

When Experts Do Politics: Introducing Water Policy Reform in Brazil

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This article brings to the fore the role of experts as policy agents by analyzing the water management reform in three Brazilian states. Seeking to contribute to the recent ideational turn in political science, it contends that in studying the emergence and implementation of new policy ideas, more attention must be paid to the role of experts as policy innovators and to the interplay between experts' knowledge brokerage and the influence of party politics. To examine the interaction between knowledge brokerage and party politics, comparative case studies were conducted to trace back throughout their different phases the reform processes of the Brazilian states of Ceará, Paraná, and Rio Grande do Sul. The purpose of this research design is to test the argument that experts are major reform agents and that what experts can effectively achieve depends on both the reform phase and the political context they find themselves in.

Introduction

Accounts of policy reforms in Latin American and other developing countries tend to center on explanatory factors such as: (1) a change or crisis in systemic or structural conditions; (2) a demand or initiative coming from elected officials, political parties, or civil society actors; and/or (3) the pressure of international organizations.¹ Implicit in these accounts is (within and outside political science) the view of bureaucrats and policy-oriented experts either as “apolitical” agents or as “instruments” of policymaking and reform. Instead, this article brings to the fore the political role of experts as agents of policy innovation by analyzing the launching and implementation of state-level water management reform in Brazil.

Over the past 20 years, both the national administration and the state governments have undertaken the implementation of a decentralized and participatory water management model throughout Brazil. Focused on the state level, this article contends that the initiation of the water management reform was not the result of pressures by political parties or civil society organizations, nor was it triggered by any clear-cut economic, social, political, administrative, or environmental crisis. It also contends that even though the World Bank has had important participation in some

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stages of the reform, it is not possible to attribute the reform leadership as such to either the World Bank or any other international organization.

Despite the absence of strong political or social pressures, throughout the 1980s, various kinds of experts began to design a new management model and later became the leaders of reform implementation. The question that immediately arises is how, in the absence of strong political demand for reforming the water resources system, experts were able to do it anyway. To answer this question, I challenge the tendency to portray policy-oriented experts as apolitical agents whose social function consists in providing the best technical solutions to policy problems. Notably, in highly specialized areas, such as water resources, experts “do politics” when they use expertise as a political resource and broker political, bureaucratic, and social relationships in order to get their proposals approved and implemented.

There exists a vast literature on the role of experts in policymaking. While inspired by already classical works such as Hugh Hecló's (1974, 1978) and Peter Haas' (1989, 1990a, 1990b), this article seeks to contribute to the recent ideational turn in the political science literature.² It especially examines some aspects of policy innovation often overlooked by the literature: the notion of experts as brokers between knowledge and politics, the intertwining between experts' ideational activity and party politics, and the idea that what experts (or policy innovators) can achieve varies according to the political context they find themselves in and depending on which policy phase we are talking about.

Thus, to explain the initiation, adoption, and implementation of the reform, this article focuses on the interplay between experts' *knowledge brokerage* and the influence of *party politics*. By knowledge brokerage I explain the experts' strategic use of knowledge and connections in order to gain political support for their policy proposals. Whereas specialized knowledge is considered the source of the new ideas proposed, experts resort to their personal and organizational connections to (1) be appointed to managerial positions related to water policy, (2) package the reform within a government program or policy paradigm so as to upgrade the reform's priority on the government agenda, and/or (3) foster the formation of a pro-reform coalition. The level of government priority, the type of government program the reform is packaged with, and the type of coalition built bear upon both the implementation and the content of the reform.

Yet experts are considered *the most important, but not the sole agents* of programmatic packaging and coalition building. The result of either activity does not depend exclusively on the experts' will but rather on the interaction between experts and other political and social actors. To focus on the experts' brokerage is thus a *privileged angle* to shed light on the interaction among all actors involved in the reform process *within a given political context*. With regard to the political context, special attention is given in the analysis to two *party-politics variables*: the programmatic ori-

entation and the electoral performance of the ruling party. As experts need to gain political support from (at least) the ruling party in order to advance their policy ideas, those variables constrain and affect the experts' brokering activities. This is why the implementation and ultimate content of the reform is contingent on the interplay between experts' brokerage and party politics.

To examine the interaction between experts and party politics, comparative case studies were conducted to trace back the reform processes of the Brazilian states of Ceará, Paraná, and Rio Grande do Sul throughout their different phases.³ The purpose of this research design is twofold. The cross-state comparison seeks to test in different political settings the argument that experts are major reform agents and that what they can effectively achieve varies according to the political context. The analytical comparison of the different reform phases will show that the kind of political support needed varies from one phase to the other and that the influence of party politics is therefore different for each phase.

Two major reasons, both of them partly stemming from Brazil's federal structure of power, justify the *focus on states and the comparison of state-level reforms*. First, Brazilian states offer a fertile ground for comparative analysis since they hold considerable decision-making power at the same time that they provide an excellent mix of contextual variability and commonality (Ames and Keck 1997, 2 and passim; Farah 2001, 10–12). Second, the decentralized nature of the water management model being introduced grants states a good deal of autonomy to create and run their own water resources management system. Furthermore, the reform initiative has been equally shared by federal and state actors to the extent that the reform was started in some states before the drafting of the federal water law.

Reform phases are distinguished as follows: The *initiative* phase begins with the emergence of the first ideas and continues to the beginning of the legislative process, the *adoption* phase comprises all steps from the executive "request" to begin the drawing of a water law draft through the passing of the law, and, lastly, *implementation* refers to the formation of organizations and the carrying out of policy instruments as defined by the new legislation.

This distinction does not imply a sequential or stage view of policy reform.⁴ Reform phases are not seen as stages that are necessarily separate and consecutive. They are rather *analytical dimensions* of policymaking, which in real practice can occur either consecutively or concomitantly. Partial implementation, for instance, can precede the legislative process. Model formulation usually starts before the legislative process and may go beyond the approval of the new legislation. Yet the analytical distinction among initiative, adoption, and implementation is worth pursuing, as each of these steps may require a different kind of political support and entail a different political process concerning programmatic packaging, priority setting, and coalition building.

A total of 93 interviews were conducted among expert and nonexpert participants and informants during separate research trips made between July 2001 and May 2005. Those interviews constitute the primary information source of the case studies. That information was contrasted and enriched with informal contacts with key informants, documentary sources, and participant observation of formal and informal meetings. It was also complemented with the observation between 2006 and 2008 of an electronic discussion group (ABRH-Gestao@yahoogrupos.com.br), in which water resources issues were vigorously discussed by experts from all over the country.

The next section provides basic information on the ongoing water management reform in Brazil and justifies the case selection. The three following sections take stock of the ideational turn in political science, discuss the relationship between expertise and policy innovation and the different types of knowledge handled by experts in their proposal of new ideas, and analyze the reform's initiative phase in the three cases under study. Resuming the conceptual discussion started in fourth section, the sixth section enlarges the notion of knowledge brokerage and examines how the mechanisms of programmatic packaging and coalition building work in the making of political support. The seventh and eighth sections analyze from a comparative perspective the working of those mechanisms in the adoption and implementation phases. The concluding section draws some lessons from the case studies regarding the interplay between experts' brokerage and party politics, and its incidence in policy reform beyond my case studies.

