

Coordinating and Integrating Cross-Sectoral Policies:

A Theoretical Approach

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Introduction

The coordination and integration of cross-sectoral policies have received burgeoning attention by both political scientists and practitioners. The European Union (EU), for example, has argued that no effective environmental policy can be formulated unless it is coordinated with decisions in cognate policy areas. This principle of environmental policy integration already mentioned back in 1987 when the Single European Act was adopted, but its scope has been extended ever since. Today, it represents a key policy principle in the EU (Tosun and Solorio 2011). In fact, both scholars and practitioners agree that complex problems often require the coordination and integration of cross-sectoral policies. The International Labour Organization (ILO), for instance, even has a department, i.e. the Policy Coherence Initiative, that aims at assisting countries to formulate and adopt policy portfolios that support coherence between the objectives of economic growth and the generation of work.

Somewhat remarkably, scholarship on cross-sectoral policy coordination and integration appears to lag behind the practice of policy making (Hood 2005). Despite the vast corpus of literature, the study of policy coordination and integration has failed to advance clear-cut theoretical expectations and does not allow for drawing generalisable conclusions. In response to this flaw, in this article we

explore ways of linking the individual isolated strands of literature to general theories of public policy and political economy. What are the empirical puzzles worth analysing in the study of policy coordination and integration? Which theoretical approaches are appropriate for explaining processes of cross-sectoral policy coordination and integration? These are the two research questions that guide this analysis. That being said, it should be noted that in this paper we concentrate on the impact of actors and their interests/preferences on how cross-sectoral integration should be attained. For the sake of coherence, we leave unconsidered the institutional aspects of policy coordination and integration. The same applies for the design of policy instruments and their efficiency and effectiveness.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. First, we define the key concepts of this study, namely cross-sectoral policy coordination and integration. Second, we present a systematic overview of the literatures that discuss these two phenomena and related concepts. The objective of the review is to substantiate our point that the literature places strong emphasis on empirical description but neglects the development of theoretical arguments. In a third step then we propose ways in which policy coordination and integration can be studied within the broader context of public policy and political economy. In the closing section we present some concluding remarks and outline an agenda for future research.

Policy integration: Chances and Challenges for the Actors Involved

The dependent variable of this study are cross-sectoral policies, that is, policies which can only be proposed and adopted when actors from at least two policy sectors or resorts are involved in the policy-making process and their interaction becomes coordinated. Often in the literature the effectiveness of policies are linked to the need for coordination and integration. For instance, Probst et al link the success of public health planning for racial/ethnic minorities in rural areas to the education and economic development sectors (Probst et al. 2004). As we shall see later, this evaluative perspective is very common in the literature, but it does not exactly correspond to what we are interested in. Our focus is on how policies are made that require the coordination and collaboration of multiple different policy sectors.

An example of such a cross-sectoral policy is the regulation of the cultivation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). GMOs are a specific type of crops and therefore their cultivation should, in principle, be primarily regulated by the agriculture ministry. However, the release of GMOs into the environment can lead to cross-breeding and a reduction of biodiversity, thus requiring the involvement of the environment ministry to make sure that these aspects are also sufficiently taken

into consideration. Furthermore, GMOs cultivated for human consumption may potentially have implications for human health and safety, which means that the ministry of health and/or ministry of consumer protection must be included in the policy-making process as well. We can expect that all these sector-specific actors (from the ministries of agriculture, environment, consumer protection, and health) have different preferences regarding the regulation of GMOs, but in order to regulate this issue their interests must be coordinated and integrated. These coordination and integration processes lie at the heart of this study.

Policies spanning across different sectors can be challenging since they involve an enhanced need for coordination and may also be prone to conflicts because of the different interests or viewpoints of the sectoral actors. These coordination requirements and potential conflicts may affect each policy phase, starting with the agenda-setting process and ending with policy implementation and evaluation. By the same token, the collaboration of actors from different sectors may stimulate processes of policy and organisational learning, which may ultimately lead to better policy designs and more efficient policy implementation. The bottom line is that based on the characteristics of cross-sectoral policies both chances and challenges can be expected. To come with more refined expectations, theoretical considerations are needed. In the next section we review the research literature in an effort to extract which theoretical expectations about the chances and challenges of policy integration we can derive.

