

The Anonymous Leader

Appointed CEOs in
Western Local Government

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CHAPTER 14

Portuguese Chief Administrative Officers: Between Rationalization and Political Struggles

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Introduction: Theories and Methods

The chief administrative officers (CAO) in Portuguese local government are positioned in multiple frameworks. We deliberately use the term chief administrative officers instead of chief executive officer because the latter role, as we explain below, is fulfilled by the mayor. Our aim is to bring together the global, societal frameworks and the specific contexts influencing CAO's profile and strategies. We then interpret the frameworks characterized by a combination of specific factors (organizational characteristics, national constraints, etc.) linked with a more general structuration.

Drawing on Anthony Giddens' analysis (1987, 1992), we identify three types of frameworks: the pre-modern model (what Giddens calls the "society-like organisation"), the modern model (modern organisations based on rationalisation, drawing on Weber's ideal-type bureaucracy) and a third emergent model, called "reflexive" or "late modernity" (complex and de-territorialised organizations where new forms of life and work are emerging and where a kind of creative disorder occurs). Closing in on our empirical object, we find a diversity of situations that tend to merge different frameworks. In a paradoxical way, the chief administrative officers are influenced by a general trend of modernization, in a context where they are fighting against traditional, pre-modern practices, yet are at the same time guardians of the bureaucratic order, avoiding innovation.

For example, when the issue of local government modernization is under debate, we find a situation of "distortion and confusion between what Chief Executive Officers have to do, what they think they have to do, what they would like to do, and what they do in practice, a situation parallel to what the mayors do in practice.... This scenario quite often produces "schizophrenic" situations for the CEOs where conflicts appear and explains the tensions between CEOs

and politicians" (Nieto, 1997: 51). In the Portuguese context, these contradictions are clearly visible among younger chief administrative officers (often having university-level training), who tend to be caught between their idealistic view of the municipality and the more prosaic "pre-modern" or "clientelistic" organisations.

In fact, Portuguese municipal administration reveals a mixture of different time-cultures, a situation different from the one found in other developed countries. As Boaventura Santos wrote (Santos, 1985), drawing on I. Wallerstein's analysis (Wallerstein, 1984), Portugal can be seen as a semiperipheral country, with a structural disarticulation between production and social reproduction, the latter being more developed (reflecting what can be seen as a social "Westernised" normality). The role of the State is to inhibit the gap between the formal ("the law in books") and the informal practices ("the law in action").

Local administration shares some of the features of this context, but there are differences across the country. In the coastal region (including the two metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Oporto) where almost 80% of the population live, the complexity of problems related with this high density and the demands upon relatively large and more professional municipal organisations produce a more modern organisational design, where the gap between the formal and informal practices tends to be reduced. In other municipalities, the organizational processes are centred mainly around the mayor and his influence. According to his profile, the mayor can act as a voluntary agent of modernization, assisted in some cases by the CAO. On the other hand, he can be a kind of clientelistic agent, reproducing a context in which some traces of pre-modernity may be found (although for the past 10 years a new generation of mayors, mostly from the Left-centre wing, are changing this traditional profile).¹

This can also be seen as a result of a new political trend, common in many other European countries: the "de-ideologisation" of political leadership. The main distinction is no longer between political programs, but between a pragmatic and modernist strategy versus a clientelistic model centred on political control and domination.

Some Notes About the Research Design

In this section, we would like to raise some questions about our main empirical source (the U.DI.T.E. survey), especially about the relevance and reliability of the information gathered in the Portuguese context. In order to avoid simplistic cross-country comparisons based on survey findings, we should be cautious and discuss some *difficulties* observed in the Portuguese case. Knowing that survey results depend largely on the perspective of the person who actually performs the

¹ The clientelistic situation is more common in northern Portugal. As Manuel Carlos Silva has written, "the traditional and generally conservative sociopolitical alignment of the inhabitants of contemporary northern Portugal cannot be understood without taking into account the system of bonding to and dependency on influential persons, whether patrons or brokers" (Silva, 1994: 29).

CEO or CAO job, it is important to stress that, *a priori*, we expect different kinds of responses, at least if we compare Portugal with more developed countries. Thus, part of the explanation for the relatively large gap between some quantitative and qualitative findings in Portugal has to do with the different perspectives used by the survey's respondents.

In addition, the vast majority of Portuguese CAOs were informed about the importance of this survey for the promotion strategy of their national association, hence, it is possible that some of the answers were influenced by the respondents' desire to present themselves as active, modern managers.

