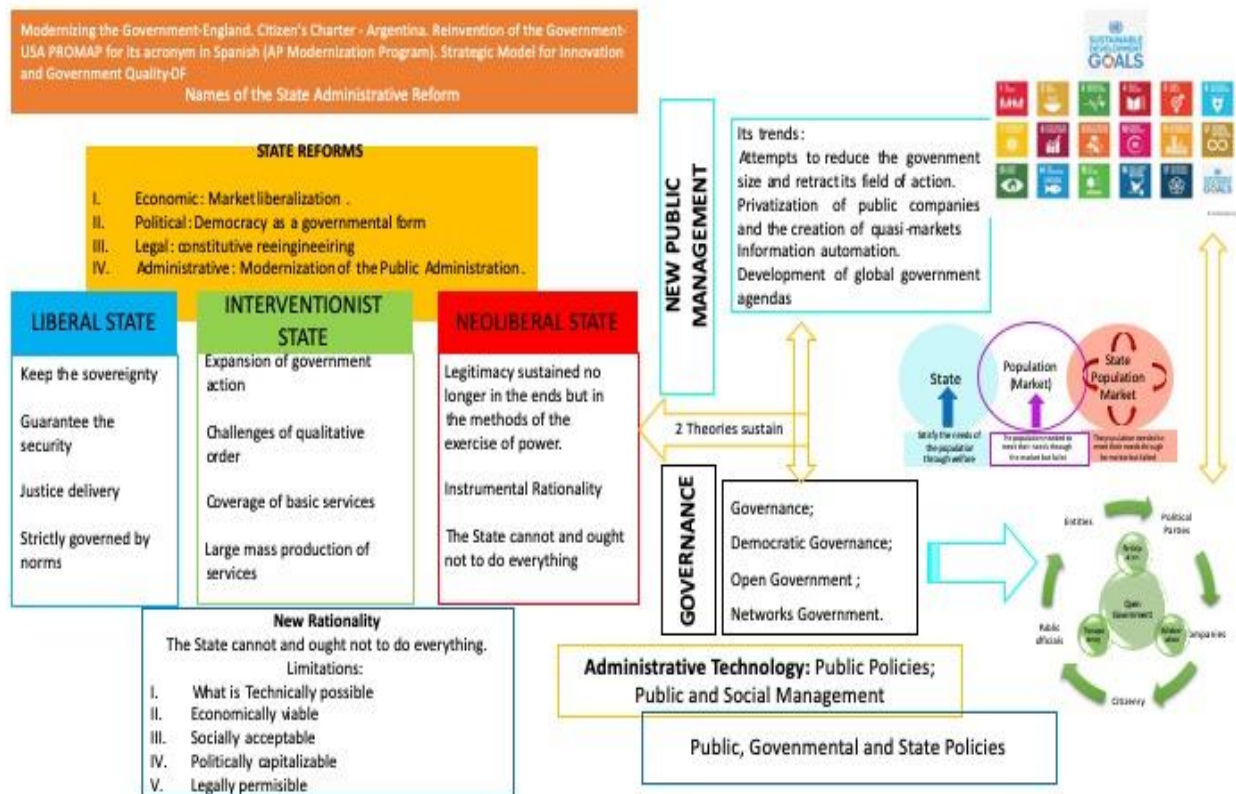


Figure 1 State Reform and Public Administration

2. Problem Development

The problem can be seen from the creation of the Federal Institute of Access to Public Information (IFAI), which responds to the Mexican society's needs for guaranteeing the exercise of transparency in the government, hence, it is subjected to a company's supervision allowing accountability. Proof of this is that in 2015 more than

now live in the so-called "fragile states", in countries whose governments fail to guarantee the minimum security and survival conditions for a significant part of their populations. Tens of millions live even in "failed states", under the arbitrary and brutal kingdom of militias, criminal groups and warlords. If these notions are vague and discussed, if the experts fight over the qualifiers and if some governments are scandalized when they are lowered in such a way, the reality of an archipelago of vulnerable or failed states is obvious to all. According to sources and definitions, between 20 and 60 countries would move in that "between two lights" of humanity (Santos, 2009).

950 thousand requests for information have been made, these clearly states the need for a mechanism that guarantees access to government public information as well as to the social need that currently exists. The information must also be efficient in two ways, firstly, so that citizens can observe, evaluate and monitor the actions of the rulers and know if the decisions that are being made are attached to real problems and to give a solution to the demands of the society. That is why, the information issued by the government must be useful and meaningful for society as a whole, since the data and figures that are accessed should lead the various actors in society to action.

