

French experience drives the debate on public communication in Brazil¹

Experiência francesa impulsiona o debate sobre comunicação pública no Brasil

La experiencia francesa impulsa el debate sobre comunicación pública en Brasil

Pierre Zémor

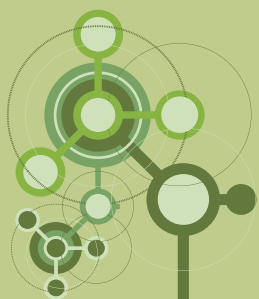
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¹ The publication of the lecture "Public Communication, the French experience" was authorized by the lecturer Pierre Zémor.



ABSTRACT

This study contextualizes and transcribes the lecture Pierre Zémor delivered in Brasília in 2009, in which he discusses the practices and challenges of public communication based on the French experience. Zémor emphasizes the importance of transparency, dialogue, and citizen engagement as fundamental pillars for public communication in democracies. His lecture highlights how concepts developed in France and Europe can offer valuable insights and inspire the enhancement of public communication in Brazil, underscoring the need for adaptation and innovation in this field.

KEYWORDS: PUBLIC COMMUNICATION • PIERRE ZÉMOR • DEMOCRACY • ECITIZEN ENGAGEMENT.

RESUMO

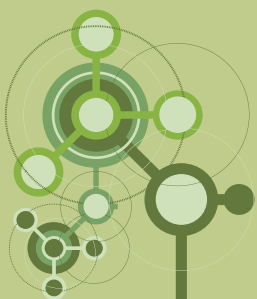
Este artigo contextualiza e transcreve a palestra de Pierre Zémor, realizada em Brasília em 2009, na qual ele discute as práticas e os desafios da comunicação pública com base na experiência francesa. Zémor destaca a importância da transparência, do diálogo e do engajamento cidadão como pilares fundamentais para a comunicação pública em democracias. A palestra ilustra como os conceitos desenvolvidos na França e na Europa podem oferecer insights valiosos e servir de inspiração para o aprimoramento da comunicação pública no Brasil, ressaltando a necessidade de adaptação e inovação nesse campo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: COMUNICAÇÃO PÚBLICA • PIERRE ZÉMOR • DEMOCRACIA • ENGAJAMENTO CIDADÃO.

RESUMEN

Este artículo contextualiza y transcribe la conferencia de Pierre Zémor, impartida en Brasília en 2009, en la que se abordan las prácticas y los desafíos de la comunicación pública a partir de la experiencia francesa. Zémor subraya la importancia de la transparencia, el diálogo y la participación ciudadana como pilares fundamentales para la comunicación pública en las democracias. La conferencia destaca cómo los conceptos desarrollados en Francia y Europa pueden ofrecer valiosos conocimientos y servir de inspiración para mejorar la comunicación pública en Brasil, resaltando la necesidad de adaptación e innovación en este campo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: COMUNICACIÓN PÚBLICA • PIERRE ZÉMOR • DEMOCRACIA • PARTICIPACIÓN CIUDADANA.



INTRODUCTION

On April 24, 2009, a Friday, Pierre Zémor met with a group of about 25 leaders of the Brazilian government and representatives of France that included the then minister of the Secretariat of Social Communication of the Presidency of the Republic (SECOM), Franklin Martins. In the afternoon, he gave an open lecture at the National School of Public Administration (ENAP) that was attended by more than 150 people, mainly government communication professionals, professors, and students from several institutions. In both meetings, he addressed public communication based on the French experience.

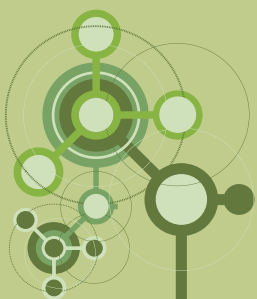
Pierre Zémor spoke as president of the European Federation of Public Communication Associations, founder and then president of the French association Communication Publique and Honorary State Councillor of France. An officer of the French Legion of Honor, Zémor has authored several books and articles on public communication and inspired the beginning of academic debates in Brazil on the subject in the 1990s. Researchers Elizabeth Pazito Brandão and Heloiza Mattos were responsible for introducing and disseminating Pierre Zémor's texts in Brazil in the 1990s (Barros & Bernardes, 2009) and were invited by the organizers to participate as debaters of the lecture.

