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Governance, Coordination, and Evaluation: The Case for an Epistemological Focus and a Return to C.E. Lindblom

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Keywords: governance, coordination, Lindblom, epistemology, complexity, steering

Abstract

While much political science research focuses on conceptualizing and analyzing various forms of governance, there remains a need to develop frameworks and criteria for governance evaluation (Torfing et al 2012). The post-positivist turn, influential in recent governance theory, emphasizes the complexity, uncertainty and the contested normative dimensions of policy analysis. Yet a central evaluative question still arises concerning the capacity of governance networks to facilitate 'coordination'. The classic contributions of Charles Lindblom, although pre-dating the contemporary governance literature, can enable further elaboration of and engagement with this question. Lindblom's conceptualisation of coordination challenges in the face of complexity shares with post-positivism a recognition of the inevitably contested nature of policy goals. Yet Lindblom suggests a closer focus on the complex, dynamically evolving, broadly 'economic' choices and trade-offs involved in defining and delivery policy for enabling these goals to be achieved and the significant epistemological challenges that they raise for policy-makers. This focus can complement and enrich both post-positivist scholarship and the process and incentives-orientated approaches which predominate in contemporary political science research on coordination in governance. This is briefly illustrated through a short case study evaluating governance for steering markets towards delivering low and zero carbon homes in England.

1. Introduction

At the heart of contemporary understandings of 'governance,' a term widely used in academic and political discourses with various meanings and purposes, is an emphasis on a shift from traditional, hierarchical government towards increasingly close, often blurred inter-relationships between public, private and non-governmental sectors, often discussed in terms of networks (van Kersbergen and van Waarden 2004). Different proposals for governance tend to share as starting premises the complexity and inter-connectedness of policy challenges. The involvement of a broad range of actors in governance is suggested either implicitly or explicitly to offer a more robust way of tackling complex challenges than hierarchical 'government.' Yet the focus of political scientists has tended to be on analyzing and conceptualizing governance rather than evaluating governance through consideration of outcomes. Reflecting the influence of 'post-positivism,' much recent scholarship highlights the plurality of contested values and understandings in terms of which governance might be evaluated. However, authors from a broadly post-positivist perspective have emphasized the need and potential to develop theoretical and methodological approaches for evaluating governance (Torfing et al. 2012).

Addressing this need, this paper draws from the classic work of the political scientist Charles Lindblom. Lindblom's work on policy-making pre-dates contemporary governance scholarship, in the context of which his dualistic distinction between government and market might seem rather anachronistic. Yet his emphasis on the potential for political science to engage more closely with evaluative questions about policy-making (Lindblom 1990, 270-

276), it is argued here, has vital contemporary relevance. Lindblom does not see it as the role of social scientists to provide complete solutions to policy problems (ibid). He anticipates the later post-positivist turn in emphasizing the contestability of the norms and understandings upon which policy evaluation is necessarily based. His conception of coordination challenges incorporates such post-positivist sensitivity, while, it is argued here, offering a suitable focus for engaging with evaluative questions about contemporary governance. This focus concerns the epistemological challenges for policy makers of discovering and acquiring knowledge about potential decision impacts in the context of complexity. This epistemological focus can complement and enrich post-positivist scholarship, as well as other established political science approaches to analyzing governance arrangements which tend to focus on how they shape actors' incentives to deliver policy goals.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 briefly introduces different proposals for 'governance' before considering the tendency amongst both positivist and post-positivist political science traditions to refrain from evaluating such different forms of governance. Yet, it is shown, contemporary discussions of governance suggest the significance of coordination challenges, the potential focus for evaluative research proposed here. Section 3 analyzes Lindblom's conception of coordination in the face of complexity. Section 4, drawing from key features of Lindblom's contribution, introduces a potential evaluative approach. Section 5 explains the potential application of this approach to contemporary governance, drawing from a brief, illustrative case study.

2. Evaluating governance

2.1 Proposals for governance

In contrast with the traditional focus of policy analysis on single policy problems, 'governance' is concerned with systems and processes through which multiple, inter-related policy areas are addressed. The various understandings of the term, employed in a range of international and national contexts, emphasize the inter-dependence of states on a range of private and non-governmental actors (van Kersbergen and van Waarden 2004). An initial use was the case for 'good governance' by international development agencies such as the World Bank, emphasizing the importance of strong political institutions and the rule of law to ensure that markets work. The term also arises in discussions about 'global governance,' through institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation and in debates about corporate governance, concerning the accountability and transparency of the firm.

In terms of public policy and service delivery within nation states, a range of reforms from the 1980s onwards involving the adoption of private sector methods and practices, known as the 'new public management,' were heralded by some as a new form of governance. Influential in this respect was Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) case for the state 'steering' public service delivery, promoting efficiency and innovation through more competitive arrangements such as outsourcing, quasi-markets and privatization. A further key feature of NPM is the introduction of performance measurement and targets for ensuring the accountability of the increasing range of service providers. NPM has since been widely criticized for promoting commercial and self-interest of service providers at the expense of a

public service ethos. Research in numerous policy areas shows how a focus on fulfilling narrowly defined targets can lead to unintended consequences. Bevan and Hood (2006), for example, explain how some ambulance depots in England relocated from rural to urban areas to ensure they achieved response time targets, even though this was harmful to rural services. The wide recognition of such potential for perverse incentives has led numerous academics and practitioners to emphasize the importance of fostering trust and mutual learning through governance networks achieving 'collaboration' and 'partnership' (Ansell and Gash 2008). Aside from, yet related to, these debates in public administration, there is an established literature on 'new governance' tools for delivering policy and services (Salamon and Elliott 2002). These are indirect mechanisms that tend to be market orientated and rely on third parties, including loan guarantees, insurance, voluntary standards, permit and voucher systems.

