Policy Integration and Coordination in Governance of Swedish Migration Policy

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Abstract

That policies are fragmented and government is siloed have become an omnipresent saying of modern welfare states. Much of scholarly attention has also been directed to how to address this from a central government perspective, most notably through concepts of joined-up government that combined with the vertical aspects of modern governance can impose a richer multi-level perspective. Embedded in such ambitions are establishing efficient policy integration and coordination that would counteract silos and fragmentation. Particularly wicked policy problems, those being without a given solution and being complex and unpredictable, create problems for efficient decision-making and implementation. To embark upon such problems, we examine policy integration and coordination within the complex area of Swedish migration policies. Drawing from extensive qualitative material we notice that elements of that character does not move in a concerted manner across the examined field. In terms of policy integration, we only see weak examples of joint objectives and platforms for decision-making, despite the fact that the government has taken a stronger grip on the regulation of migration policy and aim to increase integration. More traces of policy coordination can, though, be revealed. Although such actions undoubtedly lowers fragmentation through ways of distribution information, to which extent all involved actors share the same goal formulation is more unclear. Importantly, crucial variations are found across administrative tiers, with positive examples spurring sub-nationally. Aims to counteract siloism and fragmentation in Swedish migration policy is mainly reached at subnational levels through elements of policy coordination from a bottom-up approach, though encouraged by the government through incentives and funding.

Introduction

That policies are fragmented and government is siloed have become an omnipresent saying of modern welfare states (Peters, 2015). Irrespective of who or what that should take the blame for this, the philosophies of new public management (NPM) have been a popular culprit (Christensen & Lægreid, 2007), and governments have worked intensively to tackle such problems. However, preconditions are often challenging, including the governance of serval tiers of government and were both the problems and solutions necessary are complex in their nature (Osborne, 2010). Much of scholarly attention has also been directed to how to address this from a central government perspective, most notably through concepts of *joined-up government* (JUG) (e.g. Bogdanor, 2005; Christensen et al., 2014; Pollitt, 2003).[1] The aim of such initiatives has been expressed to increase policy integration and coordination among public actors. However, more scant is research that stresses that such challenges for the government apparatus is not limited to the national level, but also need to account for regional and local equivalents (Bjørnå et al., 2017). This is worrying since researchers have pointed out that collaboration between levels can be more complicated than between sectors (Christensen et al., 2014). To counteract fragmentation and siloism, public reforms therefore need to include coherent solutions for all administrative tiers. While the intellectual idea of *multi-level governance* (MLG) comprises some promising elements to remedy these very challenges (Hooghe & Marks, 2003), concentrated to the network like coordination of actors collaborating over different boundaries, sectoral and organizational, it is less helpful when discussing how public actors should coordinate internally. To combine experiences from both JUG and MLG a richer theoretical guidance can be reached.

The abovementioned challenges become particularly salient in the management of certain policy areas. In this debate, the reference to wicked problems is specifically accurate. Indeed, JUG was launched as an initiative to tackle problems with this specific nature (Bogdanor, 2005). Although this being a vague concept, policy problems without given solutions (Rittel & Webber, 1973) and being complex and unpredictable (Head & Alford, 2015) constitute the core definition and will, due to the nature of their character, make public actors struggle in reaching coherent levelling of policy deliverance. As an additional element of the constitution of wicked problems, we would argue that complicated state-local relations will enhance the 'wickidness' further since it requires not only that actors from different jurisdictions agree on policy problems and their solutions but also that they reach a coherent model of governance and implementation that ranges over the vertical spectrum of tiers.

