POLICY CHANGE:
An analysis based on evidence from Chile

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Abstract
The paper analyses the policy-making process of the Public Management Modernization, Health Care Reform, Urban Transport System of Santiago, and Public Transparency. The period analyzed goes from 1990 to 2013. Evidence has been collected from 205 interviews, official documents, 3,905 press clipping and academic literature. Grounded theory has been employed to analyze interviews. The analysis shows a tacit alliance between power and expert knowledge, in which the president appoints a group of technopols/technocrats who manage to get proposals approved and implemented. It also shows that president motivation seems to be a key factor for an idea to be included in government agenda. The paper concludes that the Chilean policy-making process is rather elitist and that its characteristics are coincident with the “inside access model of agenda building” described by Cobb, Ross and Ross (1976).

Key words: Chile, policy process, agenda, policy change

This article is a product of an extensive research program, which has included FONDECYT projects 1120546, 1080322 and the Inter-American Development Bank contract for developing the “Case Study on the Institutionalization and Strategic Management of the Access to Information and Active Transparency in Chile.”
INTRODUCTION

How public policies are made in Chile? or, more specifically, Who are the most influential actors of the policy-making in Chile? and How they interact along the Chile’s policy process?. Policy-making has been a topic of increasing interest in academic works in Latin America during the last two decades. In this context, for instance, in an effort to advance on the understanding of the Latin American policy politics, Stein et al (2006) focus their analysis on political institutions and the way these shape the behavior and incentives of actors participating in the policy making process. Being that an important factor, other critical questions, however, are what other factors, in addition to political institutions, may be influencing the development of the policy process, how an issue gets into the government agenda, what are the key actors in the policy formulation process and how they manage to get a proposal approved and later implemented.

The teaching and policy analysis in Latin America have been mainly made following theoretical framework originated in the United States due to the lack of empirical analysis identifying the real characteristics of the policy process in the region’s countries. Thus, for instance, although works of Kingdon (2011 and 1995), Jones and Baumgartner (2005), True, Jones and Baumgartner (1999) have been very influential, the question that immediately arises is whether conclusions of those conceptual frameworks may be generalizable to other countries. Addressing this question, for example, and based on the cases of oil, telecommunications and railroads privatizations in Great Britain and France, Zahariadis (1999) concludes that the Kingdon multiple streams model works making three extensions and one refinement/amendment to the model. Notwithstanding the interesting findings of Zahariadis, the question on whether the theoretical model may be also useful to understand how the policy-making process works in a Latin American country remains.

Thus, the question on how the policy making process works in a Latin American country is an academic endeavor that needs to be done to clarify whether policy politics from that type of country can be understood from theoretical frameworks rising from the USA reality. The findings of a works like this may also contribute to the reform and/or the improvement of practices of the political system by giving evidence about how public policies are really made in a
country different from the USA and those of Europe – given the application of Kingdon model to Great Britain and France by Zahariadis.

The article focuses on Chile, which according to Stein et al (2006: 170) would be “the country having the best characteristics of public policies” among the 18 Latin American countries included in that study. Then, the analysis of the policy formulation process of a country with these characteristics may shed light on whether the theoretical frameworks arisen from empirical studies on US cases may be still valid to understand how policies are really formulated in a country like Chile.

Chile reinstalled its democracy in 1990 after a 17 years dictatorship. Chile has been characterized as a politically stable country (Aleman and Saiegh 2007), with a very high level of political centralism in Latin America (Eaton 2004: 220), an institutionalized party system with clear ideological differences (in the continuum left – right), low levels of polarization and pragmatic but programmatic parties (Stein et al 2006, Alcántara and Luna 2004), and two stable coalitions. Chile has a presidential system with a very powerful President compared to the constitutional power of other Latin American Presidents (Boeninger 2007, Payne et al 2006, Aninat et al 2008, Mainwaring and Shugart 1997, Siavelis 1997). Furthermore, in Chile the legislative authority of the president would be potentially dominant (Mainwaring and Shugart 2002), and the president has a strong influence on the organization of the legislative work by setting urgencies to the discussion of law proposals. Chilean president also has the veto capacity, which basically allows him/her to reintroduce the discussion on a proposal decided by Congress but on which the president disagree.

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1 The Latin American countries included in that study are: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Panamá, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela. According the study by Stein et al (2006: 164 and 170), Chile has the overall highest value in the policy index and in the majority of its components as well.

2 Those coalitions are: the center-right Alianza por Chile (Alliance for Chile), which includes the Renovación Nacional (National Renovation Party) and the Unión Democrática Independiente (UDI) (Independiente Democratic Union), and the center left Convergencia de Partidos por la Democracia (Agreement of Parties for Democracy) including the Christian Democratic Party, the Socialist Party, the Radical Social Democrat Party, and the Party for Democracy. In the 2013 presidential and parliamentary campaign the Communist Party and the center-left Concertación formed a new coalition under the name of "Nueva Mayoría" (New Majority) and elected Michelle Bachelet as President and the majority of seats in Congress for the period 2014 – 2018.

3 A majority of two thirds of the votes in Congress is required to reject a presidential veto.
In spite of this, Chilean Congress is one of the strongest in Latin America regarding its role in the policy process (Stein et al 2006). Berrios and Gamboa (2006) argue that Chilean Congress has gone increasing its influence thanks to a greater specialization and professionalization, which would be related to the creation of a system of competent advisory. Aninat (2006) point out that this would be a consequence of a high rate of reelection that Chilean congressmen show, which stresses their capacity of negotiation.

In contrast, the US political system appear to be having higher levels of equilibrium of power than that of Chile and those of Latin American countries. For instance, according to Cox and Morgenstern (2001: 181) “the US President does not have the right to introduce legislation in either house of Congress, ... does not have the right directly to determine the measures that congress will consider, to accelerate bills pending on congressional calendar, or otherwise to affect the legislative agenda, ... (and) president’s budget must be introduced by a member of Congress”, which is neither the case in Chile nor in most Latin American countries. Furthermore, Cox and Morgenstern (2001: 171) characterize the US Congress and the assemblies of US states as being proactive/reactive while the Latin American Congresses would be merely reactive.

In turn, Aninat et al (2008: 156) add that Chile has “a well-funtioning mechanism for policy implementation, including an independent judiciary and an honest and a reasonable efficient bureaucracy.”

Several academic works have addressed the policy making process in Chile but the question about why the government pick a certain issue, how the policy process goes within the executive branch and how key actors manage to get a proposal on it approved have received little attention. Castiglioni (2012) analyzes continuity and change in social policy of President Bachelet first term, focusing on the role of formal and informal institutions, informal actors and ideological factors. The book edited by Larrañaga and Contreras (2010) exposes on major social protection policies of the decade of 2000, the rationale behind their design, a short historical description of their evolution and results of evaluation studies

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4 Policies analyzed in the Larrañaga and Contreras (2010) book are: the poverty reduction strategy, the health care reform and AUGE Plan, the insurance for unemployment, the pension reform, the preferential school subsidy, the policy on children protection “Chile Crece Contigo” (Chile Grow with You), and the social protection form.
made on them. Hass (2010) analyzes how the feminist movement influences the expansion of the legislation promoting women’s rights. Following a political transaction cost model, Aninat et al (2010) analyze the outcomes generated though the decision-making process of productivity related policies. Murillo (2009) concentrates in the analysis of political competition and partisanship on the policy-making of public utilities, concluding that in the Chilean case there was pragmatism in the coalition that impelled those reforms and an ideological renovation in the left-wing parties, including the acceptance of market mechanisms. Picazo (2007) analyzes the 1990s school curriculum reform, emphasizing the role played by two institutional forums including political actors as well as representatives from the educational sector. Aninat et al (2006), in a political economy perspective, describe the roles of the executive and legislative powers, the constitutional tribunal in the processing of reforms enacted through laws in the 1990s, and the capacities of bureaucracy for policy implementation.