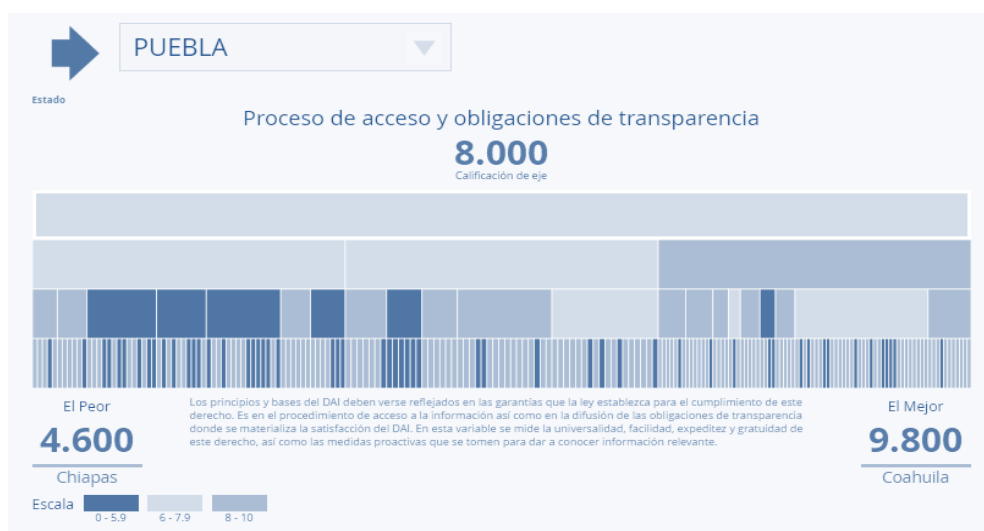


Figure 2 Access Process and Transparency Obligations

Source: Taken from the Right to Information Access in Mexico Index 2015.

The problem has several dimensions, for example, out of the 33 laws currently existing in Mexico about information access, a rating of 5.7 was obtained (Fundar, 2015)⁶. Data given by the Information Access in Mexico Index, in which the best national and international practices are measured. Some results are presented in Figures 2 and 3.

It can be said that in Mexico there is transparency but no accountability since requests for information have been multiplied to governments, but this does not translate to better government management and much less to accountability. The conditions that facilitate the information are almost inexistent. Specifying some data from 2003 to 2012, 822 thousand 511 requests for information have been made to public administration entities at the federal level.

Figure 4 shows that the increase in Information requests was of the 30.2 percent between 2007 and 2011, it is to say from 94,723 to 123,293 requests. In that sense, government transparency is a decentralized alarms system, which allows these to be activated from different social spaces. However, transparency is a means, not an end in itself, since the degree of transparency is measured, but the impact of government management on the quality of

⁶ IDAIM measures the quality of transparency laws in Mexico in relation to the national and international best practices in the field. It consists of three main variables: normative design, institutional design and procedure for access to public information and transparency obligations. Each variable consists of seven, five and nine indicators respectively, which are constructed with the help of 196 different criteria.

The criteria represent the elements that must have a transparency law to guarantee and protect the exercise of the right to Information Access (DAI, by its Spanish Acronym) promoting transparency.

life of the inhabitants is not evaluated. It is possible to have more governments, but as long as there is a lack of transformation within the institutions in charge of punish the deviations, no favorable results will be achieved. Not only of transparency live a democracy (Ugalde, 2012).

