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Promoting participative policy coherence for sustainable development

Inclusive dialogue through the “pull-push-match” methodology

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Abstract: Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) has promoted sustainability through policy coordination, but to what extent does it respond to the needs of local communities? Scholars of PCSD have acknowledged how it has been considered as an end in itself rather than a means to achieve normative impact. A major limit of PCSD has been its institutionalized nature, as mechanisms for social participation have not been highlighted in implementation strategies. This article addresses this issue. It proposes “pull-push-match” as a methodology for the establishment of participative PCSD. The article, co-authored by a team of researchers and practitioners from Mexico, addresses PCSD in relation to Indigenous communities.

Keywords: Indigenous communities, Mexico, public policy, social participation, sustainable development, transdisciplinary methods



Since the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, governments throughout the world committed to pursuing transformative development defined as providing for the needs of local populations while addressing power imbalances at the supranational level (Koff & Maganda, 2016). The SDGs state: “We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind” (United Nations, n.d.). Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) has been integrated into the SDGs as a pillar for the implementation of this agenda. PCSD, embedded in the SDGs as a policy instrument that promotes “whole of government” approaches to sustainable development (Graham & Graham, 2019), is part of Target 17.14, focusing on the governance of sustainability partnerships for the achievement of the SDGs. As such, it occupies a central role in global sustainable development agendas.

PCSD has evolved from Policy Coherence for Development (PCD), which was first proposed by the global development cooperation community for the purpose of promoting development through international organizations and their member states. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Development Assistance Committee forwarded PCD in 1991. It defined, PCD as “working to ensure that the objectives and results of a government’s (or institution’s) development policy are not undermined by other policies of that same government (or institution), which impact on developing countries, and that these other policies support development objectives where feasible” (OECD, 2005, p. 28). The European Union (EU) adopted this definition of PCD when it integrated the concept in its own policy frameworks, starting 1993 (Siitonen, 2016). PCD was utilized by development cooperation actors to highlight how non-development policies were undermining development cooperation strategies. In this way, PCD was conceived as a political statement that justified the prioritization of development agendas among other policy priorities, such as foreign policy, agriculture, trade, finance, and security.

While PCSD (and PCD) play central roles in global sustainable development debates, local and often national stakeholders outside of Europe have not necessarily engaged with this concept (Hernández-Huerta et al., 2018; Koff, 2020; Larsson, 2018; Mbanda & Fourie, 2019; Moure et al., 2021). This has limited both the legitimacy and effectiveness of PCSD as a tool for transformative change because there is a lack of stakeholder buy-in. This article directly addresses this implementation problem by asking: How can PCSD become more participative in both condition and function so as to respond to the needs of local communities, especially those located in emerging or developing states? It proposes two original-

ities. First, the article has been conceived and developed through a trans-disciplinary partnership of researchers, state government officials, and representatives of both civil society and the private sector. Second, it proposes PCSD through the lens of community engagement, thus shifting its focus away from the global sustainable development agenda toward the sustainability needs of specific groups.

The article is organized around five sections. Following this introduction, part two presents a literature review on PCD/PCSD in order to situate this project within existing conceptual and policy debates. Given that the empirical discussions engaged here revolve around Mexican policies focused on Indigenous communities, part three then presents current discussions in Mexico related to the policy needs of Indigenous groups. This is followed by part four, which presents the “pull-push-match” (PPM) methodology utilized to engage stakeholders in critical discussions on PCSD. Finally, part five presents the article’s conclusions.

Research design and methodology

Mexico has been chosen as the case study for analysis of PCSD and Indigenous Peoples for a number of reasons. First, Indigenous communities in Mexico share a very rich history, as groups such as the Aztecs, Maya, and Olmec, among others, built civilizations of worldwide renown that have contributed to modern-day advances in science, natural resource management, disaster prevention, and more (Díaz-Cayeros et al., 2014). According to INEGI (Mexico’s National Institute of Statistics and Geography) there are presently 68 different Indigenous Peoples inhabiting the country. These groups speak languages from 11 linguistic families, including 364 dialects (IWGIA, 2020). INEGI estimates that 16,933,283 Indigenous persons currently live in Mexico, representing 15.1 percent of the population (cited in IWGIA, 2020). Mexico has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and is a constitutionally declared pluricultural nation since 1992. International treaties, once they are signed by the president and ratified by the Senate gain quasi-constitutional significance (Mumme, 2019), so no state or municipal law should contradict legal commitments undertaken through these treaties, thus linking the global sustainability framework to domestic policies at different levels of governance.

