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**AGILE KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS IN PUBLIC POLICY THROUGH  
THE INTEGRATION OF THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY  
THROUGH CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

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**Abstract.** The following text aims to present a reflective analysis of the conceptualization and implementation of public policy as a mechanism for citizen participation. The theoretical and practical reflection that will be addressed is situated within the context of a bibliographic review, which incorporates several novel conceptual and methodological aspects related to systematic methodologies that have emerged in recent years. In this theoretical and practical review, the concept of interrelation of actors (public, private, and civil society) as fundamental entities of the social system is taken as a starting point, addressing Colombia's experience in identifying and understanding the social elements that constitute the design of the public policy route. As a result, tools for executing the agile mindset applied to the construction of public policies were generated. Currently, systematic methodologies have been developed that allow for a more agile approach in the construction of public policies, which can result in greater efficiency and effectiveness in their implementation. In this context, the agile mindset has emerged as a valuable tool in the construction of public policies. This methodology is based on an agile and flexible mentality that focuses on delivering value to the end customer or user. The agile mindset methodology focuses on collaboration, iteration, and a focus on the end-user, allowing public policy teams to quickly adapt to changes and environmental needs.

**Keywords:** Agile mindset, public policy, knowledge, methodologies.

**SISTEMAS DE CONOCIMIENTO ÁGIL EN LA POLÍTICA PÚBLICA  
DESDE LA INTEGRACIÓN DEL ESTADO Y LA SOCIEDAD CIVIL A  
PARTIR DE LA PARTICIPACIÓN CIUDADANA**

**Resumen.** El siguiente texto, tiene como propósito presentar un análisis reflexivo sobre la conceptualización e implementación de la política pública como un mecanismo de participación ciudadana, la reflexión teórica práctica que se abordará, se ubica en el contexto de la revisión bibliográfica, la cual incorpora varios aspectos conceptuales y metodológicos novedosos relacionados con metodologías sistemáticas que han emergido en los últimos años. En esta revisión teórico/práctica se parte del concepto de interrelación de actores (públicos, privados y sociedad civil) como entes primordiales del sistema social, abordando la experiencia que ha tenido Colombia en la identificación y comprensión de los elementos sociales, que constituyen el diseño de la ruta de la política pública. Como resultado

se generaron las herramientas de ejecución del agile mindset aplicado a la construcción de políticas públicas. En la actualidad, se han desarrollado metodologías sistemáticas que permiten un enfoque más ágil en la construcción de políticas públicas, lo que puede resultar en una mayor eficiencia y eficacia en la implementación de estas políticas. En este contexto, el agile mindset ha emergido como una herramienta valiosa en la construcción de políticas públicas. Esta metodología se basa en una mentalidad ágil y flexible que se enfoca en la entrega de valor al cliente o usuario final. La metodología agile mindset se centra en la colaboración, la iteración y el enfoque en el usuario final, lo que permite a los equipos de política pública adaptarse rápidamente a los cambios y necesidades del entorno.

**Palabras clave:** Agile mindset, políticas públicas, conocimiento, metodologías.

## **Introduction**

At first, we will present how the construction of a methodology for the design of the public policy route is considered, according to (André-Noël, R. 2006 cited in Gómez, M. 2008), as the analysis of public policies from a social research applied to the analysis of the concrete activity of governance, as well as a discipline that allows acquiring knowledge about the state-civil society relationship. The second part describes the development and social learning curve of social structures: macrosocial (society) and microsocal (individual) from the reflection of social transformation, global changes and the attention towards adding value in public policies to address structural problems in a country. For Entrena (2000):

[...] Social structures are seen as socially constructed realities, subject to reflexivity and historicity, whose production and reproduction are increasingly embedded in the processes of globalization. As a consequence of this situation, a remarkable intensification of the reflexivity of such structures is required and, consequently, the purpose of carrying out such task from a holistic perspective, it is proposed for the study of relationships of dialectic nature the reflection of the local micro-social structures where people's daily life develops, and, on the other, the logic, which present the social dynamics of transformation in which the macro-social structures unfold on a global scale. (p. 15).

