

Institutionalization of futures studies and administrative reforms: the case of France and the United States

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Introduction

From the end of the Second World War onwards, governments and public organizations have undertaken various attempts to “look into the future”. In terms of policy-oriented futures studies, two countries are considered the main founders of the discipline, namely the United States and France. While forecasting and, later, foresight were developed in the former, the latter has seen the emergence of *la prospective*. These fields had and still have in common an orientation towards long-term thinking. These have given rise to new structures, new practices and new ideas that have changed the functioning of the public sector. Although these disciplines have been widely studied in the *ad hoc* literature, little attention has been given to the interaction between the emergence of this new kind of knowledge and the evolution of the public sector, notably regarding administrative reforms.

This contribution aims at analyzing and comparing the institutionalization of future studies in the public sector. It focuses on the cases of the United States and France at the federal or central level from the 1950s to the 2000s. The institutionalization process is therefore contextualized for both cases with a special attention to the evolution of public administration and of the policy-making process.

Based on a large literature review, the two first sections respectively focus on the American and French cases. On the one hand, in France, *la prospective* was institutionalized through the development of large public institutions in charge of national planning and focused mainly on economic and social issues. On the other hand, the American perspective was largely influenced by the military concerns and fostered by private foundations and think tanks partly funded by the federal government. A third section discusses and compares the two cases in the light of a historical neo-institutional perspective. This allows us to draw on the case studies to identify several factors that can either support or constrain the institutionalization of futures studies. However, we must underline two major limitations of our study. First, as it is only based on secondary academic sources, we could therefore have missed events and practices that could have been of interest. In this respect, a further step in this research could be the conduction of interviews that would be either semi-structured or even based on life narratives. Second, the time range of our study is voluntarily limited to the end of the 1990s, except for some contextual elements. This led to leave aside some major reforms of public futures studies, notably in France.

1. American futures studies: the omnipresence of the RAND Corporation

A. The beginnings of futures studies in the United States

During the First World War, military planning was used at a national level: it facilitated later better acceptance of such practices (Bell, 2009). A first attempt to institutionalize the interest in the long-term took place in 1929 when the President Hoover created a Committee on Social Trends. The latter was headed by Wesley Mitchell, the head of the National Bureau of Economic Research, while its scientific coordination was left to the

sociologist William Ogburn. In 1933, this committee published a multidisciplinary report aiming at identifying futures trends by considering the ones from the past. A few years later, Roosevelt temporarily institutionalized a foresight function in the committee of National Resources. This committee notably published a report on the consequences of technical progress (Cazes, 2008).

Moreover, from the 1930s onwards, an interest for the study of the future was indirectly present in the modes of functioning of the public administration, thanks to planning activities. They were represented by the “P” in the POSDCORB model by Gulick and Urwick (Palumbo & Maynard-Moody, 1991). In addition, strategic planning was further developed following the publication of “Developments in Governmental Planning” by Vieg in 1942 (Bryson, 2010).

This is also in the period before 1945 that several reforms based on rationality and scientific management took place. They followed the expansion of the federal administrative apparatus related to the adoption of the New Deal (Peters, 1996). This politico-administrative context offered a fertile ground for the institutionalization of futures studies, by favoring strategic planning and supporting processes rationalization. However, the beginning of the Second World War limited the public future-oriented activities. Still, some researchers furthered and systematized methods on complex problems (Miles, 2008). This is at that time that decision theories evolved by integrating new emergent knowledge such as operational research and quantitative management techniques. It shifted the focus of decision from political aspects towards the rationalization of means needed to achieve specific objectives (Palumbo & Maynard-Moody, 1991). This idea of rationality is however different from the one from the *interbellum* period. The latter was criticized by many authors questioning the existence of a perfect rationality (Peters, 1996). The military (and also economic) planning developed within this particular context, although it was not genuinely present at the national level, as underlined by Hall (2002) in its study on spatial planning.

From 1944 onwards, the General H. H. Arnold showed interest in the future, notably through the commissioning of a study on future technologies in the military domain. An aeronautic firm was thus in charge of the RAND (Research and Development) project. It aimed at studying non-ground aspects of international conflicts. In 1948, the RAND Corporation was founded without the aeronautic firm. It was financed by the Ford Foundation. Even though the main objectives of the RAND were not the exploration of the future, such issues were rapidly considered and various methods were set up to study several possible futures rather than one probable one (Cazes, 2008). It quickly became one of the most influent think tanks in the American military domain, as well as an interdisciplinary research meeting point for academics and practitioners. This is the early moments of what some authors, such as Herman Kahn, called futurology. It was seen as a science using quantitative methods, mathematics and computer models to forecast the future. However, this terminology was not acknowledged in Europe, due to its technocratic orientation and its link with the RAND Corporation in a Cold War context (Andersson, 2008; Gonod & Gurtler, 2002; Miles, 2008).

Futures studies were therefore limited to the military field and it is only years later that academicians, politicians and business organizations became interested in such studies (Cazes, 2008). In this post-war period, there were several reforms of the public administration, because of the expansion of the missions of the government. The main efforts took place in 1947 and 1948 within the first Commission on the Organization of the Executive

Branch of Government or Hoover Commission¹. It was inspired by scientific management and was mainly concerned by large structural reforms (on this topic, see for example Light (1997)). In this respect, futures studies and even decision-making processes have not been the center of the attention, but these works were influenced by a need of scientism in governmental activities (Peters, 1996).