We should also bear in mind the links between the Portuguese chief administrative officers and their mayors: it was with some surprise that we did not receive only personal and anonymous answers to the survey. Others (almost half of them) were sent through the municipality's official channels (and probably under the control of the mayor).²

Thus, it seems that in organizational studies the use of quantitative methods has to be strongly complemented with a qualitative strategy supported mainly by discourse analysis and observation.³

When analyzing these findings we will use a frame of values that is implicitly assumed. Usually, the Mediterranean political and administrative agents are seen as having a traditional, clientelistic, non-participatory attitude placed at an early stage of management modernisation. If we see the opposite attitude (common in Northern or Central Europe) not as superior (or inferior), but merely as different, we are giving ourselves an opportunity to see the other side: we *accept* not only the *discourse* of modernisation (present in academic or political discourses), but also the discourse of irrationality, the resistance by those who have no access to the *official* discourse, even if that resistance seems archaic.⁴ By doing so, we are reminded that many new social phenomena and movements reveal to us the crisis of the modern *narrative* of progress (about this subject, see, e.g. the work of Lyotard 1984). And this narrative includes some recent managerial discourses (new public management, privatization of local services, and so on).

2 In a study of local elites, Oliveira e Rocha notes that in Portugal it is common to find situations where the local administration is under some kind of "law of silence"; there is a kind of personal and clientelistic domination centred on the charismatic personality of the mayor (Rocha 1988:3).

3 See also Terry Nichols Clark, who stresses the difference between the rhetoric (discourse) of local officials and what is found when observing their practice (1996:23).

4 It is interesting to compare this kind of analysis with the discourse of Portuguese central administration regarding local administration. The organisational change in Portuguese local administration was analysed by someone from central administration (regional co-ordination commission) in the following way: "it is common to find situations where the change from an informal organisation into a rational bureaucracy is not achieved through the modernisation of management technologies, where there is no co-ordination to avoid the sectorial segregation; the functions are not defined nor are the procedures modernised; the routines that were proven obsolete carry on" (Couto and Gaio, 1990:36).

The Historical Perspective of Portuguese Local Government

History shows us that since the fifteenth century centralisation has become a basic feature of the Portuguese political system. Administrative rationalisation marks the formation of modern Portugal in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, developed by the king and aimed at the limitation of the powers held by the nobility and the Catholic Church, leaving unchanged the limited autonomy of local powers.

Recent historical research indicates that local power in Portugal cannot be interpreted as representing the will of the people. On the contrary, the reality of local governments was based on an arbitrary and even tyrannical relationship.

The autonomy of local government (which some historians praise as a long Portuguese tradition) was not a consequence of any deliberate decentralisation, but rather the effect of the central power's inability to intervene in some regions. Some traces of this autonomy are still present, mainly through the influence of the Catholic Church and are not limited to rural areas. Moreover, this inability of central power also favoured the informal production of laws based on communitarian norms, giving way to a dual administration (see, among others, Monteiro 1993 and Capela 1995).

Only after the Liberal Revolution in 1820 and its subsequent Constitution was the country divided into "Distritos" (where central government was represented by general administrators) and "Concelhos" (an earlier form of municipality) with local governments directly elected by the people. The influence of the French model of local administration was now present, trying to define a multiple level administrative structure, with elected members at the local level, however, subordinated to the tutelage of central power or its appointees. This new situation also generated a tension between the increasing influence of central power on the overall territory (directed mainly against the nobility powers) and the increasing individualism (Tocqueville predicted this conflict between the state and the individual as a consequence of this democratic revolution: meanwhile, the intermediate "bodies" were liquidated).

Thus, the Portuguese Liberal period and the early Republic (1910-1926) were characterised by a political struggle between central and local governments. This period ended in 1926 with a coup d'état which brought to power Salazar's dictatorship. Until 1974, Portuguese administration remained highly centralised: local elections were abolished and local authorities nominated by central government. This system also generated practices of nepotism and patronage – central government financial policies were highly discretionary. Local government's share of national expenditure, however, was more or less the same as today (about 10%).

