

Conclusion: Governance arrangements and policy capacity for policy integration

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Abstract

Successful policy integration poses significant challenges to policymakers. The provincial cases studies of Integrated Land Management described in this volume suggest three main lessons. First, integration is often a response to a long period of policy layering or drift that has resulted in a highly disorganized policy regime, with potential for generalized incoherence within and between policy goals and policy means. Second, policy integration will often pose formidable difficulties of multi-level governance. Third, the multiplication of new actors often outstrips the ability of governance mechanisms to cope. Responsive policy-making for large-scale complex policy issues such as ILM requires both sophisticated policy analysis as well as an institutional structure which allows problems to be addressed on a multilevel and multi-sectoral basis.

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In her path breaking work on policy integration, Helen Briassoulis describes the dilemma of policymakers in many complex areas of social and political life using a market analogy:

The policy market faces the following situation. On the demand side, contemporary problems are complex and inter-related, defying treatment by means either of narrow, sectoral policies or of all-encompassing, super-policies. On the supply side, numerous policies, related to particular aspects of one of more of these problems, exist, making it unnecessary to devise new policies each time a problem arises (Briassoulis, 2005a, p. 2).

Faced with this situation, she noted, policymakers seek efficiency gains through the integration of existing policies, reconciling overlaps and duplications and seeking consistency and coherency in the creation of new ‘integrated’ strategies.

As discussed in the introduction to this issue, such efforts are not restricted to environmental policy issues, but this is indeed a common situation in environmentally-related areas such as resource management and land use, given recent efforts to expand the spatio-temporal range of policy concerns to those involved with complex ecosystem-level interactions associated with the desire to attain inter-generational equity or ‘sustainability’ (Fischer, Petersen, Feldkötter, & Huppert, 2007; Johannesen, 2006; Vince, 2007; Witter, Stokkom, & Hendriksen, 2006). Policy development in such cases, therefore, provides suitable material for ‘critical case studies’ able to assess and advance both the theory and practice of integrated policymaking processes and outcomes (George, 1979; George & McKeown, 1985).

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In this respect, the choice of Canadian case studies in the resource and environmental sphere is also very appropriate given the many examples provided in Canada of both terrestrial and maritime policy integration (Guenette & Alder, 2007; Howlett & Rayner, 2007) in which such efforts have been a feature (Gerber et al., 2009). Land-use policy is probably the most widespread, but little known, example of efforts made in this direction in Canada, and in many countries, in recent years. As Kennett (2004) argued:

The current reality (...) is that mining, forestry operations, energy development, agriculture, transportation infrastructure, outdoor recreation and subsistence wildlife harvesting often share the same land base, but are managed independently. Water, air, wildlife, fish and forests are often treated as separate entities in law and policy. ... As a result, the interests of decision-makers, project proponents and other interested parties are poorly served as the elements of the fragmented regime struggle to address issues that can only be managed on an integrated basis (p. 13).

This situation exists across Canada, a country covering a very large portion of the globe, but has been exacerbated in Western Canada by the rapid growth in commodity, especially oil and gas, prices over the last five years. The creation of a new resource boom in areas previously impacted less significantly by conventional resources has put further pressure on an already over-burdened and un-coordinated set of land use policies.

In the extreme case of Alberta (Williams, 2003), oil sands extraction, with its very significant ecological footprint, has pitted foresters, environmentalists and agriculturalists against energy companies over competing land use demands. While Alberta has been the extreme case, however, as the other articles in this issue have shown, similar, if less extensive, integration problems also plague the other three western provinces: British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Each of these jurisdictions has encountered a range of problems associated with dis-articulated policy responses to land use challenges. Some, like Alberta and to a lesser extent Saskatchewan, have had the demand for better integration driven by competing industrial land uses exacerbated by the growth of the unconventional energy industry. However, as other chapters in this volume have shown, other provinces in the region, like BC and Manitoba, have these same challenges but they are exacerbated by other factors, notably recent legal decisions empowering aboriginal groups and allocating to them some property and management rights formerly the exclusive jurisdiction of other levels of Canadian government.