B. Futures studies in a Cold War context

The interest in the long-term in the military domain was partly related to international events faced by the United States, namely the Cold War. At that time, there was a need to anticipate the future, in terms of development of technologies and of enhancement of knowledge regarding the best possible soviet strategies (Andersson & Rindzevičiūtė, 2012). This was reinforced by the trust that forecasters had in their capacity to scientifically know and control the future thanks to new kinds of knowledge, such as cybernetic and system analysis. Following some methodological developments (ex.: computer simulation, game theories, nuclear physics, advanced mathematics), researchers developed the Delphi method at the RAND Corporation to study the future, as it had become a significant stake (Andersson, 2012). Nevertheless, the RAND was not the only actor interested in futures studies in the United States.

Other dominant actors have supported the emergence of forecasting in the United States in the 1960s. First, several think tanks were founded by former researchers at the RAND Corporation, such as the Hudson Institute and the Institute for the Future (Cazes, 2008). The former was set up by Herman Kahn in 1961. He was one of the most wellknown American futurists. Because of his works on scenarios. One of the main principles of the Hudson Institute was (and still is) the consideration of a large range of alternative possible policy-oriented futures, despite their incoherency or their abstraction (Bell, 2009). In 1967, Kahn published a controversial book named “The Year 2000: A Framework for Speculation in The Next Thirty-Three Years”. This work became a model in the field of scenarios (Bradfield, Wright, Burt, Cairns, & Van Der Heijden, 2005). Regarding the Institute for the Future, it was created in 1968 by Olaf Helmer, Theodore Gordon (two of the designers of the Delphi method) and Paul Baran. They thought that methods developed in the military context of the RAND could also be applied to social issues. Unlike the RAND and the Hudson Institute, this institution did not want to consider the military aspects and always tried to publicize its results. In this respect, they did not want to interfere with policy formulation, but rather to propose alternatives to decision-makers. These different think tanks have been the first of a kind and several new organizations have developed since then. Some of them were for example specialized in specific public policy fields (Bell, 2009).

In this respect, futures studies cover a broad field which is not always oriented towards policy- and decision-making. As an example, Masini and Samset (1975, p. 15) consider them as :

A field of intellectual and political activity concerning all sectors of the psychological, social, economic, political and cultural life, aiming at discovering and mastering the extensions of the complex chains of causalities, by means of conceptualisations, systematic reflections, experimentations, anticipations and creative thinking. Futures studies therefore constitute a natural basis for subnational, national and international,

¹ A second Hoover Commission was set up between 1953 and 1955 but was mostly focused on specific issues such as deregulation and bureaucracy downsizing (Peters, 1996).

and both interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary activities tending to become a new forum for the basis of political decision making.

Related to the intellectual emulation of the 1960s, policy sciences were developed, notably by Lasswell since 1951 onwards, and are rather tied to futures studies. He had a significant interest in the long-term and supported the development of futures studies before turning to the study of public policy. As a matter of fact, there are several links between policy sciences and futures studies. First, they both rose in a context where there was a need to deal with crises and uncertainties. Second, they are relatively close on the epistemological aspects, since they are both oriented towards problems. Each of them also favors the use of mixed methods and of holistic approaches. Nonetheless, these similarities are limited: policy sciences are rather short-term-oriented and are interested in details and implementation whereas futures studies are more concerned with uncertainty (Bell, 2009). In sum, futures studies and public policy have been intellectually linked in this period of academic effervescence.

Despite its impact on the choices made for the policy-making process, we cannot provide much insight on the influence of policy sciences on the functioning of public administration (for further elements on policy sciences, see for example DeLeon (2008)). Commissions and temporary working groups were of course created, but also terminated, illustrating the high fluidity of futures studies structures in the United States. One notable element is the introduction of the PPBS (planning, programming, budgeting system). It was launched in the defense department in the 1960s by Johnson before being expanded to other federal services. The PPBS, as futures studies, was seen as a tool supporting decision-making and helping rationalize choices in the process. It is not a surprise either that the first organization concerned by such reform was a military department (Schwarz, 1977). More generally, numerous reforms took place within the federal administration, due to its rather low image (Light, 1997, 2006; Peters, 1996). Studies show four non-exclusive trends of reform from 1945 to 2002: scientific management and efficiency, war on waste and coordinated retrenchment, transparency and autonomization. They also clearly indicate that efficiency was the major focus until the mid-1960s before being overtaken by other aspects (Light, 1997, 2006). However, these elements do not give us much information on the relation between public management reforms and emergence of futures studies, except for a supportive context.