The democratic revolution (1974) saw local self-government as one of its most important achievements. According to the new Constitution, local governments are territorially based collective entities, pursuing specific goals for their respective populations, whom they represent through elections. Local govern-

ments also have property and finances of their own and legislative autonomy. According to Law 25/85 (which rectified some aspects of Law 100/84, both laws resulting from the first one, Law 79/77), local governments have the following duties: the administration of property, development, public supply (e.g. market-places), public health and sewage, education and schooling, care of children and the elderly, culture, leisure and sports, environment and protection of the quality of life, and civic protection. These somewhat vague obligations are transferred to a complex set of regulations that define local governments' frame of action (and are limited mainly by the law on local finance, Law 1/87). Some of their activities and decisions are subject to approval by various ministries (Finance, Planning and Territorial Administration) and by the Court of Auditors (e.g. municipal annual accounts are given *a posteriori* approval). Nevertheless, some traces of the *Salazarist* regime, such as centralised and bureaucratic structure, were *inherited* by the democratic system.

In sum, we see that the Portuguese case presents a specific dualism between the highly bureaucratic organisational models and the informality linked to the oligarchic models of local domination. Local brokers (influential persons) are thus essential to understanding administrative action, since they work as mediators in the central-local relation.

The changes in this context tend to combine the pre-modern background and late modern complexity introduced by organisational rationalisation, new technologies, European integration and other factors (see, e.g., Martins 1993, and, on the effects of European integration, Costa, Felizes and Neves 1997). In this way, the organisation can be seen as a time-space discursive rationalisation where past and present are linked in a complex manner.

The Local Political-Administrative System

Portuguese local administration can be divided into four levels. First, there are *Freguesias* (parish-based units), the lowest tier of public administration, with limited autonomy. Having very limited financial resources, *Freguesias* can be more or less favoured by municipal administration according to the decentralisation policy pursued by the mayor. Second, there are the *Municípios* or *Concelhos* (municipalities): Portugal has 305 municipalities, 30 of them in the archipelagos. They are the most important level of local government. The municipality has two elected governing bodies: the *Assembleia Municipal* (municipal assembly) and the *Câmara Municipal* (chamber). The latter is led by a *Presidente* (chairman, the mayor) who, together with the powers vested in him, holds an important *symbolic* office. There are also two other more ambiguous units: the *Distritos* or districts, created by the 1822 Constitution. Today they represent a *relic* of the legal system, since they are to be replaced by *administrative regions*. Finally, there are the *Regiões* or regions. In Portugal there are two *autonomous regions* (the archipelagos of Azores and Madeira), with elected governments and

a limited revenue raising power mainly from customs and fuel duties. There are also the controversial *administrative regions*, only legally defined in the Constitution of 1976.

Financial Situation

Nowadays, Portuguese local government consumes a relatively small part of public expenditure (8%), corresponding to around 4% of the gross domestic product.

Local government financial resources are divided mainly into three types of resources. First, there are the self-generated resources: property taxes (since 1987 the property transaction tax became the most important – about 35% of total); vehicle tax; tourism tax (in 1987 it was replaced by a 37,5% share in the V.A.T. generated by local tourism); a share in enterprises' income (which is the only – however limited – tax that municipalities can introduce autonomously), and other minor taxes. Second, there are the European Union funds. And third, a complex *equalisation financial fund*, granted from the national budget and distributed mainly according to the size of the municipalities' population, which is crucial for the less developed municipalities.

In the first years after the democratic revolution, Portuguese municipalities were involved in actions relating to the solution of the main structural problems (e.g. road construction and repair, water and electricity supply, etc.). Lately they have been asserting their role in local economic development, upholding new industrial or other activities. However, if we compare the percentage of municipalities' capital investment (around 40% of total investments), we see the persistence of that *infrastructural* stage: excluding education and recreation investment (increasing from 7% to 13%, from 1983 to 1991), the other domains maintain their traditional *profile*.

A brief examination of the statistics shows that Portuguese local governments have been improving their financial standing, following the national economy's general improvement. The composition of their income (which is steadily growing) is less dependent on the equalisation fund, since other sources have become increasingly more important. This partially explains why municipalities became an important agent of the *modernization* mentioned above. However, this is a controversial issue, since local governments' revenues have been decreasing over the last years, while public expenditures have risen, causing a financial strain that remains to be solved, as municipalities are responsible for a major portion of general investment and employment.

Municipalities' Internal Organisation

Before analysing the position of the chief administrative officers, we present an overview of the internal organisation of the municipalities. As mentioned, the municipality is divided into two major political structures: the municipal assembly and the chamber. The chamber has a limited number of councillors (aldermen): from 4 to 16 *Vereadores*, according to the municipality's number of voters.

