Addressing fragmented government action: Coordination, coherence, and integration

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Abstract

Solving complex social problems is a challenge faced by all governments. Academic and practical discussions on how to address them look at policy integration as a solution to the negative implications that fragmented government action has for addressing public problems or providing public services. Despite its importance, the academic literature has not devoted enough attention to explain what policy integration is, and how it differs coordination and coherence.

We argue that coordination, coherence, and integration are related but substantively different concepts. We offer a new way of understanding and observing policy integration in a way that is theoretically distinguishable from policy coordination and coherence and empirically observable.

In order to test this conceptualization, we analyze the Mexican government's National Crusade against Hunger, which is a strategy that tries to solve the fragmentation of government action in social policy through a) coordination among agencies, ministries and levels of government, and b) coherence among social programs. We argue that its ability to effectively overcome fragmentation depends on its capacity to achieve policy integration, by taking strategic and administrative decisions to achieve a goal that encompasses -but exceeds- the programs' and agencies' individual goals.

Introduction

Policy integration has emerged as a key concept in the policy literature and as a top goal for policy makers. It is presented as a solution to the negative implications that fragmented government action has for addressing public problems or providing public services. Despite its importance, the academic literature has not devoted enough attention to explain what policy integration is, how it differs from coordination and coherence, how they interact and how they could be operationalized.

In this paper we argue that coordination, coherence, and integration are related but substantively different concepts. We use the available literature to present definitions for

coordination and coherence that clearly distinguish each one from the other and identify their observable implications. We thus offer a new way of understanding and observing policy integration.

Once our concepts are different and operationalizable, we analyze Mexico's National Crusade against Hunger, a strategy government aimed at tackling a multidimensional problem: the extreme food poverty in the poorest municipalities in the country. It does so through the articulation of different agencies and programs. We show that the Crusade against Hunger tries to solve the fragmentation of government action in social policy through a) coordination among agencies, ministries and levels of government, and b) coherence among social programs. We argue that its ability to effectively overcome fragmentation depends on its capacity to achieve policy integration, by taking strategic and administrative decisions to achieve a goal that encompasses -but exceeds- the programs' and agencies' individual goals.

Fragmented government action as a problem

For the last two decades, following the principles of the New Public Management (NPM), governments all over the world favored devolution, disaggregation, and specialization in dealing with public problems (Verhoest, Van Thiel, Bouckaert and Lægreid, 2012; Moynahan, 2006; Hood and Dickson 2015). Decentralized governance, single-purpose organizations and specialized units were first seen as the way to make government more efficient, responsive and accountable. The limits of this trend soon became evident (Christensen and Lægreid, 2007; Peters and Savoie, 1997; OECD, 2005). These actions came into tension with the quest to address public problems that were by definition more complex and inherently interconnected with other issues (Peters and Savoie, 1997).

As Peters (2015: 5) put it, specialization tends to artificially segment problems "rather than presenting a more integrated conception of causes and possible remedies for the difficulties". In other words, the responsibility to address complex problems is fragmented among different policies, agencies, ministries and levels of government (Koschinsky and Swanstrom, 2001; Briassoulis, 2004; Christensen and Lægreid; 2007; Peters and Savoie, 1997; OECD, 2005). In consequence, the provision of goods and services necessary for people to fulfil their needs is incomplete. "Both citizens and public servants tend to be distressed when

programs are not adequately coordinated. Citizens feel the effects of inadequate coordination (...) when, as clients of programs (...) they find themselves confronted with difficulties in obtaining the full range of services they need from government." (Peters, 1998:16-17).

Disaggregation and specialization resulted in a new problem: fragmented government action. Even if some simple, one-dimensional problems could be solved by specialized government interventions, more complex problems may not. Tackling complex (or wicked) problems (see Rittel and Webber, 1973) demands more comprehensiveness. When governmental action is fragmented, complex problems are only partially solved.