Moreover, the international context also played a role at another level. Indeed, this period witnessed the emergence of global problems, such as the extension of major political conflicts and a significant growth. This led to a movement of professionalization and to more professional and scientific practices. This is in this context that several transnational research networks emerged (Schmidt-Gerning, 2002). Some are related to futures studies, such as the World Future Society, Mankind 2000 and the scientific journals like the Journal of Technological Forecasting, and Futures. These groups were also very critical vis-à-vis the futurology and preferred to use the terminology “futures studies”. In this respect, they considered the future as open and not scientifically fully determinable (Andersson, 2012). In addition to these interactions among futurists, a common scientific agenda emerged, in link with concepts such as control and controllability of wicked issues (Schmidt-Gerning, 2002). In this context, one should not neglect the influence of the Club of Rome and of its major publication: Limits to growth. Its methodology based on alternative scenarios was groundbreaking even if it was severely criticized. This international environment favored the emergence of non-military works at the RAND in the beginning of the 1970s. They used a

holistic and interdisciplinary approach and a methodology leading to the construction of a model of the analyzed system (Bell, 2009).

During the 1960s and the 1970s, the political and academic spheres became interested in futures studies. The former mainly set up temporary and *ad hoc* advisory commissions. Examples are the Material Policy Commission under Truman and « Resources for the Future », organization launched by the Ford Foundation. We can also mention two republican projects that are the Commission for national objectives, set up by Eisenhower in 1960, followed by a research team on national objectives, placed by Nixon in 1969. Moreover, at the central level, other initiatives were taken in the Congress. In 1975, a foresight provision was adopted. It made mandatory for each commission, excepting the finance, to permanently consider the future to identify weak signals of possible need of a legislative action (Cazes, 2008). Congress was also a fertile environment to institutionalize thematic commissions and other institutions. This trend led to the creation of the Office of Technology Assessment in 1972. Technology assessment is a close practice to technology foresight and the institution aimed at supporting decision-making. Nevertheless, it was terminated in 1995 following budgetary cuts in Congress (Porter & Ashton, 2008).

The academic world mostly showed interest for foresight with the Commission for the Year 2000. This commission was established by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1965 and Daniel Bell was appointed as its president, while Gordon, Helmer and Kahn were its members. Its aim was to study possible futures and methodological issues to foresee by the year 2000. The commission produced around sixty papers on several topics. The final report was in line with the international movement of development of futures studies (see below) and helped to increase the legitimacy of the field (Bell, 2009; Miles, 2008).

Other private institutions were also part of the futures studies field, such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom. One of its objectives was to protect art and sciences from the Marxist influence. However, the main institution among these was the Ford Foundation. It had strong ties with Congress and played a major role in the expansion of American sciences in several countries, such as France, as we describe further on (Andersson, 2012).

C. Futures studies and the end of the Cold War

Few data currently exist on the evolution of the institutional landscape of futures studies and foresight in the United States. The end of the Cold War has obviously had an impact on the development of futures studies, but it was not *per se* a negative one. It has opened new perspectives for researchers, notably by reinforcing the concept of uncertainty in a context of end of the bipolarism (Gonod & Gurtler, 2002).

Practices of technology foresight have been developed, such as an activity to identify critical technologies², and other activities of lower range including several public entities and foundations. We can mention the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Reconnaissance Office and the National Institutes of Health (Porter & Ashton, 2008). However, it seems that there has not been much coordination between these different activities ever since the termination of the OTA in 1995 (Faucheux & Hue, 2001).

² These activities started in 1981 and took place on a regular basis, on demand of the government to the RAND (Faucheux & Hue, 2001).

Again, we cannot underline explicit relationships between the evolution of futures studies and foresight and administrative reforms. Since the 1980s, the American government undertook several managerial reforms. Changes mostly appeared in the administrative processes due to innovations from budgetary policies but the link with the study of the future is rather weak (Gualmini, 2008). It does not mean, however, that there has been no initiative. On the contrary, the Grace Commission gathered around 2000 managers from the private sector and published around 2500 recommendations of reform (Peters, 1996). Furthermore, the externalization trend that has developed within the American government can partially explain the weak institutionalization of futures studies in its structures. Indeed, we can easily admit that the government mostly commissioned futures studies to consultants and research center (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011).

2. La prospective in France: between rationalization and decentralization

A. The first steps of la prospective

If the United States were the founding father of the futures studies, one should not ignore the role that France has played in developing a similar approach: *la prospective*.

The end of the war and the reconstruction context have supported the set-up of planning and forward-looking activities, notably with the institution of the *Commissariat général du Plan* (CGP – General Commissariat for the Plan), following the adoption of the Marshall Plan by the American Congress. However, we must mention two elements prior to 1945 that have been of interest in terms of long-term thinking in France. On the one hand, in 1941, the Vichy government passed a law creating the *Fondation française pour l'étude des problèmes humains* (French Foundation for the study of human issues). This institution would later be replaced by the *Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques* (National Institute of Demographic Studies). It played a role in raising the awareness regarding long-term thinking without conducting any activity of *prospective*. On the other hand, the *Délégation générale à l'équipement national* (general service for national equipment) realized a ten-year-plan related to equipment investment for the post-war period (Cazes, 2008). In this respect, from 1945 to 1960, decision-makers focused on a long-term perspective. Unlike the United States, where planning was mostly issued out of military sectors and conducted by private foundations such as RAND Corporation, the French long-term orientation was embedded in public institutions (Cazes, 2008; Durance, 2007). As we indicate below, this interest in long-term took place in a discursive context regarding rationalization of administrative techniques and planning efficiency (Bezes, 2009). One of the most significant examples of this trend – looking at public policy in a longer term perspective – lies in the formulation of the Third Plan (1957-1961) by the *Commissariat Général du Plan*. The institution realized economic projections until 1975 while the plan ended in 1961. As we mention it later, this shift took place in a discursive context of rationalization of administrative process and planning (Bezes, 2009).