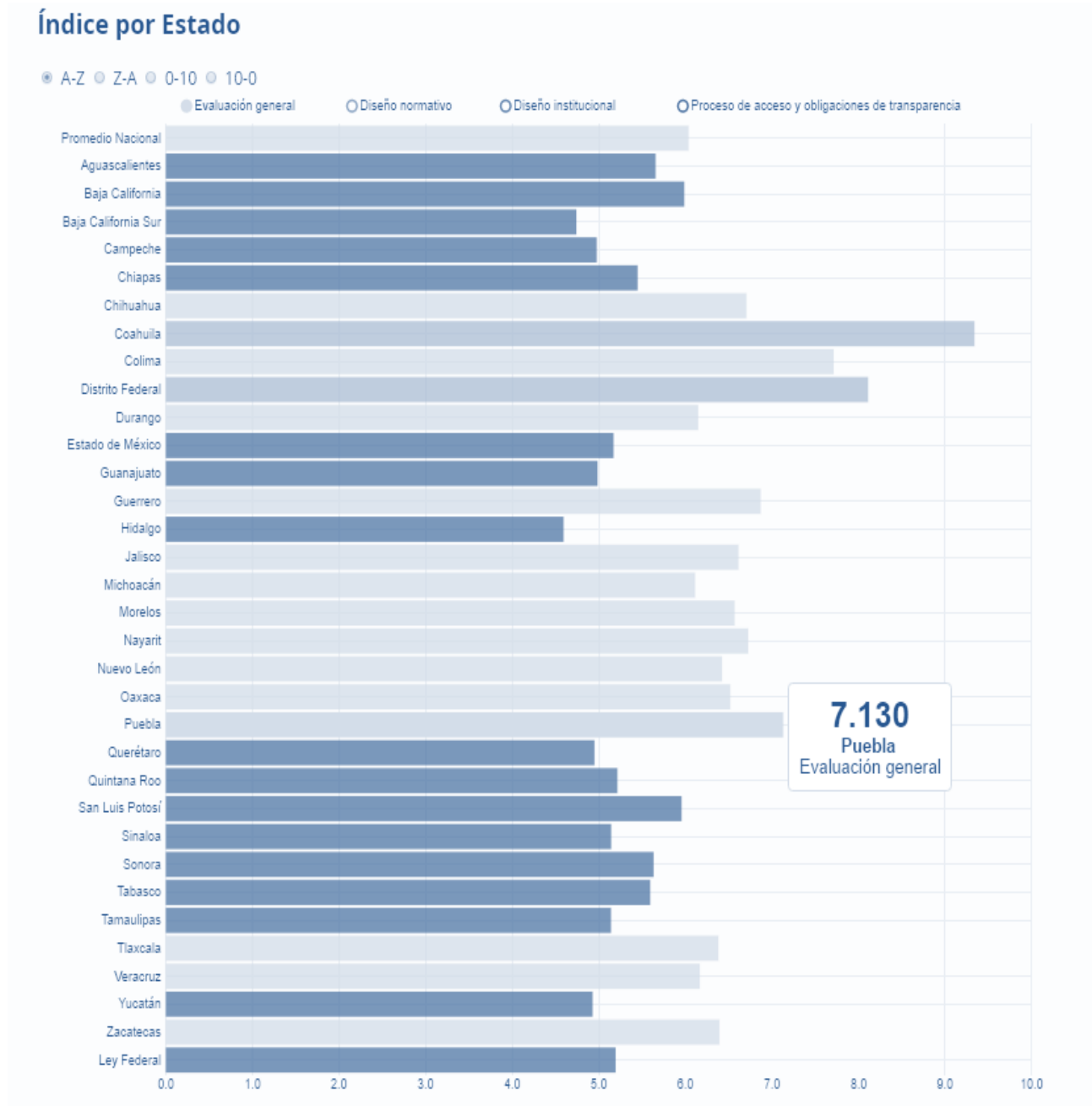


Figure 3 Information Access in Mexico by State

Source: Taken from the Right to Information Access in Mexico Index 2015.



Figure 4 Number of Information Access Petitions in the Federal Shpere from 2003 to 2011

Source: taken from IFAI Statistics 2012

This is how in the Constitutional article 6 reform, the public information access was constituted as a fundamental right. In Paulina Gutiérrez Jiménez's words (2008), this represents a real power placed in all people for demanding the progress of the fundamental rights' pending agenda in our country. It is the angular axis of a Democratic State, however, in Mexico, the State has not been able to protect fundamental rights. As a result, a greater number of Mexicans are being left out of the relevant decision making. The right to information access gives people the power to exercise control over the State and that would result in its legal obligations compliance for guaranteeing fundamental rights.

Transparency implies that the information is accessible, comprehensive and has the necessary quality, so that citizens can give content to the government acts thus strengthening fundamental rights. In this regard, the right to public information is supported by the Article 19 contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Article 10 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Article 19 of the Covenant International Civil and Political Rights and Article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights. They recognize the right to information as an inclusive part of freedom of speech, which integrates the right to seek, receive and impart information. The right to public information access is an instrument that can articulate the defense of fundamental rights in Mexico. If there is reliable information that allows comparability, it will be available to verify whether the government is fulfilling its obligations, and at the same time, it will be in a position to demand human rights.