The Brazilian Water Resources Management Reform

From the 1970s on, water resources experts from all over the country became increasingly dissatisfied with the management models hitherto dominant, as water quality and quantity problems were worsening due to the growing industrialization and urbanization of the country. This led them to search for new management alternatives, which would end up in the emergence and spreading of a new management model.

Besides urbanization and industrialization, four factors help in understanding the context in which Brazilian water resources experts started envisioning and developing a new management model: (1) the *crisis of the authoritarian regime and the process of democratization*; (2) the *depletion of the financial mechanisms for public policies based upon the state-led model of economic development*; (3) the *emergence of new international principles for water management*, expressed in the 1992 Dublin Statement on Water and consolidated into the integrated water resources management (IWRM) paradigm and (4) the *intervention of international financial organizations*, which began to condition the approval of water resources-related projects to the adoption of the Dublin principles (Abers and Keck 2003, 2005; Conca 2006; Lanna 1995, 2000).

Taking into consideration all these domestic and international factors undoubtedly helps in understanding the model change undergone in Brazil since the 1970s. However, it is worth noting that other countries, especially in Latin America, shared similar initial conditions and were under the same international influences but did not introduce the same management model (or any new management model at all). That is why it is important to focus on the work of the experts that discussed and formulated the new ideas, including their political skill to have those ideas approved and implemented.

Even though the role of experts is not the focus of this section, three remarks are in order before depicting the new management model. First, the Brazilian experts' reading and learning of existent and emerging management models was concomitant with their perception of accruing or previously unnoticed problems. On the one hand, the preexistent models were deemed not only insufficient to solve the perceived problems but also partly responsible for their emergence. On the other hand, it should not be dismissed that the critiques to preexistent models, as well as the perception of new problems, were already being made from the view of alternative management models.

Second, the reformist experts learned not only from foreign examples but also from past and present domestic experiences—such as the failed São Francisco River organizations and other failed river basin bodies. As a matter of fact, Brazilian water resources experts are considered not mere recipients of the IWRM paradigm but active participants in the worldwide, multicentric process of paradigm change (Conca 2006, 257–310).

Third, the national water reform process was the result of a long learning and discussion process involving both federal and state experts (Abers and Keck 2005, 16–28). At the national level, federal organizations such as the old National Department of Water and Hydropower and the Secretariat for the Environment, created in the 1970s, were crucial for the diffusion and discussion of new management models. Simultaneously, the Brazilian Water Resources Association (ABRH), created in 1977, became a fundamental interpersonal network where the country's major public and private experts conflated.⁵ Through its successive national conferences, the ABRH helped in setting and disseminating the principles that would end up molding new Federal Constitution's water resources chapter, the 1997 Federal Water Law, and state water legislations.⁶

The 1988 Brazilian Constitution set two pillars for water management: (1) water is a public good with economic value and (2) all water courses are divided into two exclusive public dominions: federal and state. Based upon those pillars and the constitutional mandates of decentralization and participation, the national administration, as well as several state governments, has undertaken the implementation of a new management model inspired by the French model of river basin committees (Barraqué 1997)

and imbued with the internationally dominant IWRM paradigm (Conca 2006).

The new model, as expressed in federal and state legislation, is guided by three fundamental principles: *integration*, *decentralization*, and stakeholders' *participation*—what I will call the *IDP model* of water governance.

Integration means the coordinated (or *integrated*) management of the multiple uses of water—for example, human supply, irrigation, industrial use, navigation, hydropower, tourism, and fishing. Integrated management is guaranteed through a number of instruments comprising (1) water resources plan, (2) water classification, (3) granting of water use rights, (4) pricing of water use rights, and (5) water resources information system. While the water plan contains the guidelines and planning of all projects to be executed in a given water course, water pricing is thought to work as both a micro-incentive for the rationalized use of water and the financing mechanism for the implementation and surveillance of the projects stipulated in the water plan.

The principle of *decentralization* translates into three interlocking decision levels: the *national system* of water resources management, the *state systems* of water resources management, and the *river basin committees and agencies*. The river basin is the basic territorial unit for the integrated management of water resources. This in theory grants river basin committees and agencies a central role (in coordination with the state systems and the national system) in the policymaking process. The river basin committee is in fact the privileged locus for the materialization of the third principle guiding the new model: *participation*.

River basin committees are intended to function as mixed organizations whose members are to represent all governmental and nongovernmental organizations interested in the management of a given river basin: (1) direct users of water resources (both private and public); (2) federal, state, and municipal organizations involved in water management; (3) municipal executives and legislatures; and (4) civil society organizations somehow related to water resources. It is expected that the negotiation of conflicts, the sustainable use of water resources, and the consequent efficiency and legitimacy of all decisions will be achieved through the participation of stakeholders, that is, all those interested in (or affected by) the integrated management of water resources at the river basin level.

River basin committees are charged with deliberative functions. Their main responsibility is to approve projects and activities to be executed on the territory under their jurisdiction. According to the federal water legislation and that of most states, committees must be technically assisted by executive agencies, which are in charge of executing and/or monitoring all projects and activities approved by committees.

The IDP model was nationally instituted through the passing of the Federal Water Law in 1997. Law 9433 actually enabled the 21st Article of the 1988 Federal Constitution, which charges federal authorities to create

and run the National Water Resources Management System. As already stated, the 1988 Federal Constitution also divides all water streams into federal and state dominions. The Constitution implies that every state should develop, like the federal government, its own water resources management system and integrate it into the national system. In doing so, the Constitution is granting the states a good deal of decision-making power over their own watercourses. As a matter of fact, states like Ceará, Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul, and São Paulo started their reform process and approved their water law even before the 1997 Federal Water Law was approved.

Several alternatives to the basic IDP model have been introduced in the Brazilian states. Even though those alternatives are supposed to be founded on the same general principles and the same set of policy instruments, they differ as to the type and scope of participation actually pursued, which is connected to the degree of decentralization (or deconcentration). Both on paper and in practice, three major alternatives have become salient regarding the scope of participation and decentralization: (1) civil society mobilization, (2) large users' participation, and (3) centralized governmental organization of users.⁷

On the one hand, while both of them emphasize the autonomy of river basin level organizations, the first two alternatives differ as to who is participating or is invited to participate at that level: a wide range of users and civil society organizations in the first case versus the predominance of large corporate users in the second case. On the other hand, both alternatives contrast with the third one in that the latter privileges the centralized governmental organization and mobilization of users, consequently allowing for less autonomy at the river basin level.

This article compares the policy reform process of three Brazilian states that best represent those alternative ways of implementing the same basic water governance model: *Rio Grande do Sul*, *Paraná*, and *Ceará*. Table 1 summarizes the main characteristics of the three states' reform processes. This comparison allows for the analysis of three different ways of materializing the principles of participation and decentralization and of how they stem from distinct interactions between expertise and politics. The experts' original proposals *plus* the way in which the reform becomes entangled with politics via the experts' brokerage bear upon the specific alternative of the IDP model implemented at each state as well as the pace of implementation.

While in Rio Grande do Sul and Ceará, the new ideas were discussed and formulated early by local experts; in Paraná, they were proposed by World Bank officials within the context of the already ongoing nationwide reform. Yet also in this case, local experts' brokerage is relevant, as the new ideas were only translated into a new policy design after a local water resources consultant followed by a group of state officials got support from the state government to secure the formulation and implementation of a new management model.