The term “*la prospective*” was first used in this meaning by Gaston Berger, French historian. He considered it as a tool supporting decision-making. Based on the idea that human beings were free to build their vision of the future, *la prospective* rejected prediction from past trends. It implied also a normative aspect, by proposing alternative possible futures to policy-makers. Berger created the *Centre international de prospective* (CIP – International Centre of *Prospective*) in the 1950s. It was composed by several academicians, high civil servants and heads of enterprises. It played a major role in the thinking about *la prospective* as well as in the elaboration and the diffusion of *prospective* works in several policy domains

such as education, mobility and health (Cazes, 2008; Durance, 2007; Fobé & Brans, 2010; Masini, 2010). Following the death of Berger in 1960, the CIP continued to gather members like Pierre Massé and to reflect on *la prospective*. Berger saw *la prospective* as a mostly normative process always looking at discontinuities and whose results should be tightly linked to the concrete action (Cazes, 2008).

Another author to be recalled is the intellectual Jean Fourastié who played, before Berger a role in the emerging awareness of long-term issues in a context of socio-economic reconstruction. However, unlike Berger, he supported the study of steady trends to extend them in the future. Also, he did not set up an association to support his thinking as did Berger and later de Jouvenel, but he took part in existing structures such as the CGP and the *Groupe 1985* (cf. *infra*) (Cazes, 2008).

These first conceptualisations of *la prospective* developed in the 1960s and fed the development and the institutionalization of such practices within public organizations.

B. The rise of la prospective

The 60s were a key moment in terms of considering the role of the French State and its organization, notably with discourses on the rationalization of the public administration. Three main factors can explain this movement: the internationalization process and the need of a better functioning of the administration to increase competitiveness; the development of the welfare state and the expansion of the administration; the movement of political competences towards more technical and economical knowledge. The latter shifted the struggles between politico-administrative elites : they were mainly based on a political game and moved towards more administrative stakes (Bezes, 2002).

This administrative reform movement allowed several horizontal entities, including the CGP, to take the leadership in framing and orientating the process of administrative growth towards more effectiveness of the state apparatus (Bezes, 2002). The *Commissariat général du Plan* has been a public institution in charge of economic planning since the end of the Second World War. Its aim was then to support the redeployment of the French economy through four-year or five-year-plan. In this respect, the CGP was not, at its beginning, *per se* oriented towards long-term issues (Fobé & Brans, 2010).

These developments also took place in a period during which new types of knowledge, linked with social sciences, emerged in the study of public administration. We can mention policy sciences, economy, sociology and administrative science that counterbalanced the omnipresent juridical knowledge of the administration (Bezes, 2009). More specifically, despite the death of Berger in 1960, *la prospective* continued to develop under the impulsion of Pierre Massé. From the early 1960s onwards, Bertrand de Jouvenel played a major role in the field. He rejoined some conclusions of Berger regarding the need to consider the future. He also distinguished the past, representing the facts, from the future that he assimilated to uncertainty. He created the concept of *futuribles* by merging the terms “*futurs*” and “*possibles*” (French translation of “possible futures”) and also studied desirable futures. For him, the State should dominate the future by exploring it. He supported the idea of determining undesirable futures to prevent particular political actions. He also underlined the necessity of public participation in the elaboration of *futuribles*. De Jouvenel was resolutely oriented towards the political arena and wrote the famous “*L’art de la conjecture*” (The Art of Conjecture) in 1964. This work was a critical analysis of futures studies and their

methodologies. He refused to use the term *prospective* and preferred conjecture to futurology. He also considered futures studies as an art rather than a science. Moreover, he created an association called *Futuribles* that aimed at raising awareness among political spheres regarding futures studies. Noteworthy, *Futuribles* was financed by the Ford Foundation³ (Durance, 2010; Fobé & Brans, 2010).

Therefore, *la prospective* can be defined as a tool of construction of the future, and not as a forecasting instrument. It identifies trends and possible futures. It is a multidisciplinary and systemic approach integrating the long-term dimension (de Jouvenel, 1999).

In 1959, Pierre Massé, close to Berger, became the head of the CGP and enhanced the development of new monitoring techniques, such as macro-economic modelling and mid- and long-term economic projections (Bezes, 2002). Furthermore, in 1962, in the wake of the 5th national Plan, he initiated a task force called “*Groupe 1985*” to consider longer time horizon in terms of public expenditures and investments. This group included Fourastié, de Jouvenel, as well as Eugène Claudius-Petit⁴, Philippe Lamour⁵ and Jérôme Monod⁶. One of the outputs of this task force was the publication of a policy-oriented and interdisciplinary report in 1964, which was annexed to the Plan. This report named “*Réflexions pour 1985*” was one of the first significant foresight studies produced by the French state. One of its main element was the rationalization of the functioning of the public sector (Bezes, 2002; Durance, 2007; Fobé & Brans, 2010). However, this study was still rather quantitatively-oriented, although it considered discontinuities through scenarios (Colson & Cusset, 2008).

