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Systemic planning:
An instrument for managerial innovation
in public administration in the USA and Europe

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SYSTEMIC PLANNING:
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IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE USA AND EUROPE

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1. Introduction

Throughout the world there is a great ferment of ideas and reforms concerning the management of Public Administration (PA). Everywhere great annoyance with the working of PA has arisen which seems the last sector in civil society to demonstrate that it is in line with the great structural and technological changes in industrial and post-industrial society. Tons of reports have been written a) to explain the causes of this particular interest in modernising PA; and b) to propose the reasons which make the public sector so inefficient in comparison to the progress made in other sectors¹.

1.1 The Overloading of the PA

Without entering into the merit of these general questions (which go beyond the subject of this contribution), we will limit ourselves to assuming, as the main reason for the widespread ferment referred to, and for the functional degradation of PA in all Western industrialised countries, the enormous quantitative growth of the public sector, which has been had in recent decades at a rate without precedent; this growth is expressed both in terms of employed persons and in that of the quantity of the goods and services rendered to the population.

The PA load on the general economic system has reached therefore levels that are no longer expandable, for which reason any reform of PA configured in the Western world, has to go through the attempt :

1. to reduce PA in terms of weight in the context of societal activities and,

¹Allow me, however, to recommend for an overall view of the reforming climate, on the international scale, the OECD-PUMA Report (1995b); "Governance in Transition. Public Management Reforms in the OECD countries". See also another OECD report (OECD-PUMA, 1993d) on the new values and the new vision that is emerging in PA management in OECD countries.

2. to rationalise its activities, in order to control its efficiency (quantity of input for given output, which means substantially reducing the unitary costs), and increase its efficiency (conformity of results - in both quantitative and qualitative terms - to the planned objectives and goals).

1.2 The PUMA-OECD Documentation

A clearing house of all the best initiatives in this sense has become the OECD, at which there has been instituted an intergovernmental committee and a Service for Public Management (PUMA). This service is becoming a clearing and elaborating centre for reform experiences in PA management². The working directions in which the OECD has been collecting and making known some interesting documentation are:

a. Decision-making Management

This field of activity examines the role of the organs at the "centre" of Government (Prime Minister's Cabinets, General Secretariats, or Federal Chancelleries) in advising government officials, ensuring coordination, coherence and the strategic direction of the action, managing information flows before and after decision taking (in particular with regard to consultation with the public). In the same framework is included a study on deontology and behaviour in the public sector³.

b. Human Resources Management

²I am sorry to have to say that in this process Italy has unfortunately a very limited role not only because we are far behind in many sectors of intervention, but also because we are structurally incapable (for reasons that it would take too long to examine here) of actively participating, even where the Italian experience could have some interest in entering what I have called the OECD clearing house.

³See for this the OECD-PUMA Report (1990 and 1992) on the aspects of management of centres of government, and the particular problem of the use of consultancy in the decisional processes.

This set of activities analyses the efforts made in OECD countries to install more flexible and dynamic human resource management systems, as a determining element in the realisation of the reform goals of public management. The PUMA works lead to the evaluation of the impact of reforms in human resource management, practices followed in recruitment, wages and management of the higher public function⁴.

c. Management and Reform of Regulations

This set of activities studies the management and reform of regulatory systems in the OECD countries. The work is based on the effort to increase the efficiency of regulation and lower its costs or disadvantages; to improve the transparency and flexibility of regulatory systems, as also their capacity to respond to needs; to examine recourse to other instruments as alternative solutions to the traditional regulation and improve international cooperation in regulatory matters. The activities include also an examination of administration/businesses interaction⁵.

d. Budget and Financial Management

This set of activities concerns the management and control of public spending in the member states. The work is based on the formulation and implementation of budgets, in the twin prospect of improving the budget checking, and, through the instrument of the budget mechanism, increase the efficiency of the functioning of the public sector⁶

e. Performance and Results Management

This set of activities examines the mechanisms adopted to improve the efficiency and results of the public sector organisations. The works

⁴See the OECD-PUMA Report (1996d) on the problems of integration of the management of staff in the public service.

⁵See a recommendation of the OECD Council for the improvement of the government Regulations (1995c). See also a report on the subject (OECD-PUMA, 1993e).

⁶Two OECD-PUMA Reports (1993f and 1995a) provide a noteworthy quantity of data and experience with regard to this.

evaluate the consequences of an expanded decentralisation system of public management, with particular attention paid to the elaboration of result indicators and target fixing; the elaboration of mechanisms of performance and results management, with special attention for objective contracts, mechanisms of strategic planning at the scale of the organisation or agency⁷.

f. Reporting and Evaluation of Problems and Overall Developments in Public Management

Apart from the above-mentioned main fields of activity, the PUMA Service has a part of its staff that deals permanently with an "Exposition and periodical evaluation of the problems and evolution of the management of the public sector", by means of: the periodical examination of the said problems; the study of management systems through different levels of administration; profiles per country, and special studies which analyse and measure the trends of the overall reforms of public management. In the framework of this activity of documentation, the elaboration of comparable data between countries in general is examined, and in particular employment in the public sector, and it is attempted also to encourage the most widespread diffusion possible of the PUMA Service works and results.