Technocratic influence on government activity has also been a topic of interest in academic analysis on Chile though their specific role and actions on policy formulation have not being the main focus of these analyses. A very persuasive book of Silva (2008) explains how technocrats have influenced government decisions since early XX century. An essay of Silva (1997) identifies the main socio-economic, political and cultural factors that have facilitated the strengthening of technocratic positions within the new Latin American democracies. Another work of Silva (1991) shows how technocratic groups were establishing with different ideological orientations, and how they gained political influence within administrations in which they participated. An article of Joignant (2011), in turn, analyzes the influence that 20 agents who served as ministers and undersecretaries, between 1990 and 2012, reached based on the combination of technical capacities, political competence and collective leadership, whom are characterized as “technopols.” An essay of Moreno (2010)

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5 This work suggests that there would be four salient characteristics in the Chilean policy process: a long-lived and legitimated party system, a very powerful presidency, the existence of veto players, and an honest and relatively efficient bureaucracy as a key mechanism for policy implementation.
analyzes the influence of think tank in the policy making, arguing that for a long time they have ignored the critical steps of design, negotiation, approbation, and implementation of public policies.

This article instead is an empirical research, mainly based on primary sources, that focuses on the role played by key actors in setting the government agenda as well as in getting proposals approved and later implemented. Thus, the article follows the procedural institutionalism perspective, which seeks to understand the type of process originating policies and, given that, pay attention to interactions among key players and the context in which they behave (Barzelley and Gallego 2006). Hence, policy formulation may be understood as a process of interaction among influential actors that develops in a certain institutional context, which distributes competencies and opportunities of intervention to those actors to promote problems and solutions of their interest, given the real political circumstances they face in a particular moment in time.

The analysis is based on evidence from the government modernization policy, the health care reform, the Santiago urban transportation plan (popularly known as Transantiago), and the policy on transparency and access to public information. Particular studies on these policies have been undertaken between 2008 and 2013 under an extensive research program including FONDECYT projects 1080322 and 1120546, and Inter-American Development Bank Contract for developing the “Case Study on the Institutionalization and Strategic Management of the Access to Information and Active Transparency in Chile.”

These have been policies in which the five administrations governing the country from 1990 to 2013 have intervened, giving the opportunity to see whether there are regularities in the policy formulation process or differences among administrations. All of these policies have had high visibility in the public debate and correspond to different sectors of government activity, which allow reducing the bias of analyzing just one policy or policies from sectors with similar functioning. On the other hand, two of these policies are on health care and transport, which are the same type of policies that gave the evidence to John Kingdon to build his well-known model of policy formulation. These two policies have a high and direct impact on citizen’s well-being, and let see political controversy and interest confrontation. The other two, the public management
modernization and the policy on transparency, although less controversial have a high and direct impact on how citizens receive the benefits of government interventions. And the four influence the citizen’s perception on the State effectiveness. Furthermore, two of these policies have been approved through congressional votes and the other two through the use of the president’s administrative capacity.

The following sections of the article includes an exposition on the theoretical framework, a description of methods and data used in the analysis, a presentation of the evidence on the Chilean policy making process, and a discussion on its conceptual implications. The final section offers the main conclusions arising from the study.

ON THE POLICY MAKING PROCESS

According to Cobb, Ross and Ross (1976: 127) “the public agenda consist of all issues which are the subjects of widespread attention or at least awareness; require action, in the view of a sizeable proportion of the public; and are the appropriate concern of some government unit, in the perception of community members.”

In turn, Kingdon (2011 and 1995: 3) define government agenda as “the list of subjects or problems to which governmental officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time.” In his famous study, Kingdon focuses in how a certain issue gets into the government agenda, goes to the decision agenda and, finally, to the policy enactment. Three streams shape the policy process in his analytic model: problem recognition, generation of policy proposals and political events around the issue. Each stream has its own development but at some point in time they converge. The coupling of streams – problems, proposals and politics – allow an issue to rise dramatically on the decision agenda and be ready for an authoritative decision, either from the executive branch or the Congress. This makes a subject to rise dramatically in the odds of becoming an enacted policy.

Policy entrepreneurs – “people willing to invest their resources in return for future policies they favor” (Kingdon 2011: 204 and 1995: 204) – play a major role in the coupling of streams. They take advantage of political propitious moments
and work on the coupling of problem and a policy proposal that appear to be a solution to that problem.

Thus, the likelihood of getting a policy enacted on a particular issue dramatically increases if a problem is recognized, there is a workable policy solution ready, political events around the issue are propitious and there is a policy entrepreneurs working on the coupling of streams.

The punctuated equilibrium theory (PET), instead, observe that “political processes are often driven by a logic of stability and incrementalism, but occasionally they also produce large scale departures from the past” (True et al 1999: 97). Policy changes – either marginal or large scale ones – would be the consequence of the interaction of the policy subsystem and behavioral decision-making, which combined creates patterns of stability and punctuated equilibrium.

According to PET, periods of equilibrium are produced when a subsystem capture an issue and major changes are the consequence of a situation in which an issue is forced into the macro political agenda. Most policy issues are treated in a subsystem, which are dominated by a community of experts and decision makers and by a single interest (policy monopoly) or interests in equilibrium. This allows the political system to process a variety of issues simultaneously. Thus, the policy monopoly or the equilibrium of interests would lead to incremental changes only, which would be the result of either the capacity of the policy monopoly to resist the pressure for major changes or the bargaining among interests present within the subsystem.

Jones and Baumgartner (2005: 267) argue that the processing of information from the policy environment is a key factor in getting an issue into the government agenda, which would mainly depends on how heavily the signals about the severity of the problem are weighted among the policy makers. These signals can come from “several sources, including the anxieties of general citizens, the vividness of particular events, and the activities of interest groups and policy advocates.”

Thus, major changes would be the consequence of the involvement of actors and institutions from the political system (either Congress or the Executive Power). The issue leave the subsystem and rise in the government agenda either
because the issue has captured the public attention and new participants have become interested in the debate or because previously uninvolved political actors and institutions are pushing for a massive intervention. When that occurs the likelihood of an intervention from the government and a substantial reform increases dramatically.

Then, taking together, what these conceptual framework are suggesting is: (i) that a major policy change is going to occur when the demands for changes on an issue may no longer be treated within a policy subsystem; and (ii) that a government intervention most likely occur when a problem is recognized, there is a workable policy solution available and political events are propitious for the reform.