This report has been the starting point of the development of several – often highly financed – foresight units within the administration (defense, foreign affairs, etc.), as well as the will of the several sectorial ministries to counterbalance the increasing influence of the CGP. Indeed, the latter began to develop micro-economic studies on equipment decisions (Bezes, 2002; Fobé & Brans, 2010; Guigou, 2006). More concretely, this rationalization movement led to several reforms including the limitation of the growth of the civil service and the rationalization of budgetary choices.

However, the CGP was not the only institution related to foresight in France at the time. Indeed, in 1963, was created the DATAR (*Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'action régionale*). Its proximity to the administration and its high budget allowed a better diffusion of the foresight practices. The DATAR has been the initiator of several works on scenarios, notably the “*scénario de l'inacceptable*” – the scenario of the unacceptable – looking into the futures until 2000 in both an exploratory and normative way. It also launched a journal, *la revue 2000* (the year 2000 review) and organized several conferences to develop the awareness towards foresight (Durance, 2007; Fobé & Brans, 2010; Rio, 2013).

In 1968, Jérôme Monod became the head of the DATAR and launched an ambitious program to develop *la prospective*. The *système d'étude du schéma d'aménagement* (SESAME – Study system for the spatial planning schema) was immediately created as a tool supporting decision-making in spatial planning. It led to several theoretical and

³ In 1967, the Ford Foundation stopped financing *Futuribles* but the DATAR took over its funding role. Pierre Massé became the first president of the association and, meanwhile, de Jouvenel and Monod took part in the CIP (cf. supra.). Eventually, in 1972, the CIP was merged into *Futuribles* (Durance, 2010).

⁴ He was considered as one of the founding fathers of the French spatial planning policy.

⁵ He was the president of the National Commission on spatial planning in 1963.

⁶ He became the head of the DATAR in 1968.

methodological publications and opened new avenues for *la prospective*: system analysis, social foresight and international networks. System analysis allowed a renewal of the practice of *la prospective* while social foresight was opposed to Anglo-Saxon technology foresight methods. The international openness led to several processes of knowledge transfer and diffusion, particularly with American thinkers related to futures studies such as Daniel Bell⁷, Hermann Kahn⁸ or Hasan Ozbekhan⁹ (Durance, 2007).

In sum, the conceptual and theoretical works of Berger and de Jouvenel supported the development and the institutionalization of *la prospective* within the public sector. This diffusion operated through societies and clubs, gathering politico-administrative elites. However, it was also favored by a context in which the ways of functioning of the administration were questioned and were on the verge of being reformed to enhance the decision-making process.

C. Reorientation of administrative reforms and decline of foresight

Following the oil crises and the economic crisis of the 1970s, forecasting also entered a turmoil that impacted foresight activities. Foresight structures were reduced within French administrative entities (Fobé & Brans, 2010; Gonod & Gurtler, 2002). Moreover, the reform program of the administration shifted in the early 1970s from rationalization to issues related to citizens and local politicians. These shifts induced a period of politicization in which the administration became a central political issue and caused a diminution of the need of social sciences expertise, replaced by political parties expertise (Bezès, 2009, 2010). There was also a significant fragmentation of the foresight landscape from 1975 onwards, that is notably related to the decentralization and to the devolution processes (Durance, 2007; Guigou, 2006).

Moreover, few theoretical developments have taken place during the 1970s and the 1980s, although some specific tools such as impact matrices have been developed. These works were done by Michel Godet, author of handbooks on *la prospective* and holding the chair of *la prospective* in the *Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers* (CNAM – Science and Technology School). However, Gonod and Gurtler (2002, p. 323, tr.) underline the inertia of the *prospective* thinking in France in this period :

It is Cartesian and not dialectic. It is a complex post-thinking, that is, outside a primordial philosophical evolution. Consequently, its methodological weaknesses are a systemic deficit, stasis, the forgetting of times and the status of uncertainty.

In this respect, despite several uncoordinated activities of foresight and numerous journal articles and reports by the CGP and the DATAR, no significant work has been published to renew the foresight thinking in France (Gonod & Gurtler, 2002). Nevertheless, the foresight practice still continues to be diffused in the private sector, through the scenarios method (Rio, 2013). Furthermore, *la prospective* received a growing attention from citizens, notably in terms of environmental and demographic issues (Guigou, 2006).

In the mid-1980s, managerial ideas, such as public policy evaluation, questioned the effectiveness of the state, while the French government attempted to depoliticize the

⁷ Daniel Bell is an American futurist that has taken part in works led by the American government.

⁸ Herbert Kahn, American, has developed futures studies methodologies at the RAND Corporation, and then at the Hudson Institute.

⁹ Hasan Ozbekhan, American, has been part of several works led by the DATAR.

administrative theme. However, foresight did not seem to be a part of this repertoire of reforms (Bezes, 2009). This was only in the early 1990s that public foresight returned as a policy analysis instrument, in the field of territorial collectivities, and technology, but also as a new instrument of public participation (Musso, 2006).