Zémor responded to an invitation from ENAP and SECOM of the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil. At the time, Secom maintained an agenda of articulation and strategy in public communication and, soon after, would formalize the creation of a specific Public Communication board (Santos & Lobo, 2022). Activities included a training program in government communication, including ENAP as a partner in their development. The French Embassy supported ENAP/SECOM to receive Zémor in Brasilia. The lecture was one of the first activities within the program of the *Year of France in Brazil*, which took place from April 21 to November 15, 2009.

In his approach to public communication, Pierre Zémor drew lessons from the French experience and reality, proposing reflections that are broadly applicable to democratic contexts. He noted that public communication has developed over decades on French soil, emerging as a distinctive practice in contrast to state, social, and political forms of communication, which have traditionally been shaped and simplified by the media and advertising toward merely promotional or image management activities.

Zémor approaches public communication as a dynamic process of sharing and exchanging relevant information to the public, emphasizing that such responsibility falls on public institutions and entities with missions focused on the collective interest. This conception underlines the importance of information, sharing, and interactions, proposing that effective communication needs engaged receivers: citizens. He stressed that public communication must transcend the traditional model of unilaterally distributing information to achieve authenticity and effectiveness, favoring the establishment of a true dialogue that values the citizens not only as receivers but as active participants in the democratic process.

When analyzing the public communication practice, Zémor emphasized the importance of directing it toward establishing a productive and meaningful dialogue that can adequately inform citizens while ensuring that their voices are heard and considered. For him, such dynamics are essential for the health of a democracy as they foster a well-informed and participatory citizenry that can actively contribute to the public sphere.



Zémor's interpretation of public communication highlights the critical need for transparency, dialogue, and citizen engagement as pillars of interaction between public institutions and society. He positions public communication as a crucial element of democracy that is essential to develop a well-informed, responsive, and committed society.

During the debates, Elizabeth Brandão highlighted how Zémor served as an inspiration for numerous emerging professionals in a remarkable period of democratic renewal and the emergence of a new civil society. Heloiza Matos highlighted Zémor's "undeniable contribution" to public communication in Brazil, pointing out his ability to show that it exceeds the limits of government institutional messages, reaching those previously voiceless. (Pierre Zémor fala sobre..., 2009).

This issue describes the full text of Pierre Zémor's lecture.

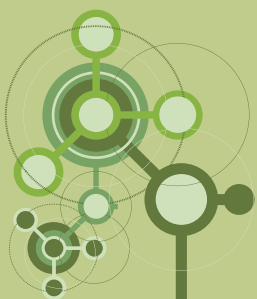
THE "PUBLIC COMMUNICATION, THE FRENCH EXPERIENCE" LECTURE

I am very happy to end my stay, of about 12 days, in Brazil with a delegation of members of the Council of the Republic, which enabled me to discover this great, diverse, and dynamic country and allowed (and this was prepared in advance) for Jorge Duarte and Heloiza Matos to ensnare me in a very pleasant trap so I could integrate new knowledge about their country into my reflections on public communication in France. At the end of the day, it is a relative model because, in France, we have a tradition and an institutional culture that has made it more difficult to achieve natural public communication, which I think you can establish here more easily.

Public communication has established itself in a difficult way in France because we have a historical culture and information that is contained and even secret from public action. The very centralized tradition of French history meant that information came from above, whether from the king, from the centralized Republic, from post-war reconstruction, or from the last Constitution. Thus, we have, according to the term they like to use in France, transcendent, descending, and condescending information.

Public communication, after all, only found its name 25 or 30 years ago, after many hesitations and appeals regarding state communication, social communication, and political communication, being helped by journalists and advertisers who tended to encourage public actors to reduce communication to just advertising or relations with the press. For democracy, this is really very insufficient. Democracy cannot simply adopt the communication know-how of competing companies (which do promotion/advertising) and be content with transposing methods from very rich techniques, such as marketing—about which I have many respectful things to say as I was a professor of Business Policy and Strategy at the School of Commerce. Marketing is very smart, but it must be used intelligently. It has no interest if you are not in a competitive market, in which you need to gain a share of the market.