While Indigenous Peoples in Mexico enjoy legal and cultural recognition at many levels, they often remain politically and socio-economically marginalized. According to the CONEVAL (2021), the percentage of Indigenous Peoples living in poverty is 35 percent more than non-Indigenous

Peoples (76.8 percent versus 41.5 percent) and the percentage of Indigenous Peoples living in extreme poverty is almost six times that for non-Indigenous Peoples (35.7 percent compared to 6.8 percent) (CONEVAL, 2021). These inequalities have become especially relevant since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, 9 out of 10 Indigenous people in Mexico are affiliated with the Instituto de Salud para el Bienestar (Insabi) (ex-Seguro Popular), which is health insurance for the poor. Moreover, 12.8 percent of their homes lack running water and 26.9 percent do not have sanitation services. As a result, 87.5 percent of Mexico's Indigenous population lives in "a high degree of marginalization" (Alcalá Gómez, 2021). This situation is representative of the conditions in which many Indigenous Peoples live throughout Latin America (Diehl & Langdon, 2018; Puerta Silva et al., 2020).

Mexico can also be considered a critical case for the study of PCD because the country has already formally adopted PCD within its governance frameworks. In its 2018 presentation of country profiles on the implementation of PCD in relation to Agenda 2030, the OECD notes that "an explicit commitment of the State [Mexico] towards the 2030 Agenda, backed by an implementation strategy, provides the basis for aligning efforts at federal, state and municipal levels" (OECD, 2018, p. 25). The report specifically applauds Mexico for two commitments: "1) Leadership at the highest level is helping to lay institutional foundations to ensure that commitment towards the 2030 Agenda transcends government administrations and 2) National planning and budgetary processes provide essential tools for policy integration and coherence" (OECD, 2018, p. 26). Thus, we are expecting to see how PCSD can be grounded in response to the needs of local communities and potentially promote community engagement.

Data collection

One proposed originality of this research relates to data collection. In addition to reviews of academic and policy literatures, statistical databases, and government reports, this article presents the results of transdisciplinary dialogues, including academics and practitioners from state government, civil society, and the private sector. The research group, comprising 15 people representing one state government agency, one non-governmental organization, two private enterprises, two universities, and one research institute met on a monthly basis from January to June 2021. Their discussions focused on the diverse perceptions of public policy among the participants, the needs of Indigenous Peoples, and the effectiveness of policy responses to these needs. Stakeholders described the communities in which they live and work, and the sustainability chal-

lenges that need to be addressed. They were asked to list some of their applied research needs that could potentially be discussed in a forum. This facilitated the construction of a public policy needs inventory that would be effective in linking stakeholders and researchers.

The discussions culminated in a PPM mini-forum aimed at establishing a shared understanding of PCSD among members of the group (see Figure 1). According to this method, there is recognition of production of scientific information that can be systematically shared with stakeholders (“pull”). Second, the importance of translating information for the use and understanding of policy and decision makers is emphasized (“push”). Third, the relevance of designing the co-production of knowledge mechanisms (science-policy interface) is highlighted, where trust can be generated between government actors and experts (academics, scientists) (“match”). A detailed description of the method is provided in part four. This is a pilot exercise meant to shed light on how these forums can be implemented with members of Indigenous communities in future dialogues.

It is very important to mention the commitment of project participants to research ethics. First, the aims and scope of the project were clarified among all participants orally and in writing. Throughout the meetings of the project team, all participants agreed to the confidentiality of the discussions. Video recordings were made of the meetings in order to provide internal records of discussions for the project team and they were circulated among participants in the meetings. This article does not reproduce any direct quotations from the meetings to protect the confidentiality of our conversations.

These virtual exchanges were complemented by field visits accompanied by project partners. We conducted five open interviews with stake-

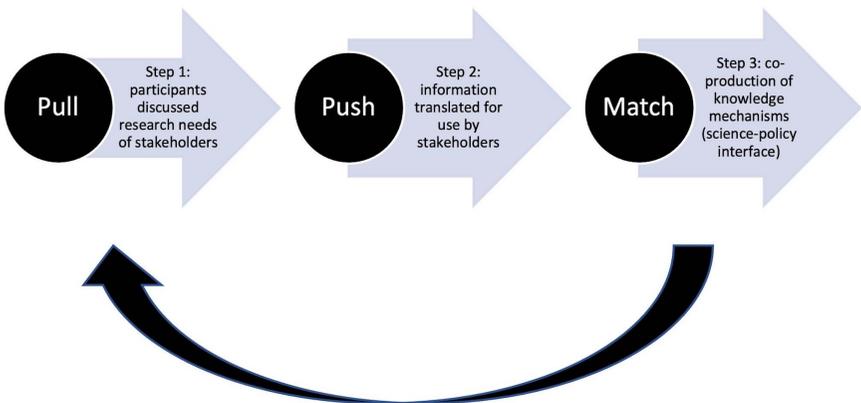


Figure 1. • Pull-Push-Match Dialogue for Science-Stakeholder Interface.

