

From “dot.org” to “dot.gov”: Professional Crossings in the Brazilian National Policy on HIV/AIDS

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Published online: 24 May 2011

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Abstract This article reflects on the importance of the relations between state and society in policy-making in the area of public health. Several studies in various sectors such as health, education, and social services have made similar observations on organizational dynamics and the institutionalization of different models of partnerships or contracts, often based on the analytical model of three sectors. Individuals and their networks of relationships, however, remain an almost unexplored dimension in these types of research. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to analyze the movement of HIV/AIDS activists to governmental organizations working in this same field. The analysis raises questions concerning the forms of individual and institutional learning that help to maintain the distinct character of innovation of the Brazilian policy. Professionals who cross the borders hold a different profile once they have accumulated experience working with grassroots and local NGOs, and have also had the chance to be trained and enhance their technical and managerial capacities, since the government has supported NGOs for a long period. When combined, these experiences allow them to maintain relationships with social movements and give them the ability to navigate through the government bureaucracy and handle technical information about fighting AIDS epidemics, making it possible for them to negotiate strategic collaborations reflecting the interests of different groups. Hence, they constantly reflect on the differences between government and social spaces, and keep questioning and modifying their roles in the light of potential and existing complementarities.

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Resume Cet article propose une réflexion sur l'importance des relations entre l'état et la société en matière d'élaboration d'une politique dans le domaine de la santé publique. De nombreuses études axées sur différents secteurs tels que les services sociaux, de santé et d'éducation ont formulé des observations similaires quant aux dynamiques organisationnelles et à l'institutionnalisation des différents modèles de partenariats ou de contrats, souvent fondées sur le modèle analytique des trois secteurs. Les individus ainsi que leurs réseaux de contacts demeurent cependant une dimension quasi inexplorée dans ces types de recherches. Dans ce contexte, cette étude entreprend d'analyser le mouvement des activistes impliqués dans la lutte contre le HIV/SIDA vers les organisations gouvernementales intervenant dans ce même secteur. L'analyse soulève des questions concernant les formes d'apprentissage individuel et institutionnel contribuant à préserver le caractère distinctif d'innovation de la politique brésilienne. Les professionnels intervenant à l'étranger présentent un profil différent après qu'ils aient accumulé une expérience de collaboration avec les ONG populaires et locales. Il en est de même s'ils ont eu également la possibilité de recevoir une formation et d'améliorer leurs compétences techniques et d'encadrement, grâce au soutien de longue date des ONG par le gouvernement. Ces expériences, lorsqu'elles sont combinées, leur permettent d'entretenir des relations avec des mouvement sociaux et les dotent tant d'une capacité de naviguer au sein de la bureaucratie gouvernementale que de traiter les informations techniques portant sur la lutte contre l'épidémie du SIDA. Ils bénéficient ainsi de la possibilité de négocier des collaborations stratégiques reflétant les intérêts des différents groupes. De ce fait, ils développent une réflexion constante sur les différences entre les espaces gouvernementaux et sociaux, et remettent sans cesse en question leurs rôles pour les modifier au regard de complémentarités existantes et potentielles.

Zusammenfassung Dieser Beitrag untersucht die Bedeutung der Beziehungen zwischen Staat und Gesellschaft bei Grundsatzentscheidungen im öffentlichen Gesundheitswesen. Mehrere Studien in verschiedenen Bereichen, wie dem Gesundheits-, Bildungs- und Sozialwesen, haben ähnliche Beobachtungen mit Hinblick auf die organisatorische Dynamik und die Institutionalisierung verschiedener Partnerschafts- oder Vertragsmodelle angestellt, oftmals beruhend auf dem analytischen Modell dreier Bereiche. Bei dieser Art von Forschungen bleiben individuelle Personen und ihre Beziehungsnetzwerke allerdings nahezu eine unerforschte Dimension. Vor diesem Hintergrund ist die Abhandlung bestrebt, die Bewegung der HIV/AIDS-Aktivisten in Richtung staatliche Organisationen, welche im gleichen Bereich tätig sind, zu untersuchen. Die Analyse wirft Fragen zu den Formen individuellen und institutionellen Lernens auf, die zur Wahrung des ausgeprägten Innovationscharakters brasilianischer Grundsatzregeln beitragen. Fachkräfte, die die Grenzen überschreiten, weisen ein anderes Profil auf, nachdem sie Erfahrungen in der Arbeit mit Basisorganisationen und örtlichen nicht-staatlichen Organisationen gesammelt haben und zudem die Gelegenheit hatten, eine Ausbildung zu genießen sowie ihre fachlichen und leitenden Fähigkeiten weiterzuentwickeln; denn die Regierung unterstützt die nicht-staatlichen Organisationen bereits seit langem.

Aufgrund dieser Erfahrungen können sie die Beziehungen zu gesellschaftlichen Bewegungen pflegen und die Regierungsbürokratie überkommen sowie fachliche Informationen über den Kampf gegen AIDS-Epidemien verarbeiten und so strategische Kollaborationen verhandeln, die die Interessen verschiedener Gruppen vertreten. Folglich bedenken sie stets die Unterschiede zwischen der Regierung und den Sozialbereichen und hinterfragen und modifizieren kontinuierlich ihre Rollen angesichts potentieller und bestehender Komplementaritäten.