Fragmented government action has been analysed under many labels: disjointed government (Pollit, 2003; Stewart, 2002), policy fragmentation (Koschinsky, and Swanstrom, 2010), departmentalism (Kavanagh and Richards, 2001; Pollit, 2003; Hood, 2005; Christensen and Lægreid, 2007), agencification (Bouckaert *et al.*, 2010), sectorization, and more. Regardless of the great variety of concepts that entail the efforts to address complex problems, consensus remains over the fact that as long as governmental action is fragmented, these problems will only be partially solved. Complex issues demand collective action (Van Buren, et al, 2003) because they are multifactorial; that is, their causes are multiple and rooted in different policy arenas (Agranoff 2003; Agranoff and McGuire 1998; O'Toole 1997), and also cut across multiple levels of government (Weber and Khandemian 2008: 36).

Coordination, coherence, integration as solutions

How can fragmented government action be solved? Just as different expressions have been used to describe the problem, possible solutions are often presented under different, not clearly defined, terms. Ideas have been put forward also under several different labels: policy coordination (Peters and Savoie 1997; Peters, 1998, 2004, 2015; Meijers and Stead, 2004; Christensen and Lærgeid, 2008), policy integration (Jordan and Halpin, 2006; Christensen and Lærgeid, 2008; Jordan and Lenschow, 2010; Russel and Jordan, 2009; Adelle and Jordan, 2014; Adelle and Russel, 2013; 6, 2005), joined up government (Peters and Savoie 1997; Peters, 1998, 2004, 2015; Streeter *et al.*, 1986; Hood, 2005; Bogdanor, 2005), policy coherence (Russel and Jordan, 2009; Peters and Savoie 1997; Peters, 1998, 2004, 2015; Christensen and Lærgeid,

2008; May *et al.*, 2006; Cejudo and Michel, 2014), holistic government (6, 2014) or whole of government (Christensen and Lærgeid, 2007; Mulgan, 2005).

These terms are sometimes used interchangeably. Policy coherence and policy integration are often seen as loosely equivalent terms and understood as types of coordination that seek to achieve compatibility among the objectives of different policy areas (Adelle and Jordan, 2014: 388, 376; Adelle and Russel, 2013). Similarly, policy integration and joined-up government (JUG) are both understood as public organizations and programs working together effectively towards consistent goals (Peters, 2015: 11; Peters, 2005:6). As Hood suggests, those are "new term[s] (…) for an old administrative doctrine. In 'oldspeak', (…) that doctrine was conventionally called coordination" (2005: 19).

Alternatively, these concepts are used as different *degrees* of coordination. For instance, Peters (2015) distinguishes policy coordination from policy integration in terms of the complexity and number of actors needed to achieve each one. Sometimes the attainment of horizontal and vertical coordination is called JUG (Christensen and Lærgeid, 2008; Pollitt 2003). Bogdanor also argues that JUG is a coordination strategy with the aim of addressing complex social problems (2005: 1-2).

Finally, coherence and integration are sometimes explained as the default *outcome* of coordination. For instance, when policy coherence is defined as the process by which policies are sufficiently well designed by top government officials so they can produce the desired outcome in the field (Peters, 2015), or when policy integration is understood as the "execution or implementation of the products of coordination" (6, 2004: 106), it is assumed that the substantive analysis necessary for producing coherent policies will take place as an automatic consequence of coordination.

As is usual when there is a lack of conceptual order,

> […] words with similar meanings crowd around each other, vying for attention and stealing each other's attributes […]. This sort of semantic confusion throws a wrench into the work of social science. Arguments employing such terms have a tendency to fly past each other; work on these subjects does not cumulate. Concepts seem to 'get in the way' of a clear understanding of things. (Gerring, 1999: 361)

Some conceptual clarity is needed. If the policy coordination/coherence/integration literature is going to make a contribution to our understanding on the way government cope with complex problems and to governments' capacity for effectively deal with fragmentation, we need to make sure that concepts are distinguishable and observable. In other words, they should help us in differentiating and operationalizing what they want to define.

In the following pages we argue that coordination, coherence and integration are related, but substantively different concepts. We use the available literature to present definitions for coordination and coherence that clearly distinguish each one from the other and identify their observable implications. We thus offer a new way of understanding policy integration. Once our concepts are different and operationalizable, we study Mexico's National Crusade against Hunger and show that these concepts are empirically different.