These meanings allow us to present in a third moment how the agile SCRUM methodology is conceived as a proposal to improve the effectiveness of the implementation and evaluation of public policy. In the reflection that we present, we consider that SCRUM, starting from its design, can be an opportunity to refine and strengthen the design of the public policy route. We start from the postulates of (Roth, A; 2006 p. 28), whose objective is to construct and propose ways of thinking and tools for the understanding of public action and the State.

## **Method**

Roth in his text presents as a hypothesis that "the constitution of public policy analysis as a science of the state in action is a process of construction of a post-state society that highlights the need for a new form of government more adapted to the context" presenting as a thesis that the state and its institutions encounter serious obstacles in their claim to govern the destinies of society and face a crisis of governance (Roth, A; 2006 p. 28).

It is a hypothesis that arises thanks to continuous reflection on bureaucratic processes, which has been latent, configured as a relevant element in public policies, implementing SCRUM as an agile framework for the design of the public policy route, is a proposal from the social sciences, which proposes the mitigation of the gap that currently exists between the construction of public policies, citizen participation and implementation in the territories.

The impact of globalization and its close relationship with the issue of the paradigmatic crisis presents the challenge of mitigating the problematization that exists in the relations between state and civil society, and in this context analyzing the role played by public policies, the challenge becomes even greater if the problem is not contextualized in regional spaces, but generalized. (Podesta, 2001).

In order to identify how agile knowledge systems would be implemented in public policy based on the integration of the state and civil society through citizen participation, a descriptive and exploratory research design was established with relevant actors in the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies at the state and civil society levels.

The proposed methodological challenge leads us to an adjustment in the structuring of the government agenda, understanding how these have changed in the last fourteen years due to the dynamics of national and international cooperation, which have led to new forms of governance between the state, international countries and civil society. An example of this is the presidential period (2006-2010) in Colombia, where there was a divorce and bitter confrontation with different strategic actors (human rights defenders, legislators, magistrates of the courts of justice, presidents of neighboring countries, journalists, international organizations, among others), due to facts derived from the management of the guerrillas, paramilitaries and drug trafficking (actors of the autonomization of social actions). Institutionalism in Colombia has never been consistent and is now diluting, a situation that endangers and uncertainties not only the country's political and institutional process but also its relations with other countries and regions. (Aguilar. 2006, cited in International Association for Governance, Citizenship and Enterprise, 2014).

In the words of Castillo - Cubillo (2017) "the transformation of the Colombian state will be visualized as imminent, under the current panorama of governance, in the new global order, presenting as analysis does not possess the monopoly of knowledge, experience and resources necessary to solve as a country, the problems and obtain opportunities for social welfare". Based on the above analysis, Colombia could think about devising and reinventing new ways of governing in coordination with strategic actors who are experts in methodologies or public *management*

The concept of governance is attributed to the new methods of governance that are being assumed, in this order of ideas, the current globalization process is adding a complexity of elements with pronounced repercussions in the new paths that public action must take, mainly in the challenges it has to face the new problems. Prats (2007) states that:

[...] The justification for the actions of governance in this era lies in the fact that governments are not the only actors facing major social issues; Latin America faces challenges from civil society organizations and companies. In these conditions of complexity, diversity, interdependence and dynamism brought about by globalization, the realization of general interests can no longer be the monopoly of the public authorities. Their action is only effective and legitimate when they ensure that the decision and its implementation are the result of an interaction between the public authorities, the business sector and civil society organizations (p.50).

When currently attempting to analyze one of the social structures (health, economic, education, etc.), it is necessary to describe and explain the processes of their production and reproduction under a systemic and complex perspective originated by globalization; that is, to explain the social structures from a conception as a socially constructed reality that is subject to historicity and social reflexivity, with the purpose of serving as a frame of reference for the initiative to build a public policy. As Bonnano (1994) puts it, "propose a systemic model for the study of social structures based on the following three analytical dimensions: the socioeconomic, the political-institutional and the symbolic-legitimizing" p17.

The relevance of public policy knowledge management would be considered a scenario of analysis of the Colombian social context, which highlights the need to rethink the state based on regional integration proposals generated by citizen participation.