Theoretical insights from the literature

In this section we review the literature on the concept of policy integration and related concepts. Since the body of literature is vast, we assigned the studies into two groups. The first group consists of government-centred approaches to policy coordination, which pay particular attention to institutional arrangements. The second literature strand includes governance-centred approaches to policy coordination; the works assigned to this group place greater emphasis on interactions of different sectoral actors.

Systematic reviews of theoretical approaches must first determine the scope of approaches that are to be compared, and second contain the body of articles and books that provide the basis for comparison. The identification of approaches to policy coordination and integration turned out to be complicated since there exists neither textbook definitions of policy coordination and integration nor an agreed canon of theories or theoretical approaches that offer a good starting point. To get an overall picture of the relevant literature we had to rely on snowball sampling. We started with some obvious candidates such as “joined-up government”, “whole-of-government” or “policy coherence”

and scanned the literature in order to identify the entirety of relevant concepts. For this purpose, we searched the Web of Science database as well as Google Scholar. We included in our study only those studies that focus on cross-cutting policy issues. As a result, we excluded the literature on policy planning (cooperative, strategic or participatory planning), governance modi in general as well as descriptive articles that detail complex and interdependent policies but have no analytical features. We also excluded the term “horizontal government” since it is basically connected to other concepts (e.g. whole-of government) and offers no additional insights with regard to the purpose of this analysis. The outcome of these efforts is reported in table 1, which summarizes the nine concepts we included in our meta-analysis. Thus, the subsequent analysis is based on five government-centred approaches to policy coordination and integration (“holistic government”, “joined-up government”, “policy coherence”, “whole of government”, and “comprehensive (policy) planning”) and four governance-centred approaches (“horizontal governance”, “policy integration”, “holistic governance”, and “boundary-spanning policy regimes”).

Table 1: Overview of the literature sources

Approaches	Total number of articles Web of Science	Total number of hit in Google Scholar	Not included
Government-centred approaches			
Holistic government	1	716	Horizontal government
Joined-up-government (JUG)	87	5.930	Strategic planning
Policy coherence	180	~ 12.100	Cooperative planning
Whole-of-government (WOG)	106	~15.000	Participatory planning
Comprehensive planning	296	~ 36.500	Interdependent policies Policy consistency
Governance-centred approaches			
Horizontal governance	13	1.010	
Policy integration	303	~ 14.500	
Holistic governance	1	843	
Boundary-spanning policy regimes	10	73	

Government-centred approaches to policy coordination

Government-centred approaches to policy coordination that are still in use entered academia in the 1960s. These approaches emphasize the architecture of governments and public administration and employ a top-down perspective. They basically cover administrative reforms and coordination in policy domains with high government influence such as the British nation health service.

One of the oldest approaches to policy integration and coordination is the concept of **comprehensive planning** that was developed in the 1950s and was widely adopted by urban planners in the United States. The concept travelled then to Europe and also diffused to other policy domains, in particular environmental policy (Glasbergen 1992; Sanchirico et al. 2010; Smith et al. 2010). According to the comprehensive planning approach, the most important functions of an urban planner are “one, to create a master plan which can guide the deliberations of specialist planners, two, to evaluate the proposals of specialist planners in the light of the master plan, and three, to coordinate the planning of specialist agencies so as to ensure that their proposals reinforce each other to further the public interest” (Altshuler 1965: 186). The comprehensive planning approach focuses on policy formulation from a top-down perspective in which a central planner or planning office is responsible for carrying out all the necessary tasks. However, the assumption that the central planner is able to determine and to execute the public interest has been heavily criticized (Altshuler 1965). As a result, scholars of comprehensive planning argued that the desirable outcomes should be determined by a participatory process, in which all affected stakeholder of the community have the opportunity to communicate their interests (Friedmann 1965; Innes 1996).

The concept of **policy coherence** emerged in the late 1990s¹ and was promoted by international organizations such as the OECD, the UN and the EU. The policy coherence approach gained currency through the publications of the OECD and the EU Commission on policy coherence for development that demanded more coordinated and integrated policies by member states regarding development policy (European Commission 2007; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2009). The building blocks of policy coherence are political commitment and leadership, policy co-ordination mechanisms, and monitoring and reporting systems.

