Review of the International Congress of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences “Socioeconomic priorities and Public Administration” held in Mérida, Yucatán on June 18-22-2012. ¹

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Presentation

On June 18-22 the International Congress of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS) took place in the City of Mérida, Yucatán; it was organized jointly by the National Institute of Public Administration (INAP).

Said Congress has been one of the greatest events for scholars in administration disciplines and public employees around the world. IIAS reported an attendance of 695 participants from 58 countries, although much more people surely attended.

The white city of Mérida was, for a week, a converge point of ideas, reflections, dialogs, debates and exchanges carried out by the scientific community of Public Administration. This is why José R. Cas-telazo, President of the National Institute of Public Administration, Coordinator of the Latin American Group for Public Administration (GLAP) and Chairman of the Local Organization Committee, stated: “The city of Mérida became the capital of Public Administration”.

¹ The authors wrote this review in order to provide a brief account of this Congress, as well as to leave a historical account in the Journal of Public Administration of the INAP due to the importance and relevance of such an event. The entire document of this Congress will be considered institutional memory and is currently in the making.
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This Congress was an important place to exchange academic experiences and practices among administrative scholars in three areas: international, regional and national. All of this thanks to the three events that took place concurrently: the Congress, the Second Plenary Meeting of the Latin American Group for Public Administration (GLAP) and the meeting of the INAP System (SINAP) of our country. It was the first time that the three events took place at the same time allowing the articulation of inclusive manifestation of administrative sciences in different levels of analysis.

International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS)

IIAS is an international organization established in 1930 in Brussels; its goal is to be the main Public Administration organization in the world. This institute has become a world platform that allows the improvement of scientific knowledge and the practice of administrative sciences. Its members are not only researchers and undergraduates, but also public sector employees of all levels of government of all over the world. It is constituted as a non-government, nonprofit association and it has been around for over eighty years. Its story began at the beginning of the 20th century in the midst of great transformations in the world and the European context. In 1910, the First International Congress of Administrative Sciences was established as Permanent Commission for International Congresses of Administrative Sciences, which organized Congresses in 1923, 1927 and 1930. In the 1930 Congress held in Madrid, Spain, the General Assembly decided to transform the Association into the International Institute of Administrative Sciences based in Brussels, Belgium.

In a general sense, for over eighty years, IIAS has witnessed and helped the development of administration disciplines around the world. Public Administration is seen as an activity that brings together governments and individuals; the Institute’s activities are based on respect for diversity, identity and the will of the citizens. This organization promotes the study of contemporary local and global Public Administration and serves as forum where comparative studies—including practical experiences and theoretical analyses—contribute to improve the operation and functioning of public administrations and improve administrative methods and techniques.

The fulfillment of the International Institute’s goals is achieved through the articulation of an international network represented by
four organizations: European Group of Public Administration (EGPA), International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA), The Latin American Group for Public Administration (GLAP) and the Asian Group for Public Administration (AGPA). The Annual Congress, conferences and specific reunions are organized jointly with these organizations; this is an important part of IIAS dynamics, a reflection of the diversity of its members. The Coordination of projects and study groups and their publications on specialized subjects allows IIAS to become a knowledge center and benchmark in terms of the administrative.

Mexico’s participation in IIAS has been permanent since its founding. On the other hand, the National Institute of Public Administration has been a member of IIAS since 1955 as National Section. National Sections are in charge of promoting the Institute as a platform of exchange of knowledge and strengthening ties between academics and public employees in their own sphere of action.

Cooperation between INAP and IICA promotes the state’s progress in Public Administration from the Mexican perspective. In this sense, it has enriched the International Institute’s knowledge with comparative reference terms that help the understanding of Mexico’s specific problems as a country that inserts itself in regional and global exchange dynamics.

