**Decision-making in crisis:**

All reports were naturally related to decision-making in crises. Hence, while the comptroller raised the pandemic's unique situation and said that policymaking was complex due to mass disruption and uncertainty (e.g., State Audit 2023a), eventually, his recommendations encouraged establishing an orderly bureaucratic function.

Hence, while mentioning uncertainty (State Audit, 2020d; 2021n; 2021b; 2021e; 2021m; 2023a) and stating that the situation needs a different decision-making process (fast and responsive, for example, State Auditor 2023a; 2021n), these were acceptable only for the short run at the beginning. As said:

“It is recommended that the ministry formulate a full and permanent format for distributing procedures during emergencies that will meet all the difficulties that arose in this matter; continue to act to reduce and focus the number of circulars, as well as to determine the appropriate timing for distributing the guidelines. It is also recommended that the Ministry consider allowing schools and local authorities to act at their discretion on certain issues following the needs of the schools and the characteristics of their students” (State Audit 2021k).

The immunization project is an excellent example of this. While health authorities know how to immune the population, the comptroller found them surprised by the mass rejection. Nonetheless, the comptroller advised: “to formulate a plan to administrate the process which will include labor division, criteria, and publish them, regulate, determine priorities, set a target day’ and ensure effectiveness” (State Audit 2020i).

In other cases, it was recommended to create a contingency plan for preparing for the ramifications of similar crises (State Audit, 2021d) or planning a multi-year program based on emergency exercises for various scenarios to respond efficiently to emergencies. These will be enhanced with things like cooperation and technologies (State Audit 2021k). The logic was specified when it was recommended to look at things at the macro level to manage the policy and oversee and inspect them (State Audit, 2023b).

**Preparation in advance while learning from the pandemic.**

As a natural continuum to the findings above, the Comptroller recommended that the government discuss the findings and draw conclusions for future crises (State Audit, 2021d). These included: establishing mechanisms for future action to draw lessons for acting more efficient and effective (State Audit 2023b), at times with the help of other stakeholders (State Audit 2021h), to map data to have a clear picture on what is happening (State Audit 2020a) to gather data in a regular manner (at the SLB rank) and to report to the ministry to enable to design a solution when there will be need (as done around the world) (State Audit 2021i), to write and update future scenarios checking their influence on all ministries, and distributing them to all ministries (State Audit 2020a; 2020h; 2021n), to take into consideration risk assessments and take these into consideration in advance (State Audit 2021f), to prepare extra things that might be needed in times of crisis, such as dedicated budget of needed funds, or new criteria (State Audit 2021f; 2021m; 2020d) and manage the different policies in an integrative manner while responding to diverse population needs and offering solutions to them, with better service (State Audit 2021b; 2021g; 2020d). The comptroller also advised building these future places but cross data from different resources, taking advice from relevant stakeholders, and using digital platforms – in crisis and routine times (State Audit 2021g; 2021h).

According to him, the rationale for all this is clear: “In this way, their proper and orderly operation to maintain financial stability will be ensured, and an adequate coping with the economic challenges brought about by the state of emergency will be achieved” (State Audit 2021f).

Hence, preparing in advance will increase efficiency (State Audit 2021j); will enable to be prepared better for the future (State Audit 2021j); To know how to perform better in routine as well (State Audit 2021j); To remove barriers to the future for special target groups (State Audit 2021k); To draw lessons on the effectiveness of the actions for determining better goals that will help future decisions on the subject and on being effective (State Audit 2021l?); To examine why things turned out the way they did and learn how to improve “exercising” the rights of the target population (State Audit 2021e).

The comptroller said that drawing lessons from past pandemic outbursts should be brought to the government for approval to help cope with “these situations” in the future (State Audit 2020i?; 2021n). Among these, the government will examine what should be duplicated in the future and what should not (State Audit, 2021d). Moreover, as part of this learning, it was advised to learn how to do several of the things at regular times as well (such as collaboration) (State Audit 2020i?)

The comptroller specified why these things were important: first, Preserving and studying systems and services established (State Audit, 2020d; 2020i; 2021h; 2021j). Second, for information about failures or rejections in the process (especially about the general situations (State Audit 2020e; 2020g), and last, for learning of the different strengths of the different ministries (State Audit, 2021b).

The comptroller also advised learning from the pandemic to address macro questions such as learning what damaged the levels of trust and what needs to be done with it in the future (State Audit, 2021b) or understanding what investment in infrastructure is needed (State Audit, 2021c). Moreover, he advised conducting surveys seeking the public’s voice as one way to learn for the future or establish procedures of knowledge utilization for future emergencies (State Audit, 2021b; 2021m).