In the presence of the public authorities, there is no competitive market in the public service. Perhaps this behavior of competition and propaganda will be observed at the time of elections, but political marketing can exist even if it is not applied to public service, but to the representation of powers during the exercise of their mandate, whether in the scope of the mayor, a governor, or the presidency. They are long communications of the exercise of power that should, in principle, move away from these competitive moments of conquest of power. Public communication gradually took its place and established itself in France. I can again quote the definition that is in the booklet that has been translated, in part, here: Public Communication is the sharing and exchange of public utility information, the responsibility of which falls to a public institution or an organism with a mission toward the collective interest. Consequently, there are several statements here: inform, share, exchange. It is necessary to mind the receiver. For the general interest, for the public service, the receiver



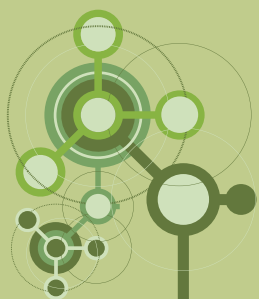
is the citizen. Therefore, as it develops, Public Communication goes against the current of this descending information. Communication is increasingly seen as necessary for the proper functioning of a democracy. It is based on simple rules: the sender, who is responsible for their mission and has a clear role; knows why the general interest provides for this public institution, the law, the texts, the provisions; and the tradition consecrated by the elected. Therefore, there is a sender who must know what their role is and delimit it. The first condition is lucidity in relation to oneself.

The second condition for communication is to recognize the other. It is essential to take the interlocutor into account: citizens, groups in society, activities that are organized by professional entities and unions. All these more or less grouped target audiences are the interlocutors of the public power, including the individual citizen. Therefore, one cannot speak to the general public as if it were an average of all the mentioned concerns. The public speech must be able to address itself individually or have an individual resonance, even in messages intended for a large mass. The second condition, therefore, is to consider the receiver. This is a big difference between the history of information in France; the information as conceived by advertisers and the information provided by journalists who claim to deliver the truth. The big difference is the receiver. An active receiver, the citizen capable of influencing the messages they receive from the sender, is essential for effective communication, without which dialogue becomes impossible. Of course, there must be a relationship between sender and receiver, involving not only a medium and support technique but also an irrational, unconscious, affective relationship that establishes a bond; the “tube” of the medium must have a “lubricant” inside it (which is the relationship of trust) so the message can get through it. Messages are not effective without a good relationship.

We have the impression that television is the most powerful means of communication because it reaches many people in a spectacular way, but research from the last 20 or 30 years shows that, in communication via television, when we try to understand what is received by the viewer, we realize that 65% are visual impressions, such as “he wore a red tie” and 25% are perceptions about character, such as “oh, he is determined.” There is low engagement in the reception of content, leaving only 10% for effective content. Politicians who believe that it suffices to appear on the television news to convey their ideas and messages are deceived, deluded by the belief that such communication has a lasting effect, when, in fact, this type of communication produces a very ephemeral effect. This effect is brief because there is an instantaneous relationship that creates a psychological mobilization in the spectator or in the person present at an event. However, in a face-to-face meeting, the dynamics are different due to the created atmosphere, placing us more firmly in the field of communication. Analyses of television programs show that people who are already convinced of an idea tend to reinforce their beliefs. Skeptical individuals may change slightly, but not significantly and the indecisive mass may be momentarily convinced, but this conviction is usually short-lived, with the indifferent returning to indifference after 48 hours. Therefore, there was no effective communication because, for the message to remain, it is necessary that the citizen receives it actively. Ideally, they should be able to interact, which is not possible in front of a television. It is essential that public actors find ways to actively engage the receiver, allowing for effective associations.

For this, I distinguish some categories of communication. First, we have the mandatory information, which must be provided to the citizen, explaining how the community works. It is necessary to be accountable for what we are doing. The French Constitution, in article 15 of the preamble to the Declaration of Human Rights, establishes that all public agents must be accountable for their administration to society. Therefore, we have a large volume of information that must be transmitted so that we can participate in the collective game.

Next, we have communications that aim to inform, promote public services, make knowledgeable. The citizen will be interested in it if they know it is a public service. Consequently, there is an interest in the functioning of their life, in their environment, in their relations with the public service, and they have an interest in using this service that is being promoted because promotion here has no sense of competition. It is not possible to prefer anything else to a civil registry service or to

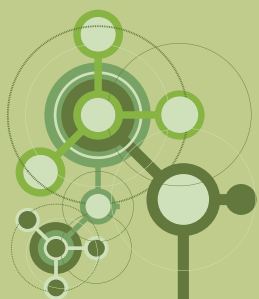


choose something other than a social assistance service. These services are inscribed in a relationship in which we explain and justify the usefulness of the provision, the text, the process, the procedure, and that is the difference. We do not claim that one product is better than another because it has a certain quality. In this case, there is no comparison. It is necessary to justify that there is no product that can replace a public procedure or a public action.

