

POLICY INTEGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION: AN OVERVIEW APPROACH

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Abstract

International integration is an inevitable process, due to the social nature of labor and the relationship between people. Individuals who want to survive and thrive must have relationships and links that form the community. Many communities are linked to each other to form society and national-ethnic groups. Countries are linked together to form larger international bodies and form the world system. The development of each country and ethnicity depends directly on the policies and strategies chosen by its leadership. Starting from the objective trend of globalization, policy integration is a relatively new concept, especially in the context of Vietnam's deeper integration into the world. This article introduces the conceptual approach to policy integration from a theoretical perspective. Hopefully this is an important data, helping policymakers identify solutions to participate and contribute to the country's international integration process.

Keywords: *Policy, policy integration, globalization*

1. Introduction

Since 1960s, "globalization" has become one of the concepts widely used in contemporary social sciences and at the same time one of the most controversial. Globalization is understood as a phenomenon associated with an increase in the number and intensity of mechanisms, processes and activities that promote increased mutual dependence among countries around the world as well as economic and political integration at the global level. Accordingly, globalization overshadows national borders, narrowing spaces across aspects of the world's economic, political, social and cultural life

There are many ways of analyzing policy in the context of globalization, in which policy association and integration are recognized as of top importance in the policy-making process of each country. The world today faces significant challenges, from persistent poverty and severe inequality along with climate change and environmental sustainability, conflict and inequality. It all hinders a joint effort for people to have the opportunity to develop comprehensively. In that context, policy integration is not indispensable without the element of globalization. Social issues seriously harm human development, such as violent labor, terrorism, migration, human trafficking, etc. are against the desire to make the world a better place

With the effect of promoting human development while eliminating the negative side

effects, policy integration will expand the opportunities of the current generation but not reduce the opportunities of future generations. Policy integration requires that countries' strategies be agreed and planned in creating job opportunities, ensuring human welfare, and building action towards sustainable development. However, shortly after the G 20-2017 summit took place in Germany. The joint statement demonstrates the views of the group of 20 major economies on various world issues, including financial transparency, food security, cooperation in solving the migrant crisis and fighting terrorism... This reflects on the ongoing challenges facing the world brought about by globalization. In fact, it makes it even more difficult to integrate policy.

Many of today's most pressing societal challenges including terrorism, food security, climate change, involuntary migration, or underemployment (WEF 2015) are crosscutting the boundaries of established jurisdictions, governance levels, and policy domains. While it is recognized that these problems require some level of policy integration, severe integration challenges to policymakers and their institutional surroundings continue to exist (Briassoulis 2004; Geerlings and Stead 2003; Hovik and Hanssen 2015; Jochim and May 2010; Jordan and Schout 2006; Kettl 2006; Tosun and Lang 2013). Examples in the literature are abundant, including the problems of compartmentalization, fragmentation, competing and incoherent objectives, policy under- and overreaction, competing issue-attention, and inconsistent instrument mixes. These integration challenges emerge particularly when complex societal issues are confronted with traditional forms of subsystem policymaking within hierarchic governance systems (Jochim and May 2010; May et al. 2006). In these governance systems (sub-)sectoral policy is made by relatively stable actor configurations, each of which is characterized by specific sets of associated interests, belief systems, and problem perceptions (Baumgartner and Jones 2009; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993). Differences between subsystems generally do not allow for the coherent or holistic approaches that are needed to satisfactorily deal with problems of a cross-cutting nature (Jochim and May 2010). Rhodes (1991: 212) therefore aptly characterized the governance of these 'cross-cutting problems' through sectoral subsystems as resulting in 'policy messes.' What makes the governance of cross-cutting problems even more messy is that many are 'wicked'; in addition to cross-scale dynamics, these problems involve high degrees of ambiguity, controversy, uncertainty, and deadlocked interaction patterns (Rittel and Webber 1973; Termeer et al. 2015).