Source: Figure designed by authors.

holders active in Indigenous communities and we committed to their anonymity. Photos were taken during these visits with the permission of project partners, but human subjects were not included in the photos unless they gave informed consent for their photo to be taken. These photos are for internal use among members of the research team, and they are not included in the dissemination of the research.

Finally, it is important to mention that this project adopted transdisciplinary methods. In doing so, it engaged stakeholders as producers of knowledge and project partners. The scope of the research, the definition of key concepts, such as public policy, sustainable development, community needs, etc., and the establishment of methods were all decided through consensus-based dialogue between researchers and stakeholders. Three field visits were conducted by teams of researchers and stakeholders to view the operations of sustainable private enterprises and visits to Indigenous communities in Guerrero, Mexico.

Participative PCSD: Prioritizing community needs

The political recognition that PCD/PCSD has received internationally has been matched by the expansion of policy coherence as a field of academic study. In their 2021 survey of the literature on policy coherence, Righettini and Lizzi (2021) analyzed 2031 articles on policy coherence published in SCOPUS-indexed journals since 2000. The authors asked three important questions that guided this survey:

- Does a specific “policy coherence” (PC) strand of literature exist?
- How has interest in PC been gaining momentum, and what are the most frequent topics associated with it?
- How does the PC literature provide a fruitful and innovative analytical perspective on increasing cross-sectoral interactions pervading policy?

The article’s focus is on PC instead of PCSD, which opens the analytical framework to a wider range of subjects. Nonetheless the findings of the research are relevant for PCSD. First, Righettini and Lizzi (2021) convincingly argue that PC is an emerging field of study within research on sustainable development. Second, they illustrate how climate change and environmental sustainability are the most prominent subjects in the field. More importantly, their quantitative analysis indicates that governance coherence (58.2 percent of academic production) studies are more numerous than policy-specific coherence approaches (40.8 percent of academic

production) reflecting the same bias that exists in the implementation of PCSD among international organizations. Finally, in response to question three, the results of this survey indicated that 40 percent of all PCD studies focus on policy implementation while only 10.2 percent examine policy formulation and decision-making, and 9.4 percent address policy evaluation (Righettini & Lizzi, 2021).

These results accurately reflect most of the academic work on PCD/PCSD. As international organizations (i.e., UN, OECD, EU) have prominently promoted this paradigm, academic perspectives have been critical of its implementation. Siitonen (2016), for example, contends that PCD is relevant to three types of development relationships: (1) between development cooperation and non-development cooperation sectors in donor countries; (2) between development cooperation and non-development cooperation sectors in aid countries; and (3) between donor and aid recipient countries. He argues that PCD's impact on development outcomes is limited because it has only been applied to the first category. In fact, the literature on PCD/PCSD has recognized a clear "Northern bias" in its application (Häbel, 2020; Koff, 2021; Mbanda & Fourie, 2019).

Another criticism of PCD/PCSD implementation has focused on its use as a technical tool aiming to improve development aid efficiency. Carbone & Keijzer (2016) argue that the EU has pursued the development of institutional reform over policy effectiveness. Häbel & Hakala (2021) illustrate how the EU's renewable energy policies are not fully coherent with all dimensions of sustainability as they adopt a narrow definition of this concept, thus reducing its normative impact. Similarly, Koff & Maganda (2016) have shown how donor program efficiency has been prioritized over normative change and the pursuit of global equity, in this instance in EU development cooperation programs focused on water.

