

**Application of Future Studies by Intelligence Service to Optimize Public Policies.
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Resumen.

Ante un futuro lleno de incertidumbre y un entorno turbulento, los países tratan de aprovechar las oportunidades y resolver los problemas de forma cada vez más oportuna. Para ello, los gobiernos recurren a las políticas públicas como instrumento de gestión. Para asesorar a los decisores gubernamentales, los Servicios de Inteligencia proporcionan productos, entre ellos el Estudio de Futuro, la cual explica la probable evolución futura de las políticas públicas. Por lo tanto, este artículo pretende analizar en qué condiciones el Estudio de Futuro contribuye a la planificación, ejecución y evaluación de políticas públicas por parte de los gobiernos. Más detalladamente, buscamos entender cómo se puede aplicar el Estudio de Futuro, considerando las razones y criterios para su adopción o no adopción. A través de investigaciones cualitativas y exploratorias, los estudios apuntaron el siguiente modelo flexible de utilización del Estudio de Futuro, de acuerdo con las seis fases del ciclo de las políticas públicas: Recepción de Demandas (no recomendada), Establecimiento de la Agenda (recomendada), Formulación de Alternativas (no recomendada), Selección de Opciones (recomendada), Implementación (recomendada a través de indicadores) y Evaluación (no recomendada).

Palabras clave: Inteligencia - Políticas Públicas - Estudio de Futuro - Defensa - Proceso Nacional de Toma de Decisiones

Abstract:

Faced with a future full of uncertainty and a turbulent environment, countries are seeking to seize opportunities and solve problems in an increasingly timely manner. To this end, governments rely on public policies as a management instrument. To advise government decision-makers, the Intelligence Services provide products, including the Future Study, which explains likely future developments in public policies. Therefore, this article aims to analyze under what conditions the Future Study contributes to the

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planning, execution and evaluation of public policies by governments. In more detail, we seek to understand how the Future Study can be applied, considering reasons and criteria for its adoption or non-adoption. Through qualitative and exploratory research, the studies pointed to the following flexible model for using the Future Study, according to the six phases of the public policy cycle: Reception of Demands (not recommended), Agenda Setting (recommended), Formulation of Alternatives (not recommended), Selection of Options (recommended), Implementation (recommended through indicators) and Evaluation (not recommended).

Keywords: *Intelligence – Public Policy – Future Study – Defense – National Decision-Making Process*

Introduction

Countries constantly seek to develop economically and socially to provide a better standard of living for their citizens. Each nation, without neglecting security and stability, creates its own objectives and structures itself to achieve them. Sometimes, there are setbacks in achieving these goals. For example, the actions to achieve these goals are in competition with the actions of other countries, or the country does not have all the resources necessary for this purpose. For these reasons, States plan and execute what they will do.

For example, Brazil's objectives already appear, in a generic way, in the 1988 Federal Constitution in its article 3^o, such as building a free society, eradicating poverty and promoting well-being without any type of discrimination.² In the search for more efficiency and in a more specific way, State planning is consolidated in Public Policies. In other words, based on demands and after political discussion, the government decides how to allocate resources to a certain area, such as public security or defense, in response to the population's demands.³ Therefore, it is up to society to pay attention to what is planned and executed by the State, especially which social forces influence the content of policies and what the impacts of public policies are for everyone.

² Senado Federal do Brasil, *Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil*, Brasília, 1988, 1-3.

³ João Martins Tude, Daniel Ferro, Fabio Pablo Santana, *Políticas Públicas*, Curitiba: IESDE Brasil S.A., 2009, 15-20.

However, it is increasingly noted that the world faces uncertainty, that is, “the inability to know in advance the real probability or impact of future events”.⁴ Revolutions in communications and the more frequent emergence of disruptive technologies contribute to the acceleration of changes in the world. As a result, dealing with various issues, such as large-scale immigration, population aging, polarization and decline in trust, and increased income concentration, become more complex.⁵ It remains for governments to prepare for the unexpected and start imagining possible outcomes of current events in order to plan and act to achieve their own objectives.

Faced with these difficulties, public policies then need to be well chosen, developed and monitored for possible corrections. Countries have several government structures that contribute to the implementation of public policies. There are bodies inherent to the central themes of public policies. For example, the Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores manages Bolivia's foreign public policy.⁶ In addition, other structures complement the advice to the decision-maker on the best course of action. Among them, Intelligence, which often acts through a body that coordinates the activities of an Intelligence system. In Colombia, the Dirección Nacional de Inteligencia is responsible for providing information to State authorities at the highest hierarchical level on matters of national interest.⁷ The youngest intelligence service on the American continent, Paraguay's Secretaria Nacional de Inteligencia (SNI), established in 2018, acts in line with the Sistema Nacional de Inteligencia (SINAI).⁸

The Intelligence Services generate classified reports with content that deal with matters of strategic value for the country and disseminated to government authorities. These reports are about the past, to clarify facts, or about the future, to anticipate problems or opportunities.

It is worth noting that reports on the future, hereinafter referred to as Future Studies, have the main objective of outlining plausible scenarios and exploring the

⁴ Diário Oficial da República Federativa do Brasil, *Instrução Normativa Conjunta MP-CGU n. 01, de 10 de maio de 2016*. Dispõe sobre controles internos, gestão de riscos e governança no âmbito do Poder Executivo federal, Brasília, 2016, 1-2.

⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Strategic Foresight for Better Policies*, 1, accessed September 02, 2023, <https://www.oecd.org/strategic-foresight/ourwork/Strategic%20Foresight%20for%20Better%20Policies.pdf>.

⁶ Ministerio Relaciones Exteriores, *Marco Legal*, accessed July, 02, 2023, <https://cancilleria.gob.bo/webmre/node/1179>.

⁷ Dirección Nacional de Inteligencia, *La Entidad*, accessed June 04, 2023, <https://dni.gov.co/la-entidad/mision-vision-funciones-y-deberes/>.