Both the multiple streams framework and PET consider the role that those in possession of an expert knowledge play in the policy process. Two concepts have been extensively used to denominate them: technocrats and technopols. According to Collier (1979: 403) technocrats are “individuals with a high level of specialized academic training which serves as a principal criterion on the basis of which they are selected to occupy key decision-making or advisory roles in large, complex organizations – both public and private.” A technopol instead would be a person with a high technical background, who has deployed political skills to govern more effectively (Dominguez 1998 and 1997). Williamson (1994: 12) argues that while technocrats have been mostly civil servants, “technopols are those technocrats who have taken the risk of accepting political appointments, with the responsibility that entails.” To Marier (2008), however, the role of technopol would not only refer to the position served but to the capacity to link expert knowledge and political abilities along different complex situations of the policy process.

Technocrats and technopols would be actors of a similar professional profile but with different roles in government. While technopols work at political level, technocrats work at professional level. It is also highly likely that a technopol leads a group of technocrats in the policy design or that “a political leader selects a team of competent technocrats and delegate them enough authority to permit reforms” (Williamson 1994: 13).
A natural question that arises, then, is how these technopols and technocrats interact with politicians along the policy process? The following sections address this question through the analysis of four policy cases on Chile.

**METHODS AND DATA**

This is a multiple case study that analyzes the policymaking process of four public policies in Chile, between 1990 and 2013. According to Yin (1994: 46), this is an adequate research strategy when cases have been carefully selected with the purpose to realize whether the analysis produce similar results (a literal replication) or contrasting results for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication). The analysis is aimed to realize whether or not there have been similar patterns in the formulation of these five policies and, then, to set a conceptual proposition about how the policymaking process works in Chile. Although multiple case study produces more compelling evidence and the overall study is considered being more robust (Yin 1994: 45), the results of this work must be regarded as propositions that further research have either to prove or disprove.

As said in the introduction, policies analyzed are: the Modernization of Public Management, the Health Care Reform, whose flagship initiative was Program AUGE-GES, the Transantiago Urban Transport Plan, and the Transparency and Access to Public Information initiative. The formulation of these policies covers the period 1990 – 2013 and five presidencies: four from the center-left coalition “Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia”, and one from the center-right “Alianza por Chile”.

Data comes from four sources: interviews, official documents, academic bibliography and the press. 205 interviews were conducted. Interviewees were high-level public officials (an ex President, Ministers, Undersecretaries, Chief of Public Agencies), high-level advisors and public managers, congressmen from the House of Representatives and Senate, leaders of unions and interest groups, experts and scholars. Table 1 presents a distribution of interviewees.

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Table 1. Key actors interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Actor Interviewed</th>
<th>PM Modernization</th>
<th>Health Reform</th>
<th>Transantiago</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undersecretaries</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiefs of Public Agencies</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisors &amp; Public Managers</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressmen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts &amp; Scholars</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>62</strong></td>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>205</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s records.

Although the sample of this research is not representative, interviews sought to collect different perspectives with the purpose of getting an integral perspective about the policy formulation process. Two ways of identifying potential interviewees were applied: making a list of people who performed key positions during the formulation of each policies analyzed and asking the interviewees to suggest other key people to interview. Interviewees were selected according criteria of theoretical sampling and theoretical redundancy, which permitted to collect testimonies and information that led to identify relevant analytical categories and to avoid getting already known information or without analytical value (Valles 2007).

With the purpose of identifying critical moments in the policy process and the role played by key actors, the interviews included open questions about the rising and recognition of problems, the building of policy proposals and whether other alternatives were considered, the approval of the policy proposal and the manner in which the decision was made, why the decision makers chose to use either the president administrative capacity or the go through the legislative way, identification of key actors, their role and behavior along the process, the political context in which the process took place, and the decisions made and actions taken to implement the policy. The interviews were done as nice conversations on the policy in which the interviewee participated. Interviews were done from 2008 and 2013 depending on the availability of time of interviewees. Interviews were
recorded, transcribed and, later, analyzed through the “grounded theory method.”

3,905 press clippings, from 1990 to 2013, were analyzed with the purpose of complementing the information provided by interviews, putting the testimonies and the role of actors in context as well as capturing the relevant facts and circumstances that occur along the process. “El Mercurio”, “La Tercera”, “La Cuarta”, “La Nación” y “El Siglo” were the newspaper examined.

The reading of official documents was aimed at identifying the government goals on the policy, interventions undertaken by authorities, and roles played by other policy actors. Particular attention was given to Presidential Orders, Reports from the Congress, Law Histories, program proposals, and government programs of presidential candidates.

In addition to that, academic literature, expert documents and think tanks reports have been also examined to understand the debate on the issues addressed by policies whose process is analyzed in this article.

The processing of information from the four sources mentioned permitted to prepare case studies on each policy analyzed. These case studies covered topics such as the role of politicians, congressmen, political parties, technocrats, the press and interest groups, the evolution of the issue addressed by each policy, and the political debate around each of these issues. These case studies have been the basis on which this article has been prepared.

EVIDENCE ON THE CHILEAN POLICY PROCESS

Were the issues addressed by policies analyzed in this article in high places in the public agenda? CEP survey is the main data set available in Chile on the public perceptions about the most important problems affecting people. According to it, modernization of public management, transparency and public transport system were never among the 10 most important public problems for citizens. Health care system, however, ranked as the third/fourth most pressing public problem for citizens by 1999 and 2000, when the reform on it was announced as a presidential campaign promise.

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7 For an explanation of the “grounded theory method” see Valles 2007
Then, how problems to be addressed by government interventions are selected is a natural question arising from the figure 1. Evidence on this topic as well as on the development of the remaining steps of the Chilean policy formulation are presented in what follows in this section.

The Policy on Public Management Modernization

The public management modernization policy (PMMP) refers to a set of changes made in the public sector management on organizational structures and procedures with the purpose to achieve higher levels of effectiveness of its functioning (Olavarria 2010). PMMP became one of the main endeavor undertaken under President Frei Ruiz-Tagle administration, though “this was never a citizen’s claim in the whole history of our Republic” (ex presidential advisor). Modernization of public management begun, in the early 1990s, with micro reforms at the level of public agencies, whose process and results

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8 The public agencies where the modernization begun were the “Servicio de Impuestos Internos” (SII) – the Internal Revenue Service –, the “Instituto de Normalización Previsional” (ISP) – the Social Security Institute – and the “Servicio de Registro Civil and Identificación” (SRCeI) – the Civil Register and
expanded concerns about the necessity and opportunity to do it. Those public managers diagnosed that “the State was working inefficiently and obsoletely” (ex Minister and ex Senator) and get the conviction that “the State must do it better” (ex Chief of a Public Agency and ex Minister). Results gotten by those micro reform made the political level of government to get involved in the process and President Aylwin – in his last speech before Congress about the state of the country (May 21st, 1993) – expressed that “public administration might be branded as slow, excessively bureaucratic, often red taping and, in many cases, inefficient but honest ... So, it is necessary to dignify public function, speed up procedures, stimulate merit and initiative and set strict parameters of responsibility” (Aylwin 1993).

The President Aylwin’s statement about the need to update public administration and given the Frei Ruiz-Tagle professional career profile, the inclusion of the issue in his presidential platform was a natural consequence. An ex advisor of the Office of Budget interviewed mentions that “this was an important theme in government agenda of President Frei Ruiz-Tagle ... He constituted a task force that included such an important topics as efficiency, probity, transparency, customer satisfaction, which were later developed.”