In fact, one of the limitations of PCD/PCSD has been a lack of integration among domestic policy frameworks in developing and emerging countries (Siitonen, 2016). Within the SDG framework, PCSD is intended to serve as a guide and framework and the 2030 Agenda invites individual countries to adopt and adapt the framework to meet their context-specific needs. In stable democracies, such as those that characterize the EU where PCD/PCSD is embedded in national governance systems, this has been achieved to some degree (Ylönen & Salmivaara, 2021). Recent scholarship on developing countries (Larsson, 2018; Mbanda & Fourie, 2019), however, has documented how weak rule of law, challenges with institutional transparency, and distrust of government have hindered implementation of PCD/PCSD. Graham & Graham (2019) study SDG implementation in African small island states, showing how the quality of democracy (QOD) promotes transformative sustainable development in

some countries whereas limited QOD blocks sustainable development in others. Häbel (2020) contends that public policies should not be viewed as static measures, and she examines the relationships between EU External Action and development partners (specifically Vietnam) by analyzing different policy networks/communities, which were found to not interact, and consequently, their policy objectives diverge. This has undermined the normative impact of PCD.

International organizations have highlighted the need to address these challenges. For example, the OECD (2021) recently published a guidance note on the implementation of its recommendation on PCSD. Principle 6 of this publication highlights the need for stakeholder participation in PCSD. It states the following:

Major barriers to policy coherence are strongly rooted in differing perceptions of stakeholders on the priorities and challenges in advancing sustainable development. A coherent implementation of the SDGs requires mechanisms for dialogue and engagement whereby governments and key stakeholders can come together to identify challenges, set priorities, contribute to the development of laws and regulations, align policies and actions, and mobilize resources for sustainable development. (OECD, 2021, p. 40)

Even though the literature focusing specifically on PCSD in Mexico is limited, it reflects many of these points highlighted in more general PCD scholarship. The first work on PCD in the country, published by Cejudo and Michel (2016), examined three types of policy coherence: coherence within policies, coherence between policies, and coherence between policy spaces. This study showed how well-designed and implemented public policies do not necessarily foment coherent and self-reinforcing policy frameworks. In fact, they contend that complementarity is quite weak in the Mexican policy system. These findings reflect the more general literature on sustainable development implementation in Mexico (Challenger et al., 2018), which highlights the lack of inter-institutional coordination in policymaking.

Other studies focus on the weakness of QOD and governance in Mexico and how this has undermined PCSD implementation. Moure et al. (2021) show how civil servants in Mexico often resist institutional reform because of the difficulties that it creates in their daily work. The static nature of Mexican governance promotes narrow objectives among government officials, which hinders policy coordination and inter-institutional collaboration.

Koff (2021) and Larsson (2018) have focused more specifically on PCSD and citizen participation in Mexican sustainable development strategies. Koff (2021) applied PCSD to Environmental Impact Assessment in

Veracruz while Larsson (2018) examined local waste management in Chiapas. In both cases, PCSD was hindered by citizen-government tensions and obfuscated environmental regulations. Similarly, Koff et al.'s (2020) discussion of Protected Natural Area governance in Mexico highlights PCSD's limited effectiveness due to the absence of mechanisms for citizen participation. The authors promote a model of "participative Policy Coherence for Development" in order to improve the local impacts of PCSD. The present article adopts this participative PCSD focus, which is consistent with both the recent OECD guidelines and academic scholarship emphasizing the need to properly engage stakeholders in PCSD implementation. The article proposes the PPM methodology as a means to operationalize participative PCSD, reorienting this tool toward the needs of communities. Specifically, it focuses on sustainable development and Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous Peoples and the SDGs

As previously stated, Indigenous Peoples throughout the world often live in marginalized conditions. However, the statistics presented earlier for Mexico only begin to describe the complexity of the situations in which Indigenous Peoples often find themselves. Indigenous communities are not only characterized frequently by poverty but the policies that have been established to address this situation are often inappropriate. For example, Alès (2018) proposes the term "proclamation-denial" to describe a trend in Latin America through which states proclaim Indigenous rights only to ignore and even deny them in practice. Her empirical research on Venezuela illustrates how Constitutional protections for autonomy and self-government passed in 1999, were subsequently abandoned by the State. Similarly, Diehl & Esther Langdon (2018) examined how the Brazilian Unified Health System institutionalized new relationships between the government and Indigenous Peoples. Specifically, the authors studied the Indigenous Health Subsystem, which was established in 1999, including three spaces for Indigenous participation: (1) Indigenous health agents as members of health teams; (2) Indigenous representatives on health councils; and (3) Indigenous organizations as primary care providers. The authors show how the roles created for Indigenous participation and governance are ambiguous and how Indigenous actors are subjected to a centralized and bureaucratized system that offers little possibility for autonomous decision-making or action.