1.3 The Innovative American Experience: the GPRA and the NPR

⁷The field is vast, and includes:

- both the "plans economic management", with various forms of delegation to private companies of the management of some functions: infrastructures (see the the OECD-PUMA Report, 1994b); Market-type mechanisms (see the OECD-PUMA Report, 1993a); and internal PA prices (OECD-PUMA, 1993b);
- and the "measuring and evaluation of results" (see OECD-PUMA, 1993c, 1994a, 1996b, and 1996c)

But certainly the most important impulse and, for particular relevant aspects (which we will discuss), the most innovative is coming from the USA. It is to these most innovative American aspects that I will devote this contribution⁸ neglecting those aspects which - it seems to me - are everywhere (in the USA, in the OECD countries, in Italy itself) already acquired in the consciousness of those who have dealt and are dealing with the reform of the PA, even if the realisations are still very far and perhaps would merit priority attention, in an ideal working programme of political and administrative intervention in the sector.

The innovative aspects that are arising in PA and public management studies in the USA concern mainly:

1. the introduction in a systematic, massive and involving way of the entire span of the federal administrative apparatus (and by means of this the state and local-urban administrative apparatus as well) for *planning*, as a decision-making and management method (in its systematic aspects of *strategic planning* and *operative planning*);
2. some specific modalities that emerge from the operations of the implementation of administrative reform, tending to shift literally the axis of reform from the managerial levels to the operative ones, through the autonomisation of the front-line operators⁹.

We will only briefly discuss these two aspects of the relevant innovation, which will be useful to place in context the new methods,

⁸I must say also that these which seem to me the most "innovative" are also those which are closest to my interest as a scholar of the methods and techniques of planning, having dedicated to these not only years but decades of inexhaustible - but unfortunately sterile - commitment. And by limiting myself to dealing with these aspects, I think I am giving a more efficacious personal contribution rather than by dealing with the aspects to which many scholars have devoted themselves and for which they may give an equal if not better contribution both in information and evaluation.

⁹These two aspects, which I consider the most innovative in the American experience, could seem at first sights - and according to a relatively obsolete logic - contradictory. This is not the case at all: they are in fact the most coherent expression of a reform that commits the upper levels not to direct but to plan, i.e. to analyse and produce study and research for reference frameworks or "scenarios", and to operate at levels to benefit from the products of the research and analysis in order to orientate the standards of the services rendered and provide an input to the programming of the operative experience.

without entering - for reasons of the size of this contribution - into the merit of the methods and techniques, preferring to refer case by case to an already abundant reference literature, for further study.

2. Systemic Planning and the American GPRA

Planning was introduced in a systematic way by a 1993 Law of Congress: the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). This law had a legislative course which precedes the NPR, and also the presidential change of January 1993 (even if it is a law signed by Clinton in August). The historical importance of this law is such that it deserves to be read and known thoroughly. I will limit myself to some essential comments.

The principal elements of the Law are:

- the general covering of the entire federal administration¹⁰;
- the integrated process of various instruments of the law; in essence four: the "Strategic Plan"¹¹, the annual ex ante "Performance Plan", which is intimately bound up with the first, the annual ex post "Program Performance Reports"; and finally "Managerial Accountability and Flexibility" (waivers of time for control procedures if they are linked to results pre-established by the Plans).

But it is essential to underline the contents anticipated for these which will oblige the agencies to become research centres and not bureaucratic management ones.

2.1 The "Strategic Plan"

The at least five-year *Strategic Plan* is based on six essential parts:

¹⁰There are about 75 agencies, between Departments and other independent institutions.

¹¹The GPRA Law (1993) wanted the first presentation of Plans in September 1997. And plans should not have a time limit lower than five years (and they should be reviewed at least every three years). This means that in 1993 the legislator anticipated a timetable implying a deadline for 2002!

1. A comprehensive *mission* statement which includes the main functions and operations. (The agency is thus obliged to review its mission, on the basis of the existing legislation and frequent consultation with Congress, the social parties, the state and local governments); this redefinition of mission constitutes an important step in "reinventing" the mission.)
2. The description of the goals and objectives of the agency, in terms of results.
3. The description of the way in which these aims and objectives thus expressed must be achieved, including a description of the operative processes, qualifications and technologies, as well as human, capital, information and other resources required to meet these goals and objectives.
4. The description of how the performance goals of the annual Performance Plan will be related with the general goals and objectives of the *Strategic Plan*.
5. The identification of the key factors external to the agency, and outside its control, which may influence the achievement of its general goals and objectives.
6. The description of the program evaluations used in establishing or revising the general goals and objectives, with a prospect for future evaluations.

The further disposition is important which states that in the elaboration of the strategic plan the agency will have to consult Congress, and will have to solicit and take into consideration the points of view and suggestions of the bodies that are potentially affected or interested by the plan.

2.2 *The "Performance Plan"*

For the (annual) *Performance Plan*, the essential elements are:

1. The establishment of the performance (or result) goals to define the level of performance to be achieved by any program activity.
2. The expression of such aims in an objective, quantifiable and measurable form.
3. The brief description of the operational processes of skills and technologies, as well as human, capital, information and other resources required to achieve the performance goals indicated.
4. The establishment of performance indicators which will be used for the measurement and evaluation of the significant products, service levels and outcomes of each program activity.
5. The provision of a basis of comparison of the current results of the program with the performance results fixed for the program.
6. The description of the means to be used to verify and validate measured values.