To overcome these integration challenges, governments and international organizations have introduced various initiatives to stimulate cross-sectoral policy integration between subsystems. Many of these initiatives, such as joined-up-government and whole-of-government, were developed as an answer to New Public Management (NPM) principles that had further worsened governance systems' abilities to deal holistically with cross-cutting policy problems (Christensen and Lægreid 2007; Halligan et al. 2011). Various scholars argue that it is somewhat surprising that this range of governance initiatives has not

yet led to a general theory of policy integration in the political sciences (Geerlings and Stead 2003; Lafferty and Hovden 2003; Tosun and Lang 2013). Instead, the governance of cross-cutting policy problems has been studied through a plethora of approaches and schools of thought, all of which have distinct backgrounds and foci but also share considerable overlap (for overviews, see: Geerlings and Stead 2003; Tosun and Lang 2013).

This article tries to approach the concepts, theories and views of policy integration while reviewing and comparing the policy integration of scholars from an overview of foreign documents. With the aim of contributing to improving understanding of the term policy integration - an important tool for Governments to participate in the planning process and specially to coordinate policy in the face of the current trend of globalization

2. Method

Our aim in this paper is to theorize and bring some conceptual convergence in the debate on policy integration for the governance of cross-cutting policy problems. The concept of 'policy integration' was first used by Arild Underdal (1980) in the context of integrated marine policy. He argues that an 'integrated policy' is one in which the 'constituent elements are brought together and made subject to a single, unifying conception' (ibid.: 159). After his publication, the notion has primarily been used in the context of sustainable development, where it is referred to as Environmental Policy Integration (EPI) (e.g., Jordan and Lenschow 2010; Lafferty and Hovden 2003; Runhaar et al. 2014), and, more recently, as Climate Policy Integration (CPI) (e.g., Adelle and Russel 2013; Dupont and Oberthür 2012; Nilsson and Nilsson 2005). The principle of policy integration, however, remains the same: The objective of EPI is to incorporate, and, arguably, to prioritize, environmental concerns in non-environmental policy domains, Footnote 1 with the purpose of enhancing environmental policy outcomes.

Whereas much of the early EPI literature understands the concept as a governing 'principle' or desired policy outcome, more recently scholars have directed their attention toward the ways in, and extents to which, EPI has become adopted within various political systems and policy processes, and the factors that facilitate or hinder this adoption (for an overview of this literature, see: Jordan and Lenschow 2010). These recent studies mark the shift toward a more processual approach to policy integration, i.e., one that proceeds beyond studying whether EPI has been implemented or not toward the dynamics and reasons behind (dis)integration. However, as Adelle and Russel (2013) put it, existing typologies have been mainly used to evaluate progress toward EPI (for example in: EEA 2005; Jordan and Schout 2006; Mickwitz et al. 2009), rather than approaching integration as an inherently dynamic concept in itself (i.e., as a derivative of the verb 'to integrate'). As a result, integration just comes in one flavor: It is a desired state that is reached, or else we do not speak of policy integration at all. In this paper, we aim to reconceptualize policy integration by adopting a processual understanding of integration. The shift from a relatively static (desired) outcome centered approach toward a differentiated processual understanding of integration raises

interesting questions about when integration is fully realized, what elements constitute integration processes, and how these may develop over time, inter-alia. To address these questions coherently and to align integration studies with adjacent theories on policy dynamics, we propose a conceptual framework that unpacks the notion of policy integration (Hogan and Howlett 2015). We thereby view policy integration as a multi-dimensional and ‘ongoing process’ (EEA 2005; Jordan and Schout 2006; Keast et al. 2007). This differentiated view recognizes that policy integration ‘...potentially has many various aspects which may not always ‘move’ in parallel or at the same speed’ (cf. Bauer and Knill 2012: 31). Through this pursuit, the framework aims to contribute to the advancement of the study of policy integration theory in the context of globalization.

3. Results

Having elaborated the four starting principles of our processual approach to policy integration, we can now define the concept. We define policy integration as an agency-driven process of asynchronous and multi-dimensional policy and institutional change within an existing or newly formed governance system that shapes the system’s and its subsystems’ ability to address a cross-cutting policy problem in a more or less holistic manner. Tracking such a process in a systematic manner requires a more concrete conceptualization of the various dimensions of integration. The goal of the remainder of the paper is to set out these dimensions.