The chamber is the executive body of Portuguese municipalities. It is led by the mayor (formally, the first name on the list presented by the winning party of the local election for the chamber), but includes other councillors according to a proportional system (which in some cases prevents the formation a single party majority). According to Law 18/91 (replacing Law 100/84, improving the mayor's powers) the chamber is the body responsible for executing and faithfully pursuing the assembly's decisions and planning annual activities, with its respective budget.

Most of the chamber's powers can be delegated to the mayor, with one important exception: the elaboration and execution of the annual plan of activities. The mayor has specific duties: besides representing the municipality and coordinating the chamber's activity, he has to submit the accounts to the assembly (for approval) and then to the Court of Auditors. Analysing recent changes on local government's legislation, we note that the mayor's powers have been increased. He has become the real chief executive officer of the municipality, since he is also responsible for the management and direction of human resources, and he has the power to "change or revoke acts carried out by municipal personnel" (see Article 53 of the reviewed Law 100/84). Finally, only the mayor can delegate part of his powers to other elected members, such as councillors obliged to present detailed reports on their activity.

We can distinguish a range of strategies used by mayors: 1) those who do not delegate powers to the opposition councillors, although they have the majority in the chamber; 2) those who, despite having the majority, try to create more consensus and delegate some powers (not the very important powers) to the opposition; 3) mayors who are forced to negotiate with the councillors of the "opposition", as they hold only a relative majority.

The administrative structure can be divided into four different sections. First, there are the municipal services (general administration, treasury and other special services). Second, there are municipalised services (not autonomous since they are directed by the mayor or by an alderman (economic activities such as water supply, sanitation, public transportation, etc.)). Third, some municipal services can be replaced by public municipal enterprises (having administrative and financial autonomy). Finally, there are in some cases private enterprises with a concession (usually awarded by municipalities' associations) to provide services such as waste disposal or water supply.

How can we understand the relations between these agents inside the municipality? Here we should define different levels drawing on Mintzberg (1979), where the head of administration may have different roles (see Alfaiate, 1988).

First there is the political level of direction (the "strategic apex"), where the mayor may share his powers with other persons, including the chief administrative officer who in some cases becomes a real chief executive officer, or in other cases a mere bureaucrat, holding limited powers.

Second, we find the intermediate level ("the middle line"), where the technical expertise is often linked more with the conception than with the execution of

specific projects. Here, the head of administration is concerned mostly with technical details. However, this kind of work tends to become a more or less deliberate barrier to the political direction's objectives (mostly if these objectives prove difficult to achieve).

Third is the "operating core", where, on one hand, we find manual workers, usually complaining about their work conditions, but also seeing their role as an active one in the execution of the projects; on the other hand, lower level officers who tend to react more passively. This usually occurs if they perceive that possible changes in the municipality may affect them negatively. In these cases, it is possible that they may try to oppose changes, namely through the intervention of their union.

Fourth, we find the "technostructure" and logistical services. Placed in a peripheral position, this level plays a supporting role. When, however, there is a staff closer to the political direction (giving advice about the organisational design), the head of administration may see his role reduced to that of executing orders which he has not even had the opportunity to discuss.

The Situation of Chief Administrative Officers in the Local Political-Administrative System

Until 1984, the administrative functions of Portuguese municipalities were under the responsibility of a chief secretary, a job similar to that of a CEO in other countries. In reality, however, their work was somewhat limited by the demands of a highly bureaucratic organization. This chief secretary belonged to a national board placed under central government control: his status and functions were defined by national administrative law, which was applicable countrywide. This situation began to change with the democratic Constitution of 1976, since it proclaimed the principle of decentralisation and local autonomy, and stipulated that municipalities should have their own personnel, whom they should manage and pay.

After 1984 this principle was applied to local administration. Each municipality was to set up and elaborate its own organisation and personnel.

The chief administrative officers' activities may vary from municipality to municipality. Generally, they participate in the drawing up and carrying out of the municipality's policies and budgets, they also participate in human resource management and supervision, managing also organisations that belong to the general direction of the department, division or area under the authority of the mayor (or other councillors). Furthermore, the head of administration usually has the following powers: 1) notary public in contracts involving the municipality; 2) adjudicating fiscal disputes (debts); 3) state delegate to exhibitions; 4) secretary of council meetings (usually responsible for the minutes); 5) supervisor of specific tasks relating to the management of human, financial and patrimonial resources; 6) proposing of possible improvements of structures, work methods and equipment; 7) certification of the facts and acts belonging to municipal records.