Public communication in France initially sought inspiration from private companies, adopting techniques and methodologies from advertising, marketing, and all forms of private competition activities. But we realized that this was not enough. We reached a point in which we could not advance any further. So, how to go further? In fact, it was necessary to define the specificity of public communication, which must necessarily have a pedagogical attitude. We know that, in pedagogy, if we limit ourselves to the class, to the conference, to a one-hour presentation in the classroom, we have no way of knowing if pedagogy worked. Effective pedagogy is one that reaches the level of the other, understands their level of knowledge and, from there, not only does it engage toward a dialogue (because there are things to be said and learned) but it also records the contents of communication. This approach also applies to journalists. I explain to journalists that programs in which the audience can ask questions enable them to transmit better quality information because they have prepared the information with their knowledge, they will read the content into the microphone. And if someone calls and says something such as: "Ah, but this works well when my wife is unemployed, etc." At that moment, they realize they have not provided all the information and that it is necessary to reformulate it. If they want complete and correct information, they obtain it by communication. Otherwise, as I mentioned before, it is like throwing a bottle overboard—a communication with no return, no feedback. Recognizing the essentiality of the receiver is a significant step toward the functioning of democracy.

The differences between the information that will be disseminated and the ability to provoke reactions in citizens to raise their level of understanding and encourage them to participate are significant. Although citizens are often already satisfied with being considered, having their questions heard and their concerns taken into account, this moment makes it possible to move forward in an exchange that promotes a richer public debate, especially when there are issues to be decided. It is in this spectrum of communication that encompasses the distribution of mandatory information to the public, practical information for community life, the promotion of services, and the appreciation of the functioning of institutions—a civic aspect—that I situate the importance of dialogue. Whether at the counter, in the offices, or in all public institutions, dialogue emerges as an essential method to disseminate information, mainly because it is through the understanding of specific situations that we can apply the general law. Surveys and polls in France demonstrate the desire for greater equality in the treatment of citizens, encouraging administration to focus on particularities. In short, it is crucial to address each specific issue, each concrete concern, to provide the proper explanation of the general rule, adapting it as necessary without being limited to region, state, rural, or industrial background, culture of origin, or mental schemes. After all, achieving equality implies treating citizens differently, considering the vast cultural diversity and socioeconomic levels. Therefore, dialogue is essential for the effective transmission of the message.

Moreover, when we are faced with messages that are not yet fully defined—as in the case of reforms or major projects that seek to change the structure of society—we enter the political sphere of public communication. It is essential to foster understanding, participation, and active listening to oppositions to recognize both points of disagreement and those of agreement. The establishment of a compromise is necessary for us to coexist harmoniously based on the pedagogy of social commitment, which depends on a contradictory debate. This approach also applies to journalism, countering the notion that journalists possess and convey the absolute truth. Truth, in humanity, emerges from investigation and confrontation. International incidents based on false rumors—such as an alleged assault on the subway that turned out to be a misunderstanding and caused unnecessary uproar—underline the importance of stepping up investigations in the face of change. The passions that such changes arouse cannot be ignored, they must be heard and channeled into rationality. After all, society and language are built on rationality.



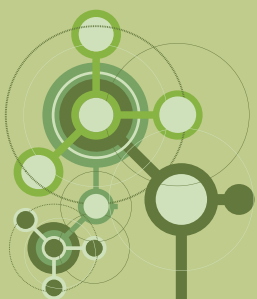
Thus, in the face of irrational emotions, public actors must guarantee the quality of information, enabling part of these emotions to be rationalized even when there is no consensus on the content. The great challenge of politics is to reach compromises that allow society to move forward, similar to how journalistic investigation can reveal truths and how a judge finds human truth through contradictory debate. This notion of debate by the recognition of difficulties is vital for us to advance in communication that promotes the development of democracy, encouraging public services to adopt practices of research, listening, and citizen participation in forums to evaluate and improve the reception of public services and the treatment of problems. This happens a lot in France.