A second stream of policy coherence conceptualizations emerged out of the policy-subsystem and agenda-setting literature of U.S. politics. May et al develop a theoretical framework with which to gauge policy coherence. Three variables are posited to play a prominent role in explaining policy coherence: type of issue, number of affected interests and the existence of integrating institutions. It is then argued that policy coherence is greater in substantive policy domains (environment, health etc.) than in group-specific (family, the elderly, etc.) and spatial policy domains (rural, California, etc.). Furthermore, May et al argue that problems in attaining policy convergence are aggravated due to issue crowding as well as little issue focus. According to May et al, interest group involvement is

¹ The notion “policy coherence” appeared the first time in the Summary record *Development co-operation and the challenge of policy coherence in the new international context* of the 614th Meeting of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 1991.

higher in policy domains with a high degree of issue crowding which then distracts agenda-setting to a multitude of issues. The targeting of issues gets more precarious the more issues are involved. The third factor that influences policy coherence is the existence of integrating institutions such as parliamentary committee structure and the number and focus of responsible executive agencies.

Holistic government has been put forward on the scholarly debate about administrative reforms and policy coordination in Britain. The holistic government approach can be seen as a predecessor to the JUG and the WGA approaches (Pollitt 2003). It emerged at the beginning of the 1990s but was replaced at the end of the decade by the more popular concept of JUG. The holistic government approach basically focuses on urban policy (Mawson and Hall 2000) but also includes studies on housing policy (6 1998), and disaster management (McEntire et al. 2002). Starting point of holistic government theorizing was the reversal of new public management recommendations in the British public service in the late 1980s. The adoption of such policies was dubbed holistic in the sense that all relevant policies and government agencies have to be considered and have to work together in order to enhance service delivery to the British public (6 1997; 6 1998; 6 1999). Scholars of holistic government advocate for more integrative policy instruments and processes. However, the holistic government approach lacks a theoretical model that includes enabling as well as constraining factors such as actor preferences and interest conflicts.

The **joined-up-government approach** (JUG) emerged in the years 1999 and 2000 in the wake of report "Wiring it up: Whitehall's Management of Cross Cutting Policies and Services" which evaluated existing administrative practices in Britain and provided guidelines for future action (Performance and Innovation Unit 2000). The joining up of government and administrative activities was part of New Labour's over-arching "modernising government" agenda (Cabinet Office 1999) meant at increasing coordination of government departments and sub-ordinate administrative units (Clark 2002). But it also contained the spirit of a "missionary government" that uses new tools to change the culture of society (Bogdanor 2005). JUG was designed to increase effectiveness and efficiency of public administrations through elimination of organizational redundancies and slack resources and to provide better and more integrated coordination of public administration could also serve citizens more directly. The joining up thus includes different government units that are still organizationally independent: "[...] joined-up working aims to coordinate activities across organizational boundaries without removing the boundaries themselves. These boundaries are inter-departmental, central-local, and sectoral (corporate, public, voluntary/community). To join up, initiatives must align organizations with different cultures, incentives, management systems and aims" (Ling 2002) (p. 616).

The **whole of government** approach (WGA) developed out of the joined-up government approach and gained popularity since 2005. Regarding policy domains, health policy has been the main focus of scholars of the WGA, followed by environmental policy. WGA's main focus is on national governments and public sector reforms with a particular emphasis on Australia. Christensen and Lagreid stress that the whole of government approach developed in response to the widespread adoption of New Public Management (NPM) reforms that emphasized single purpose measures and organizations (Christensen and Lagreid 2007). The WGA summarizes recent developments of inter-departmental and inter-administration coordination, such as performance and output measures (Boston and Pallot 1997) and organizational tools of government such as "new cabinet committees, interministerial or interagency collaborative units, intergovernmental, lead agency approaches, circuit-breaker teams, super-networks, task forces, cross-sectoral programs or projects, and tsars, with the main purpose of getting government units to work better together" (Christensen and Lagreid 2007: 1061). The WAG also stresses the changing nature of tasks which should be tackled by flexible teams and processes and rely on cooperative resourcing (Management Advisory Committee (MAC) 2004). These new organizational "super-structures" rely on a cultural foundation denoting "information sharing and cooperative knowledge management" as well as "effective alignment of top-down policies with bottom-up issues" (Management Advisory Committee (MAC) 2004).