Coordination

Coordination is the traditional response, from the public administration perspective, for tackling complex problems. Coordination is "the instruments and mechanisms that aim to enhance the voluntary or forced alignment of tasks and efforts of organizations within the public sector. These mechanisms are used in order to create a greater coherence, and to reduce redundancy, lacunae and contradictions within and between policies, implementation and management" (Bouckaert *et al.*, 2010:16). There are abundant typologies of coordination that distinguish among mechanisms of coordination (Bouckaert *et al.*, 2010), levels of coordination (Metcalf, 2004) or moments of policy process in which coordination takes place (Peters, 2015).

Notwithstanding the *types* of coordination, there are two main observable characteristics of the concept of coordination: information and knowledge exchange and the clearly defined rules and responsibilities for the actors that are supposed to coordinate. Information sharing is perhaps the most basic and necessary condition for coordination to exist. As argued by Wheatley (2006), whenever limited sharing of information and knowledge exists in an organization, its members are unable to develop integrated solutions to problems. However, it is commonly found that people resist sharing information within or among organizations (Ardichvill et al, 2003; Cress & Kimmerle, 2006). The factors that foster information sharing have been widely analysed. Based on a typology of the factors influencing

information sharing for inter or intra governmental coordination drawn by Yang and Maxwell (2011), features ranging from organizational structure and culture, to the system of rewards and incentives within an organization, to the member's beliefs about organizational information sharing are all relevant.

The existence of clearly defined rules and procedures for members to coordinate also is a determinant of inter-organizational coordination (Streeter et al, 1986; Kumar 2007; Christensen y Lægreid, 2008; Lie, 2011). Based on Mintzberg's model of complex organizations, Kumar (2007) shows that the lack of formal rules and financial resources prevents the existence of free-flowing information within organizations. Further, Streeter *et al.* (1986) argue that coordination requires the construction of rules or procedures for collaboration, which may vary depending on the degree of desired coordination. If organizations do not share the same objective but are only bound to collaborate in the development of some activities, rules and procedures might be informal and result from people's efforts to coordinate. When organizations do share the same goal, formal rules and procedures are established, although they are constantly renegotiated. Finally, where collective goals are prioritized over individual goals, rules and procedures are highly formalized and organizations' members are committed to their enforcement (Streeter *et al.*, 1986: 35-36).

From the coordination perspective, then, complex problems could be solved by bringing the relevant parties together (at the top and/or at the bottom of the administration) and getting them to agree upon a greater (and common) goal. Furthermore, this goal can be pursued only by interacting through organizations whose structures and procedures are designed to function through information exchange. The underlying logic is that since any single agency is not able to tackle a complex problem on its own, coordination (which is the decision of a common goal, and its attainment through structures and procedures that foster information sharing), serves to gather all the pieces together and produce coordinated government actions (as opposed to fragmented ones).

When coordination works at its best, decision makers willingly sit together in the face of a complex problem, set goals in order to solve it, and decide which programs will be implemented to achieve them. Policy administrators have clear responsibilities and specific rules to ensure that the implementation of each program is related to the initial goals.

Then, as a result of the information they formally --or informally-- share, policy administrators are able to identify, during their fieldwork, potential synergies or redundancies

in the implementation of their programs. This activates new processes through which they seek to solve these operational obstacles, either by working it out with other programs' administrators or by sharing this information with top decision makers. However, this sort of operational problems can only be overcome as long as the modifications required to do so do not contradict each programs' design. For example, the ministry of economy can ask two program administrators to agree on the areas (rural vs. urban) in which their programs will be implemented so that their actions are not duplicated/that their actions do not overlap; but if the design of both programs seeks to target indigenous people that have land for harvesting, no matter how coordinated they are, they both will still implement their programs in rural areas. Changing the design of such programs is a decision that might be made by top decision makers; however, making those decisions would not be product of coordination, but a result of substantive analysis that does not necessarily represent a coordination activity.