This is how the right to access information is a necessary condition for the exercise of fundamental rights, and it has the necessary strength to impose itself as an obligation for the State to respond to individual requests. It should be noted that the officiality of the information represents an instrument for promoting the active involvement in public affairs. This also promotes the State's accountability to the society it serves and guarantees fundamental rights. It is also an input for generating knowledge regarding the events that concern the society. The question that guides the research problem is to know how does the lack of accurate information affect government decision-making? Since it can be predicted that it affects decision-making because it is made based on biased or little information which does not respond to reality, an observatory that would offer a tool for evaluating the information generated by specialized institutions, would allow accurate diagnosis and analysis.

3. Theoretical Approach

In Herbert Simon words, decisions are more than propositions of fact, of course they describe a future state of affairs and this description can be true or false in a strictly empirical sense; however they also have an imperative quality that selects a future state of things over another and leads the behavior towards the chosen alternative. In fewer words: they have both, ethical and factual content (1998).

Currently, the study of public policies and the government process has reached an important peak in the academic, public and private spheres, which is why the political study and government action has ceased to be a uniformed space. In Mexico, the need to properly evaluate the quality of life understood as the sense of well-being that can be experienced by people and that represents the sum of subjective and personal sensations of feeling good (Ávila & Velarde, 2002), emerges as one of the main objectives of any economy. The above is mainly because of the creation of public policies that propose to benefit the situation of the population. In general, it depends in large part on the results that these studies show. Therefore, countries have focused on creating both, long-term and immediate attention policies to safeguard the basic needs of their population.

In all government administrations, the first priority is to meet its needs in the best possible way, contemplating a minimum amount of greater monetary resources than the currently available. One of the aspects of the problem arises from the information that the decision makers are based on for making changes, these are not measured correctly, either because of the lack of quality in the information or because the method by which the information is collected does not consider social classes, different groups, people, places, etc.

A more reliable review of the information is required, which is based on the decision making regarding the improvement of the quality of life through the satisfaction of the basic population needs, seeking to be true and of quality. In addition to being representative to the greatest extent possible and encompassing all sectors of the population so that the improvements applied show results.

The little confidence reflected by the government takes two directions: distrust of the information offered and accountability distrust, the latter is the worst rated by the population. A situation that worsens over the years, since popular opinion descends notably. That is, according to the Transparency International Organization's Corruption Perception Index: the countries that invest more in Open Data platforms have a better perception of transparency and accountability. However, there are exceptions that make it difficult to improve the perception such as bureaucratic systems or the degrees of corruption that exist in governmental spheres (Transparency, 2014).

The recurrence of the problems in Mexico formulates questions about the way in which decisions are being made and, in that sense, the political speeches referring to them in Mexico are confusing since in practice the results show the opposite. Above all, it is evident that the decisions taken have no direction or future, which is why in the face of inevitable discontent, those responsible must begin to act.

3.1 The Public Decision

The public decision is made up of several stages, so it is necessary to state the two levels of decisions and three types of decisions involved. On the one hand, the decisions related to the goals of the organization are known as executive decisions. On the other hand, decisions related to intermediates, are those that are in a chain of action and are part of a more complex process, these are conceived as managerial decisions.

In that sense, the type of decisions that are accepted depend on the objective to be reached and the context which they are taken from. For example, random decisions: they are a demonstration of the limits of rationality

when choosing; parametric decisions: they operate when the environment and the behavior of the other actors involved in the process can be considered as a fact and the strategic decisions: the elements that condition the decision are stable to us. In this type of decisions, everything depends on what the others do knowing that they are in the same position.

It is important to emphasize that the private and public decision has distinctions, that is, the first one is taken in some company or individually and has no outstanding effects outside the organization, that is, in a private company, despite its sophistication, it tends to be a cost-benefit analysis; nevertheless, the public decision is the one that is taken within the public power in agreement with the government project, and it is taken to reach the objectives that the society has proposed. There are two types of public decisions, the first are the governmental ones which pursue political objectives and are assigned to various levels of government; and the second, are those of the collective type in which the community decides.