Governance-centred approaches to policy coordination

Similar to the use of the term governance in general, governance-centred approaches to policy coordination and integration mostly emerged in the 1990s. The four forms of governance-centred approaches to policy coordination and integration have in common that they place strong emphasis on service delivery and issues of policy implementation and effectiveness or efficiency. Again, the centrality of these topics that all refer to the post-adoption phase of policy making resonates with the general literature on governance.

The literature on **horizontal governance** covers a range of predominantly prescriptive approaches to service delivery and management. It is about supplementing or ideally even replacing hierarchical steering (i.e. government) by means of establishing and strengthening horizontal networks between different governmental units in an effort to increase policy coordination, collaboration and shared responsibility. Horizontal governance principally seeks to evaluate policy-makers' efforts to move away from hierarchical government for the sake of an improved problem-solving capacity. This literature brings in the bottom-up perspective to policy coordination and integration and sheds light on how horizontal governance and vertical politics interact. In this context, it is an interesting

overarching finding that horizontal governance may help to implement formerly controversial policies (see, e.g. Powell et al. 2009). At the same time, however, hierarchical government is widely found to persist despite the adoption of some elements of horizontal governance. The horizontal governance approach locates actor interest and power structures within the broader term actor constellations/networks. However, interest competition and conflicts play a minor role since horizontal governance instruments should be devised to overcome these particularisms.

The idea of **holistic governance** is about modifying current governance structures in such a manner to achieve policy integration that are effective and efficient in the sense that they deliverable desirable policy outcomes. Thus, service delivery through governance lies at the heart of this approach. This is to be achieved by means of collaboration, coordination, co-operation and integration of policies (6 2002). Compared to the other standards of governance-centred approach, the corpus of literature is very small and descriptive. Especially from the large literature on policy integration studies of holistic governance may borrow analytical categories and theoretical arguments. Interests and pressure politics have not been systematically explored within holistic governance.

The concept of **policy integration** is about policy making in certain policy domains that take policy goals of other – arguably adjacent – policy domains into account. As a concept is develops around a top-down notion of policy making in which policy makers are expected to be aware of cross-sectoral implications of policies and willing to engage in coordination and integration. Thus, at the heart of this literature lie coordination requirements and arguably coordination dilemmas caused by the multitude of actors involved and differences in their preferences, which may or may not vary across the policy sectors and levels of government involved. The literature on policy integration is dominated by empirical analyses concentrating on issues of environmental protection and climate change (Lafferty and Hovden 2003; Nilsson and Nilsson 2005; Ugland and Veggeland 2006; Wettestad 2009). The promotion of the idea of policy integration in the context of environmental policy making by the European Commission also explains why the literature concentrate on the EU (Lenschow 1997). The idea underlying most treatises of policy integration is that some policies need to be integrated across different sectors and levels of government in order to make them effective or efficient. As a result, the literature often suggests that policy integration represents a political goal that must be attained, and sketch the design of integrated policies promoted by the EU or adopted by national policy makers. The studies on environmental policy integration and climate policy integration in particular have concentrated on “bottlenecks holding back integration” (Lenschow 2002). In doing this, they primarily illuminate the political power and policy preferences of the relevant actors and how these bottlenecks can be overcome. Oberthür, for instances, discusses to

what extent international institutions can help enhancing environmental policy integration (Oberthür 2009). Ross and Dovers explicitly shed light on the actors' preferences and strategies when analysing policy integration in Australia (Ross and Dovers 2008). Nilson and Nilson argue that the success of policy integration measures depend on the framing of policy problems. The particular framing decides whether all actors feel responsible for the problem solving and thus take part in the coordination and integration mechanisms (Nilsson and Nilsson 2005).

The point of departure for **boundary-spanning policy regimes** is the existence of boundary-spanning policy problems. The boundaries are predominantly imposed by different governmental structures. As a result, intergovernmental boundaries in multi-tiered governmental structures often raise issues of shared governance across the public, private, and non-profit sectors with respect to service delivery (May, Jochim and Sapotichne 2011). May et al present a theoretical model that stresses the convergence or divergence in policymakers' attention to the issues and their solutions across different subsystems (May, Jochim and Sapotichne 2011). The authors identify three forces responsible for such convergence or divergence. The first one is the nature of linkages among the relevant subsystems and how they structure the processing of boundary-spanning problems and their solutions. In this context, they differentiate between tightly-linked subsystems involving serial processing of issues and loosely-linked subsystems involving parallel processing of issues. The former induces convergence while the latter fosters divergence in policymaking. The second force is the extent to which relevant publics converge or diverge in their treatment of the issues and potential solutions. The third force is the degree of interest conflicts over dimensions of the problem or solutions. Interest conflicts undermine policymakers' efforts to focus attention and develop integrative policy (Mayer 2008).