Overall, regardless of the specific cause of the current crisis, all of these provinces have been grappling with the classic problems of integration set out by Briassoulis (2005b, p. 51). That is, they have had to determine: “(a) What should be integrated i.e. the object of policy integration; (b) when integration should take place i.e. at what stage of the policy process; (c) how to analyze policy integration i.e. along what dimensions; and (d) what criteria to use to assess the achievement of policy integration” (see also Scrase & Sheate, 2002).

1. The key challenges of policy integration: lessons from ILM

As the four case studies contained in this issue have revealed, faced with these pressures, Canadian provincial governments have chosen different paths towards defining and attaining better integration. But there are some apparent similarities. For example, each province has chosen a broad multi-sectoral approach to integration, eschewing what Briassoulis (2005b) has called “a (narrow) process of incorporating certain concerns (e.g. environmental, social, economic) into an extant policy to produce an integrated policy” in favor of “a (broader) process of uniting and harmonizing separate policies to produce an integrated and coherent policy system” (p. 50).

In so doing, each province has grappled with a range of policy formulation and decision-making concerns as well as a host of policy design and implementation issues related to these reform efforts. These have included a variety of policy design issues related to the effort to attain ‘optimality’ in policy institutions (Luckert, 2005) and outcomes (Kennett, 2004).

The materials presented in the provincial case studies demonstrate a rather mixed record of success in attaining, and planning, to meet those goals. The first major impediment revealed by the case studies is the confirmation that integrated strategies are rarely adopted until there is widespread dissatisfaction with the disorganized character of the existing policy regime. At this point, ILM comes into the policy agenda not just as a nice idea, but as the solution to a widely perceived problem. Here, we link the pioneering analysis of disorganized policy mixes (Bode, 2006) to the historical institutional literature on exogenous and endogenous policy change. As the case studies clearly show, disorganization is a very common outcome of long periods of incremental policy change characterized by processes of

layering and drift. While opening up space for local innovation, disorganization frustrates effective implementation, fuelling demands for integrated strategies that would allow multiple stakeholders to operate in a new, common, and credible policy framework. The British Columbia case suggests it is possible that disorganization brought about by layering can be endogenously resolved if one of the layers is eliminated by exhaustion, as happened when the CORE process was allowed to die and LRMPs took over as the main vehicles of ILM (Tollefson & Thielmann, 2009). More often, however, disorganization brought about by layering and drift will need to be addressed by much more interventionist, anticipatory strategies involving conversion or transformation and replacement.

The second challenge revealed by the case studies relates to the added-complexity of attaining requisite levels of multi-sectoral co-ordination in a multi-level system of government with relatively fixed jurisdictional limits divided between levels of government (Hooghe & Marks, 2001, 2003). Although the difficulties of co-ordinating government responses across sectors in efforts to promote optimal integration were well known (see for example Martinez de Anguita, Alonso, & Martin, 2008; Saglie, 2006; Witter et al., 2006), the significance that institutional orders such as federalism pose for surmounting these issues has only rarely been addressed (Fafard, 2000; Høgl, 2002; MacKendrick, 2005; Torenvlied & Akkerman, 2004; Westcott, 2002).

The third challenge has been the multiplication of new actors such as environmentalists and First Nations' organizations which have made the achievement of any level of agreement on integration more difficult (Bressers & de Bruijn, 2005). The gradual process of the entrenchment of aboriginal rights and title has left an indelible mark on resource and land use policy-making in the four western provinces. Although the situation in each province is distinct and varies according to the unique characteristics of its early history, at present each is bound by the duty to observe treaty and non-treaty arrangements in such a way that First Nations have become important actors in land and resource management. This multiplication of significant policy actors has challenged existing planning and consultative mechanisms (Brueckner, 2007; Keysar, 2005) and, like the issues raised with respect to the impact of new resource industries and sources, has raised the issue of governance and policy capacity to the forefront of the analysis of policy integration (Guenette & Alder, 2007; Howlett & Rayner, 2006; Shipman & Stojanovic, 2007).¹