⁸ Secretaría Nacional de Inteligencia Paraguay, *Marco Legal*, accessed July 14, 2023, <https://www.sni.gov.py/institucion/marco-legal/leyes>.

impacts they may have on public policies to then assist government planning of action. Several countries use future studies to guide public policies, for example, the Estados Unidos Mexicanos through the report “*Visión 2030: el México que queremos*”⁹, or the European Union with the report “*Global Trends to 2030: challenges and choices for Europe*”¹⁰.

Therefore, this article aims to analyze under what conditions the Future Study makes can contribute to the achievement of public policies by States. Here, the term “conditions” indicates the way in which the Future Study can be applied, considering reasons and criteria for its adoption or non-adoption. In more detail, whether or not to recommend the use of the Future Study will be based, on the one hand, on the methodology adopted in the Future Study itself and the results that can be achieved with it; and, on the other hand, in the way public policies are constructed in general in the countries of the American continent.

This analysis explains in which phases of public policy implementation it is recommended or not to apply the aforementioned Future Study. It is based here that the Future Study contributes to the achievement of public policies, when properly applied to their cycle. This statement is supported by the following arguments. First, the State governs through public policies. Second, the creation and implementation of public policies occur in a context of uncertainty. Third, the Intelligence Activity has a vocation for “anticipation” and “reducing uncertainty”, especially through future studies. It is also worth highlighting the caveat that the adequacy of the Future Study is not integral, that is, it does not apply to certain phases of the development of public policies.

Taking the teachings of Gil¹¹, this research was characterized by being basic (i.e. not applied), as it explained the relationship between future studies and Public Policy and proposing an action model; qualitative, by delving deeper into subjective issues of the phenomenon studied; and exploratory, by seeking familiarity with little-known problems. As technical procedures, explanatory, bibliographic and documentary research was carried out in the collections of various Intelligence Services in the countries of the American continent, in addition to research on the development of public policies.

⁹ Gobierno del Mexico, *Visión 2030: El México que queremos*, accessed April 18, 2023, <https://globaltrends.thedialogue.org/publication/1416/>.

¹⁰ European Union, *Global Trends to 2030: challenges and choices for Europe*, European Strategy and Policy Analysis System: Bruxelles, 2019.

¹¹ Antônio Carlos Gil, *Métodos e Técnicas de Pesquisa Social*, 6. Ed. São Paulo: Atlas, 2008, 26-31.

In addition to this introduction, the article presents the definition and detail of the public policy cycle. Next, the general concept of Future Study is presented, and then the methodology used is detailed. The paper ends with the comparison of the future study and Public Policy, that is, how it is possible to use the first to make the second efficient. By way of conclusion, the main points covered in the research are revisited and the main implications for the fields of study of Intelligence and Political Science are presented.

Public Policy

According to several authors, there is no single and indisputable definition of Public Policy.¹² Laswell coined perhaps the best-known definition, which consists of answering the following questions: who gets what, why and what difference it makes.¹³ Dye adds an important aspect to the definition, which consists of also including in Public Policy what the government does not do.¹⁴ Teixeira details the concept of Public Policy as guidelines for action by the Public Power, in addition to rules and procedures that govern relations between actors in society and the State.¹⁵ In addition to the definition, it is important to highlight that the study of Public Policies is inserted in the branch of political science, but not restricted to this branch. This study encompasses several disciplines, theories and analytical models coming from other areas of knowledge.¹⁶ Examples include economics, administration and future studies.

To better understand Public Policies, Lowi divided them into four types.¹⁷ Distributive policies are characterized by privileging a portion of the population, in which the benefits are clear, but the costs are diffused throughout society. Here the government disregards the issue of limited resources. An example is the aid given by the government to those affected by earthquakes in Chile. Redistributive policies are conflict-oriented and are therefore the most difficult for the government to implement. These policies affect large social groups, but to the detriment of others. For example, fiscal policies in which

¹² Celina Souza, Políticas públicas: uma revisão de literatura, *Sociologias*, n.16, Porto Alegre, jul./dez. 2006, 24.

João Martins Tude, Daniel Ferro, Fabio Pablo Santana, 11-13.

Ricardo Agum, Priscila Riscado, Monique Menezes, Políticas Públicas: conceitos e análise em revisão, *Revista Agenda Política*, São Carlos: Vol. 3 n.2, julho/dezembro 2015, 14-16.

¹³ Harold D. Laswell, *Politics: who gets what, when, how*, Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1956, 3.

¹⁴ Thomas Dye, *Understanding Public Policy*, Englewood Cliffs: N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1984, 1-19.

¹⁵ Elenaldo Celso Teixeira, *O papel das políticas públicas no desenvolvimento local e na transformação da realidade*, Salvador: ATTR, 2002, 2.

¹⁶ Celina Souza, 25-26.

¹⁷ Theodore J. Lowi, Four systems of policy, politics, and choice, *Public Administration Review*, 32: 298-310, 1972, 299-300.

the American government, through the tax system, subsidizes the agricultural sector.¹⁸ The third type, Regulatory, is the one with the greatest visibility for society. As the name suggests, standards are established through decrees and norms for the behavior of the actors involved. Conflict may arise during the execution of the policy, not at its establishment. An example would be the regulation of land transport services in the country. Finally, Constitutive policies are responsible for the procedures with which other policies will be structured. In other words, these policies determine the rules of the game. Brazil's Fiscal Responsibility Law is an example of this type of policy.¹⁹

It should be noted that each Public Policy may not fit perfectly into a type described above.²⁰ And it may fit into more than one type. However, the typological division presented is justified by the fact that each policy will have different forms of support and rejection, as well as taking different paths in its application and continuity.²¹

Once the nature of public policies is understood, we turn to the study of the construction cycle in which temporal dynamics stand out. Based on the study of several authors, it is summarized, here, the decomposition of the Public Policy cycle into six phases, as follows: Reception of Demands, Agenda Setting, Formulation of Alternatives, Selection of Options, Implementation and Evaluation.²² These phases, despite being presented sequentially, are not watertight in themselves. There is a back and forth between phases, characteristic of social constructions.