TABLE 1
Reform Process in Rio Grande do Sul, Paraná, and Ceará

Rio Grande do Sul <i>Civil society mobilization</i>	Initiated in the early 1980s, the reform has been notable for the collaboration between government and civil society organizations (such as environmental nongovernmental organizations [NGOs]) and has so far focused on formation of committees without advancing in the implementation of policy instruments.
Ceará <i>Centralized government organization of users</i>	Initiated in the late 1980s, the reform initially involved the creation of a state Water Resources Management Company and has emphasized the government mobilization and organization of small users, the negotiation over allocation of scarce water, and the implementation of water pricing in the industry and sanitation sectors.
Paraná <i>Users' participation</i>	Started in the mid-1990s through the implementation of a World Bank project, but halted in 2003, the reform was characterized by the coordinating role of a single consultant, the emphasis on the mobilization of large corporate users, and the rapid implementation of various policy instruments.

Policy Innovation and the Ideational Turn

The ideational turn in political science developed as a way of coping with explanatory problems of economicist and historical approaches to institutional dynamics (Blyth 1997). Ideas were initially thought of as auxiliary variables to explain institutional changes brought about by exogenous factors that were understood in terms of shocks, crises, or critical junctures. From this view, policy innovation became seen as a response to traumatic exogenous factors, and the content and implementation of the new policy ideas were constrained (if not dictated) by those factors and the preexistent institutional setting.

The ideational literature has recently shifted toward a more endogenous approach, paying more attention to the inner dynamics of policy innovation (Blyth 2002; Schmidt 2008). The focus has switched from exogenous factors to the internal mechanisms explaining the emergence and institutionalization of new ideas. Special attention is given, for instance, to strategies of persuasion and coalition building (Blyth 2002, 2007; Widmaier, Blyth, and Seabrooke 2007) and the framing of new ideas within broader programs or policy paradigms (Campbell 1998, 2002; Schmidt 2008; Yee 1996). The brokerage mechanisms analyzed in this article (programmatic packaging and coalition building) are as much grounded on my field research as on these latest developments of the ideational turn. Yet some shortcomings of the ideational literature are worth remarking.

First, an exogenous bias still persists in the literature. Ideational innovation is partly seen as an external phenomenon insofar as the emergence of new ideas is related to moments of crisis and uncertainty (Schmidt

2008, 308). Even though ideational change is explained as an endogenous process and not anymore as a mere response to historical, structural, or institutional factors (Blyth 2002), that change is still triggered by situations of crisis or uncertainty and only available at “junctures where uncertainty abounds and institutions fail” (Blyth 2002, 270). If the content and institutionalization of the new ideas are now explained endogenously, the source of innovation is still exogenous and not reducible to an ideational explanation. Paraphrasing Mark Blyth, we can endogenously explain *how* new ideas emerge and institutionalize but not *why* they emerge.

Leaving aside the problem of where uncertainty comes from and how we know when we are at an uncertainty juncture, in this article I rather see innovation as an incremental and endogenous process, much in the vein of Hecló's (1974) insights about the “constant working” of civil service. Even though my interest is not as much on the origins of the new ideas as on the intertwining between expertise and politics throughout the distinct reform phases, I assume policy innovation as an incremental process in which the source of innovation lies more on the constant working of experts than on exogenous factors.

Second, the ideational literature tends to underplay the incidence of party politics. Even though more attention is called for interelite persuasion and coalition-building strategies, the intertwining among expertise, policy innovation, and party-electoral politics is still underdeveloped in the literature. On the contrary, I pay special attention to how experts (as policy innovators) deal with politics and how party politics interplays and interferes with the experts' activity. Besides the personal and organizational connections between experts and political parties, two party-politics variables are considered relevant in this regard: (1) the programmatic orientation of the ruling party and (2) electoral politics and the continuity of the ruling party.

Third, save for some partial exceptions (Campbell 2002; Sikkink 1991; Yee 1996), the literature does not pay much attention to the fact that the different phases of policy innovation may involve different political dynamics. By contrast, I argue that each phase entails a different kind of political support and therefore a different interaction among experts, political parties and social actors.

Building upon this critical reading of the political science literature on ideas, I will now proceed as follows. The next two sections examine further the relationship between expertise and policy innovation by introducing the notion of knowledge brokerage, and then analyze the initiative phase of the reform. The following sections explain how the mechanisms of programmatic packaging and coalition building work and analyze their incidence in the adoption and implementation phases. Underlying this organization is the idea that political support matters differently according to the reform phase and that party politics exerts a different influence at each phase. While expertise (broadly understood) is considered the

source of policy innovation, the institutional adoption and implementation of the new ideas are dependent on the ability to build political support and by the same token more sensitive to the influence of party politics.

Expertise and Policy Innovation

Experts play a central role, especially in those areas in which specialized information is crucial to policy formulation and implementation. Through diverse organizational channels, they resort to their technological expertise to connect decision makers and policy participants of all sorts with the world of scientific production. By doing so, experts exert a specific form of political power: the use of specialized knowledge as a source and a means for setting the agenda, making policy proposals, and getting the proposals approved and implemented. That is why the study of the role played by experts as intermediaries between knowledge and politics is key to understanding policy reforms, such as the ongoing water management reform in Brazil. Scientific knowledge pervades most water policy decisions, and its importance can even be appreciated in the deliberations of participatory bodies such as river basin committees.

The role of experts as intermediaries between knowledge and politics resembles Karen Litfin's (1994) notion of *knowledge brokerage*. In contrast to the excessive emphasis given to scientists by the epistemic community approach, Litfin (1–82) focuses on the role of low or middle rank government officials that act as brokers between scientists and decision makers, and are decisive in the achievement of international environmental agreements.⁸ Litfin directs the attention to the role of public officials as policy entrepreneurs that act out of their handling of specialized knowledge. Thus understood, Litfin's concept of knowledge brokerage could be applied to study water management reform in the Brazilian states. Two caveats, however, are in order.

First, the reformist experts are not always civil service officials, or, as they are known in Brazil and Latin America, *técnicos*.⁹ In the cases under study, the reform's initiation and implementation have been led by *three types of experts* operating through the state apparatuses in different ways. The majority consists of state *técnicos* for whom the reform is (or becomes) part of their daily job. Some of them are eventually appointed to mid-level managing or coordination positions (i.e., below the level of secretary) and thence secure the progress of the reform. A second group is composed of a minority of *consultants* or private professionals appointed by the state government to hold managing or coordination positions ranking from secretary to head of division to program coordinator. Additionally, a few consultants are hired to undertake specific tasks such as the drafting of water legislation or the formulation of the state water resources plan. Lastly, a reduced number of academic *researchers* are sometimes invited to participate, mostly as honorary advisers, into consultative commissions or technical councils.