The law furthermore requires:

- that the (annual) Performance Plan is consistent with the Strategic Plan, and that therefore it cannot be presented for a year not covered by a current strategic plan;
- that, in order to elaborate the Performance Plan, an agency may aggregate, disaggregate, or consolidate the program activities, on the condition that any aggregation or consolidation does not omit or minimise the significance of any program activity that replaces one of the main functions or operations of the agency itself;
- that the possible waivers must be indicated for the administrative requirements and controls to give the managers greater flexibility.

2.3 The Promotion of the Studies of Performance Measurement and Program Indicators

But it is above all interesting that the law - in the section dealing with performance plans - anticipates a sort of "glossary" of the terms

used and thus contributes to clarify what in effect the agencies mean by "performance measurement"¹².

The law in fact makes clear that:

- "*outcome measure* means an assessment of the results of a program activity compared to its intended purpose;
- *output measure* means the tabulation, calculation, or recording of activity or effort and can be expressed in a quantitative or qualitative manner;
- *performance goal* means the target level of performance expressed as a tangible, measurable objective, against which actual achievement can be compared, including a goal expressed as a quantitative standard, value, or rate;
- *performance indicator* means a particular value or characteristic used to measure output or outcome;
- *program activity* means a specific activity or project as listed in the program and financing schedules of the annual budget of the United States Government; and
- *program evaluation* means an assessment, through objective measurement and systematic analysis, of the manner and extent to which Federal programs achieve intended objectives."

In short, from these indications and quotations it is completely clear that the mechanism anticipated prescribes that the agencies must carry out wide methodological reflections on the measurement of performances, and the identification of appropriate program indicators¹³; and installs a transformation of the way in which decisions are taken. In fact it would not be allowed to take decisions ignoring the assessment of the effects of such decisions; or to take decisions - by means of

¹²It is clear that the same instruments (indicators and units of measurement) studied to give concreteness to the plans, whether strategic or performance, are valid for the anticipated (annual) performance or result plan.

¹³On the concept and practice of program indicators, the author has had decades of experience in reflection, applications and recommendations. Recently the author had the opportunity to illustrate his method in the first "World-wide Conference on Planning Science" (Palermo 1992), republished in *Social Indicators Research* (Archibugi, 1996a).

such assessment - without an analysis of the congruence of relation between the predictable results and the plan goals¹⁴.

2.4 The Temporal Coordination of the Plans

It is interesting to emphasise the simplicity, but also the rationality, of the temporal link between the Strategic Plan and the Performance Plan. To the "annual" Performance Plan the deadline has been given, to become routine, the fiscal year 1999. In fact it is taken for granted and implicit that an annual performance plan (conceived in a policy-oriented logic such as that installed by the law itself) could not be prepared if not on the basis of an already elaborated and accepted (medium or long-term) strategic plan; i.e. as an instrument of implementation of the strategic plan. And from this results also the obvious deduction that also the annual Reports had a sense in producing them only when the new procedure was established as a routine in planning and management¹⁵.

¹⁴An in fact on program performance assessment in the sector of public activities there has recently been an unhelped flourishing of studies and manuals. With regard to American Federal Agencies, we can recall here only some manuals: 1) that of the Office of Management and Budget (US-OMB, 1995) and another commissioned to the TRADE group jointly by the Department of Energy and Department of Defence (TRADE, undated). The General Accounting Office as well (US-GAO, 1994 and 1996), which is a key organ for the conjunction between results measurement and budget accounting, has produced some interesting "executive guides" (i.e. with an obligation to follow) for the Agencies, with regard to obtained results evaluation. The flourishing both of Research Centres and university programmes to keep in step with the new needs of the public sector (both in expertise and in staff training) has been impressive in the years following the launch of the GPRA. The Planning Studies Centre of Rome - in the framework of the Planning Science Information System (PIS) managed with a contribution of the CNR - has gathered a vast documentation that is available to those interested in the subject (Planning Studies Centre, 1997a and 1997b).

¹⁵This "temporal coordination" of the plans is a pillar of any serious planning methodology. (Permit me to refer - without going too far - to a series of my own contributions on general methodology in which the terms of this coordination are developed: Archibugi, 1972, 1978, 1979, 1985). Notwithstanding the basic importance of such coordination, the document of the GPRA - which we are discussing - constitutes the first example of an official normative document, in which (to my knowledge) such coordination is codified in an explicit and operative form.

As a juridical framework (created in August 1993), the GPRA law has obviously stimulated and pressed the federal administrations to give suitable programmatic contents to their current actions. And the contents were of two types: those aimed at introducing new forms of program management (let us say "procedural" contents), and those, more technical, aimed at developing the know-how for the elaboration itself of plans and programs and for the preventive evaluation of the alternative choices which they contain (let us say "technical" contents").

On the first plane, the NPR has constituted the fulcrum for the further experimentation (as we will see shortly). On the second planning and evaluation studies have been relaunched, naturally somewhat improvised (as is always the case at the start of a new experience), but notably extended by field of institution and by field of application objects. The relaunch of planning and evaluation studies (strategic planning and performance measurement) has taken place first of all at the scale of the single administrations: each has contributed on its own to produce guides and manuals useful to itself, whilst at the same time producing also a scientific and methodological work of general interest¹⁶.