Resumen Este ensayo refleja la importancia de las relaciones entre el estado y la sociedad al momento de establecer las políticas relativas al área de salud pública. Varios estudios en diversos sectores tales como el de la salud, la educación y los servicios sociales realizaron observaciones similares en lo que respecta a la dinámica organizacional y la implementación de diversos modelos de sociedades o contratos, frecuentemente constituidos en función del modelo analítico de tres sectores. Sin embargo, los individuos y sus redes de relaciones aún continúan siendo una dimensión casi inexplorada en estos tipos de investigaciones. Con el fin de contrarrestar esta situación, el objeto de este trabajo es analizar el movimiento activista del VIH/SIDA correspondiente a las organizaciones gubernamentales trabajando en este mismo campo. El análisis introduce preguntas relacionadas con las formas de aprendizaje, tanto a nivel individual como institucional, que ayudan a mantener la inconfundible característica de innovación de la política brasileña. Los profesionales que cruzan las fronteras cuentan con un perfil diferente luego de haber acumulado experiencia a través de su trabajo de base y en organizaciones no gubernamentales (ONG), y también tuvieron la oportunidad de capacitarse y mejorar sus aptitudes técnicas y gerenciales debido al apoyo que las ONG han recibido por parte del gobierno durante largo tiempo. Al combinar estas experiencias, las mismas les permiten mantener relaciones con los movimientos sociales y brindarles la capacidad de navegar a través de la burocracia gubernamental y manejar información técnica sobre la lucha contra la epidemia del SIDA, posibilitando las negociaciones de colaboraciones estratégicas que reflejan los intereses de grupos diferentes. Por lo tanto, reflejan constantemente las diferencias entre el ámbito gubernamental y social, y continúan interrogando y modificando sus roles en búsqueda de complementariedades potenciales y existentes.

Keywords Civil society · Government · Activists · Professionals · HIV/AIDS

Introduction

The official Brazilian HIV/AIDS policy is a result of the wide efforts of a diverse spectrum of social actors from the public, private, and non-profit sectors. It originated in São Paulo state at the beginning of the 1980s, where physicians working in public hospitals overwhelmed with the first AIDS cases opened up a debate with the society in order to seek a response to the new public health problem. The first societal group involved in this mobilization was the gay movement. Gradually other actors joined it, especially those from civil society involved in

re-establishing democracy and the human rights of marginalized minorities (Brazil, Ministry of Health 1998, 2001, 2002, 2003; Câmara and Lima 2000).

As the mobilization grew, the groups involved managed to place the HIV/AIDS issue on the federal government agenda, resulting in the creation of the National STD/AIDS Program in 1985. It has been recognized by many international organizations like the WHO, UNAIDS, UNESCO, and the World Bank as a reference for developed and developing countries (Rosenberg 2001; UNESCO 2005; World Bank 1997).

The literature analyzing the emergence and institutionalization of the HIV/AIDS policy field in Brazil emphasizes the importance of civil society organizations, known generically as “AIDS NGOs,” and the impossibility of analyzing the Brazilian HIV/AIDS policy without considering their participation in delivering several public services and in exercising the function of watchdog control (Brazil, Ministry of Health 1998; Parker 2003). The relationship between NGOs and the state in this policy is usually described in those two dimensions—public service delivery and watchdog control—and many pieces of research and surveys have been dedicated to exploring and analyzing them.

There are, however, other dimensions that have not been explored in the studies of HIV/AIDS policy and, as Lewis (2008a) states, personal relationships and informal transaction aspects are just as important as the officially established formal connections. He recognizes the sector boundaries as blurred and perceives a fluid transit of individuals among the sectors. For him, those cross-over movements represent new approaches to understanding third sector–state partnerships in structuring public policies and they emphasize the aspect of individual agency, in contrast to a more generalized policy framework.

When we seek to understand relationships between sectors from the experience of individuals it is also possible to formulate proposals about their organizational implications. The meanings and influences of professionals’ cross-overs reveal particular dynamics of learning, power relations, which help to explain shifts in resource incentives and political opportunities, helping to adjust the three-sector theoretical model to more complex realities (Lewis 2008b, p. 564).

This study seeks to explore the movements of HIV/AIDS activists to governmental organizations working in this same field. It maps the trajectory of individuals who have made that transition, investigating the reasons for the crossing-over, how they experienced public policy construction on both sides, and what happened next in their trajectories. The results of this study point to the existence of a continuum dynamics of reflection, made possible through the different views of former activists who moved to work on the governmental programs and through the maintenance of personal networks that facilitate the flow of talks and ideas between civil society and governmental organizations. In this way, professionals located on both sides are constantly questioning themselves about their roles and responsibilities in the light of potentialities and complementarities already existent between government and civil society organizations in the field of HIV/AIDS.

Reflecting on State–Society Relations: A Processual Model

A considerable number of studies that theorize around the nature of the relations between government and civil society organizations in service delivery do so using the analytical separation of the so-called *tri-sector model*.

The tri-sector model concentrates heavily on defining and describing the different sectors, very often in terms of their organizational characteristics, and also on comparing them and describing how they relate to one another in different ways in various parts of the world (Salamon and Anheier 1997).

Explanations for the establishment of those relations stem from the idea that there are market, government, and third-sector organization failures and that each sector has its own comparative advantages as a provider of public services. It is precisely on that relationship between government and society in the implementation of public policies that the majority of studies are focused (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002).

Some studies are dedicated to differentiating the various relationship models. Coston (1998) developed a general model for the government–society relationship in the national sphere. Among the different forms of relationship identified are repression, rivalry, and competition. Najam (2000) pointed out cooperation, confrontation, and complementary and co-opting strategies. Gidron et al. (1992) examined the relations in the light of the different welfare systems in which there may be dominance of the governmental sector or of the third sector or a dual/collaborative arrangement.

It is considered that the tri-sector model is analytically convenient, but that reality shows itself to be much more complex (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002; Lewis 2008a). More detailed analyses of public–private relationships and their extent are needed (see also Garvey 1992) to clarify better the power forms that permeate and structure those relations. This sort of analysis can reveal the complexity of individual and organizational factors and their interplay with macro-factors such as politics, history, and culture and also the transit of professionals between the sectors.