To embark upon these problems, we examine Swedish migration policies by particularly departing from the dramatic event of the European migrant crisis. For this purpose, Sweden is a suitable example. The country, often classified as a decentralized unitary state with almost federal connotations, disclose an delicate distribution of power between central and local tiers (Ladner et al., 2019). The extent of the migrant crisis was vast for Sweden both due to its massive reception of immigrants (UNHCR, 2018) and to the unpredictability of the courses of events. Furthermore, the policy area is in itself suitable for our endeavor. With its intrinsic tension on policies covering both reception of immigrants and policies on social integration of them (Filindra & Goodman, 2019; Hammar, 1985), migration policies represent a sector that easily can be the subject to either siloism or non-reflected policy integration and coordination. Adding that policy-making within this realm is often described as characterized by failure (Czaika & Haas, 2013), increases the perception of this representing a complex area of governance and regulation. In Sweden, this sector has been embedded in a changing institutional landscape in which responsibilities and authorities have varied over the years between different administrative levels. That being stated, we perceive migration policies in Sweden, during the event of the migrant crisis, as an archetypical example of a wicked problem and will argue that fragmentation both between sectors and administrative levels have challenged efficient governance and implementation.

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[1] Concepts with a similar essence are applied as well, as *whole-of government* or *holistic government*.

We notice that scholars have seldom examined policy integration and coordinating coherently, addressing both various administrative tiers simultaneously as addressing the variation across sectors (e.g. public – private) and functions (e.g. different public actors) (6, 2002). The inclusion of state-local relations in such policy areas provide a wider theoretical frame by also adding an MLG point of view. To be able to take a comprehensive grip on the objectives of policy integration and coordination we account for different phases in the policy-making of migration policy (cf. 6, 2002), as we raise the following question:

- To which extent is the wicked setting of Swedish migration policy characterized by policy *integration* and *coordination* ranging over the different concerned tiers, functions and sectors?

To do this, we have collected a rich material of semi-structured interviews (*N*=44) that includes actors from all administrative levels, both elected and non elected and both public and non public and that at the local level features a comparative element. This material is complemented with an extensive study of various documents. In terms of the analysis of the qualitative material, we utilize content analysis (Boréus & Bergström, 2017) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As such, we strived to find results that give a relevant representation of the existence of policy integration and coordinating in the studied field.

Swedish migration policy – a brief description

Swedish migration policy is an apt example of an area that is kept together through a delicate nexus of participating actors, ranging from different administrative levels and various spheres of society. What is more, the division of responsibilities among these actors have been exposed to crucial variations. Over a longer timeframe, Swedish local governments appear as key actors in the formation of migration policy. As early as in 1985, the admission of immigrants was made a local issue when the government established agreements with municipalities for placement of the immigrants (Borevi, 2012; Qvist, 2012).[2] The distribution of immigrants throughout Swedish municipalities has been a highly debated issue though. This system, with its voluntary agreements, created significant variations in immigrant reception (Lidén & Nyhlén, 2014) and activated a request for more of a dispersal policy, through the rhetoric of spreading the 'burden' (Robinson et al., 2003). Hence, this model was terminated in 2016 when the voluntary part of the system was replaced under the Settlement Act (SFS 2016:38, 2016). The current system involves that the Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) organises the process for incoming people, including asylum seekers. However, when an immigrant receives a temporary or permanent residence permit in Sweden, the SMA assigns the individual to a municipality that is then responsible for receiving such individuals and ensuring housing for them. Based on a formulated distribution model, the government currently decides on the number of immigrants that each region is to receive, and also proposes the number of immigrants for each municipality to take on. Hence, municipalities no longer have the possibility to refrain from receiving immigrants if this is not the outcome of the model. It must be noted that throughout this period an important deviation from this system has existed. Immigrants that have already organised their own accommodation during their asylum process are not relocated to any other municipality when being granted a residence permit. Similarly, immigrants that are proposed residence in a municipality when receiving their residence permit but decline such an offer, must also organise their own accommodation. A significant portion of immigrants thereby organise their accommodation for themselves. We refer to this group as self-settled immigrants. This is another source of considerable variation in the distribution of immigrants throughout the municipalities that is driven by individuals' own actions.