2.5 *The Sectorial and Spatial Coordination of Plans*

On the sectorial coordination of plans, which in the logic of the systemic planning inaugurated by the GPRA should constitute an essential pillar of the edifice, the law is short on indications. It limits itself wholly to stating that when the agency elaborates a plan must (apart from "consult" Congress) also "solicit and consider the views

¹⁶The most active administrations with regard to this are: the Department of Energy which has assumed also a sort of leader role in this competition (see the guide-books in the bibliography Us-Doe 1996a and 1996b); the *Internal Revenue Service* (see Us-Irs, 1996); NASA (*National Aeronautics and Space Administration*) (Us-Nasa, 1996a and 1996b); the NHTSA (*National Highway and Traffic Administration*) (Us-Nhtsa, 1996); the Dept. of the Navy (Us-Dept. of the Navy, 1992, e sgg.).

and suggestions of those entities [not identified further: other agencies? social parties? the States? pressure groups?] *potentially affected by or interested in such a plan*". This is not much for establishing systematic procedures.

Nevertheless, in the process of the "implementation" of the law, which has been had in these last four years, something has been done: in particular in the sense of purely "sectorial" *inter-agency* cooperation. The inter-agency working groups and sections have multiplied for examining this or that problem. In truth in this first stage there is the impression that this great bustle has been strongly motivated by problems of comparison and improvement of the approach method (especially with regard to the methods of results measurement) rather than problems of analysis of compatibility between the goals and objectives of each agency plan, which constitutes the crucial systemic planning problem. Nevertheless, the inter-agency comparison and mutual assistance are already the sign of great operative progress in the direction of reform towards planning. Above all technical cooperation on performance measurement methods and on program indicators produces an important conceptual advancement as well and the possibility of introducing systems of uniform accounting (which are also an important technical premise of their meaningfulness and, therefore, of their utilisability for the purposes of evaluation and decision). In the second place the inter-agency comparison and mutual assistance are also the official premise in order that the eventual subsequent analysis of compatibility between goals and objectives is carried out in an even more illuminating measurement context: not only the possible conflict of objectives is evaluated but also the real extent of this conflict.

Therefore: on the one hand we can only be positive about the development of this inter-agency cooperation, even if it currently presents many limits; and at the same time it is necessary to underline that the refining of the methods and facing of the problems of consistency between plans, constitutes a field which must not be underesti-

mated and which should be in the first line in the process of "implementing" the law of 1993¹⁷.

With regard to the "spatial" coordination of plans, this too has materialised in the development of the "intergovernmental" relations¹⁸, which have an old and efficacious tradition in the American federal ordering¹⁹.

From the technical point of view as well, it cannot be said that satisfactory progress has been made in the strategic planning methods, perhaps because of the absence of occasions to suitably experiment problem of compatibility analysis *in corpore vili*, i.e. between real and organic programs and the plans of federal, state or local bodies²⁰. For spatial compatibility, there is then still much conceptual and methodological work to be done in planning science despite the super abundant academic production of regional sciences, because the problem has not yet been resolved (theoretically or administratively) of the *appropriate territorial unit of planning and evaluation*²¹, which sup-

¹⁷Let us not forget that the current year 1997 is the year when the strategic plans must be presented by all agencies. It is probable that only *after* such plans are presented (because also of a gap in the law) will a interagency compatibility comparison be developed. Once the process of elaboration of plans is routine a preventive comparison will be possible as well.

¹⁸Which in the USA means the relations between the federal government and the state and local governments.

¹⁹See for an overall view of these intergovernmental relations a contribution by Berry and Wechsler (1995) and an essay by P. Keelhey (1996).

²⁰The "inter-sectorial" coordination which ends up assuming logically the nature of an "inter-objectives" coordination is dealt with badly in the scientific literature, which has been limited to very abstract methodological analyses (for example, multi-criteria analysis and other linked to this) or to cases in which the "plans" are already consolidated entities or at the "corporate" level (see for example: Amara, 1979; Fandel and Spronk, eds., 1985); or to the territorial, urban-regional level (see Hill, 1973; Nijkamp 1981, 1990a and 1990b; Voogd, 1983, 1990). Methodological experiences applied to strategic planning of the GPRA type will hopefully be the main task of experts of evaluation and decision techniques (see some further evaluations in Archibugi, 1996a and b).

²¹This is a subject to which I have dedicated for decades solicitations both at the "scientific" and political level (permit to recall amongst others a 1993 contribution presented to the XXIII meeting of this Society, see Archibugi, 1993) An updated panorama of the problem is given in Cicerchia A. (1996).

ports the entire edifice of "inter-regional" (or intergovernmental, in American terms) cooperation.

2.6 *What is Not New in the GPRA*

To a group of experts such as those to whom this contribution is addressed it cannot be concealed that from a substantial and scientific point of view, the contents of the Plan do not say a great deal that is new. Anyone familiar with a minimum of the literature relative to planning science²², knows that the six requirements of the "Strategic Plan" and the "Performance Plan" constitute the ABC of any plan logic, evidenced for more than half a century (if not even before that, in some isolated studies).