3.2 Collective Decisions

Bobbio (1987), in his book “La teoría de las formas de gobierno en la historia del pensamiento político” mentions that in a strict sense, in contemporary democracy the fundamental decisions are based on two questions: Who should govern? And What are the goals of a society? That is to say, the decisions that are taken do not depend on the government but on collective decisions, these have a constitutional character and define the permanent objectives, have a higher level of stability and the presumption that they are product of community consensus.

Buchanan y Tullock, mention:

“... The theory of collective choice must try to explain the means through which opposing interests are conjugated. In a genuine sense, economic theory is also a theory of collective choice and, as such, it provides us with an explanation of how individual interests are reconciled through trade and exchange” (1993, p. 30).

For Arrow, any collective decision-making rule must satisfy certain technical and ethical criteria, the latter refers to the conservation of values considered historically superior to the will of the majorities such as respect for minorities (1964). Once the difference between governmental and collective decisions can be discerned, the governmental decision must be studied, an issue that will be developed in the following section.

3.3 The Governmental Action

It is divided into three parts, the deliberation that is the consideration of the possible alternatives that a given situation offers to the individual (Abbagnado, 1995, p. 283). This process is considered independent from the decision although, it is recognized that its separation is difficult. It is important to note that there is no “final decision”, since political decisions are sequential acts. The second dimension that must be taken into account is the choice, which is the final moment of deliberation, this refers to the central theme of this thesis chapter that is the decision. Finally, the third phase is the one that has to do with the implementation of the decision adopted.

That is why reality as a whole has several implicit problems and each one of them is open and indefinite. In that sense, the reflection capacity and the increase in the quality of the decision require taking into account rational aspects but also extra-rational ones that allow decision making to give a more accurate response. What is mentioned in the previous paragraphs is an approach to the importance that the decision theory has in the governmental scope since this affects or benefits the population as a whole.

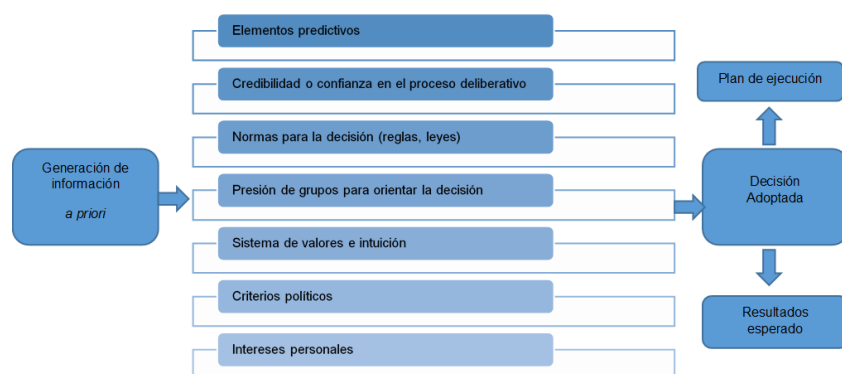


Figure 5 Governmental Decision Process

Source: Taken from Political Decisions. From planning to action (Curzio, 2008, p. 166).

3.4 Information Access

Regarding the information access, it is defined based on the capacity to respond and the strength to comply with it. Gudiño mentions that it is the duty that the obligated subjects have to inform and justify their actions, and the ability to sanction those who do not comply with this obligation (2016).

The World Bank mentions that one of the components in receptivity is defined as the ability of civil servants to keep in mind the citizens' knowledge and opinions regarding accountability. Therefore, it is in this way that information access is a fundamental right as it constitutes an instrument that protects the citizens' interests against the State and favors political and social equity by forcing governments to generate mechanisms to make public information accessible to all and not only to some groups. In that sense, so that the right to access information can be constituted as a key element in democratic consolidation, it is necessary to articulate the citizens' responsibilities as well as those of the representatives of the State.

Fox and Haight (2007), point out some characteristics that the right to information must have, honest exercise of power requires citizen supervision, democratic participation requires informed citizenry. Information access is essential to guide the strategies of reformist change from within as well as from outside the State and, in addition, in order to promote the public good, the right to know also helps to solve individual problems.

4. Public Information Transparency

Transparency is a quality that is developed in a context of the right to access information, so the quality of transparency is not an element of the right to access information, but it is a characteristic of civic culture and legality.

According to Fox in 2008, the transparency of public information has two aspects, on the one hand, opaque transparency: it refers to the dissemination of government information, not revealing the practical performance of the institutions, nor the result of their actions, so the information disclosed from it is unreliable, as it is likely to be managed according to particular interests and, on the other hand, clear transparency: it provides reliable and accessible information on institutional performance, emphasizes the responsibilities of officials, discloses decision making, destination of resources and provides the necessary conditions for interested actors to propose constructive changes of the institutions.