I insist a lot on the various registers of communication. Public communication goes beyond simple advertising and media. It is primarily based on the relationship with citizens. Obviously, companies do not share the same goals and obligations. When companies seek to actively participate in community life, acting as citizens and contributing to sustainable development, it is essential that they consider how this requires sacrifices in their usual modes of communication as social responsibility efforts in favor of shareholder advertising cannot be discarded. The citizen cannot be reduced to the figure of a consumer. They have a customer mentality because we have a consumer side in us, but we are also citizens of our municipality, Brazil, and the world. There are contradictions in this scenario, including conflicts of interest.

The great challenge lies not only in the opposition between particular interests and the general interest, but in the conflicts between the various general interests, such as between the need for transport and the quality of life, the reduction of travel and consumption; complex issues of such nature. Addressing these problems is not the sole task of administrators or politicians when setting policy but involves the evolution of individual behavior. Therefore, it is crucial to prepare for an increasingly effective communicative approach, especially in periods of global crisis. This is my understanding of public communication and its different registers.

Who is the public communicator? In France, we have a variety of senders and public communicators: cities, departments, regions, professional groups. We have municipalities and establishments, bodies that carry out public service missions, sometimes of a national nature. The mail, for example, can be seen as a public company that performs a public service mission, but it is also possible to assign a public service mission to a private company. Thus, in this mission, communication must be adapted to an action that is public. You cannot treat someone who is going to pay a toll on a highway as simply a consumer of kilometers of highway as it is a public service concession and there are safety and traffic policing issues involved. Therefore, it is necessary to explain and consider that people do not only act as customers but also as citizens who respect a collective rule and are aware of the dangers to others. We can see that there is a wide range of public senders, but in the association that I founded 20 years ago, in the Council of State in France, we bring together the heads of each ministry, the agencies, the public bodies, the activities of the municipalities. We did not gather all the 36,000 municipalities, but we have a good sample. We also bring together associations that bring municipalities together, allowing reflection on public communication to spread across a wide network. This effort is a movement of decentralization and search for proximity. We noticed that, in the countryside, communication is much easier when people know each other and interact. When asked in France who is the nearest state representative, people often answer that it is the mayor. Until recently, the mayor was not considered a representative of the state. He is a public magistrate for some of his competences, but, above all, an elected one who develops and enlivens the municipalities.

What must public communicators do? When I listed the types of communication, I did not mention internal communication. A public communicator is inserted in an institution. We will be able to communicate better externally when we can communicate well internally. This is an important rule: internal communication is valuable for two reasons. One reason common to companies is that internal communication enlivens the structure, facilitating the preparation of strategies and work committees. This is all true. However, there is an additional reason in public institutions: each public

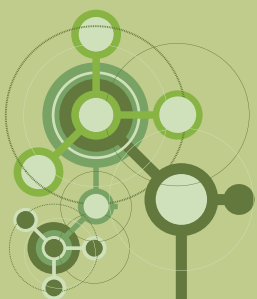


agent must be accountable for his or her work. There is a need for transparency about how the institution works internally. To communicate well externally, it is essential that agents and employees understand the role and functions of internal communication well, properly preparing external communication, which is the second fundamental reason. To shine on the outside, one must be internally organized.

Who can be considered a public communicator in the context of services? In the early days of public communication, public communicators were believed to be experts coming from advertising and journalism agencies. This was due, in large part, to the proximity to the political offices as the impression was that everything would be solved by solving the problems with journalists. However, they did not realize that there is a triangle: the institution, the journalist, and the citizen. The challenge is not necessarily limited to the relationship with the journalist. Journalists have established themselves at the apex of this triangle but, in reality, the main problem of public institutions lies in the binary relationship between the institution, the service, the power on the one hand and the public, the citizen on the other. Journalists gradually integrate this relationship given the considerable strength of the media. The stronger it is, the less useful it becomes, especially television, which is not necessarily the best medium to raise the level of public debate. They imposed themselves by the force of the media to the point that Marshall McLuhan stated that "the medium is the message." In fact, when we watch a nationally renowned journalist on television, we are only concerned with their image, and the main message ends up being the presence of the journalist and not the transmitted content. Thus, television is not necessarily a media of public and political pedagogy but an instrument of simplification and promotion. They say: "Well, you have a minute." This is the logic of advertising: to find a slogan, an impactful phrase.