Strategic planning has in fact a long history²³, the greater part of which has occurred in the USA (which we can perhaps fleetingly recall):

- It started in the 1960s (matrix/godmother: administrative science²⁴.
- It joined up immediately with "operational research"²⁵, with "systems analysis"²⁶, and with systems engineering²⁷.
- And had thus its most proficuous season in the 1960s, when it was attempted to extend strategic planning experiences developed at the

²²It is not worth even mentioning some works. It is symptomatic that this sequence is present in manuals or texts for any type of planning: from that for policy science (e.g. Dror, 1971), to that for strategic planning (e.g. Amara and Lipinski, 1983), from that for systems engineering (e.g. Warfield, 1976) to that for macroeconomics (e.g. Johansen, 1979) or urban-territorial (e.g. Chapin, 1965). On the problems of multidisciplinary convergence of planning see a contribution by myself (Archibugi, 1996b).

²³We are naturally not discussing the history of "strategic planning", as this expression is employed by some study trends, and other planning experiences which whilst obviously being "strategic" have not considered it important or significant to use this expression.

²⁴See Simon (1941, 1960, 1983), Baybrooke and Lindblom (1963) and Lindblom (1968).

²⁵For example, Ackoff (1965).

²⁶For example, Churchmann (1961)

²⁷See for an overall idea: Warfield, (1976), Lorange and Vancil eds. (1977).

Pentagon²⁸ to the whole federal organisation. It took the name of PPBS (Planning Programming Budgeting System). After noteworthy success obtained in some Departments, (such as for example Health, Education and Welfare), a binding at an inter-agency level was sought (the then Bureau of Budget, today the OMB), but at that point the same premises for systematicness in temporal and intersectorial approaches collapsed. The general climate which succeeded was not favourable and the linked initiatives - favoured by a certain generational change - faded away²⁹. Attempts were made to extend the American experience of the time to some European countries, such as France and Italy but with even less success³⁰.

- At the operational level other similar initiatives followed the PPBS in the 1970s, with similar evaluation methods (such as the MBO, Management by Objective and the ZBB, Zero-base Budgeting), but not with greater success.
- Then management theories became strongly rooted (to the point of having to discuss its relations with "strategic management")³¹.
- At the same time it continued to developed in the "corporate planning" application, in particular as long-term planning³².

²⁸See Quade and Boucher (1968).

²⁹The literature on the PPBS is extremely vast. I will limit myself to mentioning some books that were very successful, for example those by Novick (1965 and 1973), Wildavsky (1964 and 1970); and a wealth of documentation from the American Congress (in which participated important authors of the period) (US Congress, 1969). See also a book by Peter Drucker from the period (Drucker, 1964) for interesting general views. Important contributions to the the PPBS technology are in works by Selma Mushkin (1968 and 1969).

³⁰In France the budget planning system was called "Rationalisation des Choix Budgetaires" (RCB). In Italy an attempt to introduce budget planning, inspired by the American experience was witness by the author with a Report for ISPE (Archibugi, 1970) to which we refer for more by now "historical" information on the question. It dispersed in a climate of laziness and incompetence which reigned both in that institution and in general in the administration of the so-called "economic culture" of the country. But to be honest, we must recognise that things did not go much better in countries whose ability and economic culture were less approximate and superficial than in this Italy.

³¹See for example Ansoff, Declerck and Hayes (1976), Steiner (1979) Tregoe and Zimmerman (1980).

³²See amongst many: Amara and Lipinski (1983).

- The PPBS version of strategic planning continued to be practiced at the level of many local public organisations on a vast scale in the USA³³ and Britain as well³⁴.
- In this role, strategic planning influences also urban planners³⁵.
- Then strategic planning develops contemporaneously research and applications both in the world of the business schools - in which it was born substantially as a technique and vision of management theory - and in that of public organisations³⁶.
- Then it has a new and special development - like all managerial techniques - in the world of nonprofit organisations as well, which are in this specific profile included along with the public organisations³⁷.
- It stayed, on the other hand, in the 1970s and '80s on the outskirts in Europe, where public management found itself dragging old problems of "macro-economic policy"³⁸.
- It comes back to attention, including that of the town planners, at the end of the 1980s³⁹.
- It was reconceived also as an instrument of cooperation between various government levels⁴⁰.

³³See the works of the Institute for Urban Studies of Washington, under the influence of William Gorham: for example the tenacious works of Hatry and others (1967, 1973, 1976, 1990, 1994). Perhaps it is thanks to this persistence of the local administrations in continuing the PPBS experience if today we are witnessing a relaunch of strategic planning at the public scale in the United States.

³⁴With the special experience of Friend and Jessop (1969) and more in general of the IOR-School: Friend, Power and Yewlett (1974) Friend and Hickling (1987) and other authors such as Taylor and Hawkins (1972).

³⁵See Faludi (1973) and the origin of his methodological and epistemological considerations (1986).

³⁶Typical cases: the interest of the American CED (Committee for Economic Development) of a "industrialists' union" inspiration and matrix (see Moskow, 1978).

³⁷See as examples: Koteen (1989), Allison and Kaye (1997) and Barry (1997).

³⁸Rare exceptions are the work of Malm (1975) in Sweden; Brunhilde Seidel-Kwem (1983) in Germany.

³⁹See in particular the works of J. M. Bryson (Bryson, 1988; Bryson and Einsweiler, eds. 1988).