Two prominent Mexicans and members of INAP have been Chairman of IIAS, Gustavo Martínez Cabañas (1974-1977) and Ignacio Pichardo Pagaza (1998-2001). On the other hand, a great number of meetings and conferences have been organized jointly. Five of these events have been important because of their topics, number of assistants and impact:

1974 XIV International Congress, held in Mexico City.
1993 Roundtable discussion held in the city of Toluca, State of Mexico.
2006 Third Regional International Conference in the City of Monterrey, Nuevo León.
2010 The Latin American Group for Public Administration Founding Meeting in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas.
2012 International Congress of Administrative Sciences in Mérida, Yucatán.
This is why INAP has established as key priority the construction of an intergenerational, innovative and global platform of administrators and public employees jointly with IIAS. These forums have made it possible to discuss topics connected to local practical events which have global relevance. The substantive and operative planning of the 2012 International Congress of Administrative Sciences was a joint effort between INAP, IIAS and State Government of Yucatán, which started in 2010.

**Latin American Group for Public Administration**

Within the activities of the IIAS’ International Congress, the Second Plenary Meeting of the Latin American Group for Public Administration (GLAP) took place. Public Administration experiences in this region were discussed and exchanged based on the following topic: *Development and Trends in Public Administration in Latin America*, divided into three aspects: a) national analysis, b) debate and c) regional proposals.

The Latin American Group for Public Administration is a regional expression of IIAS. Its goal is to strengthen ties between specialists—academics and professionals—in Public Administration in Latin America and to promote innovative ideas, methods and techniques to develop public policies’ theory and management.

The members of the Group participate in an annual exercise, so as to gather their ideas, statements and proposals. Ever since it was established in 2010 two Subregional Meetings have been held in different countries of this region.

The goals of GLAP are:

- Exchange information on the evolution of theory and practice in Public Administration;
- Develop and promote the use of theories and methods in Public Administration within a regional perspective;
- Evaluate current education strategies to create a dynamic, flexible and innovative Public Administration;
- Guide Latin American public administrations to global changes; and
- Organize conferences and publications to spread the development and trends of Public Administration.
GLAP established a discussion matrix where three premises were defined from a situational analysis that answered several questions.\(^4\) The premises were: 1. social state based on the rule of law; 2. Public institutions and; 3. Public space.

The situational diagnosis was broken down to four aspects: 1. Government coordination and communication; 2. Globalization; 3. ICT and 4. Foresight derived from situational diagnosis.

**About the National System of Public Administration in Mexico**

The INAP System\(^5\) is a series of democratically established civil associations which include the National Institute of Public Administration and Institutes of Public Administration of the states that decide to join voluntarily and pledge to follow the rules of INAP.

Under the promotion and coordination of the National Institute of Public Administration, the characteristics of the System are aimed at sharing principles and values which regulate Mexican Public Administration, promote research activities which help the generation of improvement of knowledge, methods and techniques in this field.

Nowadays, the INAP System has 22 institutes of Administration of States.

**Congress’ topics and structure**

The main topic in Merida 2012 was: “Socioeconomic Priorities and Public Administration”\(^6\), the subtopics were: a) Democratic governan-

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4 For example, in the social state based on the rule of law premise in the situational diagnosis aspect, the following questions were asked: is the legal framework updated to the demands, needs and expectations of society?; in government coordination and communication: do regulations make coordination among different government levels, public powers and within themselves easier?, Which are the mechanisms that have been established to communicate government bodies and agencies and to communicate these with society?; in globalization: how has globalization affected the rule of law?; in ICT: Do normative instruments allow the efficient and effective use of ICT? Some questions were also derived from two other premises: public institutions and public area.


6 PRAC (Programme and Research Advisory Committee) is an IIAS body in charge of defining the academic contents of the Congress. It chose “Socioeconomic Priorities and Public Administration” this time.
ce for socioeconomic development; b) E-Government, instrument to strengthen trust and c) Tourism as public value.

In the context of a State whose goal is human development, it is important to consider the dimensions of the country’s institutional life, its history, dynamics, trends and strategies to find a congruent connection between public sector modernization and fulfillment of civil society’s demands.

This process must incorporate the human component within institutional infrastructure into foresight and national development plans. Socioeconomic priorities are different in each country; however, some principles such as effectiveness, efficiency and quality of public institutions are considered practices that promote governance and have a quantitative impact on socioeconomic indicators.