2.2 Political science and evaluation

As Bevir (2013) explains, key traditions in political science have informed these contrasting proposals for governance. Rational choice theory, with its assumptions, borrowed from positivist Neoclassical economics, of the rational, self-interested, utility-maximizing economic actor influenced the case for NPM. This influence was achieved by public choice theory in particular which applies rational choice assumptions to develop a critique of traditional, hierarchical state bureaucracies as failing to establish the appropriate incentives for serving the public interest (Niskanen 1994). Rational choice theory was borne out of the positivist tradition, which sees the role of social sciences as establishing value neutral 'scientific,' analysis with predictive capacity. Yet, as subsequent debates about NPM make evident, rational choice assumptions have deeply normative implications for governance. As

the subsequent critique by 'new institutionalists' emphasizes, rational choice theorists overlook how economic behavior is rooted in socio-cultural norms and routines. This critique informed the strong subsequent challenge to NPM by advocates of 'collaborative' network governance (Bevir 2013).

These contrasting political science traditions thus clearly have important normative implications concerning the desirability and effectiveness of different forms of governance. Yet the primary focus of political science as a discipline is to provide explanatory analysis rather than to directly address such evaluative questions. This is further evident in the 'post-positivist' tradition, widely influential since the late 1980s in political science generally and policy analysis in particular. Post-positivists emphasize the contested nature of the values and knowledge that inevitably underpin analysis and evaluation (Hawkesworth 1988). A key focus has been their critique of positivist approaches to explanatory analysis of political institutions, which they argue neglect the vital significance of discourses in shaping institutions and policy agendas (Hajer 1993). Post-positivists have been critical of positivist policy evaluation methods such as cost-benefit analysis which attempt to quantify risks, costs and efficiency, concepts which are inevitably based on normative assumptions and subject to multiple contested interpretations (Funtowicz and Ravetz 1994). Yet, aside from these critiques, there is significant scope for this tradition to engage more directly with evaluative questions about governance and policy. An early paper by John Dryzek, emphasized the need to establish a philosophical middle ground between positivism and the "abyss" of relativism (Dryzek 1982, 322). In a similar vein, Fischer (2009) more recently discusses how post-positivist scholarship can inform policy evaluation through a process of continually testing or "probing" policy actors' factual claims, exploring the norms and contested assumptions that inevitably shape these understandings. Interestingly, this notion

of 'probing' truth claims in the context of complexity, uncertainty and contrasting normative perspectives can be traced back to Lindblom (1990). These contributions lay important philosophical foundations for post-positivist evaluation. Yet there is a need for post-positivists to address methodological questions to enable the challenge of evaluating governance to be further addressed (Torfing 2007, 21).

Post-positivism, with its emphasis on the importance of discourse and meaning in shaping institutions, can complement and deepen new institutionalist understandings of their socio-cultural embeddedness (Schmidt 2012). In departing from rationalistic models, each tradition highlights important dimensions of complexity that require consideration in governance evaluation. Like new institutionalism, post-positivism has influenced scholarship on governance networks, as reflected in the strong emphasis on the uncertainty and normative contestation involved in complex governance and policy challenges (Kickert, Klijn, and Koppenjan 1997; Koppenjan and Klijn 2004). Still, as recent reviews show, there have been few studies proposing and applying criteria for evaluating governance networks (Kenis and Provan 2009; Torfing et al. 2012). The more evaluative studies conducted so far reflect a positivist influence, tending to focus on rather narrow evaluative criteria such as cost efficiency or cost effectiveness. Further reflection upon the meaning of such evaluative criteria is needed (Torfing et al. 2012) and here there is scope to draw from post-positivist insights into the multiple understandings and norms underpinning the uses of such terms. Some scholars propose principles for governance, such as 'reflectivity' (Voss, Bauknecht, and Kemp 2006) or 'interactive governance' (Torfing et al. 2012) that incorporate sensitivity to the contestability of knowledge shaping policy analysis. Yet there remains need and scope to assess specific governance arrangements and tools for translating such principles into practice, through further interrogation of the meaning and implications of complexity.

2.3 Governance and coordination

Although the primary focus of the networks literature is not to directly assess their effectiveness, suggestions are made concerning their potential superiority as a form of governance. In light of the number of actors involved in networks and the inter-connected nature of policy challenges, some scholars in this field whose work is broadly post-positivist, suggest that networks are a potential "coordination mechanism" (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004, 79; 107; 154) and can enable "integration" (Kooiman, 2003: 203). The potential role of state actors in enabling coordination within networks, articulated in various ways, are the subject of ongoing discussion. For example, Kickert (1995) introduces the notion of the state 'steering at a distance', while Rhodes (1996) suggests the 'self-organizing' capacity of networks. These conjectures reflect what Pressman and Wildavsky (1973, 133) describe as the almost universal agreement on the desirability of 'better coordination.' Coordination is generally understood by political scientists as a type of process for attaining ends. A key reason for the general normative appeal of the concept is that it is not, in itself, concerned with the particular content of these ends. The term could thus be applied across a range of social contexts characterized by varying pluralities of values and interests. Yet, in spite of this broad appeal of the concept, Lindblom's observation that clear, more specific definitions of coordination are "elusive" (Lindblom 1965, 22) remains pertinent (Peters 1998, 296). His conceptualizations of coordination and complexity are analyzed below.