The first phase of the cycle is Reception of Demands. Reality presents itself in countless problems and opportunities. In turn, the budget is scarce. Therefore, political actors cannot meet all demands. At this stage, the government receives from state institutions and civil society problems to be solved and opportunities that need to be seized. This phase also involves clearly defining all these situations, as well as the determining causes. In the case of a complex public issue, there is a need to subdivide the problem or opportunity so that specific solutions can be devised and the causes can be addressed individually.²³

¹⁸ Adelson Martins Figueiredo, Maurinho Luiz dos Santos, Maria Aparecida Silva Oliveira, Antônio Carvalho Campos, Impactos dos subsídios agrícolas dos Estados Unidos na expansão do agronegócio brasileiro, *Estudos Econômicos*, São Paulo, 40(2), abr.-jun. 2010, 445-467, accessed August 10, 2023, <https://www.scielo.br/j/ee/a/nPVdMG4SH7HMPYdwN9vjbqS/>

¹⁹ Author's note: Lei Complementar No. 101 of May 4, 2000.

²⁰ João Martins Tude, Daniel Ferro, Fabio Pablo Santana, 20-21.

²¹ Celina Souza, 28.

²² Author's note: see Appendix A.

²³ João Martins Tude, Daniel Ferro, Fabio Pablo Santana, 21-37.

It is necessary here to provide better clarification on who the actors, state and private, involved in public policies may be. State actors are those directly linked to public administration. Elected politicians from both the Legislative and Executive branches come into play here. Public servants are also included, who ultimately provide information for decision-making and are responsible for implementing Public Policies. Private actors are the other actors that interfere in the Public Policy cycle: non-governmental organizations (NGOs), media, social movements, research centers, unions, business corporations, political groups, international entities, among others.²⁴ The media distinguishes itself from others by being able to influence the process in a different way, by focusing the population's attention on certain facts.²⁵ These actors, whether state or private, can form pressure groups, and, some to a lesser extent act throughout the public policy cycle. It is worth noting that the dispute between the actors serves as a stimulus for improving the conditions of society, as long as they are practiced within the limits of the law.²⁶

The process of selecting what is or is not on the list of priorities is called Agenda Setting, the second phase of the Public Policy cycle. Once the situation is known, Public Policy needs, at least, to meet two criteria to enter this agenda.²⁷ The first is to draw the attention of the actors responsible for setting the agenda. This may be due to the emergency need to resolve or take advantage of the issue. The emergency is calculated by the size of the impact of not solving the problem or not taking advantage of the opportunity, *versus* the probability of occurrence. A good measure is the use of parameters that allow you to monitor what is happening at the moment. Another measure is to collect *feedback* on actions already underway. The second criterion for entering the agenda is that the issue analyzed can be resolved by the public sector, such as the situation of school dropout. Cavalcanti also adds that the asymmetry in the distribution of power make some issues enter the political agenda and others do not.²⁸

²⁴ Author's Note: International entities include foreign governments, international bodies, foreign companies, etc.

²⁵ John Kingdom, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*, New York: Longman, 2003, 225-240.

²⁶ SEBRAE/MG. *Public Policies: concepts and practices*, Belo Horizonte: Sebrae/MG, 2008, 6.

²⁷ Roger W. Cobb, Charles D. Elder, *Participation in American politics: the dynamics of agenda-building*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983, 1-17.

²⁸ Paula Arcoverde Cavalcanti, *Sistematizando e comparando os enfoques de avaliação e de análises de políticas públicas: uma contribuição para a área educacional*, Tese Doutorado – Curso de programa de pós-graduação em educação, Departamento de Educação, Universidade Estadual de Campinas – Unicamp, Campinas, 2007, 181.

Once the decision has been made to include a problem or opportunity on the political agenda, the third phase begins, Formulation of Alternatives. At this stage, alternative actions and instruments used that may be appropriate to resolve the issue are presented.²⁹ In other words, it is the establishment of what will be addressed in forwarding the solution. There is now, then, a clear outline of possible government programs, action strategies and what conduct will be followed, as well as objectives and goals to be achieved.³⁰

To develop these alternatives, it is necessary to listen to the technical staff about the feasibility of the actions studied.³¹ This technical body can be made up of public servants and/or private sector employees, depending on the subject of Public Policy. Another important analysis to be carried out concerns the risk management of implementing a given alternative. The description of the alternative must include the mapping and assessment of operational, image, legal and financial risks according to the risk appetite that the government is willing to accept.³²

The fourth phase is Selection of Options. It is a process, as it involves knowing how the decision to select options is made, which actors are involved and which factors influence it.³³ The decision whether the Public Policy will be implemented and the choice of the best alternative does not occur in an orderly and rational way, it depends on the type of negotiation and power relations existing at the time of the decision.³⁴ It should be made clear that the option chosen may not satisfy all interested groups.

Lindblon defines the decision process as complex, with no beginning, middle and end and whose results are uncertain.³⁵ The author adds that no matter how technical the decision may be, it will always be confronted with political complexity. Therefore, Lindblon adopts the theoretical model of incrementalism to analyze the decision-making process.³⁶

For incrementalism, government resources for Public Policy do not start from scratch, but rather from marginal and incremental decisions. Formulations, decisions and adjustments made in the past constrain future decisions, limiting the decision-maker's

²⁹ Paula Arcoverde Cavalcanti, 177-192.

³⁰ Ricardo Agum, Priscila Riscado, Monique Menezes, 26-27.

³¹ Sebrae-MG, 12-13.

³² Diário Oficial da República Federativa do Brasil, 1-2.

³³ Paula Arcoverde Cavalcanti, 181-192.

³⁴ João Martins Tude, Daniel Ferro, Fabio Pablo Santana, 38-49.

³⁵ Charles E. Lindblon, *Politics and Markets*, The World's Political-Economic System, New York: Basic, 1977, 154-155.

³⁶ Charles E. Lindblon, 314-318.

capacity. The chosen solution is only the one that is politically viable at that moment. Ultimately, the political side overlaps the rational side. The criticism of this model is that it does not explain the deep structuring reforms that also take place in the public sector.³⁷

Another theoretical model to explain decision-making in public policies is Game Theory. According to Almeida, this theory has the function of trying to predict the movement of other players (decision makers for this article).³⁸ Decision makers can behave as competitors or allies, and thus position themselves to obtain the best result. One's choice depends on the choices made by other decision makers.³⁹ In contrast to incrementalism, it presupposes that actors act rationally when making choices.