Second, to observe that experts are knowledge brokers is not to say that their proposals are exclusively based on scientific considerations. A number of issues exist whose discussion is not exactly dependent on scientific expertise. That is the case, for instance, of all issues related to management and organizational models and strategies. As argued above, in our case studies, the introduction of a new participatory management model was due to the initiative of experts rather than politicians or social activists. Policy-oriented experts may then be considered as holders of a second type of knowledge (management knowledge) that goes beyond the scope of any scientific expertise.¹⁰

Whereas the brokering of strictly technological knowledge on the experts' part may be exclusively justified on the base of their scientific training, it is hard to say the same about their holding of management knowledge. Let us consider the principles of participation and decentralization—it is difficult to think about any scientific or technological justification of those principles. Actually, any justification of such principles leads us to the borders between science and politics. Experts engaged in policy innovation and making may then be seen as handling another kind of knowledge: political knowledge. The experts' beliefs and views on the political and social constitution of the world pervade in different ways the formulation of management ideas such as the IDP model.

The divide between management knowledge and political knowledge is hard to tell indeed. By the same token, given a decision, it may be hard to determine how much of that decision is due to scientific considerations and how much it is due to managerial or sociopolitical considerations. The notion of knowledge brokerage must then be expanded beyond the realm of science. Following Frank Fischer (2003, 230), experts can be thought of not only as carriers of scientific knowledge but actually as brokers of three different "languages": that of the scientific community, that of the world of politics, and that of social interests.

But besides bringing together various languages into policy proposals, experts deploy different skills to get political support for the approval and implementation of their ideas. Two forms of political knowledge are therefore handled by policy-oriented experts: (1) the political beliefs and views that pervade their policy proposals and (2) the skill (or know-how) to build political support and alliances. While the latter is the focus of the sixth to eighth sections, in which the expanded notion of knowledge brokerage is resumed and illustrated, let us now turn to our study cases to see how experts came out with new ideas and how those ideas were pervaded by their sociopolitical views.

The Emergence of New Ideas

One of the most striking aspects of the Brazilian water resource management is the experts' high level of agreement around the IDP model. As

suggested by Vivien Schmidt's (2008, 311) distinction between coordinative and communicative discourse, this may be due to the fact that water issues are "too technical to capture the sustained interest of the public" and also to the fact that water issues are not of primary importance on the political agenda, thereby leaving more room for experts' coordinative discourse to prevail through organizational channels within and outside the state.

Accordingly, in all three states, the initiative for the reform process came from the work of experts who embraced the emerging IWRM paradigm and eventually agreed that adopting the French model was the best alternative for Brazil. Yet divergences around the IDP model did exist. Those divergences did not manifest themselves in the emergence of a competing model, but either in a silent resistance to implement (some aspects of) the new model or in the delineating of alternative ways of understanding it. As will be seen next, our three cases vary as to who the reformist experts were, why they wanted to install a new management model, and which specific ideas they put forward.

In Ceará, the reform was started in the early 1980s by a core group of university professors and consultants joining the same organizations (the local federal university and/or private consulting firms). Most of them were engineers with graduate training in water resources, had previously worked for the National Department for Anti-Drought Works (DNOCS), and joined the nationwide Brazilian Water Resources Association (as most experts under scrutiny in this article did).

Ceará experts embraced and promoted new management ideas out of their perception of the chronic problem of water scarcity and their shared dissatisfaction with the DNOCS approach. They saw in the combination of water pricing and integrated river basin management a solution to the shortcomings attributed to the DNOCS-sponsored "hydraulic solution."

Two features characterized the Rio Grande reformists from the onset: (1) the predominance of *técnicos* within the group and (2) the multiplicity of organizations and sectors involved. More than in any other case, this constellation of experts enabled from the beginning a wider bureaucratic embeddedness of the reform, as well as a broader multisector perspective. In addition, Rio Grande experts began to develop strong linkages with civil society and river-basin-level organizations prior to the drafting of the state water law, thus favoring the incorporation of a wider range of social and political interests into the reform process.

Unlike their Ceará colleagues, the Rio Grande experts were concerned with improving water quality. They were deeply dissatisfied with what a prominent Rio Grande expert called the bureaucratic-sectoral model (Lanna 1995, 2000) and saw the deterioration of the state water quality as a consequence of either the lack of integrated management or the absence of any management at all.

While in Ceará and Rio Grande do Sul, the reformist initiative came out of the local (though internationally connected) water resources

community; in Paraná, the new management ideas were introduced by World Bank officials through the formulation of an urban sanitation project. Yet the ideas proposed were soon adopted by Paraná *técnicos* under the leadership of a local consultant who became the reform coordinator.

As in Rio Grande do Sul, the major concern of the World Bank officials and the Paraná experts was water quality, specifically, the quality of metropolitan water catchments. When Paraná experts started to formulate their own ideas about how to concretize the guidelines introduced by the World Bank, the French model had already been adopted by several states, and the federal water law was about to be approved. At that point, there was no discussion—at least not in Paraná—about the adoption of the IDP model. However, the early involvement of the World Bank did introduce some important nuances.

By and large, in all three states, three basic ideas inspired by the French model and pertaining to the IWRM paradigm were adopted by the reformist experts: (1) integrated management of all uses of water, (2) the river basin as the territorial management unit, and (3) water pricing as both a microeconomic incentive and an investment mechanism.

Yet different ideas about how to better adapt the French model to Brazil emerged in the three states. Those different ideas were related to the reformist experts' perception of water problems, as well as their view of the social and political world.

From the outset, the Rio Grande experts embraced the French model as the most suitable for Rio Grande do Sul (and Brazil). But while the French model was centered on the financial and executive role of water agencies (Barraqué 1997), river basin committees and civil society participation were emphasized in Rio Grande do Sul.

Some *técnicos* indicated that such emphasis on participation was related to the 1980s' democratization process, in the sense that an emerging civil society was demanding participatory policymaking. However, democratization did not affect the other states in the same way. The management model developed in Ceará along the 1980s was much less participatory than that of Rio Grande do Sul, while there was no reform process at all in Paraná during the same period. The Rio Grande experts' preference for a more participatory approach was rather related to their personal experience in the transition to democracy (they were, in one way or another, connected to prodemocratization, left-of-center political parties) and their resulting expectations about the readiness of civil society for participatory experiments.

The case of Ceará provides a good counterexample with regard to experts' views and expectations about participation. Ceará experts also adopted the French model early on but reinforced the role of central bureaucracy. In 1991, they would end up drawing a state water resources plan where river basin organizations were granted lesser deliberative and executive power than in Rio Grande do Sul and Paraná.

Throughout the reform process, the main reason Ceará experts gave to justify limiting the autonomy of river basin organizations was that civil society organizations and users could not be relied on. Apparent in several interviews with government officials and university researchers was the belief that users and civil society organizations were neither culturally prepared nor technically skilled to make the important decisions involved in dealing with water scarcity.

In contrast, in Paraná, the guidelines laid down by the World Bank officials gave priority to the financial and administrative autonomy of river basin organizations. Paraná experts shared the Rio Grande experts' insistence that river basin organizations ought to have real power. But instead of pursuing the broad participation of civil society organizations in the committees, Paraná reformers focused on securing large users' control over the executive agencies. Behind that decision was the (World Bank and Paraná) experts' belief that the business sector was the most appropriate agent to carry out the integrated management of water effectively at the river basin level.

Strengthening Political Support

After discussing and agreeing upon the first ideas, experts need to get political support from the government and eventually from other political and social groups. Two challenges must then be faced: the *institutional adoption* and the *implementation* of the new management model.