3. Lindblom on coordination and complexity

Lindblom's work develops an alternative to rationalistic understandings of policy-making in which the challenge of achieving coordination is a central theme throughout (Lindblom 1959, 85; 1965; 1979, 523; 1993, 67-68). His early work famously introduces 'incrementalism', an understanding of policy-making as an ongoing process of incremental policy adjustments in the face of complexity (Lindblom 1959). Not least due to some ambiguity in his use of the term, Lindblom's discussion of 'incrementalism' led to considerable debate and disagreement (Gregory 1989). Some critics argued that the concept does not sufficiently accommodate the possibility of goal-orientated analysis of policy alternatives (Weiss and Woodhouse 1992). In terms of understanding real world policy-making, the approach was criticized for under-estimating the significance of unequal power relations between actors. Lindblom has been interpreted as shifting from a pluralist to a neo-pluralist position in response to this criticism (Parsons 1996, 252-253), emphasizing the disproportionate influence of business interests in the policy process (Lindblom 1977; Lindblom and Woodhouse 1993). However, the primary point in Lindblom's famous 1959 paper, which he later described as uncontentious (Lindblom 1979, 524) is that rational, synoptic policy analysis is unachievable. In The Intelligence of Democracy he then focuses on exploring how political processes of negotiation and "partisan mutual adjustment" (PMA), drawing from the knowledge and insights of a plurality of actors, can achieve a kind of collective intelligence. This account, which Lindblom saw as the main novelty of his work (Lindblom 1979, 524) and is briefly summarized in Section 3.2, incorporates a significant critique of centralist forms of political organization. However, the key focus here, analyzed in Section 3.1, is Lindblom's conceptualization of coordination in the face of complexity which runs through this account, subject of little attention from commentators.

3.1 Conceptualizing coordination and complexity

Lindblom's understanding of coordination differs markedly from previous instrumentalist treatments of the concept, reflecting the departure from positivism more broadly evident in his work. Some early scholarly work on coordination, assuming a hierarchical organization, interprets coordination in the instrumentalist, positivistic sense of translating into practice a given set of goals through rational selection of centrally known possible means. Examples can be found in a range of fields including inter-organizational studies (White 1974) and environmental policy integration (Underdal 1980). For Lindblom, this overlooks the epistemological challenges of acquiring knowledge about options and their impacts, in the context of complexity and indeed political contestation.

Lindblom's work more generally anticipates post-positivist philosophy of science in emphasizing how the complexities of policy problems inevitably give cause to qualify the knowledge that policy analysts are able to attain (Lindblom 1990). Given his primary focus on understanding and assessing policy-making processes, he does not give the same kind of detailed attention as interpretivist scholars to philosophical questions about the ontological status of the reality about which knowledge claims are made. It can be argued that, in contrast with interpretivists, Lindblom accepts the empiricist principle that there is a real world of which we can obtain at least imperfect knowledge (Hawkesworth 1988, 23). It is beyond the scope of this article to consider any such philosophical differences in further detail. The point to emphasize here is that Lindblom's treatment of coordination incorporates strong recognition of the contested nature of the goals and understandings motivating political actors, a point emphasized by later post-positivists.

This post-positivist starting point is only subtly evident in Lindblom's definition of coordination:

"A set of decisions is coordinated if adjustments have been made in it such that the adverse consequences of any one decision for other decisions in the set are to a degree and in some frequency avoided, reduced, counterbalanced, or outweighed" (Lindblom 1965, 154).

This reference to adverse consequences being counteracted to "some degree," is at least an implicit acknowledgement that, contrary to the implications of rationalist models, perfect, optimal coordination is unachievable. Lindblom's departure from narrowly instrumentalist treatments of coordination becomes clearer in his distinction between coordination and consistency. In the context of a pluralistic society, he emphasizes, coordination should not be taken to mean that all decisions are consistent in the sense of placing the same degree of priority on a given set of values. After all, variation in how different decisions weight different values might better reflect the plurality of values held by individuals across society, particularly given the need for the remediation of previous decisions (Lindblom 1965, 197).

The distinctiveness of Lindblom's treatment of coordination lies not so much in his formal definition but his further elaboration of the challenge of achieving coordination in the face of complexity. This is developed through a critique of influential rationalistic policy analysis models, which share key assumptions with Neoclassical economics. Coordination, he explains, cannot be conflated with efficiency in the Paretian sense of an outcome where it is impossible to make someone else better off without making someone else worse off.

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There are, he points out, a range of possible Pareto efficient distributions of resources, including some highly unequal distributions. Neoclassical economists recognize that there are various ways to evaluate such distributions in terms of their utility for different individuals. However, given their view of economics as a positivist 'science,' these economists refrain from such value judgements. This, they stress would require interpersonal comparisons of utility and there can be no scientific basis for such comparisons. By contrast, Lindblom stresses the need to evaluate outcomes in terms of a broader range of welfare criteria than just Pareto efficiency (Lindblom 1965, 227-228) . The equality of the distribution is one such key criterion emphasized by Lindblom, while others would include different social and environmental impacts. Lindblom emphasizes that such ends are qualitatively distinct, often incommensurable (Dahl and Lindblom 1963, 40), departing from the neoclassical assumption that all welfare impacts can be expressed in terms of a single, monetary or numerical unit of measurement. For Lindblom, there can be no purely rational approach to weighing these different ends. For such choices, between ends as he puts it, "reason exhausts itself" (Lindblom, 1965: 188). The need to take into account multiple criteria has been acknowledged in Neoclassical economics by the Kaldor-Hicks definition of efficiency, according to which those who would suffer the negative consequences of a decision in terms of one criterion, could in theory be compensated in terms of another. The principle has been famously applied in environmental economics to make the case for those gaining from an economic activity giving monetary compensation to those suffering from its negative environmental impacts. Lindblom's approach is more in keeping with heterodox traditions, including Ecological Economics, which emphasize that proposals for such a compensation mechanism overlook the incommensurable, sometimes non-compensatory nature of key values (O'Neill and Spash 2000).