It should be noted that in this fourth phase, decision-makers define resources and the time frame of the Public Policy. They also define how future decisions will be made during the implementation of the Public Policy. For the public good, the choice of alternative should ideally fall on the most efficient and effective alternative.

Implementation is the fifth phase of the Public Policy cycle. Here the transformation of political action into something concrete takes place. For Sabatier, there are two ways to implement Public Policy: top-down, in which decision-makers are separated from those who will implement it; and bottom-up, in which the implementers and beneficiaries of the action participate, together with the decision-makers, in choosing the winning alternative.⁴⁰

The first mode, centralizing, is preferred by politicians, as it provides an excuse in the event of failure to implement Public Policy. In this case, failure belongs only to the implementers.⁴¹ In the second, more participatory mode, the bureaucrats who will implement the policy and decision-makers act to overcome problems and learn from the implementation process.

Another theoretical interpretation for the public policy implementation process is the so-called "View of Implementation as a Game". For this interpretation, there are several situations that unfold in the Implementation phase that are different from what

³⁷ Celina Souza, 29.

³⁸ Alecsandra Neri de Almeida, *Teoria dos Jogos: as origens e os fundamentos da teoria dos jogos*, São Paulo: UNIMESP, 2006, 3-5.

³⁹ Author's note: The classic example of this theory is the case of two suspects being arrested and both being able to walk free, or both being arrested, or just one of them being arrested. It all depends on how they will behave during the interrogation, whether denouncing or denying their colleague's participation.

⁴⁰ Paul A. Sabatier, Top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation research: a critical analysis and suggested synthesis, *Journal of Public Policy*, Cambridge, vol. 6, no. 1, 1986, 22-36.

⁴¹ Ricardo Agum, Priscila Riscado, Monique Menezes, 28-30.

was planned.⁴² This entails a constant re-editing of the elaboration of alternatives, decisions and implementations. Especially when it comes to complex policies that involve different levels of power: federal, state and local.⁴³ This view also highlights that during the previous phases, it is essential for decision-makers and bureaucrats to anticipate future setbacks to facilitate implementation.

In addition to the factors already mentioned, practice shows that other elements contribute to making the Implementation phase the most difficult to execute. Examples are distrust between government agencies that should rather cooperate; technical incapacity of managers; hostile political environment, when there is a change of government; boycotts by groups negatively affected by the policy; corruption of public agents; changes in costs due to macroeconomic factors (such as changes in the dollar exchange rate); communication between the actors involved, among others.⁴⁴

The sixth and final phase, Evaluation, is characterized by analyzing the cost x benefit relationship of implementing the Public Policy. The results of government intervention in society are measured and assessed. The measurement is based on the comparison of the results obtained with the objectives and parameters previously established in the Formulation of Alternatives phase.⁴⁵

Evaluation is divided into two types: internal and external. The implementers themselves conduct the internal evaluation. This is about comparing the resources spent with the established parameters. These parameters normally include aspects of time (timely), cost (lower), quality (higher) and sustainability (preservation of scarce resources).

On the other hand, experts who did not participate in the program typically conduct external evaluation. They compare the results obtained with the objectives of Public Policies. The important thing is to determine the relevance, impacts and functions fulfilled by the policy. The experts assess the redistribution of resources and affected segments. Furthermore, attention must be paid to the fact that the impacts generated can provoke new demands, which can generate other public policies. Another point that

⁴² João Martins Tude, Daniel Ferro, Fabio Pablo Santana, 41-43.

⁴³ Sebrae-MG, 15-18.

⁴⁴ Maria das Graças Rua, Alessandra T. Aguiar, A política industrial no Brasil 1985-1992: políticos, burocratas e interesses organizados no processo de policy making, In: *Planejamento e Políticas Públicas*, n.12, jul/dez, 1995, 236-253.

Sebrae-MG, 15-18.

João Martins Tude, Daniel Ferro, Fabio Pablo Santana, 48.

⁴⁵ João Martins Tude, Daniel Ferro, Fabio Pablo Santana, 38-49.

deserves attention is to check whether the policy produced an unforeseen impact, a type of side effect, a situation that may deserve special treatment.

The eminently technical external and internal evaluations can give rise to questions about the actions of politicians, especially if the actions adopted are not appropriate for the issue faced. Politicians, in turn, claim that the evaluation needs to be technical as well as political, and that there will always be a tangle of causes and that public policy, to be well assessed, would need an infinity of parameters.⁴⁶ Another defense alleged by politicians is that public policies need approximately 10 years after the end of implementation to mature, which makes evaluation difficult immediately after the end of the actions.⁴⁷

It is noteworthy that the Evaluation phase does not necessarily happen after implementation. On many occasions, it is opportune to carry out the Evaluation during Implementation, precisely to propose corrections when necessary.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the Evaluation contributes to increasing cooperation between actors, justifying the actions adopted and generating useful information for other public policies.

Figure 1 below illustrates the dynamics of these six phases of the Public Policy cycle.

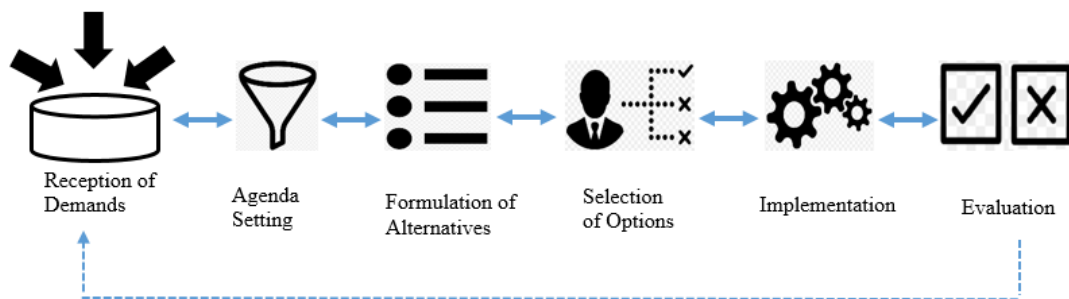


Figure 1: Diagram of the phases of the Public Policy cycle
Source: elaborated by the author

Future Study

Although the study of the future dates back to the time of ancient Egypt when people sought to predict the outcome of harvests⁴⁹, it was in the 1950s that the prospective attitude coined by Berger appeared.⁵⁰ Now the aim is to assist the decision-making process of companies and governments. The idea is to look broadly at distant futures

⁴⁶ Ricardo Agum, Priscila Riscado, Monique Menezes, 30-31.