The definition of national development goals should consider the creation, improvement and maintenance of an advanced and well-designed institutional infrastructure. In many countries, the priority of the State is to guarantee a competitive and dynamic economy, based on knowledge, capable of sustainable economic growth, with better and greater employment and greater social cohesion. The role played by Public Administration in the development and construction perspectives of state capacity is very important.

In this sense, why have democratic governance to achieve socioeconomic development? This Congress discussed the spheres in which democracy and government are profoundly involved in the development of activities ranging from political reforms to development of capacities to implement national socioeconomic policies.

Why use e-government as an instrument to strengthen trust? Because the use of ICT nowadays in the public sector is a great core instrument to modernize its administration; and even though e-government is a technical topic, it is also a theoretical and practical problem directly linked to Public Administration.

Undoubtedly, governments are changing their face-to-face and paper-based provision of services models to ICT models that impact trust and accountability in so many ways. Social communication means and concepts such as open government will improve transparency and increase trust. On the other hand, e-government will re-
duce citizens’ trust if data security cannot be guaranteed by it; or as one of the Congress’ topic states, if citizens associate e-government with the Vigilant State.

Tourism as public value shows the interest in clearly establishing that the government is increasingly a public value generator, in charge of establishing mechanisms through which to deliver that value to citizens. Tourism as an economic activity is one of the main public policies in most countries and regions of IIAS.

The role of Public Administration is important because of the monitoring of policies that promote sustained economic growth from tourism. Tourism is a multidimensional activity that includes a lot of spheres and actors involved in socioeconomic growth. Government leadership has always guided the development of tourism through the improvement of infrastructure and legislative, fiscal, social an environmental frameworks.

**Concurrent Sessions of Congress**

The Congress’s inaugural ceremony was held on Tuesday June 19th. The inaugural act included speeches from José R. Castelazo, President of INAP and the Local Organizing Committee; Pan Suk Kim, President of IICA; Rolet Loretan, General Director of IICA and Geert Bouckaert, Congress’s General Rapporteur. A video message from José Ángel Gurría, Secretary General of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was played. The last welcome speech and the formal inaugural declaration was given by Ivonne Ortega Pacheco, constitutional governor of the State of Yucatán.

After formal events of the opening ceremony; the Master Panel “Socioeconomic Priorities and Public Administration” was presented and moderated by the General Rapporteur of the Congress. This discussion had three experts in operation: the Italian academic Gianfranco Pasquino –who also presented a lecture which was introduced by Javier Barros–, Ecuador’s former president Rodrigo Borja and Mexican entrepreneur Alejandro Valenzuela.

The inaugural ceremony and master panel were the first events for all three forums of the Congress: international, regional and national; establishing a starting point for each level of analysis.
The third day, at eleven o’clock, the third concurrent act for the three platforms started: the Braibant Conference. Considering that the IIAS’ 2012 International Congress took place in Latin America, the Doctor of Economics, special UN advisor and author of 52 works, Bernardo Kliksberg was designated and was accompanied by Francisco Gaetani from Brazil. The introductory speech was given by Ignacio Pichardo Pagaza from Mexico.

Firstly, Doctor Kliksberg presented seven rights he thinks should be inviolable and guaranteed, but are not always considered:

1. **Right to Food**: problem focused on access and distribution, not production.
2. **Right to social determinants of health**: social and economic conditions that mold circumstances in which people are born, raised, live, work and age. 80% of all diseases can be prevented; thus, health determinants define standards and risks indicators and measures that must be adopted to stop the population from getting sick. The population’s health is top priority.
3. **Right to education**: event though there have been great advances like universal elementary education, this level of studies cannot meet the needs of current society.
4. **Right to work**: according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2012 there were two-hundred million unemployed people and juvenile unemployment is growing at alarming rates. It is a multidimensional problem which affects more than the economic sphere, it becomes an existential discussion; having a job entails more than earning a salary and participating in the country’s economy. It is an opportunity to learn and develop skills and a way to insert oneself in the dynamics of socialization.
5. **Right to effective gender equality**: including women into the workspace has created advances in access and equality topics; however efforts are not enough, there are still some disturbing inequalities. It is a complex topic that goes hand in hand with the existence of patriarchal structures.
6. **Right to live in harmony with nature**.
7. **Right to equity**: the distribution of wealth around the world causes hurtful disparities.