Ultimately, Lindblom accepts, actors' views about whether coordination has been achieved will hinge on their qualitatively distinct, incommensurable 'ends.' Hence there is, he acknowledges, an open-endedness to his formal definition of coordination (Lindblom 1965, 154). Nonetheless, he shows that the concept offers significant scope for evaluating political processes, in terms ensuring that chosen means achieve the balance of ends being sought. Coordination, he emphasizes, is an ongoing process, in which complex, closely inter-twined means- ends inter-relationships continually evolve. We cannot, he comments, precisely assign weightings to our ends defined in a general, abstract way, prior to this process, (Lindblom 1959, 81; Lindblom 1965, 146). Importantly, this implies that ideological debates involving abstractly defined goals, such as 'equality' or ' justice,' not only leave unresolved but are also crucially shaped by 'means related' questions of how they translate into practice.

Although Lindblom does not express the point in quite this way, complex means-ends inter-relationships are 'economic' in a broad sense that recognizes our ends are not necessarily reducible to monetary measurement. In itself, Lindblom's point about the inextricability of means-ends inter-relationships is well- recognized and was also made by some of his contemporaries (e.g. Wildavsky 1966, 299-300). However, Lindblom especially strongly emphasizes the epistemological challenges involved in ensuring coordination between multiple decisions, given the difficulties of anticipating their impacts in the face of such economic complexity. Indeed, for Lindblom, coordination is synonymous with the avoidance of "adverse," unintended consequences (Lindblom 1965, 150-151).

This epistemological emphasis distinguishes Lindblom's work from earlier classical

discussions of coordination as achieved through markets, notably from Bernard de Mandeville and Adam Smith. These two economists emphasized how markets generate incentives for individuals to engage in economic activities that satisfy the needs and preferences of others, hence facilitating coordination. By emphasizing how the discovery of means shapes the ends and hence the motives of actors, Lindblom's work highlights the close inter-relationship between these epistemological and incentives dimensions of coordination challenges. As Lax and Sebenius (1986, 298-303) point out, ensuring that actors have the motivation and incentives to acquire and disclose information is vital for effective decision-making. Yet, the two dimensions are conceptually distinct. It is possible to imagine that a solution to a policy problem is known (hence there is no epistemological problem) and that the primary problem for governance is ensuring that actors are incentivized to put this solution into practice. Conversely, it is possible to imagine that actors are motivated to seek to coordinate their activities to promote the public interest and that the only obstacle to achieving effective governance is acquiring knowledge of the most effective policies and practices for achieving this. Hence it is possible to assess and compare the weight that scholars place on these two dimensions, as does Section 4.2 of this paper.

There are parallels between Lindblom and Friedrich Hayek who also departs from a positivistic, rationalistic approach, emphasizing the epistemological dimension of the challenge of coordination. Hayek provides a conceptually rich account of how markets and the price mechanism generate and communicate knowledge about demand and supply for goods and services that would not be available in their absence (Hayek 1948). His famous skepticism about the capacity of political processes to achieve coordination, given the profound complexity of means-ends inter-relationships across society, resonates in

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contemporary critiques of planned economies and the welfare state. In comparison with market processes, Hayek emphasizes, political decisions are inevitably more centralized, hence more susceptible to failing to capture knowledge required for translating policy goals into practice.

Lindblom accepts the indispensability of the coordinative role of markets and the price mechanism (Dahl and Lindblom 1963, 173; Lindblom 1977, 68). He shares Hayek's concern with the capacity of political processes to address the closely intertwined epistemological and incentives-related dimensions of coordination problems. Yet Lindblom (1977) balances this with more attention than Hayek to the problems of markets such as the inequalities, externalities and inefficiencies they can generate. Unlike Hayek, he views political processes as offering significant potential for achieving coordination. Aside from these differences, their conceptualizations of coordination are similar in abstract terms, being distinguishable from any specific type of political or market process. Both imply that to assess whether a process has achieved coordination requires close attention to different actors' substantive understandings of policy decisions and outcomes.

In a commentary including a rare focus on Lindblom's conceptualization of coordination, Ernest Alexander criticized Lindblom's treatment of the concept as a purely abstract goal which "dilutes the concept to the point of making it almost "meaningless". Lindblom's definition is indeed very inclusive in terms of the kinds of institutions and processes that can potentially count as facilitating coordination, though this is deliberate (Lindblom 1965, 154). As Alexander (1995, 4) acknowledges, this inclusivity can be seen as an advantage for those sharing Lindblom's interest in comparative evaluation of political economic

systems.