As the Manitoba case study clearly demonstrates, prospects for the success of the integrative effort in that province improved dramatically once the number of actors was reduced, with a corresponding improvement in the clarity of policy goals and the normative expectations around the choice of appropriate policy instruments (Wellstead & Rayner, 2009). In light of these concerns, it may make sense to undertake consultation at the regional, strategic planning level rather than on a project-by-project basis. This may include co-management agreements between First Nations, government and industry (for example, see the Little Red River Cree and Tallcree Co-Management agreements), and/or the negotiation of bilateral agreements between government and First Nations with respect to a particular tract of land (for example, see the bilateral agreements between the Blueberry River First Nations and BC) (Marcy & Callison, 2007). That way, First Nations can direct their consultation efforts at the strategic planning level and cumulative impacts may be managed and accounted for at the regional level without multiplying the complexity of the task involved in securing agreements between multiple parties.

2. Meeting the challenges: analytical innovations

In the introduction to this volume, we proposed two analytical innovations to move the study of integrated strategies forward. The first was to see policy integration as taking place in two dimensions: moving towards a more coherent set of policy goals and moving towards a more consistent set of policy instruments with respect to those goals. We noted the analytical connection between this idea of an idealized relationship between policy goals and instruments, and the

¹ In the case of ILM, the question of the optimum number of new actors that can be brought into the policy network without causing further disorganization is inextricably linked to the geographical scales on which planning takes place. The concept of the spatial planning system has been used as "a generic term to describe the ensemble of territorial governance arrangements in particular places." As Nadin and Stead have argued: "spatial planning systems are deeply embedded in their socio-economic, political and cultural context, which can potentially constrain the scope for mutual learning. Moreover, planning systems may have a certain degree of path-dependency, such as the persistence of institutions and cultures (Nadin & Stead, 2008, p. 35). The case studies suggest that the question of scale is likely to be highly context dependent. It seems true, for example, that local innovation and experimentation, of a kind that is actually encouraged by disorganized policy mixes, eventually runs afoul of the absence of coherent regional and provincial planning frameworks. Land use plans inevitably involve difficult tradeoffs between affected interests and sometimes, as in many of the cases involving the recognition of First Nations' land rights in Canada, outright redistribution.

		<i>Policy Capacity</i>	
		High	Low
<i>Governance Arrangements</i>	Integrated	Effective Capacity to Meet Long-Term Challenges	Analytically-Impaired Integrative Capacity
	Non-Integrated	Structurally-Impaired Integrative Capacity	Ineffective Integrative Capacity leading to Policy Failures or Short-Term Fire-Fighting

Fig. 1. Criteria for assessing integrative capacity.

policy design literature. However, our second innovation was to argue that the dependent variable, “policy,” should be understood as composed of the general ideas and norms that “frame” the choice of both goals and instruments. And the program level operationalization of goals (such as targets and benchmarks) and the choice of instruments to achieve them (Howlett & Rayner, 2009; Fig. 1). This conceptual innovation added two new categories to more common models of goals and instruments: the program level target and objectives and the normative context for the choice of goals and instruments.

As Counsell and Haughton (2006) have argued:

Looking at this issue at a more abstract level, the choice of planning tools is also one of choice about delivering professional and scientific knowledges, philosophies and political priorities. Seen in this context debates about the selection, refinement and application of new policy tools necessarily also respect wider debates about the role of planning and planners in society, including their roles as brokers of knowledge, guardians of scientific protocols and facilitators of participative planning processes (p. 923).

As they suggest, this approach involves identifying the failures of previous approaches, how the objects of control are identified, and the design of appropriate instruments and technologies initiated in pursuit of new objectives (p. 923).

This is significant because many recent studies of resource and environmental policy have focused on the battle to make program level targets and objectives as explicit as possible and to make them stick.² This is happening with respect to ILM in Canada, especially in connection with the move away from indicative planning through priority use zoning towards planning that sets landscape level objectives. The operationalization of these objectives, for example, in the idea of managing for the cumulative effects of different resource uses on the same land base by setting and monitoring disturbance thresholds that will trigger management actions (Brownsey & Rayner, 2009), would be a significant policy change without necessarily changing policy goals and instruments as they have traditionally been conceived in the academic literature.