The type of political support needed for each of these tasks is not necessarily the same. Getting "clearance" from the government may be sufficient for the formulation and passing of new legislation. But implementation requires either stronger support from the government (largely, but not exclusively, because implementation requires money and the government's willingness to expend it or to borrow it), or a broader pro-reform coalition (especially when the government's interest in the reform is not very high). In either case, the reformist experts have to move beyond narrowly understood expertise and start resorting to their personal and organizational connections with—at least—top decision makers.

In accordance with the expanded view of knowledge discussed in the third section, the notion of *knowledge brokerage* will be used here to refer to the experts' use of knowledge and connections in order to gain political support. By doing so, I want both to stress the importance of knowledge as political resource and to focus on the way experts do politics.¹¹

An observation is in order regarding the use of knowledge as political resource. Knowledge is the source not only of new policy ideas but also of the experts' legitimacy vis-à-vis other actors. Though in their policy proposals they combine scientific and management knowledge with political views and values, experts' *primary* source of legitimacy lies in the *pretension* that their definition of policy problems and solutions is based on the objective knowledge of the world—what Jürgen Habermas (1984) calls

pretension of truth. However broadly specialized knowledge is understood, the divide and relationship between experts and other actors revolve around the recognition of such a pretension.

As to the use of connections, knowledge brokerage implies something more specific than an array of personal, bureaucratic, party, and social channels and flows. It implies the experts' skill to circulate through those channels so as to "induce cooperation in others"—what Neil Fligstein (2001, 105–106) calls "social skills."¹²

Experts resort to their multiple connections in order to undertake different brokering tasks. The first task is *to get appointed to managerial positions related to water policy*. Still, this is not enough. Getting appointed to managerial positions and obtaining government approval to start formulating a new policy is not the same as securing the government's commitment to implementation. To advance their ideas, experts have to engage in either of two extra (and to a certain extent, interdependent) endeavors:

- *To package the reform within a government program or policy paradigm* so as to set the reform on a high position within the government agenda; and/or
- *To promote the formation of a pro-reform coalition* within and/or beyond the government and the ruling party.¹³

Programmatic packaging is the process through which the reform is packaged within a broader government program or policy paradigm. Whether or not the reform is politically packaged bears upon the *reform's government priority*, and which program it is specifically linked to may affect the content of the reform.

As in the case of other natural resources and environmental issues, water issues in themselves will likely be secondary to other political and public regards (Ames and Keck 1997, 8–28; Bache and Flinders 2004, 198–199). Yet water issues may make it to a higher position on the government agenda, thanks to their packaging within other higher-priority governmental goals and programs. Water policy reform can then be either a *low-priority* issue or, if not a high-priority issue in itself, a constitutive element of a *high-priority* governmental program. An intermediate alternative is conceivable: one in which the reform is not a constitutive part of a high-priority program but has nevertheless been upgraded on the political agenda because of its ideological affinity with the reigning policy paradigm.

Coalition building refers to the interaction of actors actively supporting and/or participating in the reform process from different decision and implementation points and at different policymaking levels. Two types of *pro-reform coalition* are distinguished: (1) a *concentrated* coalition in which the content, direction, and pace of the reform are defined by the alliance of reformist experts and the ruling party, and (2) a *diffuse* coalition where the

reformist experts interact not only with the ruling party but with a broader set of political and social actors.

Programmatic packaging and coalition building are in some measure interrelated mechanisms, since programmatic packaging entails some form of alliance between the reformist experts and the ruling party. However, coalition building does not always entail programmatic packaging. This is why programmatic packaging and coalition building (as well as the level of government priority and the type of pro-reform coalition) are in principle considered separate mechanisms bearing upon the content and implementation of the reform.

If the adoption and implementation of the new ideas depends on experts' engagement in programmatic packaging and coalition building, the reform becomes by the same token sensitive to the influence of party politics. Two variables prove relevant in this regard: the programmatic orientation and the electoral performance of the ruling party. These variables combine with the experts' skill to "induce cooperation in others" (Fligstein 2001, 105–106) to bear upon the adoption and implementation of the reform, as seen in the two following sections.

Institutional Adoption of the New Ideas

In the three cases under study, the first step was to get the state government to adopt the new ideas and "request" the formulation of a new water law. When a window of opportunity appeared, experts employed different connections to the state government in order to get the legislative process started. Yet the political connections and brokerage mechanisms deployed differed for each case.

In Ceará, experts won government support to start the legislative process (1) by making use of their personal and party connections to the governors and their entourage, thereby fostering the building of a concentrates coalition, and (2) by packaging the water reform as consistent with an encompassing government program. With the inauguration of a new administration in 1997, an opportunity opened up for those experts that had hitherto failed to advance a first state water resources plan. Generally speaking, the new government's program (known as the Government of Changes program) provided a favorable framework for reforming water management. Yet the association between that program and the reformist experts' proposals was facilitated by the experts' party connections and by the later expectation of getting World Bank funds.

Due to personal and party relationships, prominent experts got appointed to important positions within the newly created Secretariat for Water Resources from 1987 on. They managed to convince the governor that the formulation of a new water management model was a necessary step toward achieving the goals of the Government of Changes program. In 1988, the state government hired three local consultant firms to draw up

the state water resources plan and a state water bill. The state plan was completed in 1991 and transformed into the state water law in 1992.

The Government of Changes program aimed at strengthening the market economy in backward Ceará via a radical state reform. Basic infrastructure and services were considered crucial for attracting private investments for industrial production, agribusiness, and tourism. So it is not surprising that, in semi-arid Ceará, the new administration got interested in the rationalized management of water as a means for the development of those activities. Still, even if it knew that to secure water supply was important for the program's success, the new administration did not have a clear idea of how to get it. This policy vacuum opened up space for the experts who had been envisioning new policy alternatives since the beginning of the decade.

The reformist experts committed themselves and their water policy to the Government of Changes program. That is why they got strong support from Governor Tasso Jereissati and his political group, which ruled the state between 1987 and 2006. Framing the reform as a constitutive part of the Government of Changes program was perhaps the most skillful strategy on the Ceará reformers' part. Because of the strong association between the two, they won government support to begin negotiating a water resources project with the World Bank as soon as the legislative process had ended.

Two different parties succeeded in power in Rio Grande do Sul between 1987 and 1994 (PMDB and PDT). Neither was particularly interested in water issues, nor did they have clear government programs into which the water reform could be packaged. Despite that, the Rio Grande experts managed to get governmental support by using their party connections and multiple bureaucratic affiliations and by building collaborative relations with river basin and civil society organizations. In doing so, they fostered the development of a diffuse pro-reform coalition, adding legitimacy to their proposal that the state government formulate and pass a new water law.

Because the reform lacked any fundamental programmatic interest on the government's part beyond a vague association with democratization, the government's support was certainly not as strong as in the case of Ceará. It was actually more a *laissez faire* attitude than a really proactive resolution. Yet that was sufficient for the initiation of the legislative process.