Nevertheless, an important change concerning administrative leadership was introduced, and the new chief administrative officers lost the ability to control the municipal organisation. According to the chairman of the Portuguese association of municipal officers: "in Portugal, after 1984, the head of administration no longer holds the overall control of the co-ordination between municipal services" (Dias, 1995: 6). Besides, in many cases, when the CAO belongs to a political party different from that of the recently elected mayor's party, the new mayor may change the internal administrative set-up, i.e., via a request made to the Ministry of Administration for a special temporary appointment of chief administrative officers from other places, who can replace the existing CAOs.

A closer look at the legal framework allow us to conclude that in important aspects the CAO's status was preserved.⁵ Moreover, financial and, mainly, legislative knowledge make him a strategic agent, even when his position is held in low esteem by the mayor's personal staff. In conclusion, it is not evident, as some CAOs maintain, that their importance is decreasing. In small municipalities (and when they have the confidence of the mayor in political matters) they can be real chief executive officers through their personal influence, through what we can term their "symbolic capital", a concept discussed by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and the American political scientist Clarence Stone.

The Background and Values of Heads of Administration: Survey Findings

The Background

Our findings show that the typical Portuguese chief administrative officer is a middle-aged man (50 years old), trained in law or economics, having recently been appointed to his present position (5 years ago on average). Almost one-third are women, and about 60% do not have university degrees.

It should be noted, however, that according to our survey there has been a recent "rejuvenation" change in age composition, as many of the municipalities' former chief administrative officers recently faced retirement.

5 We tried to understand what happened during this transition and found two different laws in a one-and-half-year period: Law 116/84 on the "Organisation and Functioning of the Technical-Administrative Services in Local Government" (6 April 1984); then, another law (amending some articles of Law 44/85 of 13 September 1985). Six years later, another decree, 198/91 (29 May 1991) amended two previous laws. Finally, the government passed Law 198/95 (29 May 1995). One of the main reasons for these changes was the temporary situation of the former *Chefes de Secretaria* (appointed by a national board since 1936), who could serve as CEOs. At the same time the ATAM (Portuguese Association of Municipal Chief Administrative Officers) changed its statutes in order to integrate all administrative officers. In fact, a major change from Law 116/84 to Law 44/85 relates to their financial situation: instead of earning up to the limit of 50% of their basic wage from their function as notary in municipal contracts, the limit was increased up to 70%. Many of the changes were indeed centered on the improvement of the chief administrative officer's position. Even if the changes are not very important, they can be interpreted as being influenced by CAO lobbying. The current chairman of the Portuguese CAO association told us that this relationship with the central power (mainly with lower political levels) is very important to the association.

Based on their background we find two important types of chief administrative officers. On one hand, we find those who worked their way up through the ranks; on the other hand, we find the chief administrative officers holding a university degree who are usually younger than the former. We should note that according to Law 198/91, municipalities can recruit chief administrative officers from persons holding a university degree (or equivalent), or from personnel already making an administrative career.⁶ In this way, the young graduates can be seen as promoters of changes in the *establishment*.

The survey also tells us that a vast majority of chief administrative officers were recruited from the public sector's administrative career (only 23% came from the private sector), local administration being the most important source: one-third had their first job here and 49% had their previous job in the present municipality or in another).

Thus, it seems that the identity of the Portuguese chief administrative officer is largely influenced by the tradition built around a local government career system and preserved by its older members. Furthermore, the Portuguese Association of Municipal Officers (ATAM) is mainly led by this kind of self-made professionals.

We find a significant difference between 1) the more traditional background, originating from within municipal or central administration, and concerned mainly with legal procedures and 2) the professionals who are mainly concerned with the results of municipal activities as a whole. Returning to our findings, the causes cited for resignation provide interesting information about this process. In fact, 11% acknowledged co-operation problems with politicians as the cause of the former chief administrative officer's resignation, which indicates a conflict with politicians caused probably, as suggested above, by the administrative apparatus' resistance to its colonisation by a clientelistic system centered on political control and domination.