It is necessary to rethink the dialogue between the public institution and the citizen and the discussion with journalists, which will take place in a more balanced position. I discovered with great satisfaction that, in Brazil, public journalism has developed, including in the Federal Supreme Court, with cameras managed by the court itself. This makes it possible to provide information of general interest as we cannot expect journalists to do so. They, for cultural reasons, often do not appreciate institutions. With direct public information, we have the opportunity to select the most relevant topics, respecting journalistic independence. It is not because they cannot provide this information that we should exclude them, quite the contrary. If we can provide this information, they will be able to better exercise their power of independent criticism over abuses of power and public lies. Therefore, I believe it is necessary to redefine the roles of each one.

Who can be a public communicator? In the beginning, the tendency was to see public communication as a superficial issue, focusing only on the relationship with the media. Thus, journalists or advertisers were used, thinking of someone who could effectively promote public service. However, it was found that the best communicators are often those who come from the public institution itself. This is due to the fact that communicating about a public institution involves more than simply selling a product. There is a public administrative culture, a set of internal and external knowledge and procedures that are fundamental for both internal management and for interaction with citizens. A generalist in the public institution, as long as they are open to communication and does not seek unnecessary complexity but have an understanding of the importance of communicating and know the institution, service, or ministry well is considered the ideal profile. Why? If they are a good generalist, with extensive knowledge, they will know how to involve specialists who can create communications, work with images, write technical documents, produce videos, and outsource other services, all supervised by someone who deeply knows the institution. Of course, training and time are needed to develop these skills but, based on my experience with individuals who initially had no relationship with communication, such as Foreign Trade Directors at the Ministry of Finance, I believe these people can become excellent communication directors. An example was when a minister proposed to a knowledgeable person in the ministry to take over the direction of communication, showing that, despite the lack of formal experience in the area, the deep knowledge about the institution could pay off, resulting in a remarkable performance in the function.

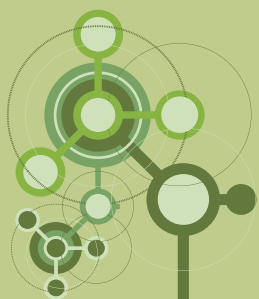


Obviously, there are exceptions. People from agencies who have worked on large public utility projects can also adapt quickly and play a good role as communication advisors within the institution. The preference for large organizations is due to the culture they promote, although, in certain circumstances, it is necessary to shake up and renew communication practices, which are often avoided or misunderstood, being seen only as propaganda. The arrival of a competent professional can, in fact, revitalize and innovate communication practices. That is why I do not establish immutable rules because each case is unique.

Communication, as I mentioned earlier, aims to establish a lasting relationship. The citizen, whether a voter, taxpayer, or consumer, needs mobilization in a democracy. It is crucial to understand what their concerns are and check if the social responses are adequate. There are associations and groups that protest against the malfunctioning of public service. In view of this, there are two possible positions: either we listen to their demands, evaluate them, and try to adapt the service and its corresponding communication or we remain indifferent to protests, running the risk of creating an abyss between the communication of society and that of public institutions. This can be quite harmful due to the created distance. This distancing, even if brief or limited to a few services, if prolonged and generalized, can enclose the public authorities in a kind of isolation. Using the Faraday Cage analogy, from which emissions cannot escape, many services perish by closing themselves in this trap, limiting themselves to a closed cycle without reaching the outside. It is crucial to have this vision for the effective operation of public services.

Public communication is a neighbor of political communication. In everyday life, public institutional communication represents most of the communication efforts, from about 80% to 85%. The remaining 15% are usually in charge of the offices of ministers, mayors, and governors, presenting a more political content, such as reform projects and changes. The best strategy is to communicate as soon as possible and throughout the decision process.