Therefore, even in a scenario where coordination works perfectly, fragmented government action will still remain. In other words, complex problems will not be completely solved under this scenario, because coordination by itself is not enough. Tackling wicked problems requires more than actors working together for a greater objective. They can sit and discuss public problems and make consensual decisions, but unless this exercise in coordination is aided by a substantive analysis of the attributes that policies, actions and programs must have in order to be coherent, the coordination process will be insufficient. Of course, this is not breaking news. From the public administration perspective, it is always recognized that coordination is required for achieving coherent policies or programs. However, this coherence is not an automatic product of coordination; it can only be achieved through an analysis of the features of each program involved in addressing the complex issue at hand, and through an understanding of how these should be modified. Undertaking this analysis is not a coordination activity. It is a substantive discussion that cannot be held just by implementing coordination mechanisms (such as structures or procedures). Coordination focuses on the decision making process, and the implementation required for achieving an integrated government action, but says nothing about the substantive content of those decisions. This means that policy coherence is not coordination.

Policy coherence

By definition, public policies address concrete, specific problems (Lasswell, 1992). Complex problems require responses from several policies. Those policies, in order to address the complex problem effectively, need to be coherent. Policy coherence is based on the premise that every policy occurs within a policy domain, each of which is conformed by several public policies through which governments intend to solve concrete -but interrelated—problems (Majone, 1992).

Accordingly, May, *et al* (2005) argue that policy coherence "implies that various components of policies correspond because they share a set of ideas or objectives" (2005:37). Thus, two or more policies are coherent by their ability to achieve, in combination, a larger goal (Cejudo and Michel, 2016). In other words, policy coherence means that the policies that coexist in the same policy domain are designed in such a way that they are able to contribute to, reinforce or improve the performance of each other.

In practice, there is coherence between two policies of the same policy domain when the achievement of the objectives and the implementation of the components of the policy "A" enhance the achievement of the objectives and the implementation of the components of policy "B" (or at least do not impede them) (May, et al, 2006; Cejudo and Michel, 2016). Alternatively, there is coherence when policy "A" targets a different population than policy "B" (May, et al, 2006; Cejudo and Michel, 2016). Finally, two policies can be coherent even if they share target populations as long as they use different, but complementary, tools (types of support) to tackle a public problem. In any case, when there is coherence, the implementation of two policies ("A" and "B") contributes to the achievement not only of the objectives of each policy but also the broader objective (the "X" Objective) to which they are bound to contribute in the policy domain (Cejudo and Michel, 2016). Thus, there are three kinds of policy coherence: coherence between different policies' objectives, instruments and target populations.

Coherence between different policies' objectives refers to the consistency between the individual objectives of the policies that coexist within the same policy domain. This type of coherence means that while all policies are aimed towards achieving their own objective, those objectives are harmoniously related with each other, so that the actions that each policy undertake serve a common purpose (Fukasaku and Hirata, 1995; Forster and Stokke, 1999; May et al, 2006). A policy domain will be conformed by policies that, in achieving their own objective, complement or reinforce each other so that they solve, together, a greater and more

complex problem (the one that originated said policy domain). Therefore, from this perspective, coherence is assessed by determining how each policy contributes to the achievement of the overall objective. The purpose is not to analyze whether each policy contributes to the fulfillment of a part of the policy domain's objective, but to determine if the achievement of each policies' objective, in the aggregate, is sufficient to achieve the overall objective of the policy domain. In other words, the idea is to determine if the overall objective would be achieved (without leaving lacunae or generating duplication) by having a policy domain conformed by policies that achieved their own objective (Cejudo and Michel, 2016).

Coherence between instruments means that two policies contribute to solve the same public problem by delivering different types of support. That is, assuming that public issues are complex and multidimensional, coherence at this level is evident when different policies, each by a different route, address a dimension of the same problem. In this type of coherence the focus of analysis has nothing to do with the performance of the instruments of each policy in addressing the specific public problem for which each of them was created, but with the complementarity between the instruments of all policies within the same domain to achieve the overall objective (Cejudo and Michel, 2016).