Table 2 gives a comparative overview of the previous mentioned nine approaches to policy integration. It highlights the main tendencies in the literature regarding interests, policy domains, and countries covered. As can be seen from table 2, there is a considerable overlap between the approaches. All approaches focus on the integration and coordination instruments such as interministerial or interagency units, task forces, project teams, or cross-sectoral programs. However, five approaches focus on the deployment of these coordinating measures during the policy formulation stage while the other approaches adopt a policy implementation stance.

Table 2: Comparative assessment of approaches

	Government centred					Governance centred			
	Comprehensive planning	Policy coherence	Holistic government	Joined up government	Whole of government	Horizontal governance	Policy integration	Boundary spanning regimes	Holistic governance
Stage in policy cycle	Formulation	Formulation	Implementation	Implementation	Implementation	Formulation	Formulation	Formulation	Implementation
Fokus	Development of master plan	Coherence of policies	Administrative coordination and integration	Administrative coordination and integration	Administrative coordination and integration	Coordination and integration of political actors	Coordination and integration policies	Solving of „wicked“ problems	Administrative coordination and integration
Interests	Central planner vs. stakeholders	International organizations, member states vs. development countries	“Accountable” government vs. Public administration vs. citizens	“Accountable” government vs. Public administration vs. citizens	“Accountable” government vs. Public administration vs. citizens	Different types of policy makers; inclusion of stakeholders	Policy makers vs. policy addressees	Public administration vs. citizens	Public administration vs. citizens
Policy domains	Local government	International development policy, U.S. politics	Local government; abstract policy goals (e.g. sustainability)	Government reforms, national health service	Government reforms	Predominantly local government	Sustainability, mostly environmental policy and climate change	Local government, national policies and institutions	Local government
Countries	U.S.	IOs, U.S.	UK, Canada	UK	Australia	Multiple, also comparative analyses	Multiple, but often EU	North America, India, Ireland	UK

In particular, the government centred approaches – JUG, WGA, holistic government, and holistic governance – focus on the implementation of coordination instruments. These approaches are also the least politicized approaches. They predominantly focus on instrument design and effectiveness which provides functionalist explanations for the choice of instruments. It is assumed that there is little friction between administrative units that have to implement these instruments. Furthermore, when the right incentives are applied, most frictions dissolve. It has already been noted by Davies and Friend that the choice of integrating and coordinating instruments does not take place in a political vacuum but, on the contrary, is highly contested (Davies 2009; Friend 2006).

Approaches that focus on the policy formulation, in contrast, have incorporated an interests and power dimension in their argumentation. The comprehensive planning approach conceptualises the formulation of urban master plans which can be subject to conflicting interests. Similarly, the policy coherence and the boundary-spanning regime approach conceptualized interest group influence and interest conflicts as major barriers to policy integration since they divert policymakers' attention and thus distracts agenda-setting. In a similar vein, the policy integration and the horizontal governance approach view interest conflicts as “bottlenecks holding back integration” (Lenschow 2002).

As can be seen from the previous account, there is a clear distinction between depoliticized policy implementation and politicized policy formulation approaches to policy integration. In the subsequent sections we provide a theoretical sketch that advocates for a fully politicized account along the policy cycle. We will show that linking the individual strands of literature to general theories of public policy and political economy provide empirical puzzles worth analysing in the study of policy coordination and integration. Furthermore, incorporating interest and power dimensions provides an avenue for the development of theoretical models of policy integration.