The literature reveals an increasing tendency to view inter-sector relations from the processual angle, delineating their nature and extension and not just concentrating on the aspect of effectiveness. An example is the use of Peter Evans's (1997) idea of synergy (Harriss 2001; Ostrom 1996; Tandler 1997; Write and Robinson 1998). The concept of “synergy” is used to describe state and civil society engagement as a form of interaction capable of generate mutual gains.

This engagement is reached by *complementarity* of their activities or capacities, nothing necessarily new in relation to many three-sector model studies, which highlighted the comparative advantages of each type of organization (Write and Robinson 1998). However, complementarity alone does not explain the existence of synergy: “Even the most obvious division of labor must be sustained by shared orientations and concrete interactions among the actors involved” (Evans 1997, p. 1123). In fact, the notion of complementarity emphasizes an instrumental view of the relationships among civil society and government organizations. Evan's concept of synergy goes further when it considers the *embeddedness* between citizens and public officials, making the boundaries of government and society less clear.

Complementarity creates potential for synergy but does not provide the organizational base for the materialization of that potential. *Embeddedness*, in the

form of the direct involvement of citizens and public agents, is the key that enables the sustainability of organizational involvement between two sectors.

A virtuous cycle is created through the mutual collaboration and gains in which civil society nurtures good government and good government in turn fosters civic engagement. Synergy depends on the extent to which social networks transpose formal government and civil society boundaries, if we could ever refer to that.

Conditions that foster synergy are associated with social structures, people's perceptions, the redefinition of problems, and the capacity for collective action. In turn, those conditions are influenced by the nature of social conflicts and the nature and extent of the inequalities between the parties (Harriss 2001).

The synergy concept implies a certain degree of collaboration between state organizations and civil society organizations to achieve common social objectives, but it can also be viewed as a political process.

In that case there is synergy when societal organizations use their influence to stimulate governmental provision of social services or enhance their transparency. Thus, synergy is capable of producing benefits for both parties without necessarily being a harmonious process; on the contrary, it is generally permeated by conflict, particularly when the historical process shows a high degree of power inequality among government and civil society organizations.

In a study of innovation in Ceará (Brazil), Tendler (1997) surmises that the limitations of synergy lie in the government sphere rather than in civil society. One interesting finding of that study is that synergy in the more decentralized spheres of government is more dependent on the degree of the insertion of government agents into civic life, meaning that there must be social networks that sustain the relationships of governmental and civil society organizations.

Among the cases that Tendler (1997) analyzed was that of community health agents. The involvement of those agents became a differential factor and a source of stability for professionals given that they were not part of the regular civil service. The inhabitants recognized these agents as their intermediaries with the state and the agents in turn presented the communities' demands and complaints not only to the local health service units, but to other spheres of government as well. The agents were motivated by the prestige they enjoyed in the eyes of the community. Thus, the degree of local belonging and the control the community exercised over the agents' work may well explain the greater involvement of those workers in the program and the greater participation of the community, which felt that its demands would be met, at least to some extent, by the state.

In looking to extend the theorization and the understanding of practices that promote collaboration among government and civil society we propose to examine further the nature of these individuals' interactions, as they can constrain or open new opportunities for collaborations at the organizational level.

Collective Identities Crossing Sector Frontiers

Lewis (2008a, b) criticized and sought to go beyond the tri-sector model to gain an understanding of the relations between state, society, and market. In our view his

innovative proposal complements and establishes a dialog on processual forms and the inter-sector analysis of policies, shifting the level of analysis to the relationships and processes and placing the role of the individuals at the heart of the question. The focus of his analysis is precisely on the inter-sector boundaries and the movement of professionals among different sectors. He highlights the need to understand the hybrid nature of many state and social organizations and its implications for their autonomy (Lewis 2010). Various forms of relationships and action strategies can be identified along the boundaries between them. That is because different actors and groups move among the sectors and that is why it so important to analyze those boundaries, as Lewis (2008a, b) points out.

However, one can shift the analysis from the boundaries between sectors to the boundaries within some societal fields. Especially in the case of the HIV/AIDS policy arena, it is impossible to ignore that the movement of professionals among the different sectors is connected to the emergence of new identities.

According to Melucci (2004), individuals belong to a plurality of groups, which are generated by multiple social roles. Individuals enter and exit these groups more rapidly now than in the past, making them “nomads of the present” (2004, p. 60). In this way an individual identity is generated through social relationships; this identity allows the individual to understand the effects of his/her actions and to recognize his/her authorship. Social actions are symbolic productions, and when recognized by their authors, become their property and make possible social exchange. Melucci (2004) also states that it is possible to speak of identity in relation to both an individual and a group. In both cases, however, three characteristics are essential to demonstrate the constitution of identity: continuity of the subject; the delimitation of this subject in relation to the other; and the ability to recognize and to be recognized. In this sense, Melucci’s concept inspired Polleta and Jasper (2001, p. 285) to define collective identity “as an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity.”

Collective identity assures to a group—or to the society—to which individuals belong the possibilities of continuity and maintenance. The identity establishes, in a given time, the limits of a given social group in relation to its natural and social environment, and concerns the orientation of action in relation to opportunities and constraints. According to Melucci (2004), types of identity and their duration are contingents of a historical context that defines the group or the society.

The concept of collective identity makes some implications for understanding organizational collaborations, particularly among organizations located in different sectors, once any processes of collaboration require a certain level of collective action. Thus, in collaborations, as described by Hardy et al. (2005) and by Lawrence et al. (1999), individuals interact to define in cognitive terms the possibilities and limits for action. Thus, it is not only organizational features that influence collaborations, or synergy types of relationships, but also collective identities that are forged by several individuals or groups to make sense of their common behavior.