Coherence between target populations exists when, even if they use the same instrument for the same objective, the aggregation of all the people targeted includes the entire policy domain's target population. This kind of coherence implies that there are no duplications in the targeting that each of the policies of the same domain makes. It means that each policy targets a different type of population affected by the same public issue, but that the same people cannot be subject of attention of two policies. In practice, this is more complicated than it seems, because the same person may have different characteristics (i.e. female, indigenous, single parent, person in poverty), each of which makes her target of various policies. Therefore it is important to highlight that coherence between target populations is not equal to the correct targeting of policies. That is, this kind of coherence not only implies that a person does not benefit from two policies that contribute to the same objective, but that the same person is not targeted by two policies that have the same objective. The difference is subtle but important: policy coherence in this sense is based on a correct targeting of policies, but goes beyond that because, ultimately, it seeks to avoid that anyone suffering from a given public problem is left unattended (Cejudo and Michel, 2016).

Under perfect coherence, we would witness different policy domains conformed by the necessary and sufficient instruments the government has at hand (programs) to effectively address every dimension of a wicked problem. However, not even the most capable official, with an unrealistic ability to control all the possible effects that each program within a policy domain might have, can tackle a wicked issue. Firstly, an analysis of policy coherence informs the substantive decisions that should be made in order to properly address wicked problems, but those decisions are not automatic products of such analysis. In order for those decisions to be actually put into practice, coordination mechanisms should be activated among all the agencies that need to be coordinated.

To effectively solve complex issues, coherence necessitates coordination. This means that even if a given official could solve the puzzle for a perfectly coherent set of programs (each run by different ministries) within a policy domain, representatives of each program would still need to agree upon the design modifications that should be implemented. Secondly, assuming the representatives of each program agreed to undertake the design modifications suggested by our extremely capable official, the implementation of perfectly coherent programs (each from a different ministry) could be transformed into programs that in practice are incoherent. The independent implementation of programs that are designed to be coherent does not guarantee coherent results. Coordination among the agents in charge of their execution is required in order for them to transform coherence in design into coherence in practice. Indeed, the decisions related to policies are not only made at the design stage; policies' probability to behave as planned in their design depends upon the decisions that will (and should) be made down the implementation stream.

Policy integration

When different organizations and programs want to jointly address multidimensional public problems, they need both coordination and policy coherence. But they are not always sufficient. If perfect coordination and policy coherence existed, top officials and/or administrators would work together with the purpose of jointly addressing problems that cut across different organizations and policy domains and coherent policies would coexist within different policy domains. Yet, organizations and programs would continue to work towards their individual goals, with their own structure, budgets and planning processes. Decisions

would continue being taken in the logic of each organization and program: for instance, when allocating budgets or defining target populations, the needs and objectives (as well as indicators and controls) of each program or organizations would be prioritized over the needs and objectives of the set of organizations and programs in the policy domain. In other words, there would not be a new policy or strategy that encompasses individual components, but an aggregation of coherent programs and coordinated organizations that would keep taking decisions based on their own goals and individual priorities. But complex problems cannot be split into specific components. So, it could be the case that even if perfect coordination and policy coherence were possible, they still would not be enough to properly address complex issues. In any policy intervention, there are decisions that need to be taken for the whole of the intervention not for its components (how to allocate budget, which population to prioritize, when a component is no longer necessary, etc.). Thus, such decisions cannot be based on the individual logic of each organization and program.

We argue that policy integration is more than the sum of coherence and coordination. Integrating policies and organizations is more than making them compatible and articulated. It means creating a new policy in which its individual components (policies and organizations) work under a new logic, by subordinating their objectives to a *new* overall goal, and making their decisions based on the needs and priorities of the set of policies and organizations being integrated. This also means that policy integration is not subordinating one policy to another (asking, for example, urban policy to align itself to the priorities of environmental policy), but subordinating a set of policies to a new, overall logic that would determine decisions such targeting, budgeting, etc.

Thus, policy integration is the process of making strategic and administrative decisions to achieve a goal that encompasses -but exceeds- the programs' and agencies' individual goals. Policy integration encompasses the design process and the implementation process. It is a decisional logic applied at every level of management and in every stage of the policy process, both by top officials and policy administrators.