3.2   *Processes for achieving coordination*

Although Lindblom does not seek to provide definitive answers about the effectiveness of specific institutional arrangements in achieving coordination, he takes a critical stance towards attempts at centralized coordination, or 'synoptic planning' (Lindblom 1965, 173). He offers a detailed account of the potential for coordination through less hierarchical, more distributed PMA processes, which he suggests might be understood as a 'new' form of planning (Dahl and Lindblom 1963, 20). This potential, he suggests, can be assessed in different political and policy contexts through empirical investigation (Lindblom 1965, 181). Lindblom's account of how PMA might achieve coordination, even though the outcomes reached are not "reasoned" (Lindblom 1965, 184-185) is very briefly summarized here as a further elaboration of Lindblom's epistemologically orientated conceptualization of coordination challenges. This account is notably somewhat analogous to the Hayekian account of market coordination through ongoing mutual adjustments (Meadowcroft 1999, 32).

Lindblom views PMA bargaining processes, like markets, as enabling engagement with and reconciliation of conflicting values and trade-offs (Lindblom 1965, 227). PMA achieves this by capturing, communicating and bringing together knowledge and expertise that is dispersed across a range of actors (Lindblom 1965, 157;189), hence enabling learning. Policy-makers might not entirely "solve" problems but political processes, he suggests, are a way of "coping" (Lindblom 1965, 157) with complexity, as different actors highlight actual or potential "adverse consequences" (Lindblom 1965,

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150) of a decision. Lindblom gives a number of reasons why a decentralized, interest-driven PMA process might be more effective in achieving coordination than a system of top-down, centralized control. A key argument he gives is that PMA involves negotiation between various interest groups serving as "watchdogs" for different value dimensions of a problem (Lindblom 1959, 85; Lindblom 1965, 156) and "compellingly call to others' attention aspects of the problem they cannot themselves analyze" (Lindblom 1959, 151). The pluralistic character of PMA provides an opportunity and incentive for a wide range of actors with contrasting goals to become involved and shape outcomes (Lindblom 1965, 208). Those values that are widely shared, he argues, will tend to carry more weight during the PMA process (Lindblom 1965, 75). Lindblom also stresses the potential for reaching agreement or compromise on decisions where participants are motivated by different values (Lindblom 1965, 208). Hence, processes of coordination, rather than being understood in apolitical, instrumentalist terms, are actually driven by political contestation.

4. Drawing from Lindblom

Assessing Lindblom's conjectures about the coordinative potential of politics thus requires close consideration of how far and in what ways political processes, as viewed by the range of actors involved, capture and convey knowledge, values and interests relating to the assessment of decisions and their impacts, while fostering the appropriate incentives for policy delivery. As further explained below, such a focus can potentially complement and enrich established political science approaches to analyzing governance, including post-positivist approaches. Given that coordination is a prominent theme in a range of social science literatures and that Lindblom's work is widely known, one might have expected his discussion of the coordinative potential of politics to have inspired and influenced a whole tranche of further empirical studies. However, as further explained below, it is very questionable how far these literatures offer such direct, empirically-orientated investigation of Lindblom's conjectures, for which there is significant need and potential.

4.1 From processes to outcomes

Coordination and related concepts are prominent in several literatures in political science, public administration and related fields such as organizational studies. These literatures tend to focus on analyzing and conceptualizing governance processes, rather than considering policy outcomes as Lindblom's understanding of coordination suggests is required. This is reflected in the common focus upon the distinction between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' coordination in political science scholarship on governance. Horizontal coordination refers to coherence between geographical or sectoral divisions of political authority. Hence the term can be applied to departmental or ministerial coordination (Krause 2009), sub-national

authorities (Hawkins and Andrew 2011) or across nation states (Kaiser and Prange 2004). Vertical coordination refers to coherence between decisions of a political authority and their implementation within their jurisdiction. Analyzing governance in these terms offers useful insights into coordination challenges within different spheres of governance. However, the focus is upon processes rather than outcomes. Krause, for example, assesses the degree to which vertical coordination is achieved by analyzing how far presidential goals are shared by subordinates. Metcalfe (1994) provides a typology of different degrees of horizontal coordination, defined in entirely procedural terms, ranging from where ministries take decisions independently to the establishment of central priorities and government strategies.

Also reflecting this process orientation, Peters defines co-coordination failure as when the actions of two organizations entail one or more of the following:

- Performance of the same task (redundancy);
- No organization performs a necessary task (lacunae);
- Policies with the same clients (including the entire society as the clients) have different goals and requirements (incoherence) (Peters 1998, 303).

While referring to some key types of coordination problem, this typology alone is not sufficient as a set of criteria for evaluating governance and policy, nor is it intended to be such. As Peters acknowledges, phenomena such as redundancy, lacunae or incoherence are not necessarily undesirable. There can on some occasions be a strong normative case *for* redundancy, or even lacunae. Peters comments: "There may be some circumstances in which complexity and incoherent approaches are functional, rather than dysfunctional, for both government and the governed" (Peters 2006, 134).

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This process-orientated focus is reflected in various literatures on concepts closely related to coordination, notably 'integration,' 'collaboration' and holistic governance. A case in point is the burgeoning literature on Environmental Policy Integration which unfortunately, as two leading authors acknowledge, has "very little to say" regarding policy outcomes (Jordan and Lenschow 2010, 156). The same is true of the literature assessing attempts by central governments to achieve 'joined up' or 'holistic' governance, with the UK experience having been particularly extensively discussed. Here, analyses have focused on developing typologies of different procedural arrangements for achieving horizontal coordination or integration, such as shared budgets and performance targets (Ling 2002). The related literature on 'collaborative' governance (Ansell and Gash 2008) also has a process-orientated focus, developing more qualitative typologies of different degrees of collaboration. Although certain types of process might tend to promote better outcomes, this needs to be demonstrated, as Lindblom's treatment of coordination highlights.