D. The renewal of foresight in the 1990s

From 1990 onwards, two complementary trends related to foresight have been the diminishing influence of the CGP at the central level and the development of a territorial foresight at the regional level, under the impulsion of the DATAR.

At the central level, the whole administrative system is questioned by new trends such as New Public Management and by good practices advocated by the OECD (Bezes, 2009). Forecast and foresight do not enjoy the same level of consideration as they did in the 1960s¹⁰. This is notably due to the weakening of growth, reducing the enthusiasm for planning; to the process of Europeanization and its strict budgetary rules; and to the process of decentralization giving more planning autonomy to regions (Bezes, 2010). Moreover, the process of decentralization has limited the capacity for planning of the CGP, because of the autonomization of the regions. In the meantime, a Minister of the Plan was appointed, reducing again the horizontality of the CGP, while the institution was already witnessing a process of technocratization. These elements led to the restructuration in 2005 of the CGP, renamed *Centre d'analyse stratégique* – Strategic analysis centre – whose missions do not include foresight (Moreau et al., 2012). *A contrario*, foresight has become sectorialized, with the development of technological foresight, following the international trend launched in Japan and in the United Kingdom. Several activities were initiated under the impulsion of the Ministries of Research and of Industry, in collaboration with universities (Barré, 2008; Cossé, 2013). These activities clearly show the tendency of French political elites to import best practices from abroad, as it has been the case with evaluation.

Moreover, the effects of decentralization on public policies have been significant, with a renewal of managerial practices at the local level, externalization of missions and performance-oriented management (Rouban, 2008). This context has been a driver for the development of territorial foresight. The first wave of such activities has appeared in the late 1980s (Goux-Baudiment, 2000). The extension of regional competencies has enhanced the need for regional planning in which economic and social Councils have played a role. Indeed, territorial foresight is obviously most developed in fields such as spatial planning (Durance, Godet, Mirénowicz, & Pacini, 2007). This shift of power to the regions has been also supported by the DATAR, that had been marginalized in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and that has offered foresight knowledge to regional entities, in collaboration with the academic world (Rio, 2013). The idea of foresight has also evolved towards a tool of public participation to address futures alternatives and to renew public governance (Bailly, 2005; Ducruet, 2010). In addition, the academic sphere was taking an increasing part in diffusion of the *prospective* practice. Such practices were gaining much legitimacy thanks to the support of academicians rather than to the rigor of its methods.

3. Discussion

¹⁰ The 10th Plan (1989) was even not presented to the National Assembly by the Government.

The two previous sections have described the evolution of futures studies and *la prospective* in their respective politico-administrative context. In both cases, we have underlined the links between the institutionalization of futures studies and the transformations of the public sector. The French case shows however clearer connections between the two processes than the American does. In this respect, we can highlight several elements by following a historical neo-institutional approach¹¹. We have identified three categories of factors. The first one concerns structural factors related to the historical and politico-administrative contexts. The second and third categories consider both actor-based factors of two types, namely politico-administrative actors and actors doing research related to foresight studies.

First, several structural factors have shaped such processes. They have established a framework constraining the process of institutionalization of futures studies. We distinguish two main structural factors: the historical context and the politico-administrative one. These two contexts are clearly imbricated and cannot easily be considered as distinct.

The historical context is the most global one. History and societal events have always had an impact on policy-making. In our two cases, the international environment and the international action of the United States have framed in several ways the manner of functioning of the public sector and, as a consequence, the opportunity or not to institutionalize futures studies within the policy-making process. From what we have described, several striking elements could be highlighted. Primarily, the international context has been relatively different. On the one hand, futures studies in USA emerged in a military context of early Cold War and developed in that direction. On the other hand, *la prospective* started to be institutionalized in France in a context of post-war reconstruction and economic redeployment. Moreover, while *la prospective* had a global approach, US futures studies mostly concentrated on military and technology aspects. From the 1970s onwards, following the crisis of forecasting, we saw that futures studies have become also non-military in the US while *la prospective* has been more and more sectorialized (Miles, 2008). Other American trends that were internationally diffused have also influenced French practices. For example, the rationalization movement that was present in the 1960s in France led to the introduction of budgetary managerial reforms. These were inspired notably by the PPBS reforms occurring at the time in the US and that were widely diffused by American researchers and civil servants. This movement was also accompanied by trends related to the types of knowledge on public administration. We can here highlight the shift from legal and bureaucratic knowledge towards a pluralist range of knowledge such as policy sciences, sociological and economic knowledge, and administrative sciences (Bezes, 2009). Other influences can be found in the oil crises, resulting in the turmoil of forecasting, and the neo-liberal movement of the 1980s. The latter was one of the drivers for several budgetary cuts and the introduction of new approach to public administration such as New Public Management. However, these two countries have reacted differently to these various elements when it came to study the future in regard to policy-making.