Policy integration is not the aggregation of coherent policies. Policy integration requires changing the decisional logic of public officials in order for them to try to address needs, not just to make different policies align with one specific policy (such as it is perceived by the proponents of environmental policy integration). In other words, policy integration implies more than

making every policy consistent with one specific policy, e.g. fiscal policy (even if the purposes of such policy are considered the first national priority).

Policy integration is a process, not a moment. It is not only about setting an overall goal or establishing central priorities and then letting all the instruments interact and expecting them to automatically produce them. Instead, it means that, at every moment of the policy process decision are made base on a new logic, as a new policy, with its own theory of change, overall goal and components. Thus, when deciding how to allocate budget among programs (not only within them); how to prioritize target populations, how to define success, how to evaluate, and so on, the decision is based on the new integrated policy, not on its individual components (policies and organizations).

 This definition allows for a further, important, distinction: *Policy integration is not a result.* Sometimes, policy integration is seen as the solution of complex problems. Such definition entails a circular argument: if integration is the solution of complex problems, then whenever problems were not solved it is because there was no integration. It is necessary to differentiate the concept (integration) from its outcome (integrated government action) and from its consequences (solved complex problems). If policy integration were a result, it would mean that there is no way that we have a low level of policy integration, that is, policy integration is only seen when a complex problem is solved. And, as it happens with coherence or with coordination, there can be good levels of integration in a policy domain, and problems can remain unaddressed. Policy integration may guarantee integrated policies, but not necessarily the resolution of a complex problem. That would depend not only on a good design of the integrated policy (that is, the causality of its theory of change) but also on its implementation (which does not only depend on good coordination but on institutional capacities, financial resources, timing, among other features).

Policy integration entails the integrated governmental action, not the consequences that should result from it. In this sense, policy integration means that public officials have the required instruments to execute actions in an integrated logic. Such instruments go from the information related to all the potential beneficiaries to properly target them, to the policy coherence analysis of the programs that will contribute to achieve the "greater goal" or the structures and procedures necessary to gather all the relevant actors for decision-making.

Of course, even if it is an attractive concept, *policy integration is not for everything.* Policy integration helps to achieve integrated governmental action. There are social problems whose

addressing does not depend on multiple agencies, or on the implementation of multiple programs. Policy integration is useful for addressing complex problems, which are those are characterized for being difficult to clearly define, multi-causal, not stable, usually have no clear solution, are socially complex, addressing them involves many organisations and often lead to unforeseen consequences, might involve changing behaviour of individual citizens and are characterised by chronic policy failure (Rittel and Weber, 1973).

The National Crusade against Hunger

The National Crusade against Hunger is a strategy undertaken by the Mexican federal government aimed at tackling a multidimensional problem: the extreme food poverty that people suffer in the poorest municipalities in the country. Based on the measurement of poverty designed by the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Coneval, *for its name in Spanish*), the Crusade conceptualized extreme food poverty as the inability of people to fulfill seven social needs: income, access to social security, education, quality housing, access to basic housing services, access to food, and access to health care. Coneval identified different indicators for measuring each of these needs. For example, a person considered to be in need of quality housing is one who lives in a house that has at least one of the following characteristics: (1) the floors consist of ground, (2) the roof of the house is made out of cardboard sheets or waste, (3) the walls are made of mud, bamboo, palm, cardboard sheet, or metal; (4) the ratio of people per room is greater than 2.5 (overcrowding).

Precisely because the problem that the Crusade intends to tackle is a complex problem, an appropriate conceptualization and definition of a strategy for addressing it require the involvement of multiple organizations. Thus, the Crusade is a strategy that intends to tackle extreme food poverty in the country through the articulation of different agencies and programs. Indeed, the Crusade does not imply additional economic resources, new administrative structures, or new programs. Its implementation depends on the successful alignment of the existent elements (programs, human and financial resources, operating rules).

During the design phase of the Crusade, 400 municipalities were chosen (out of 2,457) as the target. These municipalities face the highest levels of extreme poverty in the country and have the largest number of people in extreme poverty or food poverty (*Presidential decree*, 2013).