⁴⁰In the USA in the ambit of the *American Society for Public Administration*: see Gage & Mandell, (1990).

- It reemerged strongly towards the mid-1980s with new studies and a new impetus: "bibliographical testimonies" ensured continuity with the past⁴¹; and new works appear that restore and optimise methods and techniques⁴².
- In the business world the theme of international and world strategies is confronted⁴³.
- And finally in 1993 the American GPRA law is consecrated, as a basis for the renewal of management methods on the public scale, opening up to an impressive series of a) official hearings (see the two important hearings of the American Congress, in 1993 after the approval of the GPRA law, and in 1996 to discuss, three years later, its implementation⁴⁴; and b) studies⁴⁵; c) manuals⁴⁶; d) applications at all levels of the American public administration, which have anticipated the federal initiative of Clinton-Gore⁴⁷.
- It is sacrificed in the development, under American impetus, in the development of PUMA, the OECD service, where many new American ideas from "reinventing government" are absorbed⁴⁸.

2.7 *What is New in the GPRA*

⁴¹ See the bibliographical analyses of Anthony White (1986), for strategic management; and Lorna Peterson (1985) for long-term strategic planning.

⁴² Among the more problematic and critical texts we can point out: Bozeman and Straussman (1990); and that by James L. Mercer (1991).

⁴³ See, for example, the essays collected by Gavin Boyd, ed. (1995).

⁴⁴ US Congress (1993 and 1996).

⁴⁵ Such as that by Moore (1995).

⁴⁶ Such as those edited by R. L. Kemp, (1993) and G. L. Gordon, (1993), devoted in particular to *local government*.

⁴⁷ For example those of Florida (L. Chiles, Governor, 1992) and Texas (1992).

⁴⁸ The author has illustrated elsewhere (Archibugi, 1996c) the themes and "fields" in which the OECD-PUMA work is subdivided, looking at its didactic implications. It is necessary to recognise that - despite the American law of 1993 (GPRA) - strategic planning has not found an adequate response in the OECD-PUMA, and has been completely neglected as a field of documentation and innovation.

What cannot be ignored however that this is the first time that the six "requirements" which are at the basis of the strategic plan (according to the GPRA) are included in a national law and refer to a great public organisation such as that of the United States federal administration; and through the law enter routinely the United States Code, i.e. into the administrative practice of a great nation⁴⁹.

But the novelty and quality of the law in question is surprising for the procedures that it indicates.

First of all it has given - as said - the administrations a good four years to prepare their SP. The deadline falls in fact next September. Then it has established that the SP must have a time horizon, a perspective for its objectives and for the analysis of the means to achieve them not lower than five years. In essence the American legislator of 1993 has obliged the American administrator to regulate all their action in relation to a scenario - within or without its determinations - of 2002 (and eventually "beyond"). And to measure the feasibility, preparation of instruments and means, policies to follow, "rationality" of choice, etc. at the scale of a period of almost ten years⁵⁰.

With a simple, elementary articulated law there has been made "conventional", pragmatically and operationally, what was the object of decades of political-ideological disputes on the role of planning, on its temporal perspectives, on the level of uncertainty of "environmental" conditions, etc.

It can be said that the cultural advances realised in the USA from the 1960s to the 1980s⁵¹ finally found a way of translating themselves into collective "intelligence" and becoming current practice in administration. I would not hesitate to compare this authentic revolution in PA operating methods with that which was the slow, but revolutionary, organisation of the system of public accounting (with connected

⁴⁹Let us say the most important by role and size in the contemporary world.

⁵⁰The scheduling of time is reported in Table 1.

⁵¹And which themselves were not exempt from the difficulties and misunderstandings met in the political and operative world.

institutions) during many of the decades which, in the 19th century, accompanied the consolidation of modern democracies. This system which still today permits the functioning and organisation of the modern State (however much difficulty and disfunction it manifests)⁵².

Certainly, to the revolutionary setting of strategic planning in the field of public management corresponds the necessary slowness of the realisations. We are still at the first uncertain steps of the new system. And we are still wondering if it will last, or whether it will burn out quickly like previous attempts⁵³.

An important distinguishing aspect of the GPRA, it has been said, is that this is a law (and a law which inserts it into the United States Code⁵⁴); the other reforms were introduced through presidential directives (executive orders). The GPRA is not only a creation of the President, but of the whole Congress⁵⁵.

And then there is the general consideration not to be forgotten that the most important changes always require a lot of time: the staff has often to readapt, and the systems and processes must be adjusted.

An important observation, made by a privileged witness⁵⁶, is that the information on performance and results which the federal managers use in the management programs and operations forms the supporting prop for the measuring of the GPRA performances. Some preceding efforts have used this (or similar information) in a much

⁵²The GPRA matured in the ambit and climate of an intense debate, between scholars of public management, which took place in the 1980s, for which we will recall some works (perhaps not even the most important): Benveniste (1987); Bozeman et al. (1990); Barzelay (1992).

⁵³"Will history repeat itself?" Walter Groszyk (1995), an experienced manager of the OMB, asks in a lucid examination of the new law and its prospects. Will the GPRA constitute another reform that will have a brief flowering and then wither? What makes the GPRA different from previous initiatives, and why should it be successful when others have failed?