⁴⁷ Paul A. Sabatier, 33-36.

⁴⁸ Sebrae -MG, 18-23.

⁴⁹ Peter Schwartz, *The art of the long view*, New York: Doubleday, 1991, 105-106.

⁵⁰ Gaston Berger, *L'attitude prospective*, Revue Prospective n1 1-10, Paris: 1958.

through the perspective of experts. In other words, draw panoramas of possible futures, weighing the past and comparing the projects of the actors working on the issue studied.⁵¹ According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), foresight, another name given to the Future Study, is looking beyond current expectations and taking into account a range of plausible future developments in order to identify implications for today's policies.⁵²

To better clarify the definition of Future Study, it is also worth highlighting what it is not: neither prediction nor projection.⁵³ Prediction is asserting that the future will be a certain way. It would be choosing one of the scenarios outlined and stating that the future would be exactly that way.⁵⁴ Similarly, the projection also considers a single future, drawn from econometric models. The past behavior of the variables would be modeled and projected into the future; in short, the future would have to be a simple projection of the past.⁵⁵

The characteristics of the future regulate the development of the Future Study. According to Godet,⁵⁶ the future is multiple and uncertain. From the beginning of its study, there are multitude of possible futures and none are pre-determined to happen. Furthermore, it is uncertain, there is no way to predict what will happen. This uncertainty is due to the forces that influence the future, namely, the variables or trends and the actions of the actors. Thus, the construction of these possible futures is the fruit of our imagination.⁵⁷

One way to operationalize the study of the future, observing all the characteristics described above, is through scenario building. Scenarios are the set formed by the description, in a coherent way, of a future situation and the course of events that allow moving from the original situation to the future situation.⁵⁸ The focus of the scenarios is the events and issues of interest to decision makers. The study of scenarios is effective when it changes the decision maker's behavior.⁵⁹ This change in behavior occurs through

⁵¹ Michel Godet, *Manual de prospectiva estratégica: da antecipação a ação*, Lisboa: Publicações Dom Quixote, 1993, 105-126.

⁵² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2.

⁵³ Elaine Coutinho Marcial, *Academic Citation* (presentation, Construção de Cenários Prospectivos, Brasília, September 17, 2021 – October 13, 2021).

⁵⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 3.

⁵⁵ Michel Godet, 29-36.

⁵⁶ Michel Godet, 1-5.

⁵⁷ Elaine Coutinho Marcial.

⁵⁸ Michel Godet, *Scenarios and Strategic Management*, London: Butterworths Scientific, Ltd., 1987, 70.

⁵⁹ Peter Schwartz, 214.

the study of the scenarios themselves and by monitoring the environment as the future unfolds.

The purpose of constructing scenarios is to identify opportunities and threats to the organization and thus allow thinking about alternatives to pursue in the future.⁶⁰ Faced with these strategic options, the organization can take an active stance in building its own future, or at least influencing this future; or a defensive posture when trying to reduce the risks of a hostile future. Other authors also emphasize that scenarios generate organizational learning by encouraging both the change of mental models, especially at the top, and increased communication within the organization regarding the possibilities of the future.⁶¹

It may seem counterintuitive, but scenarios are built in the knowledge that the future will not turn out the way they were written. Based on the study of the constructed scenarios, the organization makes decisions that affect other actors, who, in turn, will react, unfolding in different situations. Therefore, future studies consider all constructed scenarios, not just one. The intention is to reduce risks while maximizing opportunities by influencing the future by making decisions today.

There are several examples of the use of futures studies by various governments. Brazil has the Estratégia Federal de Desenvolvimento (EFD), prepared for the period from 2020 to 2031. Three scenarios are outlined that must be considered in the planning of all bodies and entities of the federal public administration. The government's objective is for this strategy to be part of a structuring platform for Public Policies.⁶² In Peru, the Centro Nacional de Planeamento Estratégico (CEPLAN) has the mission of helping government bodies achieve a future with harmonious and sustainable development. To this end, CEPLAN carries out several future studies, such as in 2017 with “Escenarios de futuro

⁶⁰ Michael E. Porter, *Competitive advantage*, New York: Free Press, 1985, 470-481.
Michel Godet, 57-82.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 3.

⁶¹ Arie de Geus, *Living Company: habits for survival in a turbulent business environment*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002, 101-135.

Thomas J. Chermack, Susan A. Lynham, Definitions and outcome variables of scenario planning, *Human Resource Development Review*, v.1, n.3, p. 366-383, 2002, 373-377.

⁶² Diário Oficial da República Federativa do Brasil, *Decreto nº10.531, de 26 de outubro de 2020*, Institui a Estratégia Federal de Desenvolvimento para o Brasil no período de 2020 a 2031, Brasília, 2020, 1.

para el Perú”, projecting the future until 2030. ⁶³In Chile, in 2023, debates were held projecting the country in 2050 through the “Chile crea futuro” project of the Consejo Nacional de Ciência, Tecnología, Conocimiento e Innovación para el Desarrollo.⁶⁴ Furthermore, at a global level, more examples can be cited, such as the report “Global Economic Prospects” made by the World Bank in January 2021 and “Government Foresight Community Annual Meeting Report 2020: strategic foresight for future- ready public policy” created by the OECD in October 2020.