Equally important, however, is the hitherto neglected dimension of the normative context for goal and instrument choice. First, the case studies show that the normative context is closely connected with policy network structure. In both BC and Manitoba, experiments with pluralist networks under the influence of a preference for a participatory governance style were abandoned as unequal to the task of policy integration in favour of more state-directed land use policy networks. And, it should be noted, this change was not undertaken in the form of a pre-emptive policy strike by state actors themselves but as a result of the dissatisfaction of key stakeholders with the disorganized policy mix that resulted from pluralism. In the Alberta case, the normative preference for market solutions also created pluralist policy networks. However, though network exchange here was based more on the commercial value of the information

² In forest policy, for example, the failure of Canadian governments to deal in this way with environmental impacts has been a major impetus for third party certification of wood products as being “sustainably produced” (Cashore, Auld, & Newsom, 2004; Tollenfson, Gale, & Haley, 2008).

passing from one network member to another than it was due to the legitimization of new network actors. Again, the experience of resulting policy disorganization produced a call for government to take a “leadership role” and reconstruct the land use policy network on more state-directed lines (Brownsey & Rayner, 2009). These findings are consistent with the earlier contention of Atkinson and Coleman (1989) that pluralist networks are inappropriate vehicles for anticipatory policy change of the kind required by complex initiatives such as ILM.

Equally significant, however, is the suggestion from the case studies that the normative context for understanding policy goals and directing instrument choice is the key point at which discourse and other ideational factors are likely to influence policy change. The appearance of an ecosystem-based management (EBM) discourse is a key feature of the story of policy change in at least three of the cases examined here but in every case it operated indirectly to promote or disrupt a particular normative orientation to policy goals and instrument choice, creating, for example, a new understanding of “sustainability” as a policy goal in the BC case (Tollefson & Thielmann, 2009) or promoting the choice of regional scales for ILM planning in both Alberta and Manitoba.³

3. Meeting the challenges: enhancing the integrative capacity of governments

Recent work on policy appraisal has raised the bar in terms of rationality requirements of policy assessments and evaluations by focusing on the potential to develop *optimal* policies in complex multi-level and multi-actor policy settings. In addition, this work seeks to develop the analytical tools necessary to understand and overcome the constraints and impediments to effective assessment of such complex policy environments (Grabosky, 1994; Gunningham & Young, 1997). Thus the policy appraisal literature, for example, often draws a specific link between the increasing complexity of contemporary policy-making, especially its tendency to cut across the boundaries of tradition policy subsectors and scientific disciplines, and the need for a more sophisticated approach to assessment and evaluation (Russel & Jordan, 2007; Turnpenny & O’Riordan, 2007).

In this regard, a promising development in the policy appraisal literature is a new focus on understanding complexity as a multi-level phenomenon with different constraints on appraisal and uptake at each level. Turnpenny et al. (2007, 2008) propose three levels – micro, meso and macro – corresponding roughly to the individual, institutional and societal contexts for policymaking and appraisal. However, much more needs to be said about the “nested” character of key policy elements in ways that can direct an evaluation towards those elements that are actually under the control of policymakers and, hence, keep the evaluation policy-relevant through addressing feasible rather than infeasible policy alternatives (Huitt, 1968; Majone, 1975; Meltsner, 1972; Webber, 1986).

What are the sources of multi-level policy and policy appraisal complexity? As the case studies presented here have shown, one of the major problems has to do with the fact that many existing policies are very complex structures that originated as policy arrangements or regimes developed incrementally in an *ad hoc* fashion over a relatively long period of time and contain a wide mix of policy instruments and aims (Evers, 2005; Gunningham & Sinclair, 1999; Wilson, 2000).

These regimes resulted from continued multiple layering processes which ultimately produced arrangements of policy elements that are both complex and costly to administer, often contain counter-productive instrument mixes and incoherent goals. However, while ‘illogical,’ they are nevertheless very difficult to change because even the dysfunctional elements of existing regimes can confer benefits on well-entrenched interests who may resist their alteration or elimination (Beland, 2007; Grabosky, 1995; Pierson, 1993).