4.2 From incentives to knowledge

Reflecting the influence of dominant political science traditions, notably rational choice theory and various forms of new institutionalism, political science scholarship on coordination focuses primarily on analyzing incentives-related barriers to coordination (or related concepts such as 'integration' and 'collaboration') in a procedural sense. The epistemological dimension of coordination challenges highlighted by Lindblom is relatively overlooked. Oliver Williamson's work, of key importance in the emergence of new institutionalism, focuses on evaluating governance arrangements through a focus on the transaction costs they entail, defined as "comparative costs of planning, adapting, and

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monitoring task completion under alternative governance structures" (Williamson 1981, 552). Transaction costs can clearly be an important influence upon the incentive structures under different governance arrangements, as shown further by authors such as Fritz Scharpf and Elinor Ostrom (Ostrom 2005; Scharpf 1997). However, as critics of transaction cost economics (TCE) have pointed out, there is also a need to consider the processes of learning and discovery that can arise from some transactions, which are overlooked by (TCE) but are of vital importance for evaluating organizational structures (Foss and Klein 2008, 425-442). Other forms of new institutionalism, which depart significantly from Williamsonian TCE, share this primary focus on incentives rather than knowledge. Cases in point are Scharpf and Ostrom, famous for their criticism of Williamson as overlooking how actors' preferences are shaped by the social and cultural influences, hence cannot be treated as exogenous to the institutional context. These authors briefly acknowledge the significance of potential information problems for governance that Lindblom highlights, although their primary concern is the mutual compatibility of actors incentives and how to overcome competing interests (Scharpf 1997, 70).

This focus on processes and incentives is similarly evident in the network governance literature. Allusions are made, albeit often only implicitly, to the potential for networks to address epistemological challenges. Kickert et al. (1997, 44) and Koppenjan and Klijn (2004, 165) comment on how solutions to policy problems can emerge through interactive negotiation processes. In places, distinctively epistemological reasons are given for this view. For example, Kooiman (2000: 142) makes a similar suggestion, commenting that: "No single actor, public or private, has the knowledge and information required to solve complex, dynamic, and diversified problems." However, there is no direct, systematic attempt to explore this hypothesis, which Lindblom's work brings into focus.

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Torfing et al (2012, 172), amongst the few to have proposed criteria for governance evaluation, do recognize the epistemological dimension of coordination challenges. Their suggested criteria include policy makers' understandings of problems and opportunities, the need for policy feasibility and flexibility, coordination of implementation and responsiveness to feedback and learning. Torfing et al leave open significant questions about how these criteria might be defined and operationalized. How, for example, might we assess whether governance actors achieve a "well informed understanding of the policy problems and policy opportunities at hand" or "smooth policy implementation based on continuous coordination and a high degree of legitimacy" (Torfing et al. 2012, 172)? Underlying these suggested criteria is the epistemological dimension of coordinative challenges articulated by Lindblom. This involves enabling the discovery and drawing together of knowledge dispersed across various actors and closely intertwined with policy actors' incentives to act effectively on the basis of this knowledge. As further argued below, a systematic focus on assessing how governance processes address these challenges enables closer engagement with governance evaluation.

4.3 Towards post-positivist evaluation

While Lindblom emphasizes the contestability and variation of actors' values, interests or 'ends,' he also refers to the potential for a degree of overlap between them. Lindblom's case for PMA processes concerns their potential for reaching policy decisions that reflect value weightings which a significant majority of people will at least come to accept, even when subject to significant initial conflict (Lindblom 1965, 205-245).[2] Furthermore, as

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[2] This argument based on potential shared values becomes more explicit in Chapter 18 of Lindblom (1965)

Lindblom importantly points out, chosen policy means might gain support from a range of people with different ends (Lindblom 1965, 239-242). His later discussions of philosophy of science refer to the scope for such shared perspectives concerning the actual and potential impacts of policy decisions (Lindblom 1990). Hence, a degree of such overlap between stakeholders' values, interests and knowledge can, for Lindblom, serve as a basis for evaluation. It follows that policy evaluation requires careful analysis of these different perspectives. In this respect, he further anticipates the approach of some leading post-positivists, such as Dryzek and Fischer.[3]

Evaluation in terms of coordination, as understood by Lindblom, requires establishing the extent of such overlap in perceptions of the actual and potential outcomes of multiple decisions. Well suited to this task is frame analysis, a post-positivist method for comparing stakeholder perspectives influential in policy analysis and some network governance research. Rein and Schon (1994, 146), pioneers of frame analysis as an interpretivist approach, define frames as "the process of selecting, organizing and interpreting and subsequently giving meaning to a complex reality to provide guideposts to knowing, analyzing, persuading and acting". Hence comparison of framings, or 'cross-frame' analysis, involves analyzing the assumptions and norms underpinning actors' views and perceptions, or 'framings', of policy problems (Laws and Rein 2003).

As explained above, Lindblom emphasizes the importance of actors' values and interests, or 'ends' in shaping policy agendas, also a central theme in post-positivist scholarship on policy and governance. The danger highlighted by Lindblom of policy decisions inadequately considering significant understandings and knowledge is also a prominent

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[3] See Section 2.3 above.