A Brief History of the Brazilian National HIV/AIDS Policy

The initial Brazilian response to HIV/AIDS, when the first cases were detected in the early 1980s, relied on the intense participation of civil society and its organizations, which mobilized to fight the prejudice towards an unknown disease, then fatal in most cases, and to push for responses from the state. The first NGOs created with this specific mission during the 1980s relied mainly on the voluntary work of activists of the gay movement, people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, their families, as well as health professionals.

These initial mobilizations gave rise to specific NGOs with the main goal related to the prevention of AIDS. In addition, they also motivated some existent organizations, working with themes such as gender, to incorporate the HIV/AIDS topic into their agendas. These organizations gained more visibility as they attracted among their volunteers activists from other political arenas. The most visible of these were activists and their organizations who had been fighting for the re-democratization of Brazil for a long period (Brazil, Ministry of Health 2001, 2002).

We can point to some distinctive characteristics that shaped the emergence of the HIV/AIDS field and the institutional responses to it. Apart from occurring relatively early in the mid-1980s, this response was able to articulate a wide range of actors, from the gay rights movement to the Catholic Church. This policy assumed a shared model of coordination and implementation, involving both the provision of services by civil society organizations and the mechanisms of watchdog control and advocacy performed by the same organizations. Certain progressive strategies were put in place, such as free distribution of AIDS drug cocktails and the inclusion of marginalized groups such as gay people, sex workers, and drug users in the construction of policy alternatives (Galvão 2000, 2002). Legitimacy and innovation in the HIV/AIDS policy were reached through the participation of diverse groups, often marginalized and located on the periphery of other fields (Mendonça et al. 2010). Assuming at first a critical and confrontational character in the absence or insufficient action of the state, the relations between NGOs and the state evolved over the years into a more purposeful and complementary model that allowed the maintenance of a balance between advocacy and service delivery activities of civil society organizations (Parker 2003).

Service provision by civil society organizations is concentrated on prevention-related activities and advisory support, legal and psychological, for people living with HIV/AIDS. This action has special visibility among more vulnerable groups, who were beyond the reach of the traditional state structures in the health system. Many of these pioneering and innovative activities have gradually been incorporated into the HIV/AIDS policy by the state itself. Gradually this implementation structure has become institutionalized, primarily with NGOs carrying out prevention work and governmental structures focusing much more on the areas of epidemiological surveillance, care, and treatment with hospital networks and the availability of medicines and prevention commodities (Campos 2005).

In recent years, the policy has undergone an intense decentralization process designed to include the state and municipal spheres more effectively and in many places they too can count on partnerships with non-governmental organizations.

Thus, new partnership arrangements and divisions of labor have been constructed at the local level, but not without conflict because there is still a question that has not been totally settled, namely the “ownership” of actions that historically have always been unfolded by NGOs. Should they continue to be executed by them or should they be regularly incorporated by states and municipalities as decentralization comes into full effect? The eventual decision will have a decisive impact on the sustainability of the organizations because the public sector is their main source of funding. In a similar way there is a conflict between public managers and organizations insofar as they often view the execution of projects as merely being service provision or as a kind of outsourcing and not as a synergy type of relationship.

Considering this changing and complex background we will analyze the relationships between government and society on the HIV/AIDS policy through the examination of professional crossings and individuals’ experiences and learning processes, which directly impact on their organizational settings.¹

Methods

We mapped and interviewed 15 NGO activists who were currently working for governmental HIV/AIDS programs. The majority of them worked in the National STD/AIDS Department of the Ministry of Health, but we also interviewed professionals working in state and municipal HIV/AIDS programs. One of them was working in a state education department (dealing with HIV/AIDS issues in public schools) and another in a UN agency. The interviewees working in the National STD/AIDS Department came from all parts of the country, while those who worked in state and municipal programs were concentrated in São Paulo state.

The interviewees were selected from a predefined list elaborated by researchers with previous knowledge of the field, and were complemented with new indications from these first interviewees via the snowballing technique. All the interviewees had worked previously in NGOs or community organizations directly involved with HIV/AIDS (in the case of organizations of people living with HIV/AIDS), or were indirectly involved, in the case of gay, feminist, and religious organizations, conducting advocacy for sexual and reproductive rights. The selection of interviewees considered their previous professional experience and their current position occupied on governmental bodies. The semi-structured interview script was divided into four parts. The first part sought to gain an understanding of the way in which the question of HIV/AIDS had come into the life of the interviewees and to gain information on their experiences as activists and members of NGOs. The second part discussed the moment of transition to the government sphere, the reason why that had occurred, the reactions of partners, and the process of adaptation. The third part focused on activities unfolding within the governmental sphere and sought

¹ Despite the focus here on the movements of activists to the government, it is also possible to find professionals leaving the government and coming back to civil society organizations, universities, or international cooperation organizations, in general to work as consultants or researchers.

to perceive how the activist handled the two apparently conflicting logics of performance. The final part discussed professional prospects and a broader vision of the HIV/AIDS social movement in Brazil.

In an attempt to improve the way the interviews were conducted the script was based on the framework of an “ideal” linear trajectory from one sector to the other—what Lewis (2008a) refers to as “consecutive crossing”—without forgetting, however, that some of the interviewees belonged to a second category created by the author—“simultaneous crossing”—and that their trajectory was not necessarily linear but rather a series of comings and goings or joint performance in the two sectors.