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[2] Throughout this study we refer to the individuals that are subject to local migration policy as immigrants. However, we restrict this term to those foreign citizens that are received or settled in Swedish municipalities and have been granted residential permits as refugees, due to subsidiarity protection or due to extraordinary circumstances, as well as the relatives of such individuals.

Similarly, policies for the social integration of immigrants have been the focal point for ongoing reforms. Facilitating immigrants establishment in Sweden has traditionally been much up to local governments and their varying ways of tackling such challenges. With the ambition to streamline public deviations in applied policy, this responsibility was in 2010 allocated to the national level and the Public Employment Service (PES) under the flag of the Establishment reform (SFS 2010:197, 2010). The overarching ambition of this new regime was to enhance labour market integration of immigrants. Since 2018 additional changes have been implemented that further emphasize labour market integration. Working-age individuals are assigned to a two-year establishment programme that, through different arrangements, is meant to facilitate the individual's chances of gaining employment. However, the PES is obliged to cooperate with other actors, particularly the municipalities, in managing this complicated task (Lidén et al., 2015). Beyond providing housing, the local authorities' formal responsibilities are limited to the provision of Swedish language training (SFI) and civic orientation (CO). However, due to local self-rule and their general competence in initiating policy in other areas (Lidström, 2011), local authorities often participate in more far-reaching activities than that. Such initiatives may be related to the labour market or education and are often put in place in cooperation with public and non-public actors (Holmqvist et al., 2020).

It must generally be argued that Swedish migration policy originates from the central government. In turn, the national government is restricted by agreements taken at the EU level and through international commitments. The Swedish government formulates the general objectives of its policies and cooperates with supranational and international authorities within this area. Although the discretion of the municipalities has decreased they still have significant autonomy for shaping policy. Different municipalities implement and create policy in varying ways. The fact that the central government has taken a stronger hold on the migration policy area can also be said to apply to immigration policy in that the Settlement Act reduced the municipalities' discretion to decide and the policy now has greater elements of vertical governance (Hill & Hupe, 2014; Zapata-Barrero & Barker, 2014). On the other hand, a secondary purpose of the reforms has also been to create a more joined-up policy area in that immigration and integration policies become more cohesive. From the perspective of the vertical nature of the policy area the governance of it has also become more oriented towards multi-level governance as a result of the reforms (Caponio & Jones-Correa, 2018; Scholten & Penninx, 2016; Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). Interdependencies between the different levels have increased and the measures and working methods developed at different administrative levels better respond to the wishes and needs at other levels.

Theoretical premises

As our interest is concentrated to the management of wicked-problems in state-local relations the theoretical section derives from prior knowledge emanating from the broader governance literature and particularly research that address problems with siloism and fragmentation. To that end, we especially demonstrate theoretically how ideas from the intellectual orientation of JUG can beneficially be combined with knowledge from MLG. In a second stage, we concretize the two tools of policy integration and coordination that can be found embedded within them.

The broad palette of policy sectors that contemporary governments have to handle demands specialized multiorganizations. Peters (2015, p. 2) apt description of an ignorance across different branches of governments, not possessing the most fundamental information of what other parts are doing, will inevitably lead to failures in both policy-making and deliverance of services. This is especially valid in more complex policy areas. The general story of governance, emphasizing the changing roles of the state, is to some extent in harmony with aims of counteracting such siloism and fragmentation. As popularly described by Pierre and Peters (2020) the conception of governance can be constituted as the process of steering and coordinating, implicitly invoking the participation of other actors, spanning from various administrative levels and policy field. Hence, this requires relations going beyond the narrow political context.