3.1. Policy frame

The last remark is particularly relevant for the first dimension of policy frame, which has generally been used to refer to competing or dominant problem definitions of societal problems in public policy debates (Baumgartner and Jones 2009; Schön and Rein 1994). Policy frames have hereby been shown to have predictive value regarding public support for and decisions about policy alternatives (Lau and Schlesinger 2005; Roggeband and Verloo 2007). Here, we follow a narrower interpretation of policy frame and concentrate on how a particular problem is perceived within a given governance system. In particular, this dimension is about whether a cross-cutting problem is recognized as such and, if so, to what extent it is thought to be requiring a holistic governance approach (Peters 2005). Importantly, the policy frame here entails the problem definition and governance understanding that is dominant among the governance system’s macropolitical venues and decision-makers. This dominant problem definition may deviate from whether and how the problem is perceived in individual policy subsystems (“Subsystem involvement” section). The absence of a policy frame that fosters a common governance approach can pose serious risks. Gieve and Provost (2012) for example show how the lack of awareness and promotion of the need to coordinate between monetary and regulatory policy subsystems resulted in the collapse of the U.S. subprime mortgage market and eventually in the 2007–2009 financial crises.

The more specific policy frame we discern, focusing on the elements of cross-cuttingness and holistic governance, is embedded within a broader frame. The sociopolitical

mechanisms that influence the continuity and change of these broader policy frames have been studied extensively and include focusing events, policy entrepreneurship, and interest mobilizations (Baumgartner and Jones 2009; Zahariadis 2007). In addition, the policy frame is informed by the administrative culture of a governance system. Some administrative cultures have hereby been shown to be more open toward integration than others and this differs across countries and issues (Hoppe 2010). For example, Anglo-Saxon countries are more likely to adopt integrative approaches compared to Napoleonic countries (6 2004).

An important methodological side-note is that policy frames are generally not straightforward to observe. The cognitive and normative ideas that constitute frames are sometimes articulated in a foundational document or statement, but they eventually become taken-for-granted elements (Rayner and Howlett 2009) and, as a result, are not easily identifiable (for a discussion of methodologies, see: Verloo 2005).

We distinguish four manifestations of the policy frame in policy integration processes, which are presented in the following Table 1.

Table 1 Manifestations of policy frame

Low amounts of policy integration		←————→		High amounts of policy integration	
Policy frame	The problem is defined in narrow terms within the governance system; the cross-cutting nature of the problem is not recognized and the problem is considered to fall within the boundaries of a specific subsystem. Efforts of other subsystems are not understood to be part of the governance of the problem. There is no push for integration	There is awareness that the policy outputs of different subsystems shape policy outcomes as well as an emerging notion of externalities and do-no-harm. The problem is still predominantly perceived of as falling within the boundaries of a particular subsystem. There is no strong push for integration	As a result of increasing awareness of the cross-cutting nature of the problem, an understanding that the governance of the problem should not be restricted to a single domain has emerged as well as associated notions of coordination and coherence	General recognition that the problem is and should not solely be governed by subsystems, but by the governance system as a whole. Subsystems are desired to work according to a shared, ‘holistic’ approach, which is particularly recognized within procedural instruments that span subsystems	

Source: *Toward a processual understanding of policy integration.* Howlett, M. (2007)

3.2. *Subsystem involvement*

The second dimension of policy integration is subsystem involvement. This dimension captures the range of actors and institutions involved in the governance of a particular cross-cutting policy problem. The rise of a cross-cutting problem on the political agenda is often followed by an increase in the number of subsystems that are formally or informally involved (cf. Peters and Hogwood 1985). This has been shown to be particularly the case when two or more subsystems share beliefs and functional overlap (Zafonte and Sabatier 1998). Actors within subsystems often play an active entrepreneurial role in involvement by trying to expand their subsystem's jurisdiction over such broad issues (Jones and Strahan 1985). These expansions of jurisdictions are not only relevant from the perspective of who decides what, they also affect the overarching policy frame that was discussed in "Policy frame" section (Baumgartner and Jones 2009).