**What should be learned from covid?**

Interesting to note that the comptroller specified several things that should be learned from the pandemic. Among these: Remote working (State Audit, 2021c); Regulation of remote working (State Audit, 2021c); Digitalization as a means for keeping social (State Audit 2021h); Different categories and substances of medical treatments (State Audit 2021i); Treating inequality and on the way equip the education system to the 21st century (State Audit 2021k); Changing role and ways of function in future pandemics (State Audit 2021l?); Changing the nature of relations between the central and local authorities (State Audit 2021m); Thinking of employment in a different light than usual (State Audit 2021m); Changing medical procedures due to changing relationships between local government and health systems (State Audit 2021m). In this manner, consider developing inter-ministerial reporting interfaces while maintaining privacy and using technological options more or as called implement a computerized system (State Audit, 2020a; 2020d). And last - to be ready with the understanding of what each ministry can do and what it cannot (State Audit 2020e; 2023a)

**Discussion:**

This paper opened with the saying that Decision-making is a tricky field of study. As claimed, the field of research has no clear boundaries, and the subject spoken of while referring to the act of decision-making is numerous. Moreover, the government is constantly referred to as a decision-maker and is judged by the quality of its decisions. Hence, decision-making is a symbol of government activity.

As a symbol and continuing Edelman’s (1984) claim on politics, decision-making is interesting due to the meaning given to it. This study wished to uncover the meaning attached to the decision-making symbol by studying the interpretation Israel’s state comptroller gave to the government’s decision-making process during the covid-19 pandemic. Based on the findings above of the interpretive narrative analysis of 26 reports the comptroller published on the pandemic, three things could be argued. First, there is a clear opinion as to what the normative meaning of decision-making should be. Second, there is a gap between what happened, what was interpreted that should happen, and what the literature says about it. Lastly, this gap is one of the reasons for the growing distrust in government.

To explain these arguments, the findings above have been categorized into myths. Britannica has defined myth as: “specific accounts of gods or superhuman beings involved in extraordinary events or circumstances in a time that is unspecified but which is understood as existing apart from ordinary human experience.” When looking at the interpretation of how the process should look like it is interpreted as a myth since, compared to what happens, they are unachievable, and compared to what is known, it is not clear that it is wanted at all. Hence, they are a fictional description of something accepted today as conventional while not implementable in real life and eventually not even wanted due to the research findings.

From this study, ten myths are suggested:

1. **The rational decision-maker myth**

As at the beginning of the 20th century, the most prominent myth about decision-makers is that they should be rational. Both the lens through which the comptroller used to describe what was wrong and the lens through which the comptroller advised what should be done indicate that the rational decision-making process is the normative model for decision-making.

However, this lens conflicts with the way decisions were made (whether those that the comptroller audited or those that needed to cope with the nature of the pandemic and the scholar lens. As learned for many years, rational decision-making is a normative process only in certain circumstances (XXX). In times of great uncertainty or in times of great dispute, other models of decision-making are known to be better (XXX). These are missing from the auditor’s scope of possibilities to improve decision-making.

1. **The evidence-based decision-making myth**

There is no question about the importance the comptroller assigns to data and information in decision-making. Thinking of this aspiration in light of the pandemic is logically understandable but mostly symbolic and unrealistic. One of the fascinating features of the pandemic was its surprising nature, from its appearance, through its development and until today’s shacky status. While acquiring knowledge was at the center of attention, for obvious reasons, the challenge was different: decision-making regardless of insufficient information (XXX). Hence, establishing more systems to collect knowledge that might not be relevant to the need to improvise wisely was not even considered. Moreover, the literature over the years has taught that evidence-based decisions have a blind spot that at times even harms decision-making (such as cases where things that cannot be counted do not exist and these are at times not less important) (XXX).

1. **The administrative mission decision-making myth**

As said before, Simon 1947 has defined a decision as the conclusion reached using both factual and values-based judgments (Dery, 1996, 2005). Thompson and Tuden (1959) offered a sociological model for organizational decision-making strategies based on the idea that different types of decisions call for different strategies and therefore determine their structure and circumstances. According to them, there are at least four well-defined administration processes de facto: computation, judgment, compromiser, and inspiration (for elaboration, see Dery 1996, 2023, Thompson and Tuden 1959). However, the comptroller treats all situations as if they were computations (see also Dery 2005).

According to the literature, the pandemic was a chance for new administrative styles. For thinking differently as known in the literature (Dery, 2023). This not only did not happen but also preserved the myth of the power of bureaucracy to be relevant to different situations. Once again, the bureaucracy slandered on the outside is eventually the normative organization from within and creates a sense of confidence that it can manage processes best.