Discussion of the literature review

The literature on the concept of policy integration turned out to be vast because of the numerous headings under which this phenomenon is discussed. Remarkably though, the individual literature strands are sector-specific. As a result, scholars working in one field are unaware of the discussion in other fields. Thus, the first finding is that the concept of policy integration is discussed widely in the literature, but under different headings, which makes the body of research appear smaller than it actually is. Second, the literature – regardless of the exact heading – has developed around “buzzwords” or “catch phrases” invented by international organisations or national governments. As a result, the scholarly literature primarily aims to grasp and make sense to the concepts invented by practitioners. From this it follows that most studies are descriptive or even normative and

prescriptive, which prevents the production of cumulative knowledge for they do not put forth falsifiable statements. Related to this second point is a third one: the literature is remarkably vague about the theoretical considerations guiding the analyses. Neither are specific theoretical arguments made nor is the appropriateness of more general theories for analysing policy integration discussed. In this context, it should be noted that there are no studies that begin by stating an empirical puzzle or refer to theory. Instead, the overwhelming majority of studies directly relate to those policy documents that introduce the very concepts. What is also remarkable is that often the studies do not even state in which policy phase they are interested, which again indicates that theoretical concerns play a secondary role in the literature. When recalling the previous section about the chances and challenges of cross-sectoral policies for policy-making, our answer must be that the insights are only descriptive ones and do not feed into a theoretically informed discussion. Considering the immense size of the literature, this finding is worrying and makes us conclude that the most important flaw in the literature that needs to be addressed is the “theory gap”.

Theorizing the study of policy integration

In this paper we argue that cross-sectoral policies can be studied by existing theories advanced in the public policy literature. To facilitate this, the study of policy integration needs to pose different research questions. We here present four exemplary research questions that allow the theoretically informed study of policy integration.

How likely are integrated policies to be placed on the decision-makers’ agenda?

How are issues selected for government attention? This is an important question of studies in public policy and it can be considered as equally important for studies that are more specifically interested in how policy integration comes about. Typically, this question is addressed by studies of agenda setting. Put simply, agenda setting is about getting an issue onto the ‘agenda’. The key aspect of this scholarly debate concerned the notion of power, especially its use and distribution in society (Dahl 1961; Polsby 1963; Schattschneider 1960; Truman 1951). Regarding agenda setting, the debate principally implied that different groups of actors seek to increase the probability that an issue will receive collective attention by attempting to raise an issue’s salience and/or its support.

Schattschneider’s (1960) argument regarding agenda-setting dynamics seems to be particularly promising for the study of cross-sectoral policies. The author emphasised that rather than the actors actively participating in agenda setting it is the wider public domain which is key to understanding politics. In this regard, Schattschneider argued that strategically it is in the best interest of the contestant who is losing a battle over an issue to bring more and more fence-sitters into the conflict

to socialise them until the balance of forces changes. Conversely, it is advantageous for the one who is winning to contain the scope of the conflict so as not to upset the favourable balance of power. Hence, issue battles are frequently won or lost over the combatants' success either at getting the public involved or excluding them.

From this perspective studies of policy integration could advance the theoretical expectation that cross-sectoral issues are more likely to be placed on the agenda than issues that only concern one policy area. When an issue cuts across policy areas it should, in principle, be easier to expand the political conflict over this issue. Recalling the GMO example given above, it is likely that the mere fact that GMOs concern agriculture, environment, consumer protection, and health issues helps to increase the public's awareness to this problem, thereby imposing policy-makers to address it by means to initiating a policy-making process. Conversely, the involvement of so many different actors should make it difficult for policy-makers to contain the political conflict over an issue, again culminating in the expectation that cross-sectoral policies are more likely to be placed on the decision-makers' agenda than policies that concern only one sector.

A related research question would be whether there is competition among the different sectoral actors for exact definition of the underlying policy problem. In general, it holds that the first actor proposing a problem definition has a strategic advantage, i.e. a first-mover advantage, since normalising a deviating definition will require considerable effort by competing actors (Knill and Tosun 2013). If this is the case, the actor group that manages to define the problem first should also be eager to frame it as a policy problem that predominantly concerns their policy sector, thereby trying to increase their leverage in the subsequent stages of the policy-making process.

Are integrated policies likely to be adopted smoothly?