Role Perceptions: the Chief Administrative Officer and the Politicians

Analysing the CAO's daily activities, we noted above that as a strategic agent influencing local government's policies, he holds limited autonomy. If we com-

6 Concerning the chief administrative officers' training, there are two major institutions in Portugal: CEFA (Centre for Municipal Studies and Training), which organizes courses on municipal affairs, and the above mentioned ATAM (Association of Municipal Administrative Officers), organizes regional meetings for professional improvement and courses for local officers, supported by European Union funding. CEFA's courses (a school directed both by central government and by the National Association of Municipalities) are officially recognised for the purpose of recruiting municipal personnel. This centre is an important agent for the local government's modernisation in Portugal. However, when we interviewed some of the graduates, they told us that there is a gap between what they were taught and the reality of local administration. Recently, CEFA's policy is to favour technical instead of organisational theory courses.

Concerning their salaries, the head of department and the head of division earn 80% and 70% respectively of the central administration's general director's wage; some of the CAOs may also earn up to the limit of 70% of their basic wage from their function as notary public in municipal contracts. We may thus conclude, and the majority of the respondents confirm, that the job is attractive.

pare the municipality with a private enterprise, the CAO would be subordinated to the general manager (the mayor). In this way, his roles are limited to day-to-day management. Apparently, the considerable volume of legislation with which he must deal forces him to work mainly as a legal advisor to the chairman.

Table 14.1 shows some results about the way Portuguese CAOs perceive their own roles. Based on the two ideal-types suggested by Putnam's classical work, it seems that the classical bureaucrat type is preferred to the political bureaucrat. In other words, according to the scale presented in the survey, the neutral-role model, centred on the technical and administrative functions, receives an average preference of 78 (on the 0-100 index), although the value found for the other model (the political bureaucrat) is also significant (66).⁷ If we disregard the "political advisor" role, the result would be closer to the one found for the "classical bureaucrat" model (73). A possible explanation to this ambiguity is the CAO's desire to gain political support: as mentioned earlier, their present condition is perceived as one of a certain degree of disempowerment caused by the abolition (in 1984) of the municipal secretary and the reinforcement of the powers of local politicians.

Looking at the specific variables in table 14.1, we find a *dissonant* statistic: giving political advice to the mayor is seen as having little importance (28). Our interpretation of this score is that the word "political" has a meaning often related (at least in Portugal) to political parties and to local elections. The administrative leader thus chooses to operate on a neutral basis, outside political struggles. Nevertheless, preferring the classical bureaucratic role (in the Weberian sense), the CAO displays a growing concern with some of the strategic tasks performed on the basis of the profile of the political bureaucrat.

Therefore, if we note the emphasis placed on the correct implementation of rules and regulations (the second highest score: 81), it is somewhat contradictory with the high emphasis also placed on the formulation of ideas and projects: moreover, data from our qualitative research reveal that Portuguese chief administrative officers tend to present themselves as partisans of modernization and the improvement human relations. This reinforces our initial argument about the structural ambiguity found in these professionals.

The distinction between a classical or a political bureaucrat could lead to a dubious conclusion in this situation. We must bear in mind the legal limits preventing the chief administrative officer from becoming a real political bureaucrat. Instead, he may hold a symbolic leading office as the administrative ally of the mayor besides his role as an agent of rationalisation.

⁷ The average scores have been estimated on a range variation from "0" (very little or no importance) to "100" (utmost importance). The other results from the U.Di.T.E. Leadership Study follow the same presentation scheme.

Table 14.1 The roles of the CEOs, Portugal

The classical bureaucrat		78
Guide subordinate staff in day-to-day handling of activities	75	
Manage economic affairs, accounts and budgetary control	74	
Ensure that rules and regulations are followed	81	
Provide the mayor with legal, economic and other kinds of technical advice	82	
The political bureaucrat		66
Formulate ideas and visions	78	
Promote and encourage new projects in the community	69	
Provide the mayor with political advice	28	
Be informed about citizens' viewpoints	68	
Develop and implement norms concerning the proper roles of politicians vis-à-vis the bureaucrats	78	
Influence decision-making processes in order to secure sensible and efficient solutions	72	

Complementary to these ideas, we present in table 14.2 some findings about the way CAOs perceive the ideal role of leading politicians.

First, we note the CAOs' negative attitude toward assuming a role as elected representatives of their political party (37). Thus, the mayor and the councillors should be above all members of the whole managing board, dealing with every aspect of municipal policy and having a comprehensive view of the development strategy (87). This perception induces a high valuation of the role of creating stability: we interpret this as based on the respondents' assumption that politicians should not interfere with the administrative machine. This position can be understood as a way of enlarging the CAO's influence in the more concrete aspects of municipal affairs. However, this tendency is not clear since the decision on specific cases is still seen as an important prerogative for politicians (70).