It is hereby important to note that the exact boundaries of subsystems may be difficult to determine, because they are analytical constructs rather than firm demarcations (Nohrstedt and Weible 2010). However, it is generally possible to identify relatively stable groups of actors and institutions involved in making a specific policy (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004; Sabatier 1988). In addition, it is not necessarily entire subsystems that are raising or addressing an issue. Sometimes, individuals, or groups of actors within a subsystem may draw attention to a particular concern and as such come to function as policy entrepreneurs (Jochim and May 2010). By redefining a problem as a cross-cutting policy problem, these actors may realize the incorporation of the problem within a subsystem, resulting in a broadening of the subsystems involved in the governance of the problem.

The first indicator consists of which subsystems are involved in the governance of the cross-cutting issue. Subsystems are considered to be involved when they explicitly address a particular problem within their policy process—thus when they label policy efforts, i.e., activities involving agenda-setting, preparatory debates, policy design, or internal and external communication, inter-alia, in terms of the problem—regardless from whether these efforts substantially contribute to addressing the problem or not (Dupuis and Biesbroek 2013). The engagement of subsystems is thus determined by the extent to which subsystems consider a particular issue to be of their concern as well as the recognition of the issue's cross-cutting nature and governance implications thereof. A good illustration of how such beliefs within subsystems can change over time is the adoption of fisheries concerns within EU development cooperation policies. For a long time, the potential role of fisheries for improving livelihoods and food security had been overlooked, until some policy entrepreneurs within the development cooperation and fisheries subsystems realized that mutual synergies could be realized (Candel et al. 2015).

Apart from those subsystems that are involved, it is important to account for those

that are not yet but could be (Dupuis and Biesbroek 2013; Sabatier 1988). Drimie and Ruysenaar (2010) for example show how the impact of South Africa’s Integrated Food Security Strategy remained limited due to the failure to include subsystems other than the agricultural subsystem. As a result, the implementation of the strategy was dominated by agricultural policy efforts, while matters of health, nutrition, access, and social inequality remained largely unaddressed. Involvement of other subsystems could have led to new information, perspectives, and resources (cf. Jack 2005). The indicator can therefore best be assessed through a proximity-to-target measurement, determining how many of the potentially involved subsystems are involved.

The second indicator involves the density of interactions between subsystems in a network configuration. As not all subsystems are involved to the same extent, a distinction can be made between subsystems in which a problem is primarily embedded, and subsystems that are only indirectly involved in a problem’s governance (cf. Orton and Weick 1990). For relatively higher amounts of policy integration we would, apart from a larger number of subsystems involved, expect a set of dominant subsystems, i.e., subsystems characterized by high intentionality, that engage in frequent interactions with each other, while maintaining less frequent interactions with a set of less engaged subsystems. A possible manner of measuring these interactions lies in determining how often subsystems, e.g., departments, have the lead in developing policy proposals regarding a particular problem and how often other subsystems have an input through procedural instruments such as impact assessments and inter-departmental taskforces and consultations (for example as in: Hartlapp et al. 2012). Using these two indicators, we distinguish four possible manifestations of subsystem involvement within a policy integration process, ranging from low to high integration, see Table 2.

Table 2 Manifestations of subsystem involvement

Low amounts of policy integration		←————→	High amounts of policy integration	
Subsystems involved	One dominant subsystem, which governs the issue independently Formally, no other subsystems are involved, although they may be in terms of substantial, non-	Subsystems recognize the failure of the dominant subsystem to manage the problem and externalities which results in the emergence of	Awareness of the problem’s cross-cutting nature spreads across subsystems, as a result of which two or more subsystems have formal responsibility for	All possibly relevant subsystems have developed ideas about their role in the governance of the problem. The number of subsystems that are formally

	intentional policymaking	concerns about the problem in one or more additional subsystems	dealing with the problem	involved is equal to or higher than at previous manifestations, but complemented with a less engaged set of alternative subsystems
Density of interactions	No interactions	Infrequent information exchange with dominant subsystem	More regular and formal exchange of information and coordination, possibly through coordinative instruments at system-level	High level of interaction between formally involved subsystems, that maintain infrequent interactions with a less engaged set of subsystems

Source: Toward a processual understanding of policy integration. Howlett, M. (2007).