These case studies reflect larger criticisms aimed at inappropriate policies, especially those that are associated with state sovereignty. Puerta

Silva et al. (2020) illustrate that Colombia and Venezuela's regional strategies are weak, so neither country can support the cross-border Wayuu community or the other 12 binational Indigenous Peoples located on the border between these countries. This situation reflects the weakness of meaningful regional integration in the area as supranational organizations have done little to protect the well-being of Indigenous Peoples despite the establishment of regional organs such as the Consejo Consultivo de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Comunidad Andina and the Consejo de Pueblos Indígenas en la Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (Unasur). The Wayuu and others suffer from systemic marginalization, poverty and malnutrition. Over four thousand Wayuu children have died of malnutrition over the last 30 years (Puerta Silva et al., 2020). Puerta Silva et al.'s (2020) article, written by a team of researchers, activists, and Wayuu leaders, effectively shows how both Colombia and Venezuela formally recognize Wayuu citizenship and the rights associated with it. However, Colombian and Venezuelan security and welfare policies aim to impose state sovereignty associated with border controls, and they undermine human security along the border. Consequently, policies from these countries do not protect Indigenous Peoples from—and sometimes even cause—food, ecological, and territorial crises (Puerta Silva et al., 2020).

These criticisms have also been made at the international level, especially within the context of the SDGs. In general, Indigenous Peoples did not receive significant attention in the SDGs. They are only explicitly mentioned in two targets. First, Target 2.3 states: "By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, Indigenous Peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment." Second, Target 4.5 states: "By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and children in vulnerable situations" (United Nations, n.d.).

In both cases, these targets address Indigenous Peoples as vulnerable populations instead of being treated as equal actors in global sustainability strategies despite the important role they play in local sustainability strategies. For example, it is well known that many Indigenous Peoples have a detailed knowledge of nature that could be used for environmental governance (Durán-Díaz, et al., 2020). Also, the proposed solutions to their difficulties are inadequate, to say the least. In terms of food security, the proposed target focuses specifically on agricultural productivity, which hardly represents either food sovereignty or food systems

approaches. Domestically, countries such as Mexico have adopted this approach through programs such as *Sembrando Vida* which aims to reduce rural poverty through the planting of trees and the sale of their fruits. Such programs do not address structural inequalities in food systems. Similarly, in terms of education, the target previously cited only mentions access without addressing larger issues of curriculum content, rights, and distribution of resources. Again, this ignores the inadequacies of education systems regarding Indigenous Peoples. In fact, scholars of the SDGs and their relationship to Indigenous Peoples, such as Yap and Watene (2019) have noted that the SDGs target indicators or metrics of Indigenous populations more than the populations themselves.

This situation is reflected in Mexico. The academic literatures on Indigenous Peoples in Mexico generally focus on three discussions: the need to address poverty and marginalization (Rieger, 2021), the impact of Indigenous community self-governance (known as *usos y costumbres*) on resource distribution, well-being and sustainability (Díaz-Cayeros et al., 2014), and political participation and empowerment (Durán-Díaz et al., 2020). Even the current government's National Program for Indigenous Peoples (2018–2024) focuses on these themes. The National Program states the following:

The Government of Mexico, in the process of the Fourth National Transformation recognizes the Indigenous and Afro-Mexican Peoples as subjects of public law, with the ability to freely define their forms of political organization, as well as their economic, social and cultural development, in accordance with the provisions of national and international legislation, to overcome poverty conditions, marginalization, inequality, exclusion and discrimination that they have historically and structurally lived. (Instituto Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2018, p. 12)

It highlights the following areas of action: the fight against poverty, the facilitation of autonomy and self-governance, sustainable territorial management, and empowerment and political participation in policy formulation. Most importantly for discussions of PCSD, the National Program highlights mainstreaming as a vital element of policymaking for Indigenous Peoples. It states: “The different secretariats and agencies of the Federal Government, commit to give joint and comprehensive attention to the Indigenous and Afro-Mexican Peoples and establish mechanisms for dialogue and agreement with these peoples, for a coordinated implementation of policy” (Instituto Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2018, p. 20)

These broad themes reflect Mexico's commitments within the framework of international agreements such as the SDGs and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The National Program for Indigenous Peoples focuses on nine broad objectives aimed at reinforcing

ing regional policies and representation for Indigenous communities. The program calls for the creation of Regional Councils for Indigenous Peoples as well as 133 Coordination Centers. It aims to support the establishment of regional economies through support for traditional agriculture, Indigenous tourism and the expansion of fair trade. The program also calls for investments in water, health, and education infrastructure as well as roads and connectivity, and it includes numerous actions aimed at promoting Constitutional rights, cultural protections, intercultural education, the rights of women and children, and regional rights. Finally, the program includes support for the establishment of a National Council for Indigenous and Afro-Mexican Peoples in addition to the aforementioned regional councils (Instituto Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2018).