1. **The preparation myth for decision-making**

The covid pandemic reminded us that, as humans, we are bound to uncertainty. Hence, we never know what will happen or evolve; thus, every decision is a gamble (Dror… ). These are the conditions of the world of action and are accepted in practice, mentioned repeatedly in the audit, and are a core topic in the literature. While it is non refuted that we must try to avoid catastrophes, it is also known that there are several approaches to this issue. What does it mean to be prepared? To what? The same emergency? (see for example Douglas and Wildavsky 1980; Dryhurst et.al., 2020; ….)

Knowing and waiting for emergencies as opposed to coping with emergencies are two different strategies. The first is tied to the traditional rational bureaucratic myth.

1. **The implementation myth**

The implementation gap has been on the agenda from the beginning of time. However, despite this being a well-known fact, the comptroller as a practitioner and many scholars still see this as a surprise. While preserving this notion, this is preserving the disappointment from the work of government. Majone and Wildavsky (1984) have already elaborated on the evolutionary nature of implementation, but this has not changed. The myth that the gap is unwanted rather than simply a fact preserves the government’s frustration.

1. **The strategist myth**

The tendency to prefer a rational decision-making model is tied to another assumption within the reports: forming strategic or national plans, working with scenarios, and building references to work with. While this is understood and responsible, it contradicts what eventually happens in real life and does not open the possibilities for being able to be creative in a changing environment. Improvisation is a skill that needs to be nurtured (Shakansky and Zalmanivitch, Sher-Hadar. 2020) and is absent or even seems to contradict the strategist myth.

1. **The problem-solver myth**

The audit reports have been built in the same manner for many years. What is surprising is their assumption that the solution is the opposite of what was described as wrong. This notion is accepted in real life. However, policy analysis teaches us that there needs to be a process between them – that does not seek solutions but instead seeks for levers to change (Dery 1984, …).

Thus, whatever the government will not choose to do, it will never solve problems. This myth will thus always see government as incompetent.

1. **The visioner decision-making myth**

Public policy decisions are intended to promote shared values. The comptroller has referred several times to the place of values within the reports. However, the values the comptroller referred to were general: better service, achieving goals, sustainability, equality, and so on. One of the exciting characteristics of social values during the pandemic was the need to be creative in characterizing the goals, especially the central goal of eliminating the disease. What was missing was the answer to the fundamental question that every decision-maker should ask oneself, and that is for what? What do we want to promote, and what will that create? In other words, what will society look like in the days after the pandemic?

The findings showed that while public values are essential and widely spoken of, in practice, they play a little place, and at the normative level, it duplicates the narrow approach to values. Nurturing this myth will eventually lessen the ability to be rational and thus create a lose-lose situation for decision-makers.

1. **The cooperation myth in decision-making**

Many of the audit’s recommendations speak of the ministry’s need to cooperate with other ministries or other levels of government, or other stakeholders. While cooperation is a very fashionable feature of decision-making, its meaning depends on the angle we look through: in the reports; it emphasizes more coordination; in real life, it looks like cooperation, and in the literature, it shows the different kinds, beginning with coordination until it reaches its highest level in collaboration (or co-creation, co-production and so on possibilities) (XXX).

Nonetheless, each type of cooperation has its different features that are not expressed in what happened and in what should happen, leaving a constant disappointment from any cooperation that is executed, not knowing what is missing and not understanding that cooperation has its price and that this price should be a transparent choice. Moreover, the literature shows that cooperation does not always for the situation. And thus, not always the optimal way of action. Moreover, in terms of looking for the best solution, cooperation is the opposite of rationality, bringing once again disappointment, no matter the results.

1. **The un-human decision-makers myth**

Much of the literature on decision-making deals with the psychology of decision-making. This feature is entirely absent from the audit report or from the normative dimension of the decision maker. Understanding that eventually, even if the decision maker is a policy maker, they are still human with all its glory or meaning, even in the days of AI.

Ten myths that have become common knowledge, but not in consistency with the knowledge, not in consistency with what happens in real life, and not in consistency with each other.

**Conclusion**

This paper has suggested that decision-making is a symbol that is nourished by myths. Eventually, as T.S. Elliot’s poem implies, it happens in the shadows, not because of its faults but because the myths are preserved and nourished. The myths have not appeared out of thin air. They are a product of the promising solutions of the 20th century that deep down, there is hope that they can guide the messy realm. The models are not entirely wrong in their aspirations. However, they must be adaptive to the world of action and combined with the divergent thinking of critical ideas in a complex-dynamic world. The pandemic case is interesting because it offers a peek at a case that demands other types of answers but despite that, finds comfort in the tidy models. The ontological world is entering a place where contradicting notions can be placed together. Myths that choose sides are bounding us to continue to be disappointed with decisions from policymakers and implementers and will only continue to deepen the governance crisis the world is experiencing. This paper has suggested ten myths. Expanding the research can form others. All seek one new assumption that asks: If it were that simple, why don’t we experience more success? If we had superheroes in real life, why don’t we see more of them?