3.3. Policy goals

Each governance system and associated subsystems have several short-, medium-, and long-term policy goals to pursue, some of which are directly impacting, or are impacted by, the cross-cutting problem. A policy goal here refers to the explicit adoption of a specific concern within the policies and strategies of a governance system, including its subsystems, with the aim of addressing the concern. We recognize that policies can be rather abstract and set out strategic lines, or take the shape of concrete programs entailing specific interventions (Howlett and Ramesh 2003). The dimension of policy goals, here, focuses on two aspects: (1) the range of policies, both at system-level and within subsystems, in which (concerns about) a cross-cutting problem is adopted as a goal, and (2) the coherence between the consequential diversity of policy goals.

First, as higher degrees of integration involve a relatively high density of subsystems, they also encompass a broader range of policies. Ideally, concerns about a cross-cutting problem would be adopted as a goal in all these policies. However, our starting principle of asynchronous integration implies that this does not always happen in practice. Here too, a proximity-to-target measure could be used, assessing the number of potentially relevant

policies in which these concerns are adopted. Whereas at low degrees of integration we would expect policy goals regarding a cross-cutting problem to be restricted to one or a few domains and associated policies, shifts toward enhanced policy integration are accompanied by a diversification of policy goals across domains (cf. Peters and Hogwood 1985). Stead (2008) provides an example of low integration in terms of policy goals by arguing that the integration of transport policy is hindered by the autonomous and sectoral goal-setting by other subsystems. An example of enhanced integration of policy goals is given by Hustedt and Seyfried (2015), who show how enhanced internal coordination of climate change policies within the European Commission resulted in the adoption of climate change mitigation and adaptation goals in the policies of a number of non-traditional domains, such as energy and maritime affairs.

One of the main integration challenges found in the literature is that there are often fundamental differences in the way in which various policy goals get framed and perceived, also in terms of temporality or geographical scale (Adelle et al. 2009). A second indicator therefore involves the degree of coherence within a governance system vis-à-vis a cross-cutting policy problem (Rayner and Howlett 2009). Coherence can be achieved and measured within a policy domain (May et al. 2006), but for cross-cutting policy problems it is particularly relevant how the goals of various domains and associated subsystems relate to each other. In other words, coherence relates to whether a governance system's policies contribute jointly to—or at least do not undermine—specific objectives (e.g., food security, employment or sustainable development) (OECD 2013: 7). However, the operationalization and measurement of horizontal coherence within a governance system vis-à-vis cross-cutting issues is understudied at best and highly controversial at worst (Nilsson et al. 2012). The progress of policy integration studies will largely depend on whether conceptual and methodological agreements for studying policy coherence can be found. Here, we confine ourselves to a simple binary distinction between strong and weak coherence. Weak coherence exists when attuning of policy goals between subsystems does not or hardly take place. Strong coherence exists when subsystems attune their policy goals to jointly address a cross-cutting problem, which they can do by mitigating externalities, searching for synergies, or even working toward a system-wide 'integrated policy strategy' (Rayner and Howlett 2009). Whereas the first is achieved by 'negative coordination,' i.e., one subsystem formally has the lead in drafting policy proposals and monitors other subsystems for possible negative effects by applying the 'do-no-harm' principle (OECD 2014), the latter two take the shape of 'positive coordination,' i.e., subsystems jointly work together toward a comprehensive approach (Scharpf 1994). A good example of an integrated policy strategy is the sustainable development strategies that many governments have adopted to integrate economic, social, and environmental development objectives (Meadowcroft 2007). Table 3 presents the four manifestations of policy goals associated with relatively stronger or weaker

degrees of policy integration.