In this respect, we can see that the second structural factor, the politico-administrative context, has also played a framing role in the institutionalization of futures studies. It includes the state structure, the type of government, the politico-administrative relationships, the

¹¹ Such perspective implies that institutions structure individual behavior. It has a broad conceptualization of the relationship between institutions and individuals and is interested in asymmetries of power within institutions. It gives an emphasis on historical process and path dependency and has a particular concern for other factors such as ideas and socio-economic elements (Hall & Taylor, 1996).

administrative culture and the system of policy advice. We can give several examples based on our two cases. Firstly, the evolution of the state structure has fostered the emergence of specific kinds of futures studies. In France, the decentralization process led to a renewal of such studies with *la prospective territoriale* within several French regions, since many of them were in search of their own legitimacy and identity. Secondly, the politico-administrative relationships between government and administration greatly differ in the two countries. In this respect, the United States are characterized by the absence of a large technocratic bureaucracy, and pluralist political arrangements. It contrasts with the French centralized bureaucracy and its statist form of economic governance. This clearly impacts the knowledge regime of each country. The “knowledge regime” concept is related to interaction between ideas and institutions and can differ from one country to another based on characteristics such as the type of economy and the structure of the state (Campbell & Pedersen, 2007). In France, there is a significant domination of state research units in the policy analysis, with institutions such as the *Commissariat Général du Plan*. On its side, the American policy-making process is fed by a plurality of groups: privately funded research units, scholarly research units¹² like the Hoover Institution and the RAND Corporation and university research-based institutes commissioned by the government. There are also several advocacy research units¹³ sometimes resembling interests groups in their will to influence policy-makers (Campbell & Pedersen, 2007). Moreover, this is reinforced by differences regarding the nature of the relationships between the political and administrative spheres. As an example, the political and the administrative spheres are clearly separated in the USA, while there was a clear intertwining between the two spheres in France, due to the presence of the *grands corps* (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). This has obviously played a role in the institutionalization of futures studies. In sum, these structural constraints have framed the way in which futures studies have been institutionalized in their respective politico-administrative environment.

However, these contextual aspects are not the only ones in presence. We consider that actors have played a significant and more direct role in the institutionalization of futures studies¹⁴. Politico-administrative actors can affect such processes through different ways. The main one is certainly the political support granted to such approaches. This support can be first ideological, legitimizing futures through political discourses and reports; it can also be related to financial and human resources available to an organization to conduct or to commission futures studies. Finally, political support can be indirect, through the use of these studies in the policy-making process and through publicization. Nevertheless, there is often a gap between short-term views of decision-makers and long-term interest of futures studies, which often lacks credit from the former (Slaughter, 1996a; van der Steen & van Twist, 2012, 2013). In this respect, we showed a wide support in both countries towards futures studies in the 1960s and 1970s with the development and the extension of means for such studies in the CGP and in the DATAR, in France. It was also the case in the United States from the 1950s onwards with the numerous research and methods developed, notably at the RAND Corporation. From our case studies, we must also emphasize that one of the most, if not the most, significant factor for futures studies to emerge is probably the interest of politicians in long-term issues. Of course, this interest can be fostered by elements such as external factors. An example is the need for planning in a period of post-war reconstruction. *A contrario*, other

¹² This mainly concerns universities without students that includes scholars and professional researchers that are also often part of a university (Campbell & Pedersen, 2007).

¹³ These units have most of the time a private funding and partisan orientation. They are mostly concerned with diffusing others’ research to orientate public debate (Campbell & Pedersen, 2007).

¹⁴ We must highlight that these are only preliminary results and that they need to be improved by further research.

external events like the oil crises forced politicians to reduce their time horizon and to somehow neglect futures studies in the 1980s. The political interest in the long-term future is therefore a major driver of institutionalization in our case.

A second way for these actors to support the institutionalization of futures studies can be found in the reinforcing role of the use and the impact of such studies. Results of futures studies can be linked with processes (network creation, mobilization of collective intelligence, appropriation of issues by politicians) and to contents (policy advice, legitimation of a decision). In this respect, we should take into account elements such as the link between futures and political agenda, network and interface between researchers and policy-makers and elaboration of a common language, integration of stakeholders, timing of the study (Calof & Smith, 2010; Riedy, 2009; Rijkens-Klomp, 2012; van der Steen & van Twist, 2013). Unfortunately, we lack insights on the use of such studies but we could assume that they have been partially used since the practice did not disappear and kept being financed by public authorities.

A third way of impacting futures studies, also following their emergence, is their integration within administrative structures (Slaughter & Garrett, 1995). This form of sustainabilization of such practices can be seen in both countries by the development. In France, several *prospective* units were instituted next to the CGP and the DATAR. In the American case, the pluralistic type of knowledge regimes and the different actors at play, as well as the reduced size of the federal bureaucracy, have led to a more fragmented landscape of futures studies. In this scene, public organizations, think tanks and private actors all play a role. This can also be explained by the vertical (between Washington and the States) and by the horizontal (between States) dispersion of futures studies practices in the country. In this respect, there has been less administrative integration of such studies since the administration was not the prominent actor in providing knowledge supporting the policy-making process.