The relevance this theme got in the Frei Ruiz-Tagle’s platform was extensively expressed in the press. The “La Segunda” Newspaper (1993: 20) titled an article “The modernization of the State will be one of the most important theme of the next administration: Eduardo Frei, before being nominated candidate of the Concertacion, point out the necessity of modernizing the State as a crucial theme.” By the same token, a key member of Frei campaign declared to “El Mercurio” Newspaper (1993: C3) “the Frei campaign headquarter is studying the modernization of the State.”

Identification Service –. Chiefs of these agencies became to meet montly to talk about their experience. Later, the Chief of the “Fondo Nacional de Salud” (FONASA) – the National Fund for Health Care – join the group. By the time when President Aylwin called for the updating of public administration before Congress, the group had expanded to 10 Chiefs of public agencies who met regularly to share their views, experiences and lessons learned.

Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle is an Engineer with graduate studies on management in Italy. Later he became a high executive of an important Chilean company and a successful entrepreneur. His experience in managing big organizations is directly linked to his concern on the public management modernization as a necessary step to get an effective State that support the process of becoming a developed nation.
Modernization of public management was an important area of Frei Ruiz-Tagle presidential program. According to his program, to take advantage of the “historical opportunity” to become a developed country, not only from the economic perspective but also from the equity and social development point of view, it was necessary to get a more effective government. Thus, modernization of the working methods of the public administration was a logic consequence. An ex advisor of the Budget Office explain that “a very important issue was the presidential program ... there was a task force to build it and important themes were included, such as effectiveness, probity, transparency, user satisfaction, which are the big themes that later were implemented”. Frei Ruiz-Tagle play a crucial role in including this issue in his presidential platform because “this stuff of efficiency was very important to him ... he certainly had a global vision on this and translated it to the decision scope” (ex Minister). According to an ex presidential advisor, Frei Ruiz-Tagle “was not interested in ideologies, his interest was the good functioning of the government, ... he was also interested in leaving a bequest regarding the necessity of getting a modern government that may effectively serve the citizens”.

Once in office, President Frei Ruiz-Tagle included the theme in his first presidential address before Congress about the state of the nation and few days later he announced a first plan on it, creating the Inter-Ministry Committee for the Public Management Modernization (“El Mercurio” 1994: B1; “La Epoca” 1994:1). This was an initiative developed by a small group appointed and empowered by Frei Ruiz-Tagle. Mario Marcel, head of the Division of Administrative Rationalization in the Budget Office, led this group that concentrated on implementing a management control system in the central government. According to an ex high public official “the modernization raised as a programmatic issue based on the accumulated experience because there were diagnostics of the situation already and some micro-reforms at the agency level had begun.” Another high public official adds, “Government modernization corresponded to a very advanced visions of a technocratic group, which did not have roots in the political parties or other areas of government.”

10 President Frei Ruiz-Tagle took office on March 11, 1994 and his first presidential address before Congress was on May 21, 1994.
President Frei Ruiz-Tagle appointed and backed a group of technocrats that undertook the design and implementation of PMMP. An ex public official explains that the necessity to modernize public management “was something that Frei Ruiz-Tagle said, then chiefs of public agencies felt covered with a greater umbrella to launch modernizing initiatives.” An ex chief of a public agency adds that “President Frei Ruiz-Tagle fostered modernization processes and always acknowledged our work on this issue, he always was present in important events.” Another ex chief of a public agency mentions that the main impulse for public management modernization came from “the President itself, ... as an engineer, ex manager and ex business man, he was clear about the importance of the internal management of the agency.”

The technical leadership of the modernization process was assigned to Mario Marcel, a reputed economist from the President coalition who was appointed as the head of the Division of Administrative Rationalization of the Budget Office.\(^\text{11}\) According to an expert who worked on modernization initiatives, this group “worked very hard in researching and generating analysis and methodological proposals on improving government management.”

Beside technical capacities, this group developed political skills that allow it to deploy its influence towards public agencies and set alliances with politicians within government. An ex member of this group expresses it as follows: “... the alliance between politicians and technicians was very clear ... we were very technopols, we were a very clear political-technical alliance with differentiated roles.” Another expert on modernization adds that there was “a combination between political support and technical skills in the advising teams” (to undertake modernization).

This group of technocrats works on a proposal and go further without political interference. According to an ex Minister, “politicians did not realize (about the moving forward of the public management modernization) ... this was not an issue for Congressmen ... it was an issue for a group within the government.” Another ex Minister states “nobody knew much about the discussion so we could go further” (on the public management modernization). A person who worked within the government express “politician interests are very

\(^{11}\) The Spanish name of the Budget Office is Dirección de Presupuesto and its acronym is DIPRES.
far from this issue.” Given the remoteness of the politicians with this theme, the technocrats that drove this policy used the administrative capacity of the President to approve and implement the initiatives contained in the PMMP. On this, an ex Minister points out “with our team we preferred to go doing small thing at time and not to reach the parliament to avoid breaking much political eggs … that was the manner to make decisions” and an expert adds that they “wanted to avoid delays and political interference in the concretion of this policy.”

In this process there was not a debate on alternatives about public management modernization. There was just one proposal built and implemented: the one worked out by the groups of technocrats empowered by President Frei Ruiz-Tagle. According to an ex Minister “there was never a confrontation of ideas, of proposals” (on this topic). Another ex Minister points out “the only confrontations of visions was about who had to lead the PMMP ... and the President decided that the team of the Budget Office had to have the control of the process.”

In the next administration the issue went out of the government agenda because “President Lagos had other priorities and this was not a main concern for him” (Interview to an ex Minister). Thus, from being in the first level of government hierarchy, as the Inter-Ministry Committee for the Public Management Modernization, the status of the policy was lowered to the fourth level, under a Division depending from the Undersecretary of the General Secretariat of the Presidency as a Project of State Reform and Modernization (Proyecto de Reforma y Modernización del Estado – PRYME).

The policy would be reinstalled in the government agenda when a political crisis irrupted due to several cases of corruption by late 2002 and early 2003.12 The crisis was so serious that as long as the judicial investigations moved further several analysts discussed the possibility that President Lagos did not finish his term (Navia 2004: 182).

The crisis was solved through a political negotiation between President Lagos, represented by his Minister of the Interior and Head of the Cabinet, Jose

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12 Those cases were “oversalaries” (sobresueldos), consisting in than Ministers received an extra payment in cash in a closed envelope; “bribes,” involving five congressmen receiving illegal payments from an entrepreneur; “MOP – GATE,” “MOP – CIADE,” “MOP – IDECON,” consisting in payment for non demonstrable works made by the Ministry of Public Works.
Miguel Insulza, and the leader of the opposition majoritarian party\textsuperscript{13}, then Representative Pablo Longueira.

The opposition was interested in getting an open government procurement system and in limiting the presidential capacity of political appointments because many of those appointees were political campaigners of the Concertacion – the coalition in power by then –, according to the opposition claim. On the other hand, Lagos administration was interested in getting approval in Congress for a proposal of public financing for political campaigns.

The opposition demand of reducing the presidential capacity of political appointees was difficult to accept for the Lagos Administration and for the Concertacion because it was seen as “a right wing initiative” (ex high public official) that affected public employees whom mainly voted for them. The point is clarified in the testimony of an interviewee who express that “once I heard the then Ministry of Finance to say ‘the issue is as follows: the political structure works in such a manner that a political party or a coalition of parties seeking government power compete for a booty (treasure). And the booty (treasure) is an extensive variety of possibilities of employments and utilization of the government apparatus to provide jobs to people that keep united by political links.”