The script made use of the “set of experiences” proposed and explored by Lewis (2008a, p. 126): taking ideas from one sector into another, managing transitions between one set of workplace rules and norms and another, and engaging with power relationships in either the maintenance of the status quo or the pursuit of change. It also explored issues related to the motivation and identity of these activists.

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed after previous authorization; however, they did not reveal the names and positions occupied by the respondents, or any other information that could identify them.

Activists’ Origins

Some of the interviewees already had prior experience in other social mobilization work with churches, at university, or in gay or feminist movements, for example, so their activism was not necessarily new, although working in the area of HIV/AIDS brought with it a new perspective, raised new questions, and introduced new mobilization dynamics.

For those with no previous experience of social mobilization, working for an AIDS NGO tended to awaken the urge towards activism. They had not imagined until that moment that they would ever become involved in any kind of social work.

Contact with an NGO came about when they discovered their HIV infection and sought assistance and support to face up to the stigmatization that they were likely to suffer. They began their involvement in a timid fashion, just attending meetings, then gradually became volunteers, and usually ended up becoming politically engaged and expanding their network of contacts to other organizations and people engaged in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Some of them even held positions of administrative responsibility within those organizations.

The NGOs usually offered group meetings and the possibility of professional requalification and repositioning, since at the beginning of the epidemic people were often dismissed from their jobs when their positive status became known. Involvement with an NGO made it possible for some to develop their professional expertise in fields like management and finance.

The involvement of other interviewees who are not HIV positive usually stemmed from volunteer or paid work in AIDS NGOs or from their previous work with gender, sexual diversity, and drugs. HIV/AIDS inevitably became an issue on their agendas. Furthermore, from the beginning of the 1990s, the expansion of the policy to fight HIV/AIDS strongly stimulated NGOs to develop prevention activities

among their beneficiaries, whether as an effect of the close identity with their own official missions as organizations or because of the government and international funding that became available.

This trajectory from volunteers to more “professional activists” is different from that found in another study undertaken by Lewis (2008b). He focused on managers who crossed sector boundaries in the UK, and found that activists become involved as they are motivated by international experience in a developing country or by the desire to acquire such experience, usually working as volunteers, or by their involvement with any kind of radical mobilization at university, or even by the desire for an alternative lifestyle after finishing university education.

When they entered the world of an NGO the interviewees participated in experiences involving watchdog control of policies and became part of an articulating network by taking part in participative bodies in the local and national spheres (formed by representatives of government and civil society) and through their daily relationships with government administrators and managers, AIDS NGO forums, and mobilization activities.

Time dedicated to activism, together with the availability of resources for the first AIDS NGOs (financial resources as well as training in different technical and political issues provided by government bodies and international NGO partners), allowed the accumulation of certain knowledge and the emergence of a network of “professional” activists.

Additionally, during their first years, HIV/AIDS epidemics were concentrated on urban centers and affected mostly middle-class populations. Being HIV positive at that time was seen by society as a death sentence, and thus victims could immediately retire and receive pensions. This fact ended up functioning as an important source of resources for the HIV/AIDS social movement and many AIDS NGOs in that period. These organizations benefitted from the availability of people with time and motivation for the cause.

Mobilizations around HIV/AIDS issues were also able to articulate different fields and knowledge as many individuals and organizations joined the efforts, such as activists involved in the fight for the restoration of democracy, progressive health professionals fighting for the reform of the health system, and international development NGOs, among others.

Throughout this process, there is then a gradual movement of the first transition narrated by several of the interviewees. They left their activities and jobs in the private sector (as teachers, salesmen, psychologists, etc.) to work in an NGO and to participate in forums and networks, usually as volunteers first, and then as paid staff on funded projects. Another group already had a history of militancy, but their organizations started to work with HIV/AIDS, allowing them to acquire certain “specializations” regarding this cause.

Navigating in Different Spaces

Interviewees’ movement into the governmental sphere was related to a variety of motives such as the search for new professional opportunities, better salaries, and

professional stability, the wish to enter a new cycle of life, or even, in some cases, the desire to see what it was like “on the other side,” which were also identified in Lewis’s study (2008b). Interviewees mentioned difficulties stemming from the low level of professionalization of NGOs (despite the accumulation of learning and experiences described in the previous section), the instability caused by the government system for supporting NGO projects, and the legal framework regulating the third sector in Brazil, all of which made it impossible to provide satisfactory and regular remuneration.

In the transition process it is possible to identify a government interest in acquiring capable professionals with political articulation who can contribute to the unfolding of its policy. Even without holding a specialized degree or formal academic knowledge, these activists’ experiences were highly regarded in governmental spheres. Many of them had already acted as consultants to the government, contributing to getting their work known inside the government bureaucracy. At a certain moment that visibility contributes to an invitation to join the government sphere, an invitation that is generally accepted and viewed as a kind of professional recognition.

Activists’ experience is valued and mentioned as one of the main reasons for contracting their services. They generally come from well-known organizations, have taken part in successful projects, and have had life experiences “in the front line.” They also know how to design projects, conduct strategic planning, capture funding resources, negotiate with local government authorities and international organizations, and handle the media, among other skills.

Activists also bring strong values of solidarity and experience of working with vulnerable populations. These are rather typical of the logic of many civil society organizations and are not usually found in professionals from government. The combination of experiences, values, and management skills more specific to the area of HIV/AIDS, and identification, contact, and engagement with the HIV/AIDS movement, produces a highly qualified and differentiated professional:

We have knowledge from the base, so we know how to say for social movements what is going on inside the government administration. When we sit at a table to discuss and negotiate and especially when we know a lot about the population in question, that is a differential factor that is very important within the [STD/AIDS] Department. It is important to be able to count on people living with HIV here so that we can work better on that particular focus because the knowledge lies with those people that are living out [the issue]. If the department were made up of professional civil servants alone, what would happen to the process given their lack of such knowledge? For those of us that know both sides the skill of changing, dialog and articulating the process becomes that much easier.