⁵⁴The US Code or, simply, the Code, is a compilation of federal laws which are currently in force. The Code is "the consolidation and codification of all the general and permanent laws of the United States...in force" (from the Preface to the US Code, 1970). The United States Code is published wholly every six years, with the accumulated updates that have annually been issued.

⁵⁵Laws like the GPRA - points out the quoted Groszyk - may be lasting monuments for governability: the presidential directives are more fragile edifices. In fact many of the preceding initiatives began and finished with the presidential term. See also an acute essay by Mihm (1995-96).

⁵⁶See again Groszyk, op. cit.

ceding efforts have used this (or similar information) in a much more limited way, as analyses for decisions. Even if these uses may be very important, the data were taken for special purposes, developed and used only by a limited staff. This staff had little or no power for any aim or mission associated with the information. Any connection with what the managers did (or any responsibility for how they did it) was very remote, if not completely inexistent.

And perhaps (even more significantly) today the times have changed with regard to the PPBS. In the preceding decades the financing of Americans federal programs - as all European countries - was generally more stable, if not in growth. Today it is mainly being reduced, and the programs are more committed to explaining their purposes and demonstrating their value. The efficiency of the programs today counts for much more than in the past.

3. The Genetic Revolution in the American Experience of the NPR

Whilst on the legislative plane the GPRA cycle was being completed, with the common support of both Republican and Democratic senators and with the strong support of Bill Clinton, in the meantime President (January 1993), and with a content of epochal interest, the new administration launched the National Performance Review (NPR), aimed essentially at the reform of the management methods of federal administration, which the GPRA had launched with rigour, method and procedure exactly with strategic and systematic planning⁵⁷.

The NPR was born as one of the many Reform Commissions that have succeeded one another in the history and administrative policy of the USA. This Commission guided by the Vice-president Al Gore

⁵⁷The NPR has been the object of political analysis by experts of the Brookings Institution, whose works we refer to for a more detailed examination of all its aspects: DiIulio et al. (1993); DiIulio (1994); Kettl (1994); Kettl and DiIulio (1995).

(and made up of around 250 top federal employees from all agencies), which produced in record times a famous Report⁵⁸ (September 1993) with a series of recommendations the application of which is dealt with by permanent staff created by the White House and for which there are now numerous reports on the advances achieved. As said, at the outset, we will mention, of the vast field of NPR reforming initiatives⁵⁹, only those which seem to us, in comparison to the customary set of reforms preached and upheld in all countries⁶⁰, the more innovative ones.

3.1 Putting the Customer First

The great rhetoric of the NPR based on "putting the customer first" has been realised in the vast research for a customer standard of service. The Agencies have established up until now around 2000 standards. The customer service standards reflect a main federal emphasis on the improvement of public services and products for their users and beneficiaries. And they constitute an important material for the fixing of performance indicators useful to the elaboration of strategic plans.

Obviously not all standards are measurable. For the moment those which are, should be incorporated in the performance goals anticipated for the GPRA plans and reports⁶¹.

⁵⁸NPR (1993): *From Red Tape to Results: Creating a Government that Works Better and Costs Less*. The report was accompanied by a series of other reports presented by some of the most important agencies that participated with their staff in the Commission.

⁵⁹Which, like all things that assume a strong element of a "political movement" have had a somewhat emphatic and to a certain extent slogan-ridden tone which have left the experts perplexed and sceptical. At the beginning of this year the principles of the NPR were summed up in little red book (NPR, 1997a) which Vice-president Gore presented as an essential guide to the "genetic" reform of the public administrator, of the "reinventers", as today they define themselves the most fervent innovation experimenters in the current practice of public management.

⁶⁰Not least Italy, with the praiseworthy works carried out by the Public Function Department around 1993-94, and the subsequent initiatives and directives issued by successive Ministers.

⁶¹The most interesting Report is that of an inter-agency Consortium which have operated under the sign of the NPR (NPR, 1997b).

The insistence that the NPR gives to the needs to fix service standards produces a notable change also in the "vision" of the performances themselves. To give an emblematic idea of this change of vision, I would like to report a curious and amusing part of a speech by Vice-president Gore:

Like the private sector, we have to look to our customers to measure our success. After we issued the customer service standards executive order in 1993, there was a lot of head scratching at first. Some people asked, "What's a customer?" Because the word seems kind out of place at first, or did, in the context of services provided by the federal government. Some people thought their boss was their customer. Some people thought that it was Congress that was their customer.

We got a lot of very interesting responses to that question, "Who are your customers?"

According to the dictionary, a customer is a client, a regular patron of goods and services. So using this definition, has anything changed in the past four years in how we treat our customers? Well, the short answer is an emphatic yes. We know the answer because, for the first time, 150 agencies from across government have surveyed their customers to find out the answer. For the first time now we have real data on how we are doing. We will be publishing all the results soon, but let me give you a little sneak preview.

One hundred percent of calls to U.S. Customs are now answered in 60 seconds or less. That's quite an achievement. Second, in February of this year, always the busiest month, 97 percent of the Social Security Administration's callers got through in five minutes or less. The Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, piloted a 1-800 customer help line following disasters in New York and Pennsylvania, and 100 percent of the inquiries were answered with a single call. Another one, more than 80 percent of visitors ranked the National Parks Visitor centers as "good" to "very good". More people are getting their first-class mail delivered on time, as promised by the Postal Service. That means overnight, locally, or anywhere in the continental U.S. within three days. The Postal Service could only do that in 1993 74 percent of the time. Now, after eight straight quarters of improvement, they're scoring over 90 percent by that measure.