In the previous administration a proposal on this has been left aside because of lack of support within the coalition. According the testimony of an ex Chief of the Division of State Modernization although “during Frei Ruiz-Tagle presidency there was a process of upgrading public management … but there was neither agreement nor political chance to go further with tougher and deeper reforms on public management modernization, such as the High Public Management, which was the cornerstone of this process” (Orrego 2007: 55).

The negotiation resulted in the “Political-legislative agreements for the State modernization, transparency and the promotion of economic growth,” popularly known as “the 49 measures.” Among the most transcendent measures were those that crated the Civil Service, the High Public Management (a mechanism to select high public managers through a merit-based system), the public procurement system and the financing of political campaigns.

\textsuperscript{13} This party is the right-win Union Democrata Independiente (UDI).
The reinstallation of the public management modernization policy – with the creation of the Civil Service, the High Public Management, the public procurement system and the financing of political campaigns – required a legislative decision as well. In this case proposals were generated by the group of technocrats backed by the opposition leader, which the congressmen of President Lagos coalition had to vote for because of the political weakness of Lagos administration.

Thus, the modernization of public management illustrates a case in which an issue come into the government agenda because of the motivation of the main actor of the political system, went out of the agenda due to the lack of priority given by the next president and it was reinstalled for a political actor with equivalent political capacities in the context of a serious crisis that might have lead to an anticipated end of the Lagos administration. The case also illustrates the role of technocrats, the remoteness of politicians in this issue and the lack of alternatives to the proposal built by the Budget Office team in the formulation and implementation of PMMP.

The Health Reform and the AUGE Plan

The motivation behind the health reform of the decade of 2000 and its flagship AUGE Plan was to institute a system that guarantee equity access, opportunity, quality, financial protection in the health care services received by people – no matter whether they were covered by either the private or the public systems – as well as to improve the effectiveness of the public health care system and the regulation of the private system (Lenz 2007, Zuñiga 2007, Drago 2006). The reemergence of democracy in Chile coincided with a tendency of health reforms in Latin America because of demographics and epidemiological changes, a greater complexity of medicine and issues related to management and effectiveness of public health sector.

Health care was the third/fourth most important problem for citizens by late 1990s (Figure 1). People concerns on health care were related to “an unsatisfied demand in public hospitals and community health centers, which expressed in long waiting lists for medical services (interview to an analyst of the health care system) and restriction and high cost of services of the private sector”
(interview to an ex Minister). However, this did not translate into a specific demand to the government, because “the user of the health system is rather passive and because, by then, there was not a restlessness among the politicians” (interview to another ex Minister).

Although under Aylwin and Frei Ruiz-Tagle administrations a health care reform was not undertaken, technocrats and policy advisors on the health system played an important role to show that a major policy intervention was necessary. During the early 1990s efforts were concentrated in the diagnostic, given that the new government did not have much information on the situation in which the health system was after the 17 years of Pinochet’s authoritarian regime (interview to an ex Minister). Then, once in office Aylwin administration performed a diagnostic and concluded that the condition of infrastructure and human resources was very outdated. Consequently, Aylwin health care policy concentrated on improving access to health care, with a particular focus on the poor, restoring the public hospital network, and strengthening prevention and promotion actions as well as the institutional development of the public health care sector (PAHO 2002: 20).

A timid proposal of reform was made by the Aylwin’s Ministry of Health but it was not approved in the cabinet. A testimony of another interviewee express that when the President Aylwin’s Minister of Public Health announced his intention to study a health care reform – which did not go further – in a cabinet meeting the only one that showed interest and asked a couple of question was the then Minister of Education Ricardo Lagos.

President Frei Ruiz-Tagle and the Ministry of Health, Carlos Massad, fostered technical developments and studies on the health sector. One interviewee explains, “during that period studies on the burden of ills were performed”. Another interviewee states “studies in which a guarantee health care plan was recommend were done by then”.

Advisors saw this as an opportunity to push for the reform but soon became clear that it would no be health reform in the Frei Ruiz-Tagle administration. A member of that group of experts explains “that during the previous administration we had done a diagnostic, had known the problem and knew that had to respond but the question was What is the policy answer?; there
was not a simple and clear message about what would be the administration offer as health care policy.” Another member of that group adds “propositions rebounded, first, due to lack of political capacity and, second, because of lack of technical development with respect of what was to be done and how much it costed.”

The option was to go further with technical works that later might be useful for a new health care policy. One of these expert explains, “those of us who were close to the Technical Committee (of the political parties of the coalition) became the policy advisors of the Minister of Health and were charmed with the idea of a health reform but from the very beginning we were told that that would not occur.” Another policy advisor explains that “they explained us that there was not political capacity to get involved in reforms other than those on education, criminal justice and public management modernization ... and President message was keep going with the technical work.” And another member of that group adds that “then the instruction we received was keep going preparing the reform”.

Thus, the revision of the evidence shows that the Aylwin administration focused on the diagnostic, that under Frei Ruiz-Tagle presidency studies and technical work were performed, which allowed the following government to undertake the health care reform.

The time for the health care reform came with the presidential primary election of the “Concertación.” The Christian Democratic pre-candidate, Andrés Zaldivar, promoted a health care reform, which was not initially considered by his opponent, the Social Democrat Ricardo Lagos. After the primary election, the health care commissions of both pre-candidates reached an agreement and the winning pre-candidate, Ricardo Lagos, took it as a highly visible issue of his presidential platform. Lagos close circle of advisors saw the health care reform as a policy consistent with his campaign slogan of (economic) “growth with equity” and as highly politically profitable in an election that polls announced to be very competitive, as it really was. Consequently, the then candidate Lagos announced his commitment to the health care reform in a campaign meeting in the Barros Luco Hospital, in Santiago, in October 1999, although he “had not have a specific proposal of reform” (Drago 2006: 50).
Ricardo Lagos was close to health care themes. According to interviewees, he used to talk on this with his father-in-law, a distinguished specialist on public health of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), and with his close friend Hernan Sandoval, with whom he was a close neighbor in his country side house of Caleu.

The assumption of Ricardo Lagos to the presidency implied a convergence of two wills: on the one hand, a group that had been working for a decade in studies that might be useful for a potential reform, and, on the other, a president motivated with the idea of a reform establishing “universal access with explicit guarantees in health care”\(^\text{14}\). Once in office, President Lagos appointed his close friend Hernán Sandoval\(^\text{15}\) as the Executive Secretary of the Presidential Commission for Health Care Reform.\(^\text{16}\)

This created a bi-headed structure of the public health sector. On the one hand, the Minister Michelle Bachelet in charge of solving the problem of the long waiting list for specialized care and surgery, and the day-to-day management of the Ministry. On the other, the Executive Secretary of the Presidential Commission – with a direct contact with the President –, in charge of the content, appeared as the ideologist of the reform.

A controversy soon rose between these two heads about the orientation of the reform. The Minister Bachelet headed a vision that was characterized as “statist”, which encouraged a greater government control on the health care, fostered a greater public spending on health and sought to minimize the role of ISAPREs.\(^\text{17}\) The Executive Secretary Sandoval instead was close to a perspective that a group of technocrats had been working, which was characterized as “integrated health”. This accepted the role of ISAPREs under a strict government regulation, sought to improve the efficiency of public sector through the creation of self-managed public hospitals and the introduction of management control

\(^{14}\) This is the basic idea of the reform, which was expressed in the Spanish acronym AUGE. Although four laws shaped the reform, AUGE Plan was considered its flagship.