Those who went to the government had much a coordination role on social movement (...). They developed a technique, because [of] the militancy, the daily political work, the mediation of conflicts, the political discussion. And

the great trainer of technical and political activist is the social movement. Few universities give you political training.

The invitation was not necessarily readily accepted or accepted without deep reflection on life and what the meanings and consequences of such a change might be. The interviewees reported that when they revealed their acceptance of the invitation to their peers there was a generalized reaction of sadness and concern about their moving over to the government sphere. Some alleged that the government was co-opting activists, although that line of discourse appears to have been somewhat superficial. One of the respondents used the expression “peer terrorism” when speaking of his experience and the sequence of schism and separation involving resigning from office and leadership posts, requests to withdraw from organizations, and/or the removal of the individual’s e-mail address from the list of participants in online discussion groups.

Although painful, the break is seen as necessary to avoid ambiguity and to be better able to take on the new body of work. Some respondents still remained for a time with a double insertion, for example when working for a municipal HIV/AIDS program and participating in social movement actions in other governmental spheres on the regional and national levels. However, at some point, even retaining some personal ties, participation in the institutional life of the movement is interrupted.

The respondents vehemently rejected the hypothesis of co-optation and argued that what was involved above all was a voluntary personal choice and that they would never accept impositions of that kind. Furthermore, the institutional nature of the Brazilian HIV/AIDS policy made no provision for such practices. One interviewee went so far as to praise the government for bringing in a person with a radical background, and said that this often represents the opportunity not only to criticize the government but also to show the Achilles heel of social movements:

I give the government a plus mark for having the courage to bring someone from the movement into the government; who up until that moment had always been a critic, a combatant; bringing them into administrative spaces. I do not see that as co-opting but as something positive for the government, the vision of the usefulness of having someone that has been out there on the other side, out there demanding the effective implementation of public policies; and bringing them into help make its actions viable.

This entanglement was identified by Evans (1997) as embeddedness, meaning that the relationships between government and civil society are not rigidly delimited. Therefore, there is a dynamic balance, always instable between these limits, since every space has its own logic. They also combine their logics through different mechanisms.

It is worth underscoring the flexibility of the AIDS program mechanisms for contracting technical personnel, in the light of the rules established in the World Bank loan agreement and the so-called “Incentive Policy” designed by the Ministry of Health, which dispense, in some cases, the need for competitive public admission

exams and allow for the contracting out of technical staff as consultants, which has partly facilitated the transit from one sector to another.² There is also a perceptible personal element present in the contracting process, not in the sense of a patronage-orientated attitude, or to comply with political indications, but more in the sense of a personal identification and prior contact with the activist on the part of the government administrators or others activists who were already working there, and that factor is just as important as the question of technical expertise and experience.

As soon as the newly contracted activist starts to work in the AIDS programs, he or she has to address certain issues. The first is the need to adapt to the bureaucratic structure of the government sphere. For some, the first days were marked by unease and doubts as to whether they really could contribute anything useful. They immediately became aware of the need to acquire new knowledge of subjects, particularly on the function of the National Health System, and the detailed legislation about funding and operational and social participation mechanisms. Even though they might have acquired some of this knowledge during their activities in civil society organizations, there were other dimensions with which they needed to become familiar and make use of in their work. It is not a learning process without conflicts:

I had moments of leaving the meeting and say “I do not want anymore,” “I have not sold my soul to the devil to stand these people,” but then I had a lot of freedom from my superior to lead the process, and her support saying “you have to relieve, that’s being in government.”

At some point you want to quit. And when you see yourself in this place, people talk to you: you have to learn that you are **dot.gov, you are no longer dot.org**.

One respondent mentioned how difficult it was to persuade other members of the program’s technical staff to interest themselves in questions of civil society participation, especially those who had never been “out there” on the non-governmental side, and also reported realizing that in the government sphere things never worked out just the way one wanted, so that activists had to adapt themselves to the government “machine” and look for ways to make rigid regulations more flexible, accelerate bureaucratic processes, and persuade other parts of the government.

Working as part of the government machine means following the lines of bureaucratic processes and always acting on the principle of legality and those tend to make the actions much slower and more complex than they were when the person was working in an NGO. These differences result in changes in the way the activist embeds him-/herself in the structures of policy planning and implementation and in his/her perception of the work:

² This question is part of a broader problem existent in the public sector, which is the coexistence of career civil servants and other professionals with different work contracts. See, for example, the use of the concepts of *shadow bureaucracy* (Frederickson and Smith 2003; Garvey 1992) and *government by proxy* (Kettl 1988). See also discussions about the still incomplete institutionalization of bureaucracy in the Brazilian public administration (Abrucio 2007; Pacheco 2010).

You come in imbued with the logic of the NGO and so you end up thinking that everything is your fault, that you are incompetent and that you are not managing to be efficient enough to show that your agenda is important. But there are no funds, there is no one to sign approval (...) you cannot get a chance to have your ideas or priorities considered (...).

Another difference that was strongly emphasized with regard to the adaptation process was that in government circles one has to be very careful and coherent. In the NGO, activists are free to comment and criticize on the basis of their personal points of view, even when they are representing their organizations. In the government any such discourse must refer to the organization or agency and not the activist's individual stance:

If you compare my discourse as a [social] movement activist you see one thing, as a manager it is different, because you have knowledge of the [public] machine, you know how far you can go. The movement thinks you can go further always. Here there is a whole bureaucracy, and as time goes on they achieve results in the public policy, but it is a process, and on the other hand, they think [social movement] the government should quickly implement policy.