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See the Commission on Social Determinants of Health’s final report; August 2008. World Health Organization, WHO.
The State’s responsibility regarding these rights is undeniable. States must be aware of the realities of different groups that make up their national societies. State actions can be classified as intelligent when they understand that public policies are a way to crystallize goals, objectives and needs of the population; coordination and cooperation amongst all other relevant actors such as companies and organized civil society is essential.

In regard to the State’s role, four myths were mentioned in the relationship austerity-reactivation: 1. Public policies are not necessary; 2. The State is condemned to inefficiency; 3. Crises are due to the welfare state and 4. Public employees are the enemy.

The aforementioned statements are arguments devoid of empirical evidence and result in proposals that reduce the State’s and Public Administration’s role to almost zero.

It is true that the current context of generalized crisis needs a State reform; however, public policies are strong instruments to achieve social goals. Therefore, technical reflection –in regards to the inclusion of ICTs– should not replace strategic reflection to achieve the articulation of an intelligent State.

Taking up again one of the final reflections of the Braibant Conference, it is necessary to highlight that the social component is not a “collateral” one; social aspects are the key to sustainable development. The quest for this development should be guided by ethics to reduce the difficult relationships between individual actions and solidarity ones.

Sessions of the International Congress

The traditional Annual Congress of IIAS in its international phase developed the general topic of “Socioeconomic Priorities and Public Administration”. The planning and execution phases were monitored by a general rapporteur and a team of six rapporteurs (three public employees and three academics). The topic was divided into six subtopics: a) Democratic governance for socioeconomic develop-

8 The strategic sense of intelligent State actions is related to responsibility, transparency, accountability, decentralization principles in contact with real needs and demands.
ment; b) E-Government, instrument to strengthen trust and c) Public value: Tourism.

It is important to mention that the conditions to present a speech in the Congress was posted online, some months in advance; thus, the rapporteur of each team was appointed according to the selection and classification of received papers. Each subtopic had the academic and practical experience of each of the rapporteurs in charge, an academic one and another one with practical experience.

To approach the subtopics this was done: from previously selected presentations, work sessions were organized as workshops, participants presented their study cases and experiences. A collegial reflection was promoted and a dialog to emphasize points of convergence between theory and practice. In this sense, the platforms of each subtopic lasted two hours and were presented in a concurrent manner; each of these were attended by one moderator, two rapporteurs and two speakers.

IIAS Congress continued with the Intercontinental Administrative Forum (IAF) and the following topic: “Crisis and challenges for the public sector”, with the participation of Nick Manning (USA), Luis Solar (Peru) and Jeannine Evehe (Cameroun). IAF is a contrast mechanism between the institute’s participants of different regions. This year’s discussion focused on the crisis phenomenon, its different expressions and effects around the world. A dynamic and constantly changing context must make sure robust institutional structures can adapt their interactions.

The result of said Forum allowed the establishment of some main arguments that can be understood all around the world, even of some presentations dealt with specific cases. Public institutions’ spheres of action were highlighted, as well as control and updating mechanisms to develop leadership and public employees’ administrative abilities. The importance of human and ethical factors in governance to achieve public institutions that help the construction of a 

In the presence of the current crisis, a possible methodology to study and face challenges and opportunities of the current system was presented. Specific challenges, concerns and needs have to be defined based on evidences and indicators so as to determine prospectively
actions and strategies; in other words it is a relationship between evidence, politics and “best fit”

Afterwards, IAF simultaneously launched workshops for the three subtopics. The first one, “Democratic governance for socioeconomic development”, sought to establish generalized trend lines regarding the search of socioeconomic development based on democracy and governance concepts.