## **Results**

The World Economic Forum "Agile Governance Reimagining Policy-making in the Fourth Industrial Revolution" (2018). It presents a vision of integration, which introduces us to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, suggesting that governance must become a systematic model of double entry, where the central axis is participation, understood from the implementation of processes of innovation, agility and sustainability. Given this, this paper suggests strategies to address the needs presented above. Within this, innovation rapidly changes behaviors and creates new rules of interrelation between the state and society, by virtue of compliance with national and international policies. Despite gaps in legal regulations that translate into political governance problems, technology pioneers develop private rules, certification schemes, standards, social norms or policies that end up being integrated into social dynamics and establish governance models that shape the way societies live, work and interact.

One of the characteristics of innovation became visible in the software sector in 1990, when the concept of agility was coined. Agility implies an action or method of agile, fluid, flexible and adaptability to a context. In 2001, 17 software developers wrote the Agile Manifesto, intended for implementation at the policy-making level by the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on the Future of Software Development and Society. The principles of the report value results over rules, respond to change following a plan, encourage broader participation over control, and encourage self-organization over centralized governance.

[...] the concept of agile governance aims to change the way governance thinks about and co-creates policies, which are generated, deliberated, enacted and implemented in the face of global dynamics of change and transformation. Aligning these terms allows governance models to be, and some would say should be, more agile to keep pace with social dynamics in response to global changes, driven significantly by the rapid development and deployment of emerging technologies. For this reason, policymakers must start with strategic and proactive thinking in order to address these challenges. The difference between traditional plan-based policy formulation methods and the approach presented by agile governance relates to the change in the value placed on time sensitivity in implementation, loss-avoidance evaluation from rework mitigation and measurement. (p24).

Roth, A (2009). states that "a public policy is made up of 4 stages: problem identification; policy formulation; policy implementation; and policy evaluation. To carry out these stages, agile Scrum frameworks are suggested that allow for a more inclusive and "human-centered" design by involving more stakeholders in the process allowing for rapid iteration in

the problematization of a country's needs." (p13). Howlett, Capano & Ramesh (2018) indicate that agile governance ensures the robustness and long-term sustainability of public policy, by creating constant monitoring mechanisms to "update", improving the efficient predictability of policy implementation from emerging technologies, as well as discriminating responsibilities, as part of risk mitigation, between the public sector, private sector and civil society, thus maintaining relevant checks and balances.

(Callander & Martin (2017) & World Economic Forum (2018)). They suggest that increased agility in policy formulation also seeks to ameliorate "policy decay," meaning that policies inevitably lose their relevance over time. Legislators often benefit politically from policy decay to maintain the status quo; when pressure to change policies increases, they can leverage their influence to seek the concessions they desire on a personal basis or on behalf of the political party they represent.

However, there are circumstances that overcome political incentives, and responsibilities are shared by aligning interests between companies and civil society, with the aim of intervening before the use of a technology for strategic purposes, managing to keep developing progressive policies that can become the global standard.

((Arjun, B. (2018) & Mirzaei, A; Mabin J. (2015)) propose that:

[...] to address the above mentioned, according to the systematic framework Scrum has demonstrated its ability to address complexity, prioritization issues, integrate human-centered viewpoints, working closely with implementers, testing with users and iterating until the problem is solved generate the knowledge and strategies for early prototyping of sustainable public policies. Given that governments are often criticized for being slow reactors to innovation and societal needs, adapting this approach as one that seeks to navigate the pace of change through adaptive, human-centered, inclusive and sustainable policies is an important conceptual shift towards long-term value-based policy design through agile methods. (p43)

Accordingly, (Lasswell & Lerner (1951) cited in Howlett & Mukherjee (2014)) describe that modern political science is based on the idea that accumulating and using knowledge of the causes, effects, and impacts of a relatively known set of policies developed over many years of state-building experience can effectively bring them together to achieve governmental ends of hindsight. More recently, however, it has been recognized that even in cases of well-thought-out and well-intentioned or well-designed policies, failures commonly occur overtime as their environment changes and evolves, undermining the assumptions and expectations that went into their formulation.

This is due to the fact that the formulation was based on historical data, on problems from previous years and without prospective exercises. The use of ideation methodologies and applied statistics strategies enable the identification of risks and trends, creating alerts for failures, high uncertainty, and prediction of long-term problems (Howlett, Ramesh, & Xun, 2015; Jacobs & Kent Weaver, 2015; Nair & Howlett, 2017).