In 1988–1989, the expectation of getting federal funds for irrigation projects led the standing governor to reactivate an old Consultative Commission (created in 1981). This commission, made up of experts from several sectors, resumed the discussion of new management ideas and ended up influencing the 1989 State Constitution chapter on water resources. After the 1991 party turnover, some of those experts got appointed to important water resources positions due to their party connections. They got the governor's approval to convene a group of seven

experts from the Consultative Commission to draft the state water bill. Renowned as the “parents of the reform,” the seven experts drafted a water bill inspired by the French model of management and submitted it to the governor in 1992. The low priority of water reform on the governor’s agenda soon became evident as the bill “remained in a drawer” (*ficou na gaveta*) for about two years. Surprisingly, in late 1994, the water bill was sent to the legislature as part of a “legislative packet” also containing two bills approving the building of irrigation systems. As the executive had a strong stake in the irrigation systems and the opposition supported the water bill, the three-law packet was unanimously approved in December 1994.

In the meantime, Brazil’s first two river basin committees based on the French model were created in Rio Grande do Sul between 1987 and 1989. While those committees emerged from the collaboration between *técnicos* and environmental NGOs and other organizations, the idea of creating a committee to face pressing environmental problems was proposed by the Consultative Commission experts.

In Paraná, the inception of the World Bank project in 1993 was not sufficient to launch the legislative process. The standing governor was eager to expend the World Bank funds to build water works but showed no interest in implementing the institutional change required by the World Bank project. That change only began to be legally formulated with the 1995 party turnover and the emergence of a new government policy paradigm.

The association between the World Bank ideas and the new administration’s policy paradigm was made possible by the brokerage of a local consultant with contacts in the World Bank, the federal agencies, and the state government, who became the reform coordinator. This coordinator connected the World Bank guidelines with both incoming Governor Jaime Lerner and the state bureaucracy. But neither he nor the state *técnicos* that supported him built broader social and political connections beyond the ruling party, with the possible exception of large public users. In the end, such a concentrated coalition reinforced the reform’s identification with Governor Lerner and neoliberalism.

The World Bank guidelines and the model advocated by the reform coordinator fit well with the new administration’s emphasis on state downsizing, fiscal control, decentralization, and privatization. This ideological fit helped win the governor support for convening the group of *técnicos* and other experts that drafted the state water law and the enabling decrees approved between 1997 and 2001.

In the three states, the model legally formulated gave coherence and consistency to the first ideas proposed. While the three state legislations contained similar policy principles and instruments (see the second section), there were important differences regarding the type, role, and operation of executive agencies and the river basin committees’ responsibilities, most notably those of fixing, collecting, and allocating water use charges.

The Ceará water law did not include executive agencies. Instead, a central “management body” was to be created to implement the state water policy and act as executive secretary for all river basin committees. This implied that the committees, besides lacking their own executive agencies, had to rely on the executive assistance of a centralized agency. Consistently, river basin committees had authority only to approve programs and projects to be executed with the funds collected. The value of water use charges had to be approved by the State Water Resources Council and collected, administered, and allocated by the Secretariat for Water Resources.

In contrast, Rio Grande do Sul water law called for decentralized regional executive agencies, with each agency assisting a certain number of river basin committees. As regards water pricing, the state water law established a provision aimed at financially strengthening the committees’ autonomy: All revenues from water pricing are nontransferable and must without exception be invested in the river basin in which they are collected, while committees are in charge of fixing the value of water tariffs and approving the projects to be financed with the funds collected.

In Paraná, the reform’s association with neoliberal policies reinforced the guidelines introduced by the World Bank: decentralization and involvement of large users. The Paraná water law allowed for the contracting of large users’ organizations to exercise the function of executive agencies in the form of decentralized executive units (DEU), actually establishing that the state government had to promote the formation of users’ associations to operate as DEUs. Furthermore, the DEUs and committees were granted more power over water pricing than federal and Ceará river basin organizations. The Paraná water law determined that at least 80% of the funds collected were to be applied in the river basins where they were generated and granted committees the same power over water pricing as in Rio Grande do Sul.

These differences in the water management system’s structure and the agencies’ responsibilities regarding water pricing were critically important for the functioning of river basin committees, since the execution of water plans depends on whether and how water charges are collected and allocated. The possibility of *effectively* concretizing the principles of *decentralization* and *participation* at the river basin level is contingent on the river basin organizations’ responsibilities and capacities regarding the implementation of water pricing and the formulation and execution of their water plans.

Putting Ideas into Motion

To put ideas into motion, reformers needed the government to do more than pass new legislation: they needed it to sponsor the initial implementation steps and to provide the required funds. The new water management model was supposed to self-finance through water pricing. Yet one

important aspect of implementation was how to fund the investment necessary for the creation of the organizations in charge of collecting and allocating water tariffs. This is why the availability of a World Bank project (or any other alternative funding source) proved especially important for implementation.

To get World Bank or similar funds, it is necessary to have the state government committed to the reform. Indeed, the expectation of international financing may even increase governments' interest in the reform. In either case, it is apparent that in the implementation phase, the availability of international funds and the reform's governmental priority are strongly associated. That is why the next challenge after the approval of new legislation is to increase the government's interest in the reform and get the funds required for implementation. It is at this point that the reform's programmatic packaging (as a way of upgrading the reform's governmental priority) renders its highest contribution—but can also show its limitations.

Yet low government priority and lack of international funds do not necessarily lead to failure of the reform. As shown by the Rio Grande do Sul case, a diffuse pro-reform coalition (fostered by the reformist experts) can compensate for such a shortcoming and facilitate the beginning of implementation—though within limits imposed by the lack of funds and of political will to provide them.

In sum, implementation requires either stronger support from the government or a broader pro-reform coalition. By and large, two different implementation roads were taken in the cases under study:

- *Fast road*: When programmatic packaging and intervention of the World Bank (or any comparable organization) combine and reinforce each other (as they did in Ceará and Paraná), the reform gets a higher government priority and its implementation is faster. However, under these circumstances the reform can be more vulnerable to party turnovers.
- *Slow road*: Even if programmatic packaging is lacking and government priority is low to moderate (as in the case of Rio Grande do Sul), the skill of experts in forging a diffuse pro-reform coalition can facilitate a slower but more consensual implementation. Here the pending question is whether the reform will ever be fully implemented.

Each road entails a different form of knowledge brokerage and the development of a distinct interaction among experts, political parties, and other actors. In the first case, experts focused on their connections with the ruling party and the programmatic packaging of the reform; in the second case, they sought to intertwine multiple party, social, and bureaucratic connections and followed war-of-position tactics, so to speak.

In Ceará, the reform's packaging within the Government of Change program and the availability of World Bank funds favored the steady implementation of the reform from 1993 on. Water charges started to be implemented in Ceará earlier and more consistently than in any other state. However, such a steady implementation took place at the expense of the proclaimed principles of decentralization and participation. The intervention of the World Bank was particularly important in this regard, as it forced the creation in 1993 of a state water management company whose job it is to collect and allocate water charges and function as centralized executive secretary to the committees, limiting even more the low autonomy granted to committees by the 1992 state law.

Different experts succeeded as reform leaders without affecting the continuity of the reform. That was made possible by the permanence of the ruling party and its government program between 1986 and 2006. A party turnover took place in 2007, but it is still too soon to assess its impact on the water reform.