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post-positivist theme. Notably, amongst the numerous post-positivist studies comparing framings of policy problems and the values they reflect, many focus on comparing insights of 'lay' people with established 'expert' forms of knowledge. Here, the focus is especially on the domain of natural sciences, in relation to policy issues such as nuclear power and genetically modified foods (Bäckstrand 2003). Yet, technical and scientific questions concerning such technologies are often closely inter-twined with complex economic questions (Greenwood 2010), such as how far such technologies are necessary or cost effective, given the range of different technologies, resources and consumer demands in complex modern economies. Lindblom gives insights, pertinent to a range of contemporary governance contexts, into how the challenge of balancing and refining policy goals is shaped by such economic complexities and the epistemological challenge of anticipating decision impacts in this context. This contribution suggests the need for post-positivist policy evaluation to assess how far perceived adverse decision impacts might be unintended, reflecting what we might refer to as 'epistemological gaps' in policy-makers' framings of a problem. While, as Lindblom argues, there are limits to how far we can rationally evaluate policy makers' ends, there is greater scope for "probing" knowledge claims (Lindblom 1990) concerning the effectiveness of selected policy means for achieving those ends.

Where such analysis highlights an epistemological gap, this prompts the question of how far the gap reflects the particular institutional context for the decision, again a question of close interest to Lindblom as his case for PMA makes clear. Lindblom views epistemological gaps as to some extent inevitable, given the inherent complexity and associated uncertainty involved in policy-making. His concern is with the evaluative question of whether institutional arrangements ensure that such potential gaps and their possible adverse unintended consequences are at least minimized. It follows that the cross-frame analysis

proposed here should consider stakeholders' framings not only of substantive policy

problems but of the institutional arrangements that shape how policy actors respond to the

epistemological and incentives related challenges involved in addressing these substantive

problems.

5. Application of the approach

Although Lindblom's discussion of PMA focuses on decision-making by political leaders at a single scale, he notes that such a coordinative process could potentially involve a broader range of actors (Lindblom 1965, 10-11). Applying the type of cross-frame analysis proposed above to assess how epistemological and incentives-related challenges are addressed in contemporary governance systems requires analysis of an especially broad range of stakeholder framings, given that they tend to straddle multiple scales, sectors and organizations. Just as actors with different ends, as Lindblom points out, might agree upon a set of policy means as a compromise, so they might potentially support governance arrangements designed to accommodate a plurality of ends and policy means. Conversely, arrangements within a particular governance sphere might be criticized for having adverse, possibly unintended, consequences, giving rise to the need to further seek potential causes through cross-frame analysis of related governance spheres. The analysis will inevitably need to selectively focus upon a set of especially closely related governance spheres and policy tools, as illustrated in the case study below.

Lindblom's illustrative applications of his conceptualization of coordination concern the effectiveness of PMA *processes*, for example PMA within political parties (Lindblom 1965, 311-329), without detailed consideration of their outcomes. The approach proposed here includes attention to both governance processes and outcomes, as explained below through a brief, illustrative case study conducted by this author (Greenwood 2012; Greenwood 2015). The focus is on the ambitious British government target set in 2006 that by 2016 all new homes in England should be 'zero carbon'. The challenge of steering markets towards this target involves coordination problems in procedural terms, cutting across the jurisdiction of

multiple government departments, as well as in Lindblom's substantive sense of balancing

multiple objectives. As well as the mandatory building regulations and planning policy, a

key tool in this agenda was the Code for Sustainable Homes, commissioned by Government

and developed by a private firm BRE as a graded set of standards that could be adopted

voluntarily by housing developers and set as requirements by various funders of social

housing, from local authorities to national agencies. Such voluntary, or quasi-voluntary,

standards, developed through private sector expertise, of which there are many in the UK

construction sector, typify 'new' governance tools, widely viewed by environmental

regulation scholars as vital to fostering innovation and learning (Gunningham, Grabosky,

and Sinclair 1998). The governance arrangements for developing these policy tools included

an integral role for industry. A notable example of Government adopting a 'steering'

approach was their establishment in 2009 of the Zero Carbon Hub, an industry network

organization commissioned to advise on and deliver the zero carbon target.

A detailed cross frame analysis was conducted, incorporating a broad range of private,

public and non-governmental sector stakeholders involved in defining and implementing

this policy agenda, based on qualitative data from interviews and industry events.

Broad support was found for the general 'end' of reducing CO2 emissions from new

homes, including a significant, though varying degree of support amongst housing

developers, in spite of the widely observed lobbying by many of them for a slowdown in the

rate at which regulations for the energy efficiency of new homes were strengthened.

Although conflicting interests are involved, stakeholder debates about this policy agenda are

not reducible to interest and value-driven differences between stakeholders alone. Vital

questions also arise, involving contrasting perspectives and knowledge, concerning the

appropriate governance-related means for steering markets towards the ends of this policy

agenda, given demands to ensure economic feasibility while enabling innovation and sensitivity to local contexts for housing developments.