This entire journey allows Howlett, Capano & Ramesh (2018) to present that:

[...] How best to mitigate the uncertainty and risks associated with public policy making is an issue that has preoccupied policy studies for some time. Studies on policy uncertainty and failure have emphasized the need to create policies that can be improvised in the face of an uncertain future, which means that it is necessary to design and adopt policies with agility and flexibility in their components and processes. Such policies require redundant resources and capabilities and this need is in strong opposition to design ideas that equate better design with efficiency, which implies the allocation of the least amount of resources possible and often also emphasizes routinization and replication of standards, operating procedures and program

elements to ensure consistency in the delivery of legislation and public policies designed for sustainability in the face of change.

### **Discussion and conclusions**

Public policies from the social sciences, identify that there are policies intended to be short-term solutions, studies of uncertainty and policy failure have emphasized the need in many cases to design policies based on agility, improvisation and flexibility to manage to adapt and deal with surprising and uncertain futures in the medium and long term (Capano & Woo, 2017; Kwakkel, Walker, & Vincent, 2010; Walker, Lempert, & Kwakkel, 2013; Walker, Marchau, & Swanson, 2010).

In sum, this brief reflects on public policy implementation models and their social indicators (Moynihan (2009) cited in Capano & Woo, 2017) presents that:

[...] studies of policy uncertainty, crisis management, policy learning and political capacity have emphasized the need to design a minimum of robustness into most policies. This means designing policies capable of maintaining the same performance in the face of any type of internal/external disturbance in order to cope with surprise and avoid policy failure caused by unexpected or unknown events that alter the initial design specifications and assumptions

As noted by OECD (2011), achieving robustness in practice ultimately involves accurately answering a host of questions around issues such as:

1. how can human and financial resources be reallocated in a timely manner to emerging policy issues?
2. what new frameworks are needed to improve strategic agility in public governance?
3. how can governments identify and act on the issues that need attention?
4. how can they move resources quickly to address these challenges, as well as situations that were not foreseen?

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organization, working in partnership with governments, policy makers and citizens, that works to set international standards and advise on public policy at the global level. The OECD member states are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America, United States of America

The OECD has highlighted the importance of transparency in public governance through the provision of reliable information, which must be available to the population. The OECD has advocated two major sections: a) Promoting transparency and integrity in political finance and b) Promoting integrity and transparency in decision making.

Inclusive public policies and decision-making based on integrity, participation and transparency legitimize policies and make them more effective, strengthening citizens' trust in their governments (OECD, 2017). However, powerful individuals and interest groups may use their wealth, power or advantages to tip the balance in their favor at the expense of the public interest. When public policy decisions are consistently or repeatedly directed away from the public interest to target the interests of a specific interest group or individual, then public policy is captured. The consequences of public policy capture are devastating: it fuels inequality and

undermines economic growth. According to a study by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), if those favored by private interest-oriented policies tend to be an elite with political and economic influence to tilt political decisions in their favor, capture is related to inequality. On the contrary, public policies that involve and coordinate a greater number of actors are correlated with per capita GDP growth and improved human development indicators (Scartascini et al., 2011).

Undoubtedly, the consequences and impact of policy capture are even worse if the few power groups that capture policy are part of and connected to organized crime. It has been identified that a high level of infiltration of criminal groups in the public sector implies that policy making and implementation is biased, and that political campaign financing is compromised. Buscaglia, E; Gonzalez Ruiz, S; W, Ratliff. (2005). This affects political competition and has a negative impact on democratic systems.

Despite the existence of strong regulations on paper, their weak monitoring and enforcement may leave the door open for interest groups or individuals to seek informal ways to exert their influence. In this area, electoral entities and sanctions are key to implementing political finance frameworks. There are three basic factors to ensure effective implementation:

1. Independence.
2. Capabilities - in terms of resources, as well as personnel and their technical expertise.
3. Social control.

Oversight bodies must have the right powers, policies, people and procedures in place to carry out their tasks and, more importantly, they must be committed to fulfilling them. In addition, civil society and individuals must have the capacity to act as watchdogs and assist in the control and scrutiny of political actors. In this sense, transparency is also essential to enable effective enforcement of political finance regulations. Prats, (2022).