There are two concepts that have received notable attention by studies concentrating on the stage of policy adoption. The first concept is the one about veto points as put forward by Immergut (Immergut 1992). Veto points refer to the fact that policy decisions need the agreement of several, constitutionally generated, institutional points in a chain of decisions. The adoption of legislative proposals depends upon the number and location of opportunities for veto along this decision-making chain. For example, a parliament represents a veto point if it can block the decision of the executive. The logic here is straightforward: the more veto points in a given political system, the more difficult it is to gain approval for a policy proposal. The second concept is a refinement of the veto point concept; the veto player perspective that is almost exclusively associated with the work of Tsebelis (Tsebelis 2002). His veto player theory holds that policy adoption can be explained by the

institutions governing the decision-making process and the preferences of the actors involved in it, thus following the logic of rational choice institutionalism. More precisely, however, the general expectation of this model is policy stability, that is, that it is very difficult to change existing policies. Veto players are defined as “individual or collective actors whose agreement is necessary for a change of the status quo” (Tsebelis 2002: 19).

The theories of veto points and veto players can also be related to the theoretical concept of incrementalism (Lindblom 1959; Lindblom 1979). While the veto player theory is based on the concept of rational choice, and incrementalism, in contrast, relies on bounded rationality, both theories’ predictions about decision making are remarkably similar. Both perspectives underline the difficulties in achieving agreement among the relevant actors. Accordingly, incrementalism argues that this can only lead to marginal changes in public policy. In a similar vein, the veto player theory emphasises the likelihood of policy stability.

Depending on whether the preferences of the actors involved concur or not, the adoption of a cross-sectoral policy can become tedious or even fail. In Romania, for example, the environment minister recently aimed to institute a cultivation ban for GMOs. To prepare a formally correct bill, the environment minister had to coordinate the proposal with the agriculture minister, who opposed the cultivation ban. As a result, no bill could be produced – and subsequently inserted in the legislative adoption process – since the agriculture minister used his veto power in this specific case. On a related note, Germany has no proper regulation of hydrological fracturing (better known by the term of “fracking”) because the environment minister and the economy minister cannot reach compromise and make use of their veto powers.

In light of these considerations, studies of policy integration may ask how veto positions can be overcome. In fact, the literature points out numerous instances at which it was possible for different ministries to agree on policies and so they might contribute to the broader public policy literature by teasing out why and how this agreement was reached.

How likely are integrated policies to be implemented properly?

Policy implementation is primarily carried out by different levels of bureaucracy. At the central level, there are the various national ministries, which form the core of the executive branch. Also at the central level, there are autonomous agencies located outside of the ministries that are endowed with the competence of implementing public policy. While centrally located ministries and autonomous agencies play an important role in policy implementation, national policy is also implemented by

public entities at the local level. Employment and to a certain extent also social policy and health care policy are usually carried out by local agencies. As seen above, often public policies that are implemented by multiple organisations, which might even be located at different levels of government. In such a situation, policy implementation involves collaborative efforts and brings inter-organisational relations to the fore.

In this regard, it is analytically interesting to ask to what extent deviations and shifts in policy goals can occur during the implementation phase when cross-sectoral policies are concerned. To address this question, the principal-agent theory constitutes an appropriate analytical framework. The principal-agent theory assumes that implementation problems result from the differences between policy objectives and their actual implementation through the responsible administrative agencies. This difference is seen as an unavoidable consequence emerging from the configuration of modern political-administrative systems that are characterised by the delegation of competencies to subordinate administrative authorities.

Delegation entails the problem of agency drift or bureaucratic drift, a problem that is inherent to the configuration of political-administrative systems, which is further aggravated by two factors. First, high organisational complexity might increase the number of agents and government levels that are involved in the implementation process and hence increase the potential for agency drift. Second, a high degree of scientific or technological complexity of the underlying policy problem will increase the chances of different interpretations of policy objectives by principals and agents. The more specialised knowledge is needed to implement a public policy, the more likely is the implementer to possess information advantage vis-à-vis policy makers, which facilitates deviations from the original policy guidelines (Knill and Tosun 2012).

In the present case it is mainly the first factor that suggests that cross-sectoral policies should be particularly susceptible to implementation problems because of the involvement of different organisations. Indeed, we would confirm that this expectation is implicitly advanced by many studies of policy integration, especially the government-centred approaches. We would even argue that several studies aim to provide solutions to this problem. However, the underlying theoretical reasoning is not taken up in an explicit manner. Furthermore, the literature fails to develop more refined expectations for potential delegation problems. Interesting enough, though, the perspective on policy implementation is the one to which the literature on policy integration could contribute most easily, simply by making an effort to spell out more clearly what the research objectives are and

by stating how the studies relate to the issue of policy implementation. In this way, the literature on policy integration could contribute to the broader literature on bureaucratic control.