In conclusion, the ideal role for the politicians does not seem to reveal a specific profile. Instead, we arrive at a more negative definition: beyond fulfilling their legal obligations, politicians should avoid interference from both political parties and local groups.

Nevertheless, we still maintain that these explanations imply a deeper exploration of our survey and other qualitative data.

Table 14.2 The ideal politician, Portugal

Administration		63
Be a spokesperson for local groups or individuals who have issues pending decision by the authority	49	
Lay down rules and routines for the administration	69	
Taking decisions concerning specific cases	70	
Representation		67
Be informed about citizens' views	83	
Represent the municipality to the outside world	78	
Defend the authorities' decisions and policies externally	75	
Be a spokesperson for their political party	37	
Be a spokesperson vis-à-vis the press	62	
Governance		79
Implement the program on which he/she has been elected	77	
Decide on major policy principles	73	
Have a vision of the way in which the municipality will develop in the long run	87	
Stability		86
Create stability for the administration	84	
Formulate exact and unambiguous goals for the administration	87	

Networks

In this section, we would like to discuss our initial idea of a dualistic political structure.⁸ We know that beyond the empirical findings we are dealing with traditionally informal networking practices which in Portugal tend to reproduce clientelistic traditions. We are also aware that great changes are taking place with regard to strategies directed towards the promotion and shaping of bureaucratic procedures.

However it is wishful thinking to assume transparency and equality in the discussion when we analyze political processes, and particularly their implementation. Perhaps a more probing perspective would be to assume a *diversity* of ways in which policies are implemented regardless of the context. Thus, it may be argued that we never have a stable framework for the political dimension. To talk about politics means talking about a series of dynamic processes.

We have here a combination based on two democratic ideal-types: the archetypal ancient Greek city-state (in the writings of Rousseau, Montesquieu or Tocqueville considered an example of participatory democracy) and the liberal-democratic representative system, considered by R. Dahl (1989) as an adaptation of the previous model to complex contemporary societies.⁹ Both these ideal-types are now resuscitated by the necessity to manage public economic resources in accordance with budgetary requirements. Today we see this as the ideal model of democracy, commonly, and more or less explicitly, accepted by contemporary social and political scientists.

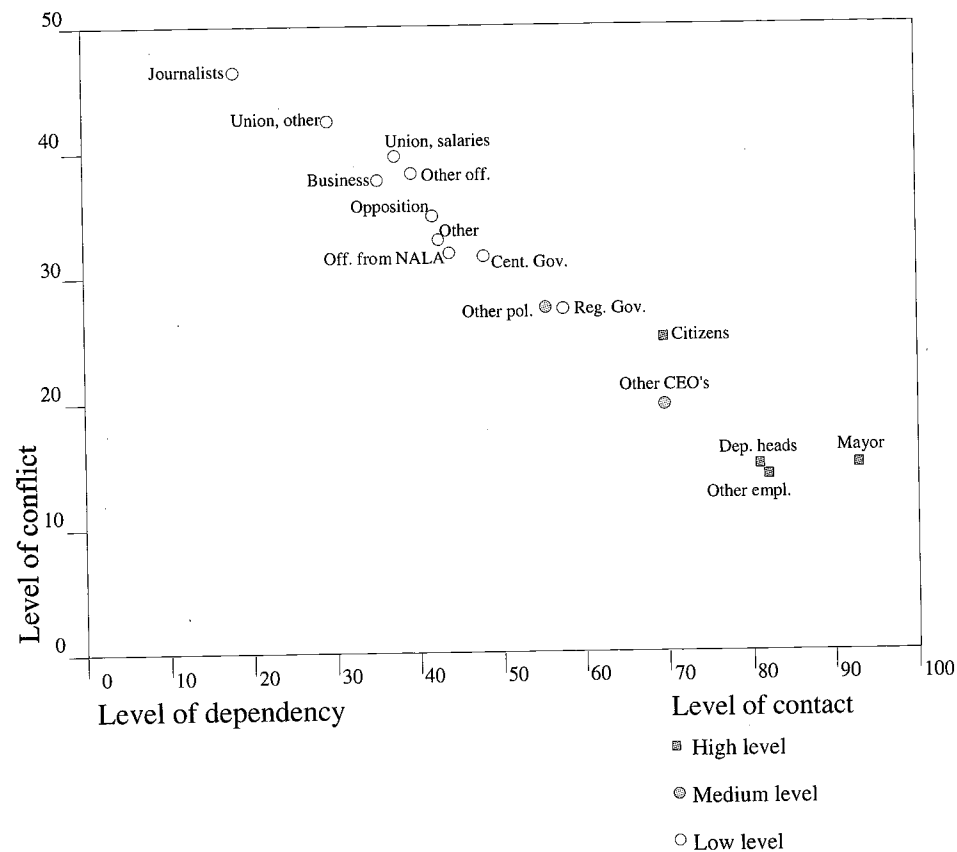
Next, we choose as an important dimension of the chief administrative officer's network the pressures from specific problems on his job. In the questionnaire we asked whether the following items influenced the daily work of the chief administrative officer in a negative way: demands for better services, unemployment and social problems, pressures from local organized interests. We found that none of the three issues seemed to disturb the bureaucratic machine (an average score of 23).