PPM and participative PCD

The Mexican National Program for Indigenous Peoples certainly presents an ambitious agenda. As the aforementioned literature review indicates, this recognition of the needs of Indigenous Peoples is not uncommon in Latin America, and it certainly should be applauded. However, experience has also indicated that such broad objectives cannot be fully implemented nor do they necessarily respond to the needs of Indigenous communities. This is most evident in the article published by Puerta Silva et al. (2020) where a group of 15 authors, representing academics, activists, and Wayuu leaders effectively illustrated how Venezuelan and Colombian policy frameworks undermined the coherence of policy responses for the needs of the Wayuu. Building on this innovative approach, this study similarly adopts a transdisciplinary perspective in order to examine the coherence of Mexican Indigenous policies for the needs of these communities.

Transdisciplinary approaches to public policy formulation and research have become widespread. In academia, research partnerships that encompass academics, members of civil society and the private sector are often referred to as “citizen science.” Through this approach, stakeholders are engaged in the definition of both conceptual and methodological aspects of research in such a way that they act as participants rather than subjects (Gray et al., 2017). In policymaking, these partnerships are generally identified as “participative modelling” (Gray et al., 2017). Many scholars of governance have already differentiated between various types of stakeholder participation. For example, Vaillancourt (2009) highlights the distinction between the “co-production” and the “co-construction” of policy. The former refers to the organizational dimension of policy and

addresses the participation of both civil society stakeholders and market forces in the implementation of services to the public. Conversely, the latter relates to the institutional dimension of public policy and enables an analysis of how both civil society stakeholders and market forces are defining public policies (Vaillancourt, 2009).

In order to operationalize this perspective, this project implemented a PPM methodology. The PPM model is based on the Delphi policy method, which was established to address systematic attempts to identify divergent points of view and facilitate consensus among stakeholders with opposing points of view. This is a systematic method for obtaining, exchanging, and developing informed opinion on an issue (Rayens & Hahn, 2000, p. 308). The Delphi policy method was used by McGeoch et al. (2014) to facilitate the communication process to reduce disagreement among stakeholders and ensure that all points of view are properly raised and recognized. Also, the method aims to assist asset intensive organizations to develop strategy and policy. The PPM model is used here to create inventories of research needs and align them with the scientific capabilities of the research team to influence public policies.

The PPM method began with numerous meetings between the research team, representatives of state government, civil society representatives, and stakeholders from the private sector (see methods section). This dialogue was transformed into participatory research through the establishment of a more structured PPM virtual forum based on the approach described in the methods section. This extended dialogue resulted in the completion of a research proposal aimed at promoting a model of PCD for Indigenous communities in Mexico (especially Veracruz State). Future dialogues will also focus on Guerrero, Campeche, Quintana Roo, Chiapas, and Oaxaca. These extended dialogues will be facilitated through the translation of research materials into Indigenous languages, such as Nahuatl, Maya, and Amuzgo. The following section presents preliminary PPM results because these forums will be expanded to include a larger number of participants who will represent a broader spectrum of Indigenous communities.

Preliminary Results

As previously stated, the research team working on this project held regular meetings with stakeholders from January to June 2021. During this period, the team-members presented the concept of PCSD and explained how they had implemented it in research on Mexico thus far (“pull”). Once this dialogue was established, the stakeholders then introduced themselves and explained how they work with Indigenous Peoples in differ-

ent parts of Mexico. Above all, these exchanges focused on the challenges that Indigenous Peoples in Mexico face and how policy responses have addressed them (“push”). The transdisciplinary dialogue then identified specific actions where research can be of use to the stakeholders (“match”) in their own engagement with Indigenous communities.

In order to target research on PCSD for the needs of participating stakeholders, the forums were organized around three questions concerning their organizations:

1. What are the objectives that your organization pursues?
2. What are the biggest challenges that you face in the pursuit of these objectives?
3. How can scientific research help you achieve your objectives?

These questions were asked for short-term, medium-term, and long-term objectives. Similarly, PCSD-related questions were put to the stakeholders for the purpose of identifying the needs of the communities in which they work. These questions were asked:

- What are the main challenges that affect the communities in which you work?
- How do public policies affect these challenges?
- In your opinion, how can scientific research support policies addressing these challenges?