\(^{15}\) Hernán Sandoval is a physician with a background in public health and risk prevention, with extensive links within the president coalition and with ISAPREs, the private companies managing the pre-paid health care plans.

\(^{16}\) The presidential commission was headed by the Minister of Health and integrated by the Ministers of Finance, Work and Social Security, General Secretariat of the Presidency, and a Executive Secretariat of seven members.

\(^{17}\) ISAPREs are pre-paid health insurance plans.
mechanisms, believed in the concept of “prioritization in health” and promoted the creation of a government agency to regulate both public and private health sector. Given the reform implied to modify prior laws, public organizations, and new spending, a congressional approval was necessary.

After two years of slow progress, President Lagos appointed Michelle Bachelet as Minister of Defense and Osvaldo Artaza as Minister of Health with the mission of getting the four bills conforming the reform approved in the House of Representatives. Artaza fulfilled that task in a year but at the cost of facing a big conflict with the unions of public health sector and the Chilean Medical Association. Pedro García replaced Osvaldo Artaza as Minister of Health with the assignment of making the reform be approved in Congress.

Artaza and García were well reputed physicians, had academic background and extensive experience in hospital management, were members of the Health Commission of the Christian Democratic Party and in that capacity had worked in health program of the pre-candidate Zaldívar in the Concertación primary election, had extensive and intensive links along the president coalition, and had good and close relationship with Sandoval as well as with those who had worked on studies during the 1990s.

After a long and inflamed debate, laws conforming the reform were finally enacted between late 2003 and mid 2005. The design and contents of the reform were based on studies done in the previous administrations, which had been generated by the group of technics promoting the “integrated health” vision.

Along the policy process President Lagos showed a resolute will of getting a health care reform approved during his term, in spite of not having a specific proposal on it at the very beginning, which was seen as a secondary problem by then (interview to a high public official of the health sector). President Lagos directly involved in the design of the reform, pushed the proposal forward, changed Ministers when he felt that the reform was not having enough progress or when the situation made it necessary to move it onto a new stage, and backed and empowered the group of technocrats that shape the content of the reform. According to Navarrete (2012), without Lagos there would have not been health care and because of his commitment the reform could overcome the opposition of
his first Minister of Health, the Medical Association, the National Union of Health Workers and a half of the political parties of his coalition.

**Transparency and Access to Public Information**

Efforts to set a law guarantying citizen’s access to public information and regulating the functioning on mechanisms of transparency in Chile have been oriented to “deepen democracy and get a more horizontal relationship between the State and citizens” (interview to a policy advisor).

The case of the transparency policy shows a long process that took 15 years, from the report of the Public Ethic Commission of President Frei Ruiz-Tagle, in 1994, until the enactment of the law on transparency and access to public information, in 2009. Transparency was not among the main citizen’s concerns during the decade of 2000s – neither it was in the 1990s – although it is considered one of the main achievements of the first Bachelet Administration. From the mid 1990s to late 2000s three Presidential Commissions worked on the issue, the Internal Auditing Council was created, several laws were amended, a bill on access to public information was sent to the Congress (withdrew later) and an initiative of two Senators to reform laws to give citizens access to public information was being discussed in Congress by the time when President Bachelet sent a bill allowing the access to public information and creating the Council for Transparency.

The final stage of this long journey started with the inclusion of the theme in Bachelet presidential program, which was the result of a coincidence between the aspirations of a group of NGOs and lawyers working on it, and the Bachelet wishes of developing a citizen’s government. An interviewee, member of one of these NGOs, explain that they “met Bachelet during the campaign, explained to her the importance of the issue and got her convinced that transparency and a citizen government were convergent ideas ... and that is how transparency got into her campaign program.”

Although access to public information was included in the presidential platform of the then candidate Michelle Bachelet, but the issue really get into the government agenda in the context of a complex situation for the State of Chile: corruption cases in previous administrations of the coalition that backed
Bachelet had been heatedly discussed during the presidential campaign, other corruption scandals irrupted also at the beginning of her administration, the decision of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on the case of Marcel Claude and others against the State of Chile was communicated on September 19, 2006, and proposal of Senators Larraín and Gazmuri was moving forward in the Congress (Olavarria 2012).

Bachelet government program emphasized the concept of citizen’s government, which included the idea of opening access to public information to citizens (Bachelet 2005). With that commitment to the issue of transparency and in the context of the convergence of situation above mentioned, Bachelet appointed a task force, in September 2006, to propose measures in favor of the efficiency, objectivity, public accountability, and professional quality in the public management.

President Bachelet appointed Alejandro Ferreiro as the head of the presidential task force on probity and efficiency in the public management. Ferreiro – a lawyer with a Master on Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, member of the Christian Democratic Party with extensive links along the coalition that backed President Bachelet – had served in several positions in Concertacion administrations, as advisor in the General Secretariat of the Presidency, Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Public Ethic, as Head of several regulatory agencies, and Minister of Economy. He also has taught courses on public policies, anticorruption, economic regulation and corporative governments of organizations.

Reputed lawyers and experts on public management additionally integrated the task force. These experts were high public officials of government

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18 The corruption scandals cases were those of Chile Deportes, employment programs in Valparaíso Region and the Governor Office in Valparaíso Region (see Instituto Libertad 2007).
19 The case started in 1998. Mr. Claude and others requested to the Central Bank Foreign Investment Committee information on the Rio Condor project, and the seriousness and eligibility of investor Forestal Trillium. The information was not provided by the Central Bank and Chilean Courts also denied access to that information. On October 10, 2003 the Inter-American Court of Human Rights accepted the submission of the appellants.
20 The proposal of Senators Larraín and Gazmuri proposed amendments to the Organic Law of the General Bases of State Administration, the Law on Administrative Procedures and the Constitutional Congress Law in order to enforce the right to access to public information and restrict the causes for reserve or secret (see BCN 2008: 6). Senator Larraín belongs to the right wing party “Unión Demócrata Independiente” (UDI), and Senator Gazmuri is a member of the left wing Socialist Party.
institutions, prominent members of Non-Governmental Organization dealing with the issue of transparency and even a member of a think tank linked to then opposition. The task force made use of reports done by the Commission on Public Ethic appointed by President Frei Ruiz-Tagle, in which Ferreiro had been its Executive Secretary.

The report was submitted in November 2006 to President Bachelet, who accepted it and sent a bill to parliamentary discussion on December 6. Congress approved the bill and the Council for Transparency – the public agency in charge of implementing the law – begun functioning on April 20, 2009. Once the law on access to public information was enacted, Ferreiro was appointed as Counselor of the Council for Transparency and in October 2011 became its President for the 18 months term.21

The accumulation of experiences, lessons and knowledge appear to have been key for the approval of the law proposal and the implementation of the transparency policy in the country. The case of the transparency policy shows a combination of both a presidential will to intervene on the issue and a compelling convergence of events faced by President Bachelet, which seems to have been seen as an opportunity to make her commitment through citizen access to public information effective.

Transantiago

A reform of the public transport system of the city of Santiago was neither among the most important problems for citizens by late 1990s and early 2000s (table 1) nor among the priorities of the presidential program of the then candidate Lagos. However, it became one of the most important policy interventions of his administration.