In Paraná, programmatic packaging and World Bank funds also combined to favor implementation. The first decentralized executive unit was created in record time and with the privileged participation of large users in 2002, and water charges were expected to be implemented by 2004. But a party turnover in 2003 drastically changed the reform's prospects. Governor Lerner was succeeded by his electoral and ideological enemy, Roberto Requião, who took office with the explicit goal of terminating everything deemed neoliberal. The decentralized executive units were soon dismantled, water pricing was postponed, and a more centralized approach was proposed, which as of 2006/2007 still had to be implemented.

The failure of Paraná's decentralizing experience showed the reform's vulnerability to party turnovers, especially when the reform is packaged within a highly contested government program or policy paradigm. It also showed the limitation of the concentrated reform coalition forged by the experts with the state government, which could not prevent nor offset the new governor's attack on the reform.

In Rio Grande do Sul, the absence of programmatic packaging and World Bank intervention and the constant party turnover did not impede implementation altogether. The reformist experts resorted to their multiple connections to political parties, state agencies, and civil society organizations to remain in important positions within the water resources system and secure the implementation of the reform through different means. They could do so even when party turnover was not favorable to their party connections. In such a case, some of them managed to become river basin committee members in representation of civil society organizations, despite the fact they were state *técnicos*. Thanks to those changes of hat and similar tactics, they kept on participating in the reform process regardless of the party in office.

But the reform's low priority on the government agenda did have a price. Implementation was slow and incomplete. As of 2007/2008, water

pricing and most of policy instruments had not been implemented and no executive agency had been created. Counting on scarce funds from their own organizations and the hydropower royalties, the reformist experts devoted themselves to the proliferation of river basin committees throughout the state. Though legally invested with high financial and deliberative power, those committees had in practice low executive power due to the scarcity of funds.

Conclusion

In contrast with the tendency (within and outside political science) to focus on the policy power of political leaders and elected officials and to consider experts and bureaucrats as instruments of their decisions, this article sought to explain how experts were able to start and advance the water management reform in the Brazilian states despite the original absence of strong political or social pressures and of any identifiable crisis juncture (unless we admit that such a juncture may last for decades). In so doing, it showed that in studying the emergence and implementation of new policy ideas more attention should be paid to the role of experts as policy innovators and to the interplay between experts' brokerage and the influence of party politics.

By investigating and comparing the water policy reform in three Brazilian states, I was able to test the argument that experts are major reform agents and that what experts can achieve depends on both the reform phase and the political context they find themselves in. Each reform phase and each political context affords different opportunities for programmatic packaging and coalition building.

Each reform phase entails a different kind of political support. *Initiative* does not require much political support beyond the environmental conditions for the functioning of the organizational channels (within and outside the state) through which experts can get together, exchange and discuss their experiences and proposals, and come out with new ideas. In such areas as water resources policy, initiative is circumscribed mostly to the constant working of experts who interact through several organizational channels and eventually have access to the state apparatuses. Ideational divergences among the states are in this regard related to the particular ideas entertained by experts, which are in turn pervaded by the latter's political and social views and beliefs.

After agreeing upon the first ideas, experts need to get political support from the government and eventually other relevant actors to secure the *institutional adoption* and *implementation* of the new management model. The type of support required for each of these phases is not the same. While the governor's authorization to draw a water bill and the ruling party's legislative support is enough to secure the approval of new water legislation, stronger support from the government and/or other relevant actors is required to sponsor and finance implementation. And if the need

of strengthening political support grows from one reform phase to the next, so does the importance of the brokerage mechanisms and the influence of party politics.

In the three states, experts' brokering activities combined and interacted with party politics in different ways, thereby bearing upon the outcome of the reform. The most immediate brokerage mechanism was to resort to personal and party connections in order to *get appointed to managerial positions* related to water policy. The strategic use of personal and party connections is crucial to winning political support from the ruling party and other relevant political actors. Yet party connections are two-edged tools: If they are useful in getting the process started and running, they are also sensitive to *electoral politics*. Party alternations or even intra-party changes may many times risk, if not the continuation of the reform, at least the continuance of the reformist experts in managerial positions.

A similar risk affects a second brokerage mechanism—*programmatic packaging*. Indeed, programmatic packaging is a two-faced phenomenon. On the one hand, packaging can be seen as a personal accomplishment of the reformist experts and other individuals, as they can skillfully move the reform up the governmental agenda by showing how intimately connected the reform is to the government's programmatic goals. On the other, there are limits as to how and how much experts can resort to programmatic packaging.

First, there is a supply restriction given by the *programmatic orientation of the ruling party*. There must be a program or at least distinctive goals available to which the experts can attach the reform. The lack of programmatic packaging in Rio Grande do Sul can be attributed either to a deliberate strategy followed by the reformist experts or to the absence in the political market of a program with which the reform could productively be associated.

Second, packaging affects the reform itself, in that the package in which it is inserted pervades the content of the management model. In Ceará, for instance, packaging the reform within the Government of Change program reinforced (via the World Bank intervention) the centralizing aspects of the management model.¹⁴

Third, like political connections, programmatic packaging is sensitive to *electoral politics and the electoral performance of the ruling party*. The Paraná case shows that the more the reform is identified with a (contested) government program or policy paradigm, the more likely its survival is to be threatened by a party turnover. Similarly, the continuity of the Ceará reform was due a great deal to the continuance in office of the same political group from 1986 through 2006.

Conversely, the absence of a fitting government program in Rio Grande do Sul was partly due to the fact that every election since 1986 has brought a governor from a different party to power. Even if such a program had been available, it would have been hard to implement it and to package the water reform successfully in only one term (four years).

Both friends and foes repeatedly remarked on the slow and incomplete implementation of the Rio Grande reform. However, once one considers the partisan makeup of governments, the most notable aspect of this case is the reformist experts' ability to even begin to implement the reform, given its low governmental agenda status. How did they manage to do so? The third brokerage mechanism comes here to the forefront: the building of a diffuse *pro-reform coalition*.

It was thanks to their war-of-position tactics that the parents of the reform and their fellow reformers managed, first, to remain in important command, coordination, and even contestation points within the water resources system despite party turnovers; and, second, to foster the development of a diffuse pro-reform constituency across local and social organizations, as well as bureaucratic agencies. By doing so, the reformist experts managed to offset the low government priority and the constant party alternation and to start and continue implementation (even if slowly or erratically) without changing the management model. Whether or not the Rio Grande reform will be ever fully implemented is an open question. But the Rio Grande reformers unquestionably accomplished much more than could be expected given inauspicious political circumstances.

All things considered, two general conclusions can be drawn from my case studies regarding the influence of programmatic packaging and coalition building on the content and implementation of the reform. First, regardless of the content of the management model, the speed of implementation is positively associated with programmatic packaging and government priority and negatively associated with the diffuseness of the pro-reform coalition. Second, a wider participatory approach is more likely in cases of more diffuse pro-reform coalitions, while the association between participatory policymaking and level of government priority has to be tested through further research.

This article's findings open important questions regarding the role of experts and the prospects of participatory and decentralized policymaking. I stated earlier that experts play a fundamental policymaking role in highly specialized areas. Yet are experts only important in policy areas that are highly dependent on scientific knowledge, such as water resources? Are experts equally important in areas as disparate as, for instance, water resources management, education, or poverty alleviation? Furthermore, is the relevance of experts related to the issue's cognitive nature or rather to the issue's public and political priority?