An additional finding may help us confirm this impression. Looking at figure 14.1, we are not surprised to observe the decreasing level of conflict perceived in the relation between the CAOs and the actors investigated in the survey. As shown in the figure, almost none of the respondents claimed to have conflicting relations with different actors. Most of the responses concerning journalists, trade unions or other public officers were in the category of moderate conflict. Moreover, the level of conflict varies inversely with the level of dependency (how important are the relations with the several agents) and with the level of contact.

⁸ This part of the chapter is partially based on Maurizio Gamberucci's contribution to a paper presented together with Joel Felizes at the Oslo Summer School on Local Government Studies (Gamberucci and Felizes, 1997).

⁹ For a critical approach to the classical theories of democracy, and for the relation between social complexity and democracy, see Zolo (1992).

Figure 14.1 Contact, conflict and dependency, Portugal



How can we explain this apparently ambiguous phenomenon? How can we define local authorities' attitudes according to which segments of the community the doors of the Town Hall seem to be open, but at the same time being closed to conflicts? Again, as previously indicated, this ambiguity can be seen as a result of a pragmatic turn to politics. Yet we nevertheless maintain our skepticism: we should not assume the possibility of the dyad *politics-consensus*.

Instead, we interpret this conflict avoidance as reflecting a "paternalistic" strategy. The paternalism stems from the authorities' belief that they "know best" how to manage municipal affairs. Research conducted under a developmental perspective on English local government found this attitude present among local officials dealing with the public in the 1970s. At that time this was related to a recent administrative reorganization of the offices, resulting in bureaucratic professionalisation. All this promoted an attitude toward the public as if it were composed of "clients" without any real authority as to who should "accept the superior judgement of the professional" (Gower Davies, 1974, quoted in Burns

et al., 1994: 40). The authors stressed a transformation of the relations with the public, passing through different styles of government in the 1980s and 1990s: the "new right" extended market models, treating people as "consumers", the new managerialism considered the public as "customers", and, finally, what they call extended democracy, dealing with "citizens" who have the real right to express their voice.

Our purpose here is not to define narrow evolutionist patterns of development: instead, we intend to discuss some possible interpretations of the present situation, based on the evidence we found. We expect to find *hic et nunc* a paternalistic attitude, although we are aware of the shifting context with which we are dealing.

Conclusion

We have tried to analyze and characterize the surveyed Portuguese local administration, focusing on the chief administrative officer's position and perspective. We have shown that the context surrounding the chief administrative officer is largely influenced by the legal framework and by the relation that he maintains with the mayor. We also noted that in different ways this context combines practices relating to what we termed a pre-modern background and to a late modern complexity.

One of the most sensitive issues deals with the chief administrative officers' powers, leading us to dismiss their specification as chief executive officers, since this function is usually under the mayor's control. In some (usually smaller) municipalities, however, the chief administrative officer can operate as a real chief executive officer, using his *symbolic capital*.

One possible conclusion for our study is inspired by our theoretical framework in its close relation with our empirical sensitivity. In other words, we developed our argument around the *constructed* intuition that the Portuguese chief administrative officer is mostly worried about the *reproduction* of the system, stressing its normative structure, but at the same time producing a modernizing discourse, which justifies the gap between *saying* and *doing*. This gap is more or less reduced according not only to the chief administrative officer's background but also to the organisational model in which he is placed. This explains our hesitation to construct a clear typology combining more or less modern organizations with the different kinds of chief administrative officers.

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