How are integrated policies evaluated?

There exist many different ways in which policies can be evaluated. We here refer to administrative evaluation, which is usually carried out within government bodies and examines the delivery of government services. The main objective of administrative evaluation is to ensure that public policies attain their goals at the least possible cost and by implying the least possible burden on the policy addressees (Howlett, Ramesh and Perl 2009). There exist many different techniques of administrative evaluation, including process evaluation, effort evaluation, efficiency evaluation and effectiveness evaluation (Howlett et al. 2009: 186). Process evaluation is about exploring possibilities for making operating procedures more efficient. Effort evaluation assesses the amount of effort governments put into attaining their policy objectives. Efficiency evaluation is about a public policy's costs and ways of accomplishing the same goals at lower costs. Effectiveness evaluation compares the intended goals of a policy or a programme with the actually achieved ones. These four forms have recently been complemented by performance indicators and benchmarks that are designed to allow public-sector efforts to be compared. Considering the involvement of different organisations in the evaluation of cross-sectoral policies, one can advance the expectations that the outcomes of the evaluation process are likely to be inconclusive due to the different evaluation practices and assessments.

It should be noted that there is a lack of studies that explicitly ask about how cross-sectoral policies are evaluated. The absence of such a research perspective is surprising since several methods for administrative evaluation were developed and promoted by the same international organisations that triggered the study of policy integration and related concepts. Policy appraisals for example seek to inform decision makers by predicting the effects of policy proposals. The most widely used form of policy appraisal is the regulatory impact analysis, which includes various methods to assess *ex ante* the impact of proposed regulatory policies on target populations. The OECD and its 1997 guidelines on regulatory impact assessment played a central role in the international diffusion of this evaluation technique (Radaelli 2009). Consequently, it would be interesting to explore whether cross-sectoral policies are more likely to be subjected to a regulatory impact analysis than policies that do not cut across different policy sectors.

Similar to policy implementation, the literature seems to be concerned with administrative evaluation, but again the studies do not spell this out clearly. They also do not explain whether

evaluation outcomes – if taken into consideration at all – are the motivation for policy integration or whether the policy integration is the subject of the evaluation process. These clarifications would be appreciated for linking the study of policy integration to public policy analysis and to achieve cross-fertilisation and a more rigorous theorising.

Concluding remarks

What are the empirical puzzles worth analysing in the study of policy coordination and integration? Which theoretical approaches are appropriate for explaining processes of cross-sectoral policy coordination and integration? These two research questions guided our analysis. To address them we reviewed the literature on policy integration and eight related concepts that are widely used in the literature, namely holistic government, joined-up government, policy coherence, whole of government, comprehensive (policy) planning, horizontal governance, holistic governance, and boundary-spanning policy regimes. Our analysis revealed that the use of these concepts is sector-specific, which makes the body of literature initially appear smaller than it actually is. Despite the vast size of the literature, however, its use for answering the research questions are limited. The bulk of studies do not state any empirical puzzles, but directly start to elaborate on the concept of interest. This corresponds with the overall characteristic of the literature, which is descriptive, normative or prescriptive. More precisely, the literature very much clusters around buzzwords and catch phrases invented by national governments for promoting their programmes or international organizations. From this it follows that the empirical puzzles worth studying when dealing with policy coordination and integration must be identified by the readers; empirical puzzles do not guide the research.

The difficulties experienced in identifying the empirical puzzles guiding the literature are closely related to the low attention that is paid to theoretical considerations. While we must acknowledge that the literature on some concepts is more aware to theoretical considerations than others (i.e. policy integration), the overall level of theorising is comparatively low. Due to the relative absence of theoretical considerations, it is also difficult to identify empirical puzzles worth studying. To remedy this, we illustrated ways in which the study of policy integration could be related to theoretical arguments advanced in public policy. To this end, we presented four exemplary research questions and discussed by which theoretical perspectives they could be addressed. In this context, we also highlighted some possible empirical puzzles.

All in all, the study of policy integration can be improved by developing further its theoretical underpinnings, which in some cases only requires a tweaking of arguments, while in others an entirely new approach to the topic.

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