Future Studies and Intelligence

The Intelligence Services, as the public policy of the Intelligence Activity itself advocates, are responsible, among others, for executing and coordinating Intelligence activities in their respective country. Taking Brazil as an example, the law that established the Agência Brasileira de Inteligência (Abin) defines Intelligence as activity that aims to get, analyze and disseminate knowledge within and outside the national territory about facts and circumstances of immediate or potential influence on the decision-making process and government action and on the protection and security (and safety) of society and the State.⁶⁵

Figure 2 illustrates the concept of Intelligence defined in this law.

⁶³ Centro Nacional de Planeamiento Estratégico, *Escenarios de futuro para el Perú* - Julio 2017, accessed September 3, 2023, <https://cdn.www.gob.pe/uploads/document/file/3518877/Escenarios%20de%20Futuro%20para%20el%20Per%C3%BA%20-%20Expositor%3A%20Jordy%20Vichez%20Astucuri%2C%20director%20nacional%20de%20Prospectiva%20y%20Estudios%20Estrat%C3%A9gicos%20de%20CEPLAN.pdf>.

⁶⁴ Ministerio de Economía, Fomento e Turismo del Chile. Chile crea futuro: Mirada diversa com proyección de país al 2050, accessed July 05, 2023, <https://www.economia.gob.cl/2023/06/29/chile-crea-futuro-mirada-diversa-con-proyeccion-de-pais-al-2050.htm>.

⁶⁵ Diário Oficial da República Federativa do Brasil, *Lei Nº 9.883, de 7 de dezembro de 1999*, Institui o Sistema Brasileiro de Inteligência, cria a Agência Brasileira de Inteligência - ABIN, e dá outras providências, Brasília, 1999, 1.

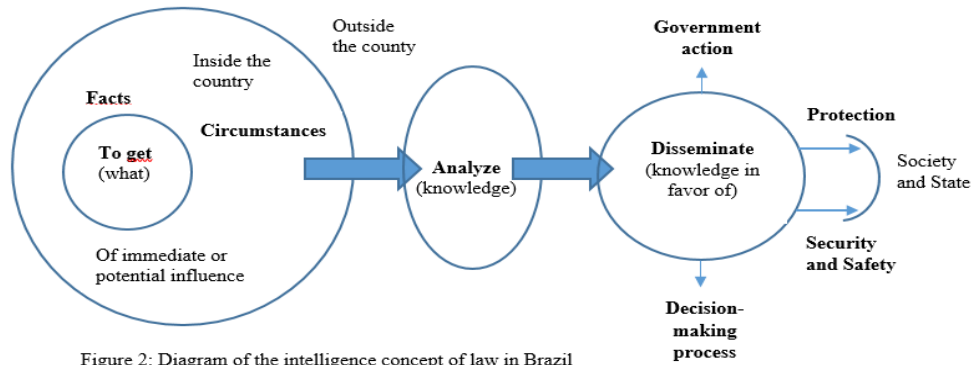


Figure 2: Diagram of the intelligence concept of law in Brazil
Source: elaborated by the author

To analyze the knowledge that is obtained, the Intelligence Service uses specialized techniques, especially in the case of the Future Study. The method for this study follows the Intelligence cycle that comprises planning, data collection, data analysis, dissemination of the generated product and monitoring of the situation studied.⁶⁶ Monitoring can take place through indicators that are facts, events, conditions, indices that reveal which scenario is materializing. Examples of indicators include the basic interest rate, number of riots, number of new patents, troop movements, among others. Over time, intelligence monitors these indicators to find out how reality unfolds and which scenario is closest to this reality. At this stage, Intelligence reports are necessary to alert the decision-maker about aspects that may motivate some action on the part of the State. If there is any fact that causes profound transformation, it may be necessary to carry out a new Future Study.

The method used to carry out future studies by the Intelligence Services are subject to secrecy, as the techniques and methodologies used in general are part of the secret of the activity. However, future studies are based mainly on the works of Michel Godet, who, in turn, was based on the La Prospective school developed by Gaston Berger in the 1950s. In order to adapt Godet 's method to the specificities of Intelligence activity, ideas and tools from other academics can be incorporated, such as the cross-impact matrices outlined by Gordon.⁶⁷ Furthermore, it is very common to use the Delphi method.⁶⁸ Regardless of the method, the formation of a multidisciplinary group of intelligence analysts and constant consultation with experts on the subject are part of the good

⁶⁶ Marco Cepik, *Inteligência e Políticas Públicas: dinâmicas operacionais e condições de legitimação*, *Security and Defense Studies Review*, Volume 2, n.2, Winter 2002, 249-251.

⁶⁷ Author's note: the concept and all theory related to the Cross-Impact method can be found in the following work: Theodore Gordon, *Cross- impact method (MID)*, United Nations: 1994.

⁶⁸ Author's note: a possible source of consultation on the Delphi Method can be found in: James T. C. Wright and Renata A. Giovinazzo, *Delphi - uma ferramenta de apoio ao planejamento prospectivo*, *Caderno de Pesquisas em Administração*, São Paulo, v. 1, n. 12, 2000.

practices in preparing the Future Study. Finally, variables and actors that interfere in the studied environment and their implications for each other are evaluated, and how these factors would behave in the future.

The Future Study, as a variation of foresight in the field of Intelligence, aims to advise the government to make the best decisions for society today regarding future issues. The immediacy of the challenges leads governments to worry only about the here and now. If the government does not get involved with the future, it will be ill-prepared to deal with unexpected and unconventional issues.⁶⁹ The Future Study helps governments get out of this situation of inefficiency, especially in turbulent and uncertain environments.

In particular, the Intelligence Services product differs from other information flows due to the possibility of including data denied by the opponent or difficult to obtain by conventional means. This confidential information can help construct scenarios that would otherwise go unnoticed. Another point that deserves to be highlighted is the fact that the Intelligence Service has the vocation of monitoring the environment to anticipate the future, that is, problems and opportunities. In this way, it is already inherent to the analyst's work to monitor the indicators of the outlined scenarios.