The academic rapporteur Ghazi Gherairi (Tunisia) and the practical rapporteur James L. Nkata (Uganda) coordinated, during the sessions, thirty-six works from participants of ten countries: México, Germany, Morocco, Brazil, South Africa, Egypt, China, USA, United Kingdom and Qatar. Due to the nature of the works, the following themes were discussed: “Economic development and local governance”; “Democratic governance, citizens’ participation and transparency”; “Socioeconomic development and sectorial policies: health”; “Democratic transition, socioeconomic development and implementation and evaluation policies”; “Socioeconomic development, taxes and market policies” and “Good government and administration, road to reform”.

The second subtopic was based on seventeen presentations with papers form ten countries: Germany, Canada, China, Ghana, India, Iran, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria and Czech Republic; coordinated by academic rapporteur Koichiro Agata (Japan) and practical rapporteur Tino Shuppan (Germany) and divided into four sessions. The sessions’ themes were: “Data protection and transparency”; “Improving the Provision of Public Services”; “Building Institutional Abilities” and “E-government for Development”.

The last subtopic “Public value: tourism” was coordinated by René Rivera (México) from the academic perspective and Roberto Gallardo (Costa Rica) from the practical one. Ten papers of six countries were presented in two sessions.

Some general considerations include the importance of public sector modernization and what it entails. Democracy and governance topics are closely related to efficiency and effectiveness principles of Pu-

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9 As stated by Nick Manning, World Bank advisor.
Public Administration and are very important to study public employees’ performance.

This can be done thanks to a State vision which promotes institutionalization of good government practices. The need and desire for a participative, transparent and responsible government that meets society’s demands stand out. Creation and maintenance of a country’s institutional infrastructure means going through its economic and social indicators; thus, socioeconomic priorities of each country are defined and strategies and lines of action to achieve development are fulfilled.

An increase of economic indicators must include social and human dimensions. Economic growth should be equal and parallel to the improvement of institutions who watch over common interests, as well as promotion mechanisms of civil society’s dynamics.

A context that includes globalization and technological convergence is a transversal process which affects a State’s operation framework. The computerization of governments includes the use of ICTs to make government practices more efficient.

ICTs are the new way of connecting governments, companies and organized society based on values such as transparency and accountability.

Sessions of the Latin American Group of Public Administration

On Monday June 18th the inaugural ceremony of the third edition of the Latin American Award of Public Administration was celebrated. The first place was awarded to Doctor William Guillermo Jiménez Benítez for his research “Public Management and Internationalization as strategy to the development of sub-national governments in Colombia”. Second place was awarded to Doctors Daniela Arias Torres and Hugo Amador Herrera Torres for their work “Governmental policies and public policies. Cycle analysis of development policies of the Government of Michoacán, Mexico, 2003-2010”. This marked the beginning of the Latin American Group for Public Administration events.

As we mentioned earlier, this regional exercise’s specific topic was “Development and Trends in Public Administration in Latin America”.
The dynamics of work was the exchange of experiences and theoretical approaches from a national perspective. Gregorio Montero was the General Rapporteur for the Group.

Sixty panelists from twenty different Latin American countries were organized into panels. Each panel had an employee, an academic and a politician, so as to cover a wide range of topics and make the identification of equivalent elements for a comparative approach easier. The first day of GLAP’s work included roundtable discussions of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador and El Salvador.

The GLAP platform had a specialized panel which dealt entirely with topics from the Latin American Treasury Forum (FOTEGAL)\(^\text{10}\) with representatives from Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Uruguay. Panels from Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua were also presented.

The importance of analyzing the role played by Public Administration in the definition of national strategies was emphasized, since a conciliatory view of effectiveness and efficiency principles in the public sector and different society actors’ co-responsibility relationship as a whole can be used to face challenges presented by some countries' contextual conditions.

The topic of participation and mechanisms held by citizens to access information forces us to think about a governance system which includes the necessary technical and technological tools to build a sensitive government capable of meeting the needs of its society in a state based on the rule of law. All of this without forgetting that Latin America is not only a geographical reference, it is also a place that shares a history and has close social, political, economic and commercial ties.