Transparency is a necessary condition for public life, making information available to the public and giving interested parties the possibility of contributing to decision-making processes not only allows citizens to monitor the integrity of public officials, but also strengthens democratic processes and, over time, increases trust in public institutions.

By virtue of the above, it is necessary to provide tools and mechanisms for citizen participation that allow for public debate in the decision-making process. Creating participation and transparency frameworks need to be designed in a way that promotes accountability, as reflected in the OECD Council Recommendation on Public Integrity (OECD, 2017), which provides guidelines for promoting transparency and stakeholder participation at all stages of the policy process and policy cycle, and thus fostering accountability and the public interest. Emphasizing that civil society participation also includes organized civil society, commercial and non-commercial actors, as well as various categories.

In view of the above, OECD (2019) developed a survey of international organizations involved in the participation of a wide range of practices (from intergovernmental organizations, international non-governmental organizations, international business organizations, government representatives of member countries, international regulatory agencies, parliamentarians and political parties, individual experts, private sector entities, non-member country government representatives, academic institutions, national level entities and bodies, philanthropic foundations, consumers, to academic unions and labor or trade unions, among others), from information dissemination and soliciting consultation, to participatory collaboration, co-production, co-decision and partnership. To this end, a variety of procedures and modalities were developed to ensure their participation.

- Opportunity to be consulted on proposed instruments.
- Invitations to participate in the development of instruments.
- Invitations to participate in the dissemination and implementation of instruments.
- Invitations to participate in monitoring the use and evaluation of instruments.
- Official status that allows for regular input from stakeholder groups.
- Invitations to participate in meetings of regulatory agencies.
- Expert processes that facilitate technical input from stakeholders.
- Specific processes that allow the participation of wider audiences, in particular providing the opportunity for the general public to comment on the proposed instruments.

Participation is not only a public duty, but a right. As stated in the Ibero-American Charter for Citizen Participation in Public Management (2009)

[...] "*citizen participation in public management implies a process of social construction of public policies. It is a right, a responsibility and a complement to the traditional mechanisms of political representation*". In addition to being a pillar in the democratic development of the States. (p22)

In this sense, citizen participation is the key to transform the state space into a public space and contribute to create conditions to consolidate democratic governance. Because citizen participation, unlike other forms of participation (political, community, etc.), refers specifically to city dwellers intervening in public activities representing particular (not individual) interests. But for this participation to be effective, commitments and institutional conditions must be generated and, above all, there must be the conviction that public deliberation and social interaction, acceptance and respect for ideological pluralism, are positive and essential values and practices for living in democracy; values and practices that can and should be exercised primarily in the daily sphere and in the local space, which is where the greatest proximity between authorities and citizens is found (Ziccardi, 1998, 1999).

Although citizen participation has its manifestations in different spheres, its express inclusion in legislation should be a mechanism aimed at guaranteeing citizen participation. The key mechanism for this is public consultation. Burgos, E. R. (2022).

As Comfort, L. K. (2012) points out to us. Administrative agility and flexibility are necessary in such circumstances and robustness can and should be planned and implemented through the adoption of specific types of procedural tools in policy mixes.

As stated by the OECD (2011):

[...] In a recent study on public policy agility, thinking about policy robustness implies answering the question: "What should the government do to be more strategically responsive to emerging policy issues? Better align government policies and activities with shared objectives and the public interest; Facilitate the timely reallocation of human and financial resources to emerging policy needs?" Then in *Achieving Public Sector Agility at Times of Fiscal Consolidation*, OECD (2015) comments that, policymakers in the public sector have to use a combination of policy tools to achieve targets and agility in practice. Some of these tools are rooted in public sector management culture and practices, such as budgeting and human resource management. (p35)

According to Roth (2009), the last stage of a public policy is evaluation and, concluding the above, the evaluation of the impact of policies goes hand in hand with the efficiency of



governance and the need for agility and robustness of governance models, in which, the formulation of public policies is presented as the route to minimize this gap. In this way, public policy is oriented to the changing circumstances of society and global dynamics, an issue that recently began to be addressed (Capano & Woo, 2017; Nair & Howlett, 2017). Therefore, this contribution contributes to a new approach, positions and tools that facilitate the creation of an agile ecosystem for knowledge management based on citizen participation in public policies.

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