Even though the Lagos presidential program included a general mention about the modernization of the urban transport of Santiago (Lagos 1999), this was not a central issue in his campaign platform. An ex Minister interviewed explain that “it was for elimination but not for choice that Transantiago was so central ... (a person from his inner circle) told me that Lagos is giving importance

21 According to the law, the Council for Transparency is integrated by four counselors and each one of them are to be its president for a term of 18 months.
to this issue because other ‘piramids’ he was thinking to build for the bicentennial had fallen ... Lagos had 10 projects and Transantiago was not among them.” Another ex Minister adds that as a consequence of the deepness of the Asian crisis “Lagos did not have (resources for) big projects and suddenly Transantiago appeared.” Another interviewee states “Lagos saw the celebration of the bicentenary in the same manner as it was in the centenary, with big and emblematic projects such as the building of the Art Museum and the like.”

Already in office, Lagos administration exposed two main arguments to demonstrate the need to reform the Santiago’s transport system: on the one hand, the strong negative externalities of transport system (Díaz et al 2004) showed by technical studies and, on the other, the fact that public transportation neither corresponded with the level of development of the country nor with the wishes of authorities to make Santiago a world class city. An ex Minister mentions “in his first presidential address President Lagos, in the context of the big bicentennial projects, included the urban transport issue not only to Santiago but also to Concepción, Antofagasta and Valparaiso.”

President Lagos motivation toward the Santiago’s public transport reform was so manifest that he was directly involved in the design of the Plan. A participant of a meeting held at “La Moneda”\(^\text{22}\) narrates the episode: “there were several key cabinet members, presidential advisors and experts, and I was very surprised to see that the speaker of the workshop was President Lagos himself. There was a certain consensus about the necessity to improve urban transport and how it had to be done, and the person who explained everything was President Lagos himself.”

On September 17, 2000 the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications presented a document titled “Plan de Transporte Urbano de Santiago” (PTUS) (Santiago Urban Transport Plan), and the President approved it on November based on his administrative capacity. The idea was to avoid delays and political interferences. Congressmen were not particularly interested in this initiative because it was seen as a particular policy just for Santiago, with technical complexities, which was being worked within the executive branch. On the other hand, the Association of Bus Owners was an active obstructionist with a capacity

\(^{22}\) “La Moneda” is Chile’s presidential palace, which is located in down town Santiago.
to finance electoral campaign of influential congressmen (ex member of the Inter-
Ministry Committee for Transantiago). A political authority of the Lagos
Administration explains that in the case of Transantiago “there was an explicit
decision of not going through the Congress but using presidential orders, because
if the plan would have been sent to legislative discussion it would have not been
approved in the Lagos period and perhaps it would have never seen the light.”

The plan was a document mainly conceptual (about the basic architecture
of the plan), including a revision of prior documents, results of focus groups,
workshop with economists, architects, experts and representatives of buses
owners (Germán Correa testimony before the House of Representatives
Commission that Investigate Transantiago 2007: 212).

On April 7, 2003 the Inter-Ministry Committee for the Santiago Urban
Transport System was established. The chronogram of implementation of
Transantiago considered a public contest for the transport services in December
2004, to assign the services and sign contracts in April 2005, to contract the
service of customer information in June 2005, to begin operations on roads, AFT
and information to customer in August 2005 (Díaz 2005). Transantiago would
start operations in October 2006 but finally started by Saturday February 10th,
2007. The time period between the creation of the Ministers Committee and the
call of proposals – the milestone of the Plan – was only 20 months. The term of
references for these proposals were the basis on which contract were written.

The committee was technically supported by a group of technocrats
belonging to the Secretary of Transport Planning (SECTRA). The influence
reached by this group is well expressed in words of an ex Minister: “SECTRA was
the political platform of the technocrats to rule the needs of transport or
transport infrastructure in the government.” Another ex Minister adds “it was
such the power of SECTRA and so transversal that somebody that had been its
Director under Pinochet, a rather rightist man, keep the job for two more years in
a Ministry headed by a socialist ... which is so unusual; then this is a
phenomenon of technocratic influence, with difficulties to understand political
and sociological aspects of the reform.”

The relationship between politicians and technocrats seems to be critical
for results reached by the policy. None of Ministers during the formulation of
Transantiago had technical background or extensive experience in transport sector, and the same applies for the majority of Transantiago Coordinators. An ex public official states that “technics made propositions based on what they believed what would be the politicians directions and according to that politicians decided ... In some moment politicians took badly some elements so detailed, such as what would be the incentives for companies operating buses.” But an expert expresses that “the Minister, who took office later, said in sessions that he had no capacity to understand the magnitude of the problem he had to face.” Another expert adds, “there was some self-complacency and autonomy in the decisions on the Plan.”

The approval of PTUS raised the need to do studies to support the proposal, which focused on surveys origin-destiny in the Santiago’s Metro of 1991 and 2001, the size of the fleet of buses and its years of service as well as that on urban transport contribution to Santiago’s pollution, basically analyzing origin-destiny surveys, which was key information for the design of the Santiago’s Urban Transportation Plan.

In spite of a well-known consultancy firm worked in the design as well and some studies have been done, such as the surveys origin-destiny in the Santiago’s Metro of 1991 and 2001, the design of prospective scenarios, those about the routes of buses, the size of the fleet of buses and its years of service as well as that on urban transport contribution to Santiago’s pollution, the plan lacked critical information on the customer behavior and cost of the plan, has unclear information on the rate of customer transferences between buses, frequency of buses and average time of travels as well as a lack of understanding about the complexities of a transport system of a big city. Briones (2009) claims that the failure of Transantiago was mainly a problem of not enough information on the issue in three levels: first, about the modeling of new trips and on the old trips to which passengers were accustomed; second, insufficient information provided to passengers to be able to adapt to the new system; and third, information asymmetries between the authorities and bus owners, which was a key issue in the writing of contracts and the perverse incentives these included. An interviewee adds: “old routes were not considered and that was an important knowledge.”
DISCUSSION

What the analyzed evidence is telling about how the policy process works in Chile? The gathered evidence most properly suggests a kind of non-explicit agreement between political power and expert knowledge in the Chilean policy-making process of the analyzed period. In other words, a tacit alliance between the most powerful actor of the political system, the president, and those who get the expert knowledge and apply it, the technocrats and technopols. Furthermore, the evidence identifies not only who the most influential actors are but also how they constitute this alliance and work through the policy process to select problems, and formulate, approve and implement government interventions.

The evidence shows that the inclusion of a problem into the government agenda rather depends on the vision that a small group within the government has developed on a particular situation. This groups is commonly integrated by very influential policy advisors, high public officials and the president. The vision developed by this group would depend on a set of factors such as professional background, the theoretical frameworks in which they have been trained in their studies, the perception of problem they have developed on a particular situation, studies undertaken on the issue and evaluation of programs under current implementation. The fact that an issue had been among the main citizen’s concerns was not a decisive element for that issue to be included in the government agenda.

The analysis of the four cases seems to show a pattern. If the president has a motivation on the issue or if policy advisors succeed in getting the President convinced that the situation is a public problem, then the likelihood to be included in his/her presidential platform, when candidate, or in the government agenda, when president, increases dramatically. In all of them presidents had personal inclination to them either because of their experiences, beliefs, knowledge on the issue, because of their interest in solving a situation they saw as a problem or because they wanted to leave a bequest for next generations.