The use of the Future Study is suitable for both national issues (macro or strategic) and sectoral issues (micro or tactical). Examples of national decisions include choose alternative actions to deal with the consequences of forced immigration or face the expansion of organized crime or even how to manage alliances in international trade agreements. At another level, on a smaller scale, there are examples in the definition of defense industry development policy or how to combat cross-border drug and arms trafficking. You can also specialize even more in specific issues such as the potential of applying artificial intelligence in Defense⁷⁰ or the use of a space rocket launch base or even if it is worth building a nuclear submarine. Futures studies efforts at both broad and specific levels can interconnect and reinforce each other as part of a continuous system of integrating futures thinking applied to public policy formulation.⁷¹

The Future Study is criticized mainly in two aspects: cost, both due to the time it takes to prepare the report, around two months, and the number of analysts dedicated to

⁶⁹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2-3.

⁷⁰ Author's note: an example of this potential is the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) against hypersonic missiles, since missiles travel at speeds greater than 5 times that of sound. In addition to high-speed processing of missile trajectory data, AI is also a key element in countering this threat.

⁷¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 4.

the work, at least five; and report size, no less than ten pages. Defenders of the Future Study argue that not every subject deserves to be covered by it. It is only suitable for the most complex ones, with significant impact and requiring a distant future study, for four years or more. Therefore, to prepare such studies, the preparation time and the team dedicated to the task present a favorable cost/benefit given the return obtained. Regarding the size of the report, it is assumed that Presidents and Ministers of State would hardly read extensive documents, however their advisors or senior and middle government management could focus on texts that really matter. Furthermore, the construction of the Future Study already provides a better understanding of the topic, which facilitates oral reports for senior authorities and monitoring of developments. Monitoring is most notable when experts from the Intelligence Service together with those from the country's Intelligence System construct the Future Study.

Perhaps the most famous Futures Study produced by the Intelligence Services of the Americas is the report entitled “Global Trends” published by the National Intelligence Council and produced by the American Intelligence System, led by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Several publishers around the world publish the ostensible version.⁷² CIA distributes the confidential version only to sectors of the American government that need to know about a specific topic.

Public Policy and Future Studies

The function of the Intelligence Service is to advise the national decision-making process whenever necessary or requested, regardless of the moment in the Public Policy cycle in question. Various types of Intelligence’s reports materialize this advice. It is up to the Intelligence Service to identify the best way to respond to the decision-maker's call. The Future Study is used to improve long-term decisions. As the complexity of reality does not allow defining a single way of acting, the aim, by optimizing the use of the Future Study based on the Public Policy cycle, is to propose a flexible model of action. The use of the Future Study will be more effective if the indication follows technical criteria that provide more legitimacy and usefulness to this tool.

Keeping this premise of technical criteria in mind, we turn to the first phase of the cycle, Reception of Demands. Receiving problems and opportunities from society describes this phase. At this stage, decision-makers would not use the Future Study, as

⁷² Author's note: for example - Relatório da CIA: a nova era. Original title “Global Trends 2035”. Published by *Geração no Brasil* in March 2019.

precisely the free movement of ideas and projects characterizes the phase. There is no point in limiting the clash of actors at this moment.

On the other hand, in the Agenda Setting phase, decision-makers are provided with assistance in carrying out the activity of selecting, albeit in a preliminary way, the policies that will make up the agenda. At this point, the decision-maker does not know the consequences of implementing or not implementing a Public Policy. The product of the Future Study, possible scenarios, sheds light on this issue by helping the decision-maker understand the situation and choose policies that provide better well-being for the population, whether to avoid undesirable scenarios or to strengthen favorable scenarios. It is noteworthy that here, there is a clash between state and private actors to influence the formation of the agenda. However, it is up to the decision-maker to understand the situation, based on the Future Study, and make the best choice.

In the third phase, Formulation of Alternatives, the technical team develops possible ways of acting to implement a given Public Policy. The Future Study is not essential in developing alternative courses of action, since at this stage technicians need to use objectivity and data that clarify the current situation to create a way of government action that allows progress for society. However, nothing prevents the Future Study carried out in the previous phase from being used to guide the construction of alternatives if technicians feel the need to understand how the future would unfold based on the premises established in the preliminary choice of Public Policy. The Future Study would be another element of assessment by technicians to develop alternative actions, but it is not fundamental.

In the Selection of Options phase, it is defined whether the Public Policy will be implemented, as well as which implementation alternative will be chosen. At this moment, the decision-making process needs to be based on evidence, observing ethical and legal guidelines.⁷³ However, the situation to be faced appears diffuse and for this type of decision, the weight of facts is low, while the weight of judgments is high.⁷⁴ Thus, the decision-maker, through subjective assessments, seeks to identify and define current and potential developments. To do this, it is common to turn to specialists, who can offer the Future Study, which reduces the probability of an inappropriate decision. In this way, the

⁷³ Diário Oficial da República Federativa do Brasil (2020), 26.

⁷⁴ Morgan D. Jones, *The Thinker's toolkit: 14 powerful techniques for problem solving*, New York: Editora Crown Business, 1998, 7-9.

Future Study becomes a useful element for the decision-maker, as already identified in the Agenda Setting phase.

Note that the Future Study used in this fourth phase may or may not be the same as the one already used in the Agenda Setting phase. What will define whether the Future Study will be another, different from the first, is the fact that there is a cyclical change in the time lapse between these two phases. If situations have occurred that have transformed the environment in which Public Policy will take place, it may be necessary to carry out a new Future Study.

Execution characterizes the Implementation of Public Policy, the fifth phase of the cycle. As already mentioned, this phase is the most difficult due to several factors such as communication between actors and boycotts from adverse groups, among others. As Public Policy unfolds, the public agents responsible for its execution become aware of difficulties and try to overcome them. Whenever possible, they seek to anticipate these problems to maximize the resources available for implementing Public Policy.

The Future Study necessarily has a phase in which indicators are developed. Measuring these indicators is useful for monitoring the environment in question. Through the collection of indices and situational studies, it is possible to outline which scenario reality is approaching. If a scenario proves to be inappropriate, corrective actions are necessary. If the scenario is favorable, reinforcement actions are still necessary. Therefore, at this stage the use of the Future Study is much more valid for the indicators generated and the respective monitoring than for the Future Study itself. Still, the use of the Future Study is useful. After all, the public agents involved in implementation are constantly learning.