\(^{10}\) FOTEGAL is an Exchange mechanism created in 2010 in Lima, Peru that includes the participation of sixteen countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay. Its goal is to promote cooperation amongst its members through the updating of theoretical, empirical and technical knowledge related to the analysis of governments’ Treasury systems.
Sessions held by the National Public Administration System

Sessions held by the National Public Administration System (SINAP) included eight important roundtable discussions on the following subjects: e-Government; Better Municipal and State Public Administration Practices; Management of Public Space as Shared Responsibility; Intergovernmental Coordination of the Federal Pact; Better National and International Public Administration Practices; Accountability and Governmental Co-responsibility.

Thirty notable speakers participated. In each discussion, people that have joined their academic interests and government exercise were in charge of presenting the context for each of the eight topics. These events also included a technical secretary, a moderator and a rapporteur whose task was to provide information on the relevance of these topics to be synthesized by the general rapporteur.

A conference by Juan María Alponte titled “The transition from private to public; the Law above the Prince” was also included.

The presentation of countries participating in GLAP, conclusion of the works of this group, and a panel on Mexico under the responsibility of Luis F. Aguilar Villanueva, Rafael Morgan Ríos (head of the Ministry of Public Function) and Carlos Reta Martínez took place at the same time.

Assessment

This Congress established that contemporary governments need to generate innovative skills for themselves and society; harmonize social interests; favor employment and productivity so as to design, implement and achieve the great tasks of democracy and progress. It also mentioned that countries’ competitiveness lies in an informed participation of citizens, respecting human, political, economic and social rights and an articulate, honest, effective and democratic governance.11

The three forums had grand lectures, workshops and ample discussions. The International Report was in charge of Geert Bouckaert;

11 See Carta Mérida.
the Latin American Report, of Gregorio Montero, and the Mexican Report was prepared by Fernando Pérez Correa.

The Congress achieved the goals set by the organizers; consequently, the expectations of the people who participate and assisted were also fulfilled.

We think it was a wonderful comparative exercise which allowed the evaluation of policies and Public Administration by promoting better administration practices based on ethical values.

One of the achieved goals was the offering of a platform of research and Public Administration topics which evaluated the latter’s performance in context of global financial crisis.

Lectures and worktables allowed us to understand that public legal frameworks are in constant need of adapting themselves to great changes generated by ICTs, interaction of commercial blocs, migrations, cultural changes and climatic change which have become great imperatives and trends faced by governments.

These processes need administration measures that affect national laws and country’s constitutions due to the dynamic changes in rules that seek to make them flexible at various levels.

In this context, democratic governments are required to have better services and greater resources. Citizens interact with governments through new technologies.

This use of networks and associations is very relevant. Governments cannot be successful if they do everything. Governance requires collaborative efforts, especially for medium-term projects.

Creation of public value is necessary to in turn create trust among institutions and their administrations to satisfy citizens. What is the meaning of public value? How is this value created? How are public employees connected to this value?

It is important to take up again General Rapporteur Geert Bouckaert’s question: under what circumstances are public employees, public
policies and Public Administration part of the solution to the performance of government in times of crisis?

One of the answers is to mention that it does not depend entirely on political solutions and respect for the law given that trust is a strange and complex capital for society.

Another answer is found in performance measurements; Public Administration quality is a strategic factor to regain trust, this is why the Congress’ agenda and its research agenda developed a central topic: share the best government practices as José Ángel Gurría Secretary General of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) says: “The role of public employees is essential, unfortunately, resources do not increase at the rate problems do”.

**Carta Mérida**

Major agreements or resolutions of the Congress of Merida are summarized in the “Carta Mérida” signed by the President of IIAS and of the International Committee, Pan Suk Kim, and the President of INAP Mexico, Local Committee and GLAP coordinator, José R. Castelazo. The “Carta Mérida” is intended for the international community, heads of state and government and public opinion; it identifies global, Latin American and national contexts of the three forums of Congress. Said statement also has a series of proposals that establish goals and means to achieve them.12

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12 See: www.ias-iisa.org and www.inap.org.mx