On the other hand, the fact that an issue leaves the government agenda appears to be related to the lack of president’s motivation to it, which is the case of the public management modernization in Lagos administration. In that
situation, an actor with equivalent political capacity, in a context of a political crisis or a severe weakness of the president, and inclined to intervene on the issue has to emerge to get the issue be included into the government agenda and move it toward the decision agenda, as the case of the public management modernization shows.

Technocrats and technopols contribute expert knowledge to give rationality to problem selection. While the president is the protagonist in the problem selection stage, technopols appear to have the leading role in the formulation and implementation stages, whereas technocrats are key actor in the details of designing interventions. Presidential motivation appear also to be linked to the issue moving up in the government agenda and coming into the decision agenda. In all the four cases the president appears to be the crucial actor to overcome any difficulty in the process of building and approval a policy proposal, because he/she is the one who may gives the most important political support to the policy initiative.

This tacit agreement between these two types of key actors seems to work as follows: a motivated president appoints and empowers technopols, who lead groups of technocrats to build proposal based on expert knowledge. These technopols set ties and work within political networks across government and develop extensive efforts – supported by the president – to get a proposal approved and implemented later.

Three out of four cases analyzed in this study show that policies being approved and implemented went through a long process of accumulation of information, experiences and, ultimately, knowledge on the issue that would be intervened. This was a crucial factor in decision on building the government agenda as shown by cases of public management modernization, the policy on transparency and the health care reform during both Lagos and Frei Ruiz-Tagle administrations. Health care reform was not undertaken during Frei Ruiz-Tagle administration because of the lack of enough expert knowledge on the issue and, due to that, the president instruction was to develop studies for the reform might be implemented in the following administration, which allows the next president – Ricardo Lagos – to implement it.
Transantiago shows, on the one hand, a case of inclusion of an issue into the government agenda based on the president strong motivation and will without having enough expert knowledge on the issue to be intervened. On the other hand, it reveals that failure in the understanding and complementation between technocrats and politicians may lead to a policy failure.

The cases studied also let see another main characteristic of the Chilean policy formation process: there were not alternatives but just one proposal, the one produced by the group that had worked on it within the government – empowered by the president – or the one generated by a group backed by an actor with enough political capacity, as showed by the case of the reinstalation of the public management modernization. Differently from what Kingdon (2011 and 1995) finds for the US case, the analysis of the four Chilean policies does not show a selection process of contending proposals. The analysis rather suggest that there is one idea or perspective, which is the basis for a proposal progressively built by a group of technocrats/technopols empowered by a politically dominant actor, who almost always is the president.

This characteristic seems to be related to another one, expressed in the fact that technopols and technocrats seek the political support of the president to use his/her administrative capacity to approve proposals and implement them later, and leave the legislative way to situations in which there is no other constitutional choice and/or in context in which crisis have to be solved through a political negotiations that must be expressed in the approval of laws. This characteristic may be also seen as another expression of the tacit agreement – which appears to be very robust – between political power and expert knowledge. Interviews reveal that officials from the executive branch frequently – but not always – see Congress as a source of obstruction, disinterest or long delays on executive initiatives, which they prefer – as long as it would be possible – to avoid for two reasons: to have a fast approval and keep control on the process – to prevent that corporate interest may make that process deviate from the objectives of the reform defined by technopols and technocrats.

The analysis of the four Chilean cases suggests that the policy process would work somewhat different from that of the US. Studies performed on cases from the United States concludes that joining of streams – problems, solutions
and politics – would be the key factor to understand the formulation of a public policy (Kingdon 2011 and 1995), that “an issue intrudes (in the government agenda) when a problem is severe and when the signal indicating the severity of that problem is weighted heavily” (Jones and Baumgartner 2005: 266). According to this latter perspective, the key to understand the inclusion of an issue into the government agenda and the rising of a public policy is the processing of information (from public opinion, policy advocates, interest groups and the like) that occur in the political system, which lead to interpretations that creates images about the need to intervene on an issue that had been managed in a policy subsystem. Kingdon’s perspective is close to that since his analytical focus is “how problems come to be recognized and how conditions come to be defined as problems,” which implies processing information that come in the form of “systematic indicators, focusing events and feedback from the operations of current programs” (Kingdon 2011 and 1995: 19).

These very interesting and seminal studies seem to depict a quite rational process and resemble what Cobb, Ross and Ross (1976: 128) describe as “outside initiative model” of agenda setting. These studies focus their analysis in how the decision makers process information, mainly coming from the public agenda, to set the government agenda and to undertake the policymaking process. Thus, what these analyses describe is a rather pluralist model (see, for instance, Howlett and Ramesh 2003: 31 – 41) of agenda setting for policy cases from the USA.

In contrast, the evidence collected on the Chilean policy formation processes rather suggest the presence of an elitist model, where groups reaching government power and those around them have the ability to set some issues into the government agenda beyond whether or not these issues were in the public agenda. This characteristic seems to resemble to the “inside access model” of agenda building and policy-making, where “proposals arise within governmental units or in groups close to the government … (implying an) attempt to exclude the participation of the public” (Cobb, Ross and Ross 1976: 136).

Seen in perspective, the analysis suggests that the Chilean policy process mainly develops within the executive branch – because of the institutional design – and that there would be a reciprocal and robust support between the president
and technopolis/technocrats – or, in other words, power and expert knowledge – which is maintained even when the knowledge on an issue is weak – as shown in the case of Transantiago. These two factors would make the president and technocrats/technopolis so influential on the policy making process. In this context, the president would be the political actor – given his/her motivation – that most frequently opens the process for a policy change. Technopolis/technocrats people would be the key actors in the design and implementation stages, resting in the presidential administrative capacities to avoid delays and keep control on the policy process. Similarly, as the health care reform shows, competition between different advocacy groups for the contents of the policy tend to be solved by the president, who set the framework ideas in which the policy proposal has to be designed.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has analyzed four Chilean policy cases. The evidence collected from those cases insinuates that the Chilean policy formation process would be rather elitist and the characteristics of the Chilean agenda-setting process would be coincident with the description made by Cobb, Ross and Ross (1976) on the inside access model.

The evidence provided by the four Chilean cases analyzed suggest that the president will and motivation seems to be a key variable in Chile to identify a chance for a policy change. Most frequently a motivated president is the key actor that opens the process, identifying a situation on which he/she would like to undertake a policy intervention; that the workable solution depends on the knowledge accumulated on the issue and the framework of ideas set by the president.

This central characteristic of the Chile’s policy formation process diverges from the one that reputed scholars have identified on the US case. While in the US case a plurality of proposals contends, in Chile no other proposal is considered in the process except the one worked within the executive branch.

Thus, the analysis suggests that a policy change would most likely occur when a motivated president nominates and empowers a group of technopolis/technocrats, who takes advantage of an extensive accumulation of
knowledge on an issue, designs a proposal and manages to get it approved and implemented. Technopols/technocrats, in turn, wishing to avoid delays and keep control on the process, prefers to use the administrative capacity of the president to get the proposal approved and implemented. But, if it is constitutionally mandatory or politically needed – because of a crisis, for instance – they are going to submit the proposal for a Congressional discussion and decision.

REFERENCES


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