In the Evaluation phase, the binomial controlling and judging Public Policy prevails. Although this phase formally constitutes the last of the cycle, it is also spread throughout the previous Implementation phase. To remember, government oversight bodies to check the occurrence of corruption and other wrongdoings exercise control of Public Policy. Bureaucrats carry out the evaluation through the comparison of parameters collected before and after the implementation of the Public Policy, in addition to other ways of measuring the impacts of this policy. It appears that in these tasks, both control and judgment, the Future Study does not seem to be the most appropriate to assist decision-makers and public agents. The scenarios generated in the Future Study are speculations of possible scenarios and when the Evaluation phase takes place, the future has already arrived and has become the present, with no room for assumptions.

Application of Future Studies by Intelligence Service to Optimize Public Policies.

It is clear that the Future Study takes place in the national decision-making process considering the Public Policy cycle in three of its phases. Especially in the decision-making phases, whether preliminary or definitive selection of what will be put into practice. Furthermore, during Implementation, the Future Study is also useful by delivering indicators that monitor the environment and allow for better calibration of Public Policy.

Figure 3 below illustrates the proposed model for recommending the application of the Future Study in each phase of the Public Policy cycle.

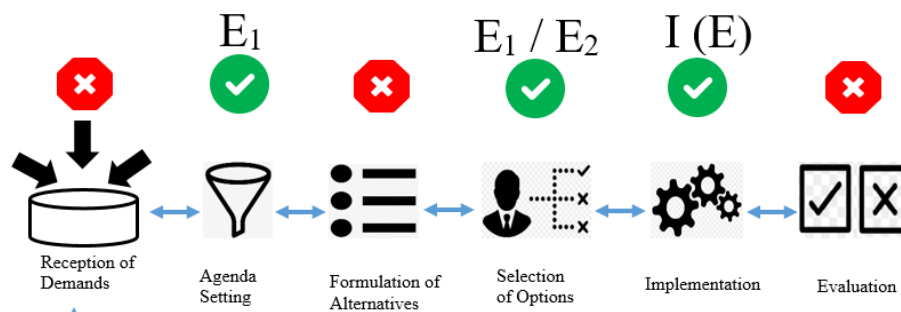


Figure 3: Application of the Future Study according to the phases of the Public Policy cycle
Source: elaborated by the author

Final considerations

According to Gaddis, strategy is the alignment of potentially unlimited aspirations with necessarily limited capabilities.⁷⁵ Society and the governments that represent it have an intense desire for full social and economic development; however, the State's production power is insufficient to meet all these objectives. Thus, public policies emerge to be the alignment between aspirations and capabilities. Moreover, the Future Study contributes to choosing the best alignment through adjustments and regulations.

Similarly, the OECD recommends that governments establish anticipatory governance.⁷⁶ In other words, governments systematically incorporate and apply strategic predictions throughout the governance architecture, that is, throughout the Public Policy cycle. By strategic forecasts, the international organization understands it to be the structured and explicit exploration of multiple futures, in order to assist decision-making. For the Intelligence Services, Future Studies are the way to operationalize these strategic predictions.

⁷⁵ John Lewis Gaddis, *As grandes estratégias*, São Paulo: Editora Planeta do Brasil, 2019, 33.

⁷⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 3.

On the part of an Intelligence Service, exploiting the potential of the Future Study increases its rapport with other areas of the State. In this way, your Intelligence analysts develop skills that they did not have before carrying out the Future Study. On the part of the decision-maker, by understanding how future studies work, he or she is encouraged to have new thoughts to develop innovative and appropriate public policies to take advantage of opportunities and overcome challenges.

Reflectively, the Intelligence Activity itself is a Public Policy, and as such, those responsible for it, i.e. the bodies that make up the country's Intelligence System, must see it. Therefore, the Future Study on Intelligence itself and its developments is a good practice to help decision-makers implement this policy.

At the end of this exposition, one can understand how the argument was supported. In the case of the first argument, which the State governs through public policies, it was highlighted that public policies are produced within a cycle with six phases. Second, the achievement of public policy occurs in a world of great and rapid transformations, which generates uncertainty about the future. Third, Intelligence's main function is to anticipate facts and events to advise the national decision-making process, in particular, using the Future Study. It is worth noting, however, that the adequacy of the Future Study is partial, that is, it does not apply to all phases of the development of public policies. Based on this, the conclusion is, in fact, the Future Study contributes to the achievement of public policies, when applied appropriately to the public policy cycle.

The model proposed in this study can serve as a basis for future empirical investigations into the use of Future Studies to aid the national decision-making process according to the phases of the Public Policy cycle. To complement the current research, it also suggests checking how other Intelligence products can be useful in achieving public policies. These studies would be necessary to expand the results obtained here.

Mahatma Gandhi said that the future will depend on what we do in the present. Paraphrasing the Indian political leader in consideration of the context of this research, the future will depend on the Future Study we carry out and the decisions we make in the present.

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Appendix A

Phases of the Public Policy Cycle

Authors / Phases	Frey, 2000	Souza, 2003	Kingdom, 2003	Cavalcanti, 2007; Tude, Ferro, Santana, 2009	Sebrae/MG, 2008	Agum, Riscado e Menezes, 2015	Adopted in the article
1	Perception and definition of problems	X	X	X	X	Problem Identification	Reception of Demands
2	Agenda Setting	Agenda setting	Agenda Establishment	Formulation of public policies	Formation of the Agenda	Formation of the Agenda	Agenda Setting
3	Program development and decision-making	Identification of alternatives	Compose Alternatives for possible resolution of the problem		Policy formulation	Formulation of Alternatives	Formulation of Alternatives
4		Evaluation of options Selecting options	Choice of Alternative		Decision-making process	Decision making	Selection of Options
5	Policy implementation	Implementation	Implementation of the Decision	Implementation of public policies	Implementation	Implementation of public policy	Implementation
6	Policy assessment and action correction	Evaluation	X	Evaluation of public policies	Evaluation	Evaluation	Evaluation