Finally, the second set of actors that can influence the institutionalization of futures studies within a specific politico-administrative context are the actors doing research related to such studies. This category of actors encompasses universities, public and private research centers, lobbies and other individual actors. They are important on several aspects of their action. The first one is the production of theoretical and methodological developments that are relevant to futures studies practices. Since policy-makers want to avoid uncertainties (that are an intrinsic part of such studies) (van Asselt, Mesman, & van't Klooster, 2007), such works can legitimate the practice of futures studies by better defining concepts and by clarifying methods for policy-makers. This lack of knowledge of what futures studies are seems to be a decisive factor for their institutionalization (Rijkens-Klomp, 2012; Slaughter, 1996b, 1999). In both countries, specific actors have developed theoretical or methodological frameworks on which the practice of futures studies in general has relied. We can mention Berger and de Jouvenel in France and Kahn, Helmer, Cornish, Gordon and Bell, among many others for the United States. We must also highlight the numerous relationships and practices diffusion between the two countries, and the large influence of the RAND Corporation on the French and more broadly on the European practice of futures studies (see for example Durance (2010)).

A much related factor is the openness of the academic world to futures studies. This is notably crucial to Slaughter and Garrett (1995), since universities could provide both education and research on futures studies. In the United States, for example, academia and research centers are deeply intertwined and the practice of futures studies has been developed

in both of them. This element is more complex to identify in France, since the expertise on *la prospective* mostly belongs to the public sector. However, we showed that *la prospective* also gained support in the 1970s from the universities.

Eventually, the capacity of the actors of futures studies to become key actors of the policy process is also important, as noted by several authors. They can do so by proposing alternatives and by bringing new elements from futures studies to the agenda, publicizing thus the practice and its added-value (Riedy, 2009; Rijkens-Klomp, 2012; Slaughter & Garrett, 1995). Again, our empirical data are weak on this aspect. However, some elements can still be given. For example, in the United States, researchers at the RAND Corporation left the institution to create a new research centre that was more related to their own field of interest. We can mention Helmer, Gordon and Baran that wanted to orientate futures studies towards social issues rather than military ones. It was done through the Institute for the Futures that is still currently active. In France, someone like Pierre Massé actively supported the integration of *la prospective* within the CGP.

In order to sum up this discussion, the following table should be presented:

Factors	France	United States
Historical context	Post-war reconstruction, rationalization movement, oil crises, neo-liberalism, etc.	Cold War, rationalization movement, oil crises, neo-liberalism, etc.
Politico-administrative context	Influence of decentralization Shaping role of intertwined politico-administrative relationships (<i>grand corps</i>) Shaping role of the policy advice system oriented towards bureaucratic research units	Influence of the federal structure Shaping role of politico-administrative relationships (clear separation between the two spheres) Shaping role of the pluralist policy advice system composed mostly of private funded research units and scholarly research units.
Political support	Development of <i>la prospective</i> in the CGP and the DATAR	Large funding and commissioning of projects in private organizations like the RAND Corporation
Use and impact of futures studies	Continuation of the practice	Continuation of the practice
Administrative integration	CGP, DATAR, <i>prospective units</i>	Little integration due to cultural reluctance towards a large bureaucracy and to the pluralist system of policy advice
Existence of theoretical and methodological works	Works of Berger and de Jouvenel	Works of researchers at the RAND Corporation (Helmer, Gordon, Kahn) and of other futurists (Bell, Cornish, etc.)
Academic openness	Interest from academia in the 1970s	Large commissioning of projects to universities
Actors' capacity to become key actors	Role of Massé	Role of ex-Rand researchers to set up other alternatives institutions studying futures

Conclusion

In this paper, we looked at the institutionalization process of futures studies in two of the founding countries of the discipline, namely the United States and France. In the two first sections, we have developed a historical approach of such processes from the end of the Second World War to the late 1990s. We have given a particular interest at administrative reforms.

These findings are in line with other history-oriented works. For example, Kuosa (2011) defines three historical paradigms of futures studies. One of them goes from 1940s to nowadays and is divided in three periods. During the first one, from 1940 to 1960, planning and quantitative methods are the most used tools, notably by think tanks. Later, between 1960 and 1980, there is a movement of internationalization of futures studies and an emergence of specific foresight methods. Eventually, from 1980 onwards, he acknowledges a stabilization of the field that is relatively fragmented. These three periods are consistent with our findings. In a similar approach, Jemala (2010) studies the global evolution of foresight, showing the significant influence played by the United States. He considers also several generations of foresight. One of them started as well from the end of the Second World War and lasted until the beginnings of the Cold War. This generation mainly concerned the military and science and technology fields and was publicly funded. *A contrario*, the next generation was mostly centered on industries, markets and integrated a more participative dimension. We can also link these findings with the process that we analyzed earlier.

In order to compare and highlight differences between the two countries, we identify several factors of institutionalization, following a historical neo-institutional perspective. Accordingly, we showed that the institutionalization of futures studies is highly related to contextual elements, either history or politico-administrative structures and culture. Moreover, these contextual elements also shape and constrain the way in which actors behave. In this respect, we must underline the significant role that political, administrative and research-related actors, individually or collectively, play in the institutionalization process. A particular element that we specifically want to mention is the interest of politicians in long-term issues and in the future(s). This aspect needs however to be deeper analyzed to provide a more comprehensive and theoretical understanding of the relationship between politicians and the future as an area of knowledge.

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