4.1 Observatories

The creation of observatories of the different social phenomena, has been key, and whose central objective has to do with the study, registration and analysis of the situation and evolution of a certain problem. In 2004, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), determined that the work of an observatory, is given in relation to the work areas listed below: compilation and development of databases, methodologies for encode, classify and categorize data, connection of people/organizations working in similar areas, specific application of new technical tools and trends' analysis/publications.

That is why, the creation of an economic-social observatory favors the development of a structure whose activity is intended to collect information from a social sector, the diagnosis of a situation, the forecast of its development and finally, the production of applied research that would serve as a basis from which the decision would be made.

Natividad Enjuto states that, the social observatories work is basically done through the steps of the scientific research method: object observation, hypothesis, results, data analysis and conclusions. The importance of observing specific social problems, could have an impact with the creation of social and economic observatories, from a vision of the territory, since from these the research process takes place, it becomes part of something essential in research as it is to observe. Apparently, the fact of observing a social and economic phenomenon in a given context, actually entails a complex process that requires the integration of multiple dimensions, in this case combining the quantitative and qualitative elements. Enjuto states that for an observatory to meet its objectives, an efficient information system must be supported and must integrate different knowledge and professions. In "Observando Observatorio ¿Nuevos agentes en el tercer Sector?", it is mentioned that the global objectives of the social observatories are the knowledge production, social complexity delimitation, data centralization, diagnosis and anticipation.

In this way, the importance of the creation of a Social Economic Observatory with a vision from the territory is based on a reality where a group of collaborators can transmit their know-how and make meaningful learning, guaranteeing to be objective, without biasing reality. The generation of accurate data on current issues is aimed at developing a research process that sets out the type of society that people want to build. In the particular case of Mexico, there is only one Social Economic Observatory developed by the Universidad Anáhuac del Mayab. There is where the importance of research lies, as it may be the first step in consolidating applied research and generating virtuous circles that link different institutions, decision makers, academia and civil associations.

5. Previous Reflections

Citizenry participation, within the political and public activity should be represented and taken care of through different means, one of which could be the observatories. By adopting, as their main function, the monitoring, evaluation and control of certain aspects of public life that are likely to be intervened and/or solved by the government and/or civil society.

If the civil society were to be organized in order to analyze what happens in its environment, these observations would serve to propose solutions to the different problems that society has, mainly the ones affecting the most vulnerable sectors, which are those that do not meet the basic needs in their daily lives (Silva, 189-190).

Pasquino (2001), Hevia (2004) and Montesinos (2004), with respect to citizenry as an analytical category, share that the role of citizenry participation spaces as mechanisms for supervision and control of governments in a

context of legitimacy deficit of democratic institutions, not of democracy itself, is to adopt observatories as a way for citizenry building, and also, since they operate as a social escape valve, they legitimize and reduce polarization in the political sphere, in addition to being supervisors of those who exercise public power. On the one hand, they control and propose, and on the other, they legitimize (Silva, 191).

Therefore, the observatory would have as one of its main objectives, to inform about the situations, and to become the intermediary between the government, official bodies and the citizens that do not agree with the situation in which they are. Therefore, it is necessary that the observation is carried out by people who are neutral before the two sectors mentioned above, so that this would be a space for analysis and, at the same time, they could be informing about the social reality in order to clarify the situation and be a starting point for generating the change based on the indicators (Rodríguez & Correllero, 2008, p. 19).

Within the most outstanding characteristics, the observatories serve to build a more inclusive citizen engagement, since if the information generated by the government is analyzed, it will not only promote its transparency, it will also inform and generate greater knowledge to the people about the things that go beyond what politicians promised. They would also show the deficiencies of public policies with the aim of improving them and in this way, helping to improve the quality of life of the population (Fundación este País, 2008).

If the above were carried out, the information that is used to generate public policies for citizens in general would be more representative of all the extracts of society. In addition, it would be analyzed in order to make the information as accurate as possible according to the current situation in the country.

Finally, considering the new information reliability and its access by all citizens without information bias, the new public policies that would arise, would result in citizens starting to improve their quality of life, as they would have the ability to meet, at least, their basic needs.

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