Table 3 Manifestations of policy goals

Low amounts of policy integration		←————→		High amounts of policy integration
Range of policies in which problem is embedded	Concerns only embedded within the goals of a dominant subsystem	Concerns adopted in policy goals of one or more additional subsystems)	Possible further diversification across policy goals of additional subsystems	Concerns embedded within all potentially relevant policy goals
Policy coherence	Very low or no coherence. Occurs when cross-cutting nature is not recognized, or when subsystems are highly autonomous in setting (sectoral) goals	Because of rising awareness of externalities and mutual concerns subsystems may address these to some extent in their goals	Coordinated sectoral goals, which are judged in the light of coherence	Shared policy goals embedded within an overarching strategy

Source: Toward a processual understanding of policy integration. Howlett, M. (2007).

3.4. Policy instruments

The fourth dimension of policy integration consists of the substantive and/or procedural policy instruments within a governance system and associated subsystems. Substantive instruments allocate governing resources of nodality, authority, treasure and organization (Hood 1983) to directly affect the ‘nature, types, quantities and distribution of the goods and services provided in society.’ Procedural instruments are designed to ‘indirectly affect outcomes through the manipulation of policy processes’ (Howlett 2000: 413–415). Procedural instruments can also be deployed at a governance system-level, for example to facilitate the coordination between subsystems (Jordan and Schout 2006). Within a policy integration process, we distinguish three types of indicators related to policy instruments for policy integration: (1) subsystems’ deployment of instruments, (2) procedural instruments at system-level, and (3) the consistency of substantive and procedural instruments.

First, as higher amounts of policy integration are characterized by a wider range of subsystems involved and of associated policies in which the problem is adopted as a goal, they ideally also include supportive instruments within subsystems’ policies to pursue the more or less coherent sets of goals. In other words, we would expect a diversification of instruments addressing the problem across subsystems’ policies. These instruments can be both substantive or procedural, depending on the nature of the problem and the governance

philosophies within a subsystem (Howlett 2009).

Second, enhanced amounts of policy integration are characterized by the deployment of procedural instruments at governance system-level to coordinate subsystems' policy efforts and to enforce and safeguard the consistency of the instrument mix as a whole (Jordan and Lenschow 2010). Examples of such instruments include overarching plans and strategies, constitutional provisions, legislative standards setting, overarching funding programs and financial incentives, consultation mechanisms, impact assessments, interdepartmental working groups, and (green) cabinets, *inter-alia* (e.g., Adelle et al. 2009; EEA 2005; Feiock 2013; Jacob and Volkery 2004; Jacob et al. 2008; Karré et al. 2013; Ross and Dovers 2008). At the highest degree of integration, organizational procedural instruments will take the shape of a boundary-spanning structure or overarching authority that oversees, steers and coordinates the problem as a whole (Jochim and May 2010; Lafferty and Hovden 2003). Jochim and May (2010) provide the example of U.S. Community Empowerment regime in the 1960s and 1970s, in which subsystems of economic development, housing, education, employment, social welfare, and transportation worked together to realize urban renewal. This mutual effort was facilitated by the creation of overarching inter-agency review teams. Pelkonen et al. (2008) give another example of a boundary-spanning structure by showing how the Finnish Science and Technology Policy Council, a governmental advisory body, fosters the integration of science and technology policies between domains.

Third, higher amounts of integration are characterized by a stronger consistency of policy instrument mixes, *i.e.*, the sets of instruments that subsystems have developed incrementally in an *ad hoc* fashion over a longer course of time (Gunningham and Sinclair 1999; Howlett and Rayner 2007). This consistency is relative to the (more or less) coherent goals that a set of instruments is meant to help procure (Howlett 2009; Howlett and Rayner 2007; Rayner and Howlett 2009). Thus, an appropriate instrument mix effectively realizes certain integration objectives (Adelle and Russel 2013). As with policy goals, the consistency of instrument mixes should, in case of a cross-cutting policy problem, be assessed for the governance system as a whole, thus between subsystems. It is hereby not only the types of instruments that matter, but also their magnitude and whether they are targeted to the appropriate audiences (EEA 2005). Although the public policy literature has provided various arguments for why inconsistencies may arise and how they could be overcome (on paper) (e.g., Gunningham et al. 1998; Rayner and Howlett 2009), as with coherence an univocal and agreed-on operationalization of the consistency of instrument mixes is lacking. For the sake of our theoretical argument, it suffices to distinguish between weak and strong consistency. Within strong consistency, a further distinction can be made between negative coordination of instruments, *i.e.*, mitigating the externalities of subsystems' instruments, and positive coordination, *i.e.*, seeking synergies between