An interesting metaphor used by some respondents referred to the need to start to think as “dot.gov” and no longer as “dot.org,” to speak from and for the government, to assume responsibilities for policies, and to replace the critical discourse in relation to the government.

Another question that arises is whether the activists who move to the government sphere are there to represent the social movement. Most of them understand that this is not the case. One of those interviewed put it this way:

Whoever comes in [to the government] and still thinks in terms of the social movement suffers a lot. Here we are fighting for the National Health System. Here we are in a different locus altogether.

The transition may be easier for some than for others but it never takes place automatically or free of conflict. Should one think in terms of public policies or in terms of actions and projects directed at certain groups? That is a question that arises because activists' previous experience has been concentrated in a certain organization or a certain population segment whereas in the new situation the government work calls for a much wider focus.

Despite much of their performance strategies and the space they act in may have changed, the activists allege that they keep their ideology, their positions, and their ideas regarding HIV/AIDS intact. Such retention seems to be associated, in part, with the fact that they are embedded specifically in the HIV/AIDS program and not in the government at large. The constant reminder of the compromise in the fight against AIDS is also cited as a strategy for the activist not to “get lost” in the middle of the government machinery.

The quotations that follow illustrate how the identity of an activist can be exercised just as much in the government sphere as in civil society, precisely

because their origins are maintained and because working in government demands skills that were previously exercised in the work with NGOs, such as articulation with other sectors of government, states, and municipalities, NGOs, and the policy's beneficiaries:

I was perfectly well aware that irrespective of where you found yourself, you are still an activist, in different places, playing different roles, none of that changes my essence (...) I can be just as much a combatant in the movement as I can be in the government.

Here within the administrative space of the Ministry we are activists too, every day you have to negotiate and try to induce flexibility.

There is a very clear attitude, however, with regard to the responsibilities of each sector. The government is held responsible for constructing a public policy and civil society for exercising watchdog control over it. Another aspect that can be detected is the recognition of civil society's collaboration in implementing public policy but at the same time bearing in mind that it should be complementary in nature and never substitutive. That difference in the roles of the two sectors in HIV/AIDS policy is not only highlighted with regard to its implementation, but also applies to the roles and functions the activist is supposed to bear in mind at the moment he/she changes sides. There is a strong concern that those two roles may not be clear to the individual:

Civil society has the very useful function of exercising social watchdog control over policies whereas we have the equally useful function of constructing public policies to respond to the epidemic. That is a given fact. It is not feasible for the government to exercise social control or advocacy. Society can propose public policies but should not try to adopt a "dot.gov" line of discourse.

Although there are various similarities in the attitudes of the interviewees, there are also many differences that can be highlighted, as two distinct logics become mixed. Sometimes the activist does not find his place so easily in the government:

It's bad when some people come for the government mix up everything and cannot identify their place and role. At the same time they are in the government, they still believe they are representing a movement or that they can benefit some particular social demand at the expense of another. (...) As far as I committed myself and came to work in government, I'm not in the social movement anymore, I can continue, however, the dialogue. (...) And this is not always understood by people who come to the government.

That kind of reflection seems to be a constant presence, which becomes even more important if we consider that half of the interviewees occupied or had already occupied managerial positions in the HIV/AIDS governmental programs. One interviewee confessed to feel a constant need to be questioned and to reflect on whether his routine decisions in policy planning and implementation were being made using an activist frame or an administrator frame. He often makes decisions as an administrator that he would never have made as an activist and also reported that

he sometimes attempted to reach the solution of a given problem more from the stance of an activist than from that of an administrator, recognizing that in the position he presently occupies that is not a suitable attitude.

At this point we could identify two opposing ideas: when making a professional crossing, if an activist does not change his/her logic of action, it would mean draining the social watchdog control function typical of the social movement. In contrast, another respondent understood it to be possible to work in government while fighting for his/her rights as a citizen, participating in demonstrations, and expressing personal opinions. The first idea was much more predominant.

Although the prevailing discourse refers to complementary roles between government and civil society in the construction of the national response to HIV/AIDS, the interviewees also addressed questions of power and the existence of groups that compete for funding resources under the aegis of the HIV/AIDS policy. An additional factor contributing to the complexity of a professional crossing is the fact that the former activist will occupy a locus of power and will need to learn how to deal with it:

To debate AIDS within the health council is one of the great difficulties, there are many conflicts of interests, and many people are defending a policy of their own devising. Most people think about the policy in terms of their own surroundings, not concerned with a macro view for the entire situation. It was always very difficult. They questioned the resource, quantities, not whether the policy was adequate. That made me sad and sometimes we had very heavy clashes.

The interviewees also stressed the difference in the dimensions of their public targeted in their new roles. Working in an NGO means that activities are more focused and directed towards specific groups. The government, on the other hand, operates on a much larger scale and there is a need for inter-sector articulation. There is a glaring difference between the partial vision of an NGO and the broad government agenda and that has caused some to fear that they would be unable to carry out their work satisfactorily or make any relevant contribution.

Even so, another person mentioned that the NGOs are the ones that have first contact with a reality that will only later become apparent to the government; the more partial their vision may be, they are still very important in the context of complementariness: “the tendencies of the epidemic that eventually show up in the epidemiological bulletin knock first at the door of the NGO.”

Within an NGO, work is directed primarily to the final user; in the government it is more concerned with administrators, the bureaucracy, and other spheres of government. The work is directed at managing and monitoring policy and not at front-line actions involving final beneficiaries. In that sense, experience accumulated in the front line makes a difference because it is possible to generate more realistic proposals that have a better chance of being effective.