Interestingly, the discussions carried out with stakeholders, combined with three field visits in Veracruz and Guerrero and five interviews with stakeholders active in Indigenous communities, indicated that the biggest challenge to establishing PCSD in Mexico is not the definition of coherence but the very understanding of public policies. For some stakeholders, public policies refer to the whole system of governance and services provided by the state to Indigenous Peoples. For others, policies reflect market interests and development strategies that undermine sustainability. Another understanding mentioned in these discussions focused specifically on subsidies that communities and even individuals receive from the government.

While initial approaches to public policies differed, the stakeholders participating in this dialogue identified similar objectives and challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples despite the fact that they work in different sectors. First, representatives of all four participating organizations highlighted the need to strengthen environmental sustainability in Indigenous communities and protect natural resources. Specific challenges identified

in the dialogue include: the presence of a weak institutional framework for environmental governance, weak application of environmental rights in Indigenous communities, lack of satisfactory diagnostic environmental studies at the local/regional level, and productive, economic, social, and housing policies/practices that contribute to deforestation, pollution (especially chemical fertilizers) and other negative environmental consequences. All of the participating organizations identified the need to reinforce local/regional networks of actors that promote transformative sustainability practices in Indigenous communities. What is most interesting about this perspective is the identification of the need for the mainstreaming of sustainability. Participants did not express their concerns as “Indigenous problems,” but they addressed these difficulties as environmental challenges that need to be resolved by a plurality of actors, agencies, and policies that affect production, distribution, trade, and the consumption of products. In short, they identified the need for PCSD to address complex situations faced by Indigenous Peoples.

The “match” proposals identified by stakeholders varied quite significantly. The four areas of proposed actions were generally: research on Mexican governmental frameworks and how they can better promote transformative sustainability; studies of territorial dynamics including inter-community relations, production, and distributional practices; the establishment and maintenance of social networks in order to improve sustainability; and diagnostic studies of value chains in order to promote reforms that are more sustainable economically, socially, and environmentally. Stakeholders also requested detailed technical assistance in their specific areas of expertise.

The second part of the exercise was also very interesting because it highlighted numerous incoherences stakeholders attempt to address through their different projects. First, the stakeholders highlighted vertical incoherences, as the objectives of national programs are not necessarily coherent with the needs of regional or local territories or communities. Some stakeholders identified conflicting policy aims between levels of governance. Others focused on how policy instruments—for example, agricultural subsidies—actually undermine territorial cohesion by privileging individuals over communities (especially self-governed *ejidos*¹). Related to this, stakeholders identified inter-organizational incoherences for sustainability as community and inter-community partnerships sometimes break down due to economic competition and as well as competition for natural resource which public policies do not adequately address.

Finally, as part of the “match,” stakeholders identified two other types of incoherences for sustainability that need to be addressed. The first is horizontal coherence, as forum participants highlighted a lack of main-

streaming of policies for Indigenous Peoples. Not only do policies lack coordination but there seems to be little dialogue between officials from different secretariats/agencies at the municipal, state, and federal levels of government. For example, one stakeholder bemoaned the lack of integration of financial policies into sustainability strategies, as access to and the structure of credit is not coherent with sustainable agricultural practices. Second, all stakeholders identified a lack of infrastructure as a major problem affecting Indigenous Peoples in Mexico. Not only does the lack of infrastructure and services affect education and health (among other sectors) but some stakeholders have claimed that this has also fostered outward migration from these communities due to limited opportunities for well-being. One stakeholder specifically focused on how community leaders have migrated due to insufficient services because they lose faith in the government's promised support for transformative change. This migration obviously affects local economic dynamics that have suffered as well. Due to the chain reaction of negative impacts, all stakeholders requested diagnostic PCSD studies of governance from a bottom-up perspective. These requests indicate the need to re-orient policy evaluation toward the community/territorial scale. Some of the stakeholders also requested capacity-building activities with Indigenous Peoples so that actors can better monitor/evaluate governance within their territories.

This PPM exercise has confirmed the previously mentioned concerns about policies aimed at Indigenous Peoples in Mexico. The National Program for Indigenous Peoples focuses on repressed rights, cultural recognition, and the protection of autonomy and self-governance. These objectives are important, but they do not necessarily respond to the needs of local Indigenous communities. PCSD is, of course, affected by systemic governance issues. However, it has been proposed as a tool for policy effectiveness. Through the pilot PPM forums implemented here, participative methods highlight the challenges that local communities face and how PCSD analyses can contribute to local actor initiatives that promote sustainability. These viewpoints reinforce the idea that PCSD should focus more on policy evaluation and less exclusively on policy implementation.