Overall, this policy agenda is widely agreed to have fostered significant learning and innovation across housing and related industries. Amongst the significant achievements was the establishment of a minimum energy efficiency standard for the building fabric of new homes (FEES) that would form part of the 2016 target. FEES gained wide acceptance from a broad range of stakeholders. However, concerns were raised by many practitioners about various adverse unintended consequences of policy and standards, notably including the Code (Greenwood 2012). The Code's points system for ranking homes in terms of six levels was argued to be creating numerous perverse incentives. Installations of various technologies were rewarded that would not necessarily bring environmental benefits, such as water recycling systems in areas of high rainfall and cycle storage or low carbon energy technologies that might never be used. Some adverse unintended consequences arose from inter-relationships between policy tools managed by different departments. For example, an adjustment to the methodology for calculating building energy efficiency (by Department for Energy and Climate Change) to make it easier for homes without a gas supply to achieve standards inadvertently made it easier for homes *on* the gas grid to achieve higher Code standards through installation of *electric* heating, which entailed higher CO_2 emissions. (The Code was managed by Department of Communities and Local Government). Especially prominent concerns were expressed about the 'zero carbon home' definition itself which initially required that all energy used should be generated by renewables on the site of the home, such as solar panels or micro wind turbines on the roof. A range of stakeholders pointed out that such '100% on site' was not feasible or cost-effective on some sites, particularly in urban areas. There were, they argued, other more cost effective options for

tackling emissions from the built environment, such as energy efficiency measures for existing homes and improving public transport. These criticisms of policy tools as incentivizing a 'box ticking' approach to satisfying performance measures, rather than assessing potential outcomes more holistically, are reminiscent of critiques of NPM. It was felt that the Code and associated zero carbon definition were promoting an unviable pathway for mainstream housing that would not fully 'feed into' mandatory regulations in the way initially envisaged by key policy-makers and advocates of such non-mandatory governance tools. Among those expressing these concerns about policy coordination were some designers and consultants with a strong normative commitment to achieving the 'end' of sustainable, low carbon homes.

These perceived adverse consequences prompt the question of whether their causes can be traced to the governance processes through which these tools were developed. Here, we can usefully compare the processes for defining FEES and the Code. The proposed FEES was based on a recommendation by Zero Carbon Hub following extensive industry consultation. Being independent from government, the Hub incentivized stakeholders to reach agreement rather than concede the final decision to government. By contrast, decisions by numerous local authorities to set high Code levels as a planning condition did not always command such support. Questions were raised by designers and developers about whether local authorities had the required expertise and resources to set such targets appropriately. This in turn prompts questions about the national level process through which the Code was established. In 2009 the proposed '100% on site' zero carbon definition was changed in response to the industry criticism that it was unviable. It was announced that financial contributions by developers to off-site renewables and other emission-saving measures would count towards achieving zero carbon. This suggested that policy-makers had initially

been unaware of the full implications of their first definition, hence that there was an epistemological gap in their framing. The future course of innovation in technologies such as on-site renewables inevitably involves significant uncertainty and complexity, hence such a gap is to some degree inevitable. Yet, institutional factors were also significant in this case. Some civil servants or ministers, it was suggested during interviews, might not have had sufficient time or the required specialist knowledge to fully understand or act upon criticisms from experts, including some closely involved in policy-making (Greenwood 2012). This epistemological gap could have been exacerbated by state officials lacking sufficient resources or incentives to develop expertise, again illustrating the close inter-relationships between epistemological and incentives dimensions of coordination challenges highlighted by Lindblom. Furthermore, concerns were raised that the arrangements for BRE to develop and maintain the Code entailed a lack of accountability and responsiveness. Analysis of the substantive outcomes of such 'public-private' governance arrangements, as outlined here, can complement and inform our understandings of how such governance arrangements potentially undermine accountability, a theme discussed so far primarily in process terms (see Willems and Van Dooren 2011).

Compared with more general post-positivist analysis of policy discourse, such detailed analysis of coordination problems in the face of economic complexity, as well being vital for governance evaluation, enhances our understanding of the impacts of such discourse. For example, Barry and Paterson (2004), analyzing U.K. environmental policy under New Labour, highlight an 'ecological modernization' discourse that emphasized potential for environmentally sustainable economic growth. Yet, in this case of housing, support for ecological modernization was weakened by widely perceived problems with the tools developed for delivering the agenda, notably the Code. Consequently, it was easier for the

subsequent Coalition Government to justify its 2014 decision to wind down the Code. The prior ecological modernization became superseded in this case by a discourse of 'streamlining' policy.

As briefly illustrated in Section 2.1, such debates about governance effectiveness are ongoing in a range of contexts. Considerable resources are required for conducting the extensive, detailed, inter-temporal, qualitative, cross-frame analysis proposed here for political science to engage more closely with the evaluative dimension of these debates. As Lindblom (1965, 166) himself acknowledges, no evaluation can be comprehensive, or definitive and this is especially true in a governance context. Yet, the fundamental importance of coordination problems as defined here means that, where they occur, they are likely to be highlighted by actors when asked to evaluate the area of governance concerned, even if not necessarily articulated in terms of 'coordination'. The impossibility of synoptic evaluation should not, as Lindblom argues, deter researchers from seeking such insights and engaging with the demands of evaluation.

6. Conclusion

In contemporary political science, the question of the concepts and criteria to use in evaluating governance remains very much open, not least in light of post-positivists' emphasis on the contestability of values that provide the basis for any evaluation. Lindblom's conception of coordination in policy-making offers a potential focus for meeting this need, sharing these post-positivist premises and differing markedly from instrumentalist, narrowly economistic understandings of the concept. Assessing whether a policy process has achieved coordination, as understood by Lindblom, requires a focus on how far the various actors involved are enabled to discover and act upon knowledge concerning the possible means for addressing policy challenges. Lindblom's work suggests that an especially close focus is needed on this 'epistemological' challenge in the context of complex, closely inter-twined means-ends inter-relationships. Such an epistemological, outcome-orientated focus can complement analysis of the incentives of governance actors to address policy challenges, on which established political science approaches tend to focus. The approach proposed here can complement and enrich widely used post-positivist methods, ensuring that sensitivity to complexity enables rather than prevents closer engagement with vital evaluative questions about contemporary governance.

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