The transition to the government changes the earlier views that the respondents had in relation to NGOs: for some, a positive change, confirming their recognition that NGOs have carried out a great job for the HIV/AIDS policy with limited resources. For others, it clarifies the roles and limitations of each sector, as they become aware of mistakes made previously.

Finally, the general assessment of the interviewees is that the transit of activists is positive because the government benefits from the expertise that exists in another sector. Although they do not think that all the people working in the field of HIV/AIDS have to follow the same trajectory, the activists believe that bringing different professionals to work in the government makes an effective difference:

Difference in the commitment, there's no denying. Who comes from the social movement, has something more. There is suffering, a quest, uneasiness, and it makes the machine to think. There are things that you bring inside the bureaucracy. You will clear deficiencies of the service technicians. Who's an activist is able to instigate, and when the government calls you up inside, it's because it wants it too. It is no fool.

On the other hand, there is a general recognition that the process leads to a drain on leaders from the social movement's organizations, particularly because many conditions from the past that allowed many leaders to emerge and activists to engage in the fight against HIV/AIDS no longer exist. The HIV/AIDS policy faces new challenges as the epidemic profile changes (reaching more women and members of the poor population outside main urban centers). Societal actors who once cohered to engage in the HIV/AIDS cause are now more fragmented and dispersed, as funds, both national and international, cease and the policy advances in its decentralization processes.³

Final Remarks

There is a need to deepen the understanding about the interactions between state and civil society organizations. They have gained visibility as more policies rely on NGOs and other forms of civil society organizations to deliver services, usually following some contractual arrangements. These relationships are also defined by political actions that might forge changes in both sectors. Focusing on the movements of people between sectors we analyzed the case of the HIV/AIDS policy in Brazil, seeking to expand the comprehension of the relationship between state and civil society in specific public policy contexts.

The Brazilian HIV/AIDS policy emerged during the 1980s from a distinctive mobilization involving a wide range of societal actors. Certain conditions were presented in that period that helped to support the organization of certain groups and their mobilization: the re-democratization process was underway, creating more spaces for interactions among government and society for the definitions of new social priorities; one of the main policy areas being redefined was health, with the creation of the National Health System, demanding the mobilization of many health professionals; the profile of the AIDS epidemic concentrated on urban middle-class populations, reaching particularly the gay community; and the lack of information on the problem raised panic and prejudice in relation to the AIDS disease.

³ For a deeper discussion of NGO funding mechanisms and the challenges involving decentralization for the Brazilian HIV/AIDS policy see Campos (2008) and Campos and Mendonça (2010).

In these processes individuals with involvement in different fields built relationships to create a new policy space and new organizational forms, the AIDS NGOs. The contextual facts described above, together with the social and psychological impacts of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, contributed to the formation of a collective identity, as a sense of “we,” reflected in many statements of the interviewees.

The collective identity forged among different social groups, mostly societal groups but also some health professionals working in public hospitals and as civil servants, not only reflected an agreed definition for their membership, but also positioned certain boundaries and activities for these groups that would not necessarily be contained in a complete separation of government and society. In this way, the use of the concept of “collective identity” derived from the theory of social movements (Melucci 2004) gives a theoretical gain in understanding the emergence of the HIV/AIDS policy field and enables us to understand how activists moved between the non-governmental sector and the state, and how they reflected and acted on their roles and responsibilities in those different spaces. Our research showed how these movements of professionals changed the government ethos.

The analysis of the trajectory of professionals who crossed sector boundaries raises questions concerning the learning processes of these groups; it also helps us to understand the innovative character of the HIV/AIDS policy. In crossing sector boundaries, the professionals need to explore the function of new structures, which they achieve using their previous activist lens, forcing changes in their own views about the state and government policies, but also forcing the bureaucracy structure to change itself.

When individuals move, certain capacities and abilities also move with them and are absorbed by the new structures within the government. In our case, the particular trajectory of the individuals and the characteristics of the HIV/AIDS policy field contributed to this absorption. The process also produces changes in both sectors, and the high degree of permeability present also facilitates this traffic. The upmost managerial implication that resulted from these movements has been the debates carried out on the government’s need for different forms of composition of what Lewis (2008a, b) calls “lateral entry,” compared with a stricter view in other areas that tends to accept only the presence of career civil servants.

The respondents throughout the process reaffirmed categorically that their “activist identities” are not lost when they assume positions in the government, although the individual conflict from assuming new bureaucratic roles causes, in some cases, inflections on their discourses and perspectives. What emerged strongly is that the presence of activists promotes changes in organizational dynamics that allow greater flexibility in action and a greater openness to dialog.

In looking to a more processual model to understand the relationships between sectors—state, society, market—we learned that not only do they involve formal definitions and functional separations highlighting their organizational characteristics, but also that individuals’ networks and informal aspects also count, as pointed out by Lewis (2008a, b).

By applying the notion of collective identity we can connect these understandings at both the organizational and the individual level, by showing that values and

ideologies are also involved in the construction of new forms of collaboration. In the case of the HIV/AIDS policy field in Brazil, values and ideologies related to the right to have full access to health policies and solidarity and respect for minority groups were taken inside the government structures, making the sector boundaries less clear. At the same time they help to foster synergy, enhancing the capacity of government organizations to absolve society's demands through dialog and the adoption of some of their practices.

Some of the limitations of this research are connected to its scope. We limited the analysis to the transformations of the field and the learning processes of the individuals who migrated from “dot.org” to “dot.gov” and how they affected the government and the policy field, but we did not enter into the analysis of the transformations that these movements caused in civil society organizations. Further studies could also explore the changes brought to civil society organizations, which intensify or change their complementarity in relation to the state, as well as their advocacy and watchdog control roles in other issues.

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