Demands for more integrated policies and “joined up government” have been drivers of efforts to develop integrated policy appraisals; however, the results of these efforts have rarely been the large-scale policy reforms most assessors recommend. This is due to both the manner in which, at the meso-level earlier regimes and regime elements generate actors and interests willing and able to defend the status quo, as well as to the more macro-level existence of institutional and other barriers to large-scale policy change. All of these concerns are highlighted in the four case studies presented above.

³ The Saskatchewan example, however, provides a limiting case which suggests that discourse operates through specific changes in the normative context, requiring additional related changes in policy network structure or the clarification of the meaning of larger policy goals in order to be effective. Where the introduction of the EBM discourse failed to have any such impact, as in the case of the Saskatchewan North-Central Land Use Plan (Rayner & Needham, 2009), leaving the land use policy network unchanged in its clientelist form and the goal of “sustainability” as vague and ambiguous as ever, its mere appearance did not result in a discernable change to the existing disjointed policy regime already in place.

These cases suggest that responsive policymaking on large-scale complex policy issues such as ILM requires both sophisticated policy analysis as well as an institutional structure which allows problems to be dealt with on a multi-level and multi-sectoral basis. Designing and implementing such policies in practice requires both substantial policy analytical capacity in relevant government departments and agencies, as well as effective governance capacity in terms of the existence of arrangements which facilitate and promote multi-level, multi-sectoral and multi-actor policymaking (Gerber et al., 2009; Weber, Lurch, & Gaffney, 2007).

The most effective policy organisations are those that have the capacity to be able to anticipate likely policy demands and can react appropriately in terms of developing effective solutions. However, the case studies also show that the governance context is also critical in dealing with complex policy issues (Considine, 2001; Considine & Lewis, 2003; Van Kersbergen & Van Waarden, 2004).

As the case studies in this issue have suggested, the relative strengths of the public and private actors involved in resource regime governance is a key factor which can affect the ability of a government to de-centralize or de-concentrate authority to non-state actors, ultimately affecting the choice of policy instruments or regulatory techniques utilized in specific policy contexts (Daugbjerg, 1998; Haas, 2004; Harrop, 1992; Knill & Lehmkuhl, 2002; Pontusson, 1995). Governance arrangements vary from steering via hierarchical, imperative coordination to steering through reflexive self-organization (“plurilateralism”) both within and across sectors, and are more or less capable of effectively orienting policy participants in common directions (Cerny, 1993; Jordan, Wurzel, & Zito, 2005; March & Olsen, 1996; Offe, 2006; Scharpf, 1991; Shipman & Stojanovic, 2007; Weaver & Rockman, 1993; Zielonka, 2007).

All of our cases suggest that the kinds of governance arrangements which exist in a jurisdiction is the second key component of a larger notion, “integrative capacity” which, together with policy capacity, helps to identify the potential for governments to be able to formulate and implement policies which can deal with the complexities of problems such as integrated land management (Hall & Thelen, 2008). Hence, the integrative capacity of government falls into four types (see Fig. 1).

As the case studies has shown, none of the provincial governments examined has both the high level of policy capacity and the integrated governance arrangements to allow them to successfully integrate their land-use policies in an optimal fashion. While most have a relatively high level of policy capacity, they lack the governance arrangements required for effective policy integration.

3.1. Conclusion: layering and drift as a response to a lack of integrative capacity

Both the existing literature on policy integration and the case studies conducted into Canadian experiences with integrated land management suggest that even in the context of governments with a relatively high level of policy capacity, the existence of multiple key policy players operating without the kinds of institutions which would allow them to develop coherent and consistent multi-sectoral and multi-level policy regimes leads to at best sub-optimal satisfying policy outcomes, not optimal ones.

In such situations, successful integration can only come about piecemeal over time as successive layering approximates a new policy regime or if institutional change in administrative mandates or federal-provincial and other kinds of multi-level agreements enhance the integrative capacities of governments. A promising future research agenda on integrated strategies, therefore, would be one that would focus on the kinds of governance changes which, in the case of efforts to promote Integrated Land Management in Western Canada, for example, are required for more effective policy integration (Hogl, 2002).

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