Additionally, 70 social programs were selected (although in 2014 they were extended to 90) from 19 government ministries and agencies to be part of the Crusade. Taking into account the programs' design, each one was associated with one or more social needs. So, for every social need, there is a set of pre-existent programs that are supposed to contribute to fulfill it. Moreover, the operation rules of these programs mandated that they include the 400 municipalities of the National Crusade Against Hunger.

The Crusade was initially presented only as a *coordination* strategy, but as we will show, it also promotes *policy coherence* and, in order to be successful, requires to *ensure policy integration.*

In order to foster coordination among federal officials and between them and local authorities, the Crusade has three inter-ministerial committees: one at the federal level, one at the state level and one at the municipal level. At the federal level, different ministers gather at least twice a year to discuss and agree upon the modifications that should be made to the programs associated to the Crusade, to avoid duplications and lacunae in their implementation. Additionally, different working groups were created, each related to one of the seven social needs. Top officials of different ministries integrate every group.

The same structure is replicated in each state, where the federal representatives of each ministry, along with the local ministries, gather in the inter-ministerial state committee with the purpose of agreeing upon the programs (and percentage of their budget) that each will implement to address the Crusade's target population, and hence, achieve the Crusade's goals. The representative of the Ministry of Social Development leads the committee. One of his responsibilities is the development of a work plan, which is based on a diagnosis of each municipality to which the Crusade is aimed. A community committee, located in each village in every municipality, elaborates the diagnosis. This means that in each community committee various members of the community participate in the definition of the social needs they have. Based on such diagnosis, inter-ministerial state committee defines the number of programs operating in the territory (and the budget allocated to each) and the activities that will be undertaken (with a goal and indicator for every one of them) to address each of the seven social needs. At the municipal level, the inter-ministerial committees do not have clearly defined responsibilities, so their functioning vary from municipality to municipality.

The National Crusade against Hunger also seeks to promote coherence among the programs that contribute to each of the seven social needs, which are taken as indicators of poverty by the Crusade itself. The Crusade acknowledges that in order to tackle every social

need, the programs on which it is based must neither duplicate actions nor leave unattended populations. In the National Crusade against Hunger the search for coherence among the 90 programs is shown in two ways. Firstly, when linking a set of programs to each social need, the expectation was to set a broader objective to which each program should contribute to, without neglecting the achievement of their own goals. Secondly, it is expected that the inter-ministerial committee's members will modify the operation rules of each program, after a substantive analysis regarding their coherence. Ultimately, these two aspects of the Crusade are aimed at achieving perfectly coherent programs to address each social need.

Perfect coherence among the programs aimed at tackling the lack of good quality housing, for example, could be shown in different ways. One would be to have programs with complementary goals. For instance, the purpose of one program could be that every family owns a house; another program's goal could be that every house be built with quality material, while another program's goal could be that each house be placed in a safe terrain. Or in case they all seek to guarantee that every house is built with quality material, another way of having policy coherence in this policy domain would be that, for example, one program provides sturdy roof for the families to replace their current roof that is woven from palms or other fragile material; another one provides solid floor for the houses, and finally, another one provide solid walls. Under this scenario, we would be looking at coherence between instruments.

However, the problem of undignified housing for poor people will not be solved unless these programs actually have enough budget to provide roofs for these people, a register of the beneficiaries of their localities, and human resources to implement the program in their regions. If any of these features is lacking, no matter how much coordination or how much coherence there is, it will be impossible for this set of programs to properly address this problem. As we explained before, coordination plus policy coherence is not policy integration. Decisions on resource allocation, targeting, etc., are still made by people that coordinate their own particular programs and control their own budget and resources, and this will not change despite the existence of the highest levels of coherence and coordination.