instruments or even developing a unified instrument mix at system level (cf. Scharpf 1994). The latter has also been referred to as a ‘new governance arrangement’ and involves the replacement of subsystems’ existing instrument mixes that resulted from an incremental process of policy layering with an entirely new and consistent instrument mix (Howlett and Rayner 2006, 2007).

Table 4. Manifestations of policy instruments

Low amounts of policy integration		←————→			High amounts of policy integration	
Range of subsystems’ policies that contain policy instruments	Problem only addressed by the substantive and/or procedural instruments of a dominant subsystem	As a result of increased awareness of externalities one or more additional subsystems (partially) adapt their instruments to mitigate negative effects	Possible further diversification of instruments addressing the problem across subsystems	Instruments embedded within all potentially relevant subsystems and associated policies		
Procedural instruments at system-level	No relevant procedural instruments at system-level	Some procedural information sharing instruments at system-level)	Increasing number of system-level procedural instruments that facilitate subsystems to jointly address the problem	Broad range of procedural instruments at system-level, including boundary-spanning structures that coordinate, steer and monitor subsystems’ efforts		
Consistency	No consistency. Sets of instruments are purely sectoral and result from processes of policy layering	Subsystems consider externalities of sectoral instrument mixes in light of internal and inter-sectoral consistency	Subsystems seek to jointly address the problem by adjusting and attuning their instruments. Consistency becomes an explicit aim	Full reconsideration of subsystem instrument mixes, resulting in a comprehensive, cross-subsystem instrument mix that is designed to meet a set of coherent goals		

Source: Toward a processual understanding of policy integration Howlett, M. (2007).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In the previous sections we have presented a new conceptual lens to study policy integration processes. It is important to note that our framework should first and foremost be seen as a heuristic that may serve as a starting point for more refined policy integration studies. We acknowledge that we have touched upon a broad range of concepts and scholarly debates within the public policy literature; all of which deserve, and fortunately receive, more lengthy elaborations in themselves. The primary goal of this paper has been to synthesize fragmented accounts of policy integration into a single, more refined framework. This inevitably has left open important questions about individual concepts and ontologies, for example about how to study policy coherence (“Policy goals” section) and consistency (“Policy instruments”). We hope this paper will be an impetus to addressing such loose ends within the policy integration literature. In addition, the ambition of this paper has been to draw policy integration out of the domain of environment and to make it a subject of general theorizing in the political sciences as more and more problems are perceived as “wicked” and cross-cutting. Although debates on EPI in the early 2000s have certainly set the agenda and have provided a firm foundation for thinking about integration, expanding the integration debate and agenda to other domains and (associated) scholarly communities could provide new perspectives on mechanisms of stability and change, interactions and possible trade-offs between parallel integration processes, and normative implications of (the absence of) policy integration.

The relevance of the framework to policymakers and political leaders lies in three contributions. First, the framework offers an assessment tool to evaluate current degrees of policy integration in the governance of a particular cross-cutting problem. In addition, it can be used for comparing these degrees over time, between issues, or between governance systems to address the normative question whether integrative progress is enough. A second contribution is the above argument that these actors should not oversee the merits of lesser degrees of policy integration. Thirdly, the framework shows that actors should think about the four dimensions as conditions that they need to invest in simultaneously, if they want to realize a mutually supportive interplay across the four dimensions that enable full policy integration. The challenge then is to overcome the asynchronous nature of most integration processes by investing sufficient capacity and resources, including will, into synchronization efforts. For those out of government office, the framework may be a helpful tool to monitor whether political promises to invest in more integrative approaches are kept and, consequentially, to hold decision-makers accountable to the commitments they make. Such accountability measures may be the first step toward integration beyond mere discursive levels for a range of issues that lie waiting to be addressed.

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