More case studies and cross-area research are required to answer these questions. Yet two hypotheses can be speculated here. First, the importance of experts is positively related to the technical nature of the issue at hand and negatively related to the latter's public and political priority. Compared with other policy areas, water issues seem to be more technical and to get a lower priority on the political agenda, leaving more room for the role of experts and the prevalence of what Schmidt (2008, 311) calls "coordinative discourse." In areas that are less dependent on specialized

knowledge and/or of higher social and political priority, less ideational agreement, more social controversy, higher participation of party and social actors, and lower importance of experts can be expected.

Second, the importance of experts is associated with the way experts relate to the state bureaucracy and the degree of separation between state bureaucracy and party politics. As noted in endnote 11, Brazil can be considered as a special case of the "politicized state" in which there exists "a blurring of the division between the administrative and party-electoral lines of action" (Chalmers 1977, 32) at the same time that the bureaucracy stands out as a strong policymaking actor. Perhaps in cases in which political parties and state bureaucracy are not as connected as in Brazil, or in which the bureaucratic power is weaker than in Brazil, experts would interact with parties in a more distant manner, would act more outside the state agencies (from NGOs, interest groups, or independent research centers), or would be less relevant altogether, depending yet again on the technical complexity and the level of public and political priority of the issue at hand.

As regards the prospects of participatory and decentralized policymaking, the case of Rio Grande do Sul shows that while participatory management is associated with a diffuse pro-reform coalition, effective implementation seems to be associated not only with high government priority but also with a concentrated pro-reform coalition. Thus, two questions arise concerning the implementation of a wide participatory approach like the one introduced in Rio Grande do Sul. Could the participatory management model ever be fully implemented even if the reform never switches from the slow to the fast implementation road? Is it possible to get higher government priority and therefore accelerate the implementation pace while keeping a broad pro-reform coalition?

These questions can only be answered through further research—and by the real practice of the participants in the reform process. In the meantime, two concluding remarks are worth making. First, while experts and bureaucrats are commonly seen as contrary to participatory politics, they do not necessarily hold "technocratic" or "isolationist" approaches. As shown (especially but not only) by the case of Rio Grande do Sul, experts within and outside the state apparatuses may hold participatory values and foster participatory policy models. When available, they can become allies to social actors claiming or longing for more open and responsive decision-making processes and can occasionally provide a bridge between social actors and the ruling party.

In this regard, the politicized state (i.e., the blurring of the division between bureaucracy and political parties), instead of being seen as the manipulation of bureaucrats by politicians, can be thought of as fostering the formation of networks of experts, officials, and social actors—a sort of a democratic version of the embedded autonomy. In the end, if the effective implementation of a participatory management model depends on both the building of a wide social coalition and the ruling party's com-

mitment, participatory experts and bureaucrats incorporated into a politicized state can provide, at least theoretically, the lost link.

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Notes

1. For an overview of the literature on policy reforms in Latin American and other developing countries during the last two decades, cf. Haggard and Kaufman (1992), Huber and Solt (2004), Kaufman (1999), Kaufman and Nelson (2004), Nelson (1996), Schneider and Heredia (2003), and Walton (2004).
2. For a general appraisal of the ideational turn in political science, cf. Berman (1998), Blyth (1997, 2002, 2003, 2007), Blyth and Varghese (1999), Campbell (1998, 2002), Finnemore and Sikkink (2001), Goldstein and Keohane (1993), Hall (1993), Litfin (1994), Schmidt (2008), Sikkink (1991), Wendt (1999), Widmaier, Blyth, and Seabrooke (2007), and Yee (1996).
3. On process tracing, cf. George and Bennett (2004, 205–233 and *passim*).
4. For a classical critique of stage models, cf. Hecló (1974) and Kingdom (1995).
5. Founded in 1977, the Brazilian Water Resources Association (ABRH) is the professional association of individuals and organizations engaged in water resources management. As stated on the association's Web site, the ABRH carries out "technical-scientific, legal-institutional, and social activities," which include running the Brazilian Water Resources Symposium every two years and publishing a specialized journal (<http://www.abrh.org.br>, accessed December 14, 2008).
6. After the 1985 return to democracy, a new, all-encompassing Federal Constitution was approved in 1988. To comply with the Federal Constitution, all states had to approve their new constitutions the year after.
7. For an overview of the state reform processes, cf. Formiga Johnsson and Lopes (2003), Lobato da Costa (2003), and National Water Agency (2002).
8. For an overview of the epistemic community approach, cf. Adler and Haas (1992), Haas (1989, 1990a, 1990b, 1992), and Leatherman (1993).
9. *Técnicos* constitute a special type of bureaucrats defined as follows: civil service officials that hold mid-level positions functionally related to their scientific or professional training (cf. Centeno 1993; Grindle 1977; Schneider 1991; Silva 1997; Domínguez 1997).
10. Similar distinctions are made by a number of scholars, for example, Peter Weingart (1982, 78–80) identifies three different kinds of expertise: scientific, industrial, and administrative; Charles Perrow (1993, 46) distinguishes between the scientific/research and the administrative/technical competences of the bureaucracy; Giuseppe Delmestri and Peter Walgenbach (2005) point out that middle managers in the industrial sector hold two different types of knowledge: technical and managerial.

11. This view of knowledge brokerage may be particularly relevant in so-called “politicized states” (Chalmers 1977) such as Brazil. While my interpretation is akin to Douglas Chalmers’ view of the politicized state as one in which there exists “a blurring of the division between the administrative and party-electoral lines of action” (32), it departs from it regarding another important aspect of the politicized state: “the [partisan-electoral] manipulation of the bureaucratic lines of authority” (32). In my case studies, experts are not mere electoral instruments of the governor but active political actors on their own. Notwithstanding that, it is still possible that the political role of experts will be less prominent in cases in which the blurring of the division between the administrative and party-electoral lines of action is less apparent.
12. This social or political skill is at the core of such categories as technopols (Hecló 1978) or *técnicos-políticos* (Grindle 1977; Schneider 1991).
13. For a discussion on the packaging of policy ideas, cf. Campbell (1998, 2002), Hall (1993), Heredia and Schneider (2003), Schmidt (2008), and Yee (1996). On the importance of coalition building for policy innovation, cf. Blyth (2002, 2007), Carpenter (2000, 2001), and Sheingate (2003).
14. The World Bank intervention deserves a final remark. The comparative analysis shows that the importance of that intervention varies across the states and from one reform phase to the next. While the Bank intervention was unnoticeable in Rio Grande do Sul, the joint analysis of the cases of Paraná and Ceará shows that (1) even though water market is its first preference, the bank can promote the introduction of quite different models in different places (decentralization and privileged participation of the business sector in Paraná, bureaucratic centralization in Ceará, water market somewhere else); (2) the intervention of the World Bank is not sufficient for the transition from one phase to the next (even if a pro-reform World Bank project is already in place at the initiative phase, as it happened in Paraná, strong government support is still required to start the legislative process and secure implementation); and (3) implementation is the moment at which the World Bank intervention is the most crucial, but always in association with a congruent government program or policy paradigm.

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