Conclusions

PCSD is a central pillar of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. At the same time, it remains an enigma in many parts of the world. While PCSD has focused on institutional reform and development governance among international organizations, discussions surrounding the implementation of PCSD generally approach public policies as static strategies

to be coordinated. This is the principal shortcoming that limits the effectiveness of PCSD, as recognized by organizations such as the OECD.

Public policy represents the interests and interactions of policy networks/communities. If transformative sustainability is to be achieved, then these communities must be coordinated as much as the policies themselves. This conclusion derives from the PPM discussions presented earlier with stakeholders active in Mexican Indigenous communities. These exchanges were organized in order to promote citizen participation in PCSD debates so as to inform them with fresh perspectives. These discussions confirmed the finding by Cejudo and Michel (2016) that public debates on policy in Mexico focus on specific programs and their effectiveness rather than addressing the interactions between policy spaces in the framework of sustainability governance.

The conclusions from the PPM forum made clear that participative PCSD actually promotes transformative sustainability in local communities by facilitating sustainable policy frameworks that go deeper than simple policy implementation. Participative PCSD aims, in fact, to coordinate policies, networks of actors and territorial resource management in sustainable development mainstreaming aimed at fulfilling the needs of local communities. It does so by responding to these needs at three levels: (1) within communities; (2) inter-community relations; and (3) governance of territories.

These findings are preliminary as they are the basis for future transdisciplinary research to be conducted through the RISC-RISE Consortium Knowledge Platform on Participative PCD. The platform aims to engage stakeholders in detailed discussions on sustainable development and together, participants will identify mechanisms through which to establish policy frameworks that are coherent with sustainability. This virtual platform is an open space that aims to promote sustainability strategies that reconcile perceived tradeoffs in domestic policy contexts. Through this approach, we invite other researchers and stakeholders to engage sustainable development policies, identify the challenges that their communities face and establish coherent policy frameworks that address these issues. Rather than promoting the top-down implementation of PCSD in development systems in general, participative PCSD engages communities, identifies localized policy needs through inclusive dialogue, and establishes specific policy coherence proposals for addressing these needs. Through the PPM methodology, local stakeholders and community members can appropriate PCSD as a policy tool and use it for their own sustainability objectives. In doing so, participative PCSD reinforces both sustainability as a policy objective and the QOD necessary for its attainment.

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NOTE

1. A system of comunal land tenure in Mexico.

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Promover la coherencia política participativa para el desarrollo sostenible: el diálogo inclusivo a través del “pull-push-match”

Resumen: La Coherencia de Políticas para el Desarrollo Sostenible (CPDS) ha promovido la sostenibilidad mediante la coordinación de políticas, pero ¿en qué medida responde a las necesidades de las comunidades locales? Los estudiosos de la CPDS han reconocido que ésta se ha considerado un fin en sí misma más que un medio para lograr un impacto normativo. Uno de los principales límites del CPDS ha sido su carácter institucionalizado, ya que los mecanismos de participación social no se han destacado en las estrategias de implementación. Este artículo aborda esta cuestión. Propone el “pull-push-match” como metodología para establecer un CPDS participativo. El artículo, elaborado por un equipo de investigadores y profesionales de México, aborda la CPDS en relación con las comunidades indígenas.

Palabras clave: comunidades indígenas, desarrollo sostenible, métodos transdisciplinarios, México, participación social, políticas públicas

La promotion de la cohérence participative des politiques de développement durable : le “pull-push-match”

Résumé: La cohérence des politiques de développement durable (CPDD) favorise la durabilité par la coordination des politiques, mais dans quelle mesure répond-elle aux besoins des communautés locales? Les chercheurs dans ce domaine ont montré que la CPDD est considérée comme

une fin en soi plutôt que comme un moyen d'avoir un impact normatif. L'une des principales limites de la CPDD a été sa nature institutionnalisée, car les mécanismes de participation sociale n'ont pas été mis en évidence dans les stratégies de mise en œuvre. Cet article aborde la question et propose la méthode "pull-push-match" pour l'établissement d'une CPDD participative. Il est co-écrit par une équipe de chercheurs et de praticiens au Mexique et traite de la CPDD en relation avec les communautés indigènes.

Mots-clés : communautés indigènes, développement durable, méthodes transdisciplinaires, Mexique, participation sociale, politique publique.

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