I chaired consultation committees in France on housing. Whenever a problem arose, the committee was able to express the desired developments since we maintained a permanent dialogue with representatives of landlords, tenants, management agencies, among others. There was a constantly established relationship. We occasionally questioned their representativeness, and they then carried out a poll, a survey. We had the possibility to explore all the new questions and answer, looking for ways to find a compromise—which is sometimes difficult. We have never been able to achieve some commitments, such as rehabilitating housing while keeping people in their homes. We must also consider the decision-making processes for all major equipment and infrastructure projects. I chaired the public debate national commission. Whenever a major project emerged, it was necessary to organize a public debate to evaluate the project of the foreman and the authorities, what specialists, experts, and technicians thought, and the existing associations or those that would arise against the project and that would request counter-expertise. The public debate commission financed the counter-expertise requested by the associations opposed to the project. The commission did not issue opinions on the content. We announced that the public debate would not be the place of decision, but we made an effort to make the procedure go well, with debate and exchange, we recorded and disseminated the arguments and observed at what point there could be evolutions. This information was delivered to the foreman and the authorities that needed to define the procedures and how to proceed. We observed that some variants were better than others, seeming to be more accepted, so these variants were technically studied, and the project was modified or else we concluded that it was not necessary to change anything just to make adaptations and some suggestions and consider environmental issues. The foreman and political leaders made the decision to abandon or proceed with the project. This did not occur during the debate. They had a deadline to which to react. These are formulas to associate the citizen with the decision. The big challenge is that these projects can last 10, 12, even 20 years. The right time to hold a public debate is a major challenge. It is necessary to find the moment when the process of preparing the decision has matured enough so the public debate can be initiated and there is a chance to obtain quick results from the point of view of those who will decide. The idea is, in fact, to promote concertation above the project and before a reform.



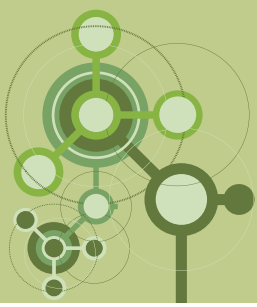
Fundamental challenges for democracy include, first and foremost, remembering that communication is a business of experts only for practical implementation, but not for the essentials of content, guidelines, and dialogue with citizens. Communication must be integrated with public action. Otherwise, we will communicate on one side and action on the other, allowing journalists to correctly state that they only do communication, which can replace action. This represents a dangerous decline. Our goal is to make communication an integral part of public policy, a primordial lesson of democracy. It is crucial to be very close to the actions to take responsibility for them in the dialogue with the citizen. Another point is that companies can change customers, but public institutions cannot change citizens. I know politicians who say: "If the people are against us, let's change the people!" but this is not easy to do. Therefore, it is essential to understand that the objective is to establish a lasting relationship of trust with the citizen. This does not mean that we should govern only on the basis of polls. It is precisely a perennial and mature relationship, which is based on saying: "We're listening to you, we understand you, but we're going to explain what we can and can't do." Thus, on this basis of trust, we achieve a deeper understanding of decisions. This does not mean that effective communication is enough to achieve consensus. It also works the other way around: when, as politicians or decision-makers, we devote significant effort to communication, we are sometimes warned that we might need to take another approach. That is how well the system works in a democracy. However, democracy has strong electoral and political rituals, and it is essential that politicians understand the importance of what I have just mentioned. It is necessary to strive to make democracy as participatory as possible, improving its quality as established by the constitution and parliament. The separation of powers contributes to strengthening democracy in each institution, mission, or project by a participatory practice that raises the legitimacy of the institution. We are, therefore, facing the heart of the problem: a mature dialogue with the citizens, who will choose those who are able to solve the problems in the best possible way or, at least, who are able to explain how they intend to do it. By explaining our methods and not simply claiming to be omnipotent, we create a productive tension, allowing us to say: "I had promised this, but now it is no longer possible for these reasons," which is accepted by public opinion.

The beginning of Obama's presidency presents a very interesting case. His campaign forced him to maintain a constant relationship with the public as it would not be easy to solve the problems. During his campaign, he promoted a mobilization that was as non-political as possible, allowing citizens to share situations and discuss solutions. Thus, 10 million people explained to 70 million how to solve specific problems within the philosophy of the Obama campaign. Now, these people are aware that he will not perform miracles as he himself said that it would be difficult and that he would not be able to perform miracles, but he pledged to do his best to keep them informed about what is feasible and what is not. Either we move to a higher level of participatory democracy or we will face disappointments, returning to where we started. This experience deserves attention. As for Brazil, with the little I know after only two weeks, I would not dare to make a definitive judgment. However, I perceive a lower level of doubt regarding the ability to overcome the current crisis when compared to Europe and the United States. I believe that this optimism is not only due to samba but to the combination of a clear and modest vision with a great capacity for work. I was quite impressed with what we discovered in this area.

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