Surveying and listening to customers is making us change the way we do everything. Here's another example. Fifty percent of our customers could not find what they wanted in the blue pages of the telephone book. If they wanted a passport, what would they look under? Well, naturally, "I." For Immigration and Naturalization Service. Or if you couldn't figure that one out, you could look a passport under "S" for "State Department". I suppose "W", "Wanna go somewhere".

But how about letting them look under "P" for "Passport"? What a revolutionary idea, to list the key federal services in the blue pages rather than listing the organizational names. If your boss is the customer, you might want to put "I" or "S." If the person receiving the service is your customer and you start looking through that person's eyes, listening through that person's ears, thinking the way that person thinks, then you'll put it

under "P" for "Passport," because that's what they're going to be looking for. That's a big change. And it was made because it was customer-driven. That's the key to it.

3.2 The "Partnerships"; the "Performance Agreements" and the "Re-invention Labs"

I would like to cite some concrete forms (however diversified) which are moving on the wave of rhetoric of more direct participation of the interested subjects in the reform (the famous "stakeholders").

The first - which is realised at the maximum rung of administration - are the performance agreements between the President and the Cabinet Secretary or head of an independent agency. The concept is based on a contract performance-based employment of the sort which are used in some other countries⁶², but with some important differences. Such agreements are made at the highest level, and not between a minister and an agency director, which elsewhere is the usual starting point. The presidential agreements are not even used to reward or penalise single performances. Based on the presidential agreement, the agencies are then pushed to create some agreements between the agency and subordinate functionaries, agreements which "cascade" throughout the whole organisation. And - at these levels - can be connected the systems of staff evaluation and incentive bonuses. The intention is to expand the number of agreements which include more goals and objectives connected to the results than are in the Strategic Plan or in the (annual) Performance Plan of an agency.

A second interesting form are the Performance Partnerships which are realised between federal and local government. These performance partnerships are constituted by negotiated agreements between the

⁶²In Italy there exists something similar in the experience - unfortunately not successful - of the "program agreements" between central administrations, and between these and regional and local administrations.

federal government and single states or local government, in which the federal government provides the state or local government with greater flexibility in the administration of a program, in exchange for greater accountability and responsabilisation with regard to the performance and results of a program. Apart from the programs for social security and veterans, the federal government supplies, in fact, few contributions or services directed at the public. More often the States or local government provide these services, with their cost financed completely or in part by the federal government. The performance partnership may bring more attention to the value and effect of these federal funds. At the moment, only a limited number of partnerships have been negotiated. But these agreements may also be an instrument for extending the same evaluation of performances to all local governments and favouring information exchange and the elimination of strong distortions, whilst safeguarding the federalist autonomy of local governments⁶³.

A third form of partnership which is developed within the NPR deserves to be recalled. This is the institution of the "Reinvention Labs".

In recent years the NPR has promoted over 200 reinvention laboratories in the federal agencies. These laboratories are experimenting with ways to streamline administrative procedures and reduce and eliminate unnecessary controls for the federal directors. The main attention of the labs, however, has been given to the controls and rules established by the agency itself, and not the requests at the level of the entire federal administration⁶⁴.

⁶³Allow me to insist on recalling, on this occasion as well, that by tradition, the "federalist" logic consisted of increasing not reducing the links between autonomies. From the beginnings of the American federation, the federalists (Hamilton and pugnacious journal "The Federalist") fought to increase (not diminish) the responsibility and common funds of the Federation!).

⁶⁴Further information on the various directions taken by the NPR staff are in the numerous reports made public, which all have however a strongly popularising characteristic. We have given the most interesting in the Bibliography (NPR, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c). I would take the opportunity to point out that almost the totality of the writings, works and reports indicated in this con-

4. Conclusion

The American experience, both that of the introduction, for the first time, of a precise procedure

a) *of strategic and systemic planning at the level of federal agencies and (with less definition) at the level of inter-agency coordination (GPRA) and that of a*

b) *overturning of the daily operating methods at the front line (customer-driven reforms and controller-controlled partnerships) (NPR)*

deserve much attention and discussion. They are rich in experience and may strongly inspire reforms in the field in any advanced country. Here we have necessarily given a very general and perhaps superficial idea of this movement. But as in the USA, also elsewhere, the application of methods and techniques of systematic and strategic planning passes through a political procedure which demands comprehensibility, diffusion, and perhaps also a little superficiality and slogans.

The duty of experts who are convinced they are the bringers of methods whose constant, tenacious and continuous application would benefit greatly political and administrative decision-making and those who have to do this, is also to become the publicisers and standard-bearers of such methods. And the duty of the experts' scientific and professional associations is also to insist among the politicians and public so that such methods are adopted. This is the case of the methods for public management results measurement, and the planning of the same, which we are dealing with.

The responsibility of the adoption and application of such methods is obviously that of political representatives, but the experts must also inform and demonstrate that they know well what to do, and refine

their methodologies *as if* the methods were applied, and experiment thus permanently their feasibility and practicability.

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