That is why achieving the objectives of the National Crusade Against Hunger requires more than perfectly coordinated actors/agencies and perfectly coherent programs. What the Crusade seeks is for every minister; federal representative; mid-ranking public servant; program administrator and /or beneficiary to direct their everyday decisions at addressing the seven

social needs, that is, policy integration. In this way, the implementation of the Crusade is based on different management tools through which relevant information is produced in order to inform actors' decision making. There are four in particular worth mentioning. The first one is a single register of beneficiaries. Before the Crusade, every program had its own register, so it was practically impossible to know if programs were duplicated. The second is the Single Questionnaire of Beneficiaries (CUIS, *for its name in Spanish*). This questionnaire integrates every household member's socioeconomic and demographic information, as well as the characteristics of their home. The information gathered from these questionnaires accounts, among other things, for the social needs each family has. This CUIS was first used by the programs under the Ministry of Social Development, and with the Crusade they are expected to be applied in each household of the 400 municipalities included. Both the single registry of beneficiaries and the information that results of the application of the questionnaires are valuable for improving targeting decision-making.

The third tool is a control board operated by the Crusades' technical secretary (the Director of the strategy at the Ministry for Social Development) that shows the amount of resources each federal program has invested in each municipality. Finally, the community committees, which are a structure created to identify and prioritize the community's social needs, are the fourth instrument intended to improve decision-making. These committees are organs designed as spaces for the communities' "real participation", since they are expected to be involved in all phases of the Crusade (planning, implementation, supervision, monitoring and evaluation) (SEDESOL, 2014: 88).

In the Crusade against Hunger we would see policy integration in two different but simultaneous scenarios. In the first one, at the top of the public administration, we would see the planning and budgetary departments of every ministry get together to establish which program of which ministry will give up a percentage of its budget in order for them both to achieve a greater goal that exceeds each program's and ministry's goal. For example, the programs in charge of providing solid walls and floors that have already addressed certain region this fiscal year, instead of advancing in their coverage the following year, would transfer some of their budget and perhaps even human resources to the programs in charge of providing sturdy roofs, which still have not been able to provide for that same region. In the second one, at the bottom of the administration, in order for poor people to overcome the problem of having an undignified house, we would see the people in charge of operating those

same programs calling each other whenever they find citizens still lacking roofs, walls or solid floors. This would mean that the operators of each program are not only coordinating themselves, but also thinking in terms of a broader objective. Another example is this: the CUIS and the single register of beneficiaries would serve as functional instruments and hence would generate reliable information regarding the beneficiaries. From the coordination and coherence point of view, this information would be useful to improve each program's targeting and hence avoid duplications. However, from the policy integration point of view, this information would also be considered to establish the targeting strategy of a new policy (that of the Crusade) and if necessary, make the programs redefine their own targeting.

Conclusion

Mexico's National Crusade against Hunger is an attempt at solving a complex problem (extreme food poverty) by overcoming the fragmentation in government action that has plagued social policy in Mexico for decades. It does so by fostering coordination among ministries and levels of government, by promoting coherence among social programs and by creating policy integration to achieve more encompassing objectives. We have shown that only policy integration has the potential to effectively overcome fragmented policy action and, by doing so, to have an effect on poverty among its target population.

This analysis confirms that policy integration is substantively different from policy coherence and policy coordination. Coordination is a process through which organizations share knowledge and information and their members have clearly defined responsibilities so they can make joint decisions. Coherence implies making programs complementary in their objectives, instruments, or target populations, so they not only don't overlap or leave vacuums, but also reinforce each other to address a complex problem. Policy integration is more than coordinated organizations and coherent programs and the sum of both. Policy integration is a process where decisions are taken in order to achieve a common, greater goal.

Conceptual clarity is an essential attribute of any discussion in the social sciences. Beyond attractive labels and academic fashions, it is important to make sure that we actually mean what the concepts we are using attempt to mean. We will be in a better position to

understand how governments try to address complex problems, if we have the right conceptual tools.

We have shown that policy coordination, policy coherence and policy integration are analytically differentiable and empirically observable. Total policy integration is unachievable, just as perfect coordination and absolute coherence are. Nonetheless, the practical implications of an integrated policy are clearly different from mere coordination or coherence, and, as we argued in the case of the National Crusade against Hunger, are much more likely to effectively address complex social programs.

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