In contrast to the broader governance concept, JUG is a theoretical undertaking with a stronger empirical linkage, originating from philosophies imposed by Blair's New Labour administration in the UK. In a famous article, Pollitt (2003) describes how the concept comprises ideas of closer horizontal and vertical coordination among concerned actors. More efficient (better use of resources), seamless and coherent processes of policy-making and implementation are thus aspired that will enhance the flow and exchange of good ideas across stakeholders. To increase analytical clarifications of JUG, Pollitt (2003) makes a few distinctions. Although they are analytically and tangibly hard to separate, JUG can be imposed in both policy-making and implementation processes, focusing both on actors as well as structures. Furthermore, linkages between involved actors and institutions can be both vertical and horizontal. Actors could be bureaucrats as well as managers within bureaucracies. Actors can also be ministries coordinating policy upward (with EU) and downward (with local authorities) (Pollitt, 2003). Although they apply the theoretically close concept of holistic governance, clarifications made by 6 and colleagues (2002) are still important. In addition to distinguishing between vertical tiers, they add the two dimensions of functions and sectors that we previously have introduced and that represent horizontal relations. In terms of functions, the authors differentiate between if there are few or many functions involved in the governance setup, represented by various involved actors. This aspect thereby accounts for both the extent of different actors as well as their integration across different functions. Regarding sectors, 6 et al. (2002) make the traditional distinctions between public, non-profit and the private sector. Together with the aspects of different tiers this setting grasps much of the contextual dynamic in which actors operate together to enhance integration and coordination of policy.

Keast (2011) emphasizes that more precision can be given to the vertical linkages, dividing them into the strategic state-level to the administrative regional level and, finally, to a local level in which policies are implemented by practitioners. Aligned with Keast we argue that it is critical to clearly distinguish between these levels, but we are less convinced that levels subordinate to the national one should be observed solely as administrative ones since they usually possess own discretion. This will influence both policy-making and deliverance of welfare services. With a similar ambition, Hood (2005) also proposes a distinction by arguing that the commonly used separation of different governance modes, hierarchy, networks and markets, also can be applied in the refinement of JUG. Research in this vein shows a particular disinterest for the local level which is unexpected when accounting for the crucial role in public administration that local governments represent (Bjørnå et al., 2017). Furthermore, researchers have also pointed out that local level actors have both better conditions and are, in fact, better at avoiding siloism and fragmentation (Stoker, 2005). When referring to state-local relations through a JUG viewpoint the dynamic of partisanship should not be ignored. As stated by Bogdanor (2005, pp. 14–15), there is no inherent reason to why local governments would share the diagnosis made by the central government, particularly not if they represent ideologically different positions.

Even if compilations of empirical studies have pointed out positive effects of applying a JUG philosophy in the public administration, both in terms of efficiency and cost reduction (e.g. Silvestre et al., 2018), scholars have also added knowledge on the challenges often associated with processes of this character. In a study of a Norwegian reform, Askim et al. (2009) find a more complex setting than expected, referring to a situation of how problem solving and implementation are constrained by internal and external conflicts, materialized through different cultural conditions and interest among involved actors. In a follow up study, Christensen with colleagues (2014) emphasize that these challenges particularly arise over vertical relations. In other words, it is easier to reach efficient integration and coordination horizontally, even if such relations ranges intersects to other sectors, than it is to maintain relations, within the same policy frame, with actors from different administrative levels.

As challenges particularly revolves around enhancing vertical relations smoothly, we see that the theoretical notion of MLG would be able to add an important building block. While there are features that disclose similarities, the two philosophies do also reach contrasting conclusions on pivotal matters. Described as an 'arena in which many actors behave strategically within a system which offers a range of possible locations to pursue their objectives' (Laffin, 2009, p. 24), the presentation of MLG adds

valuable elements for analyzing state-local relations. As one of the dominant strands, MLG is often perceived in the version of being task-specific, intersecting and building on flexible jurisdictions (Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Pierre & Peters, 2020). Such mode of MLG inevitably includes a range of various actors aim to resolve coordination issues through far-reaching sectorization that limits requirements for relations between narrowly identified policy fields. Even if such proponents manage the vertical dynamic, it introduces another, MLG's challenge of horizontal coordination of policy areas (Jessop, 2006). More recently, scholars have tried to circumvent such challenges, referring to how coordination can be facilitated if the point of departure will be local governments, since they often take on leading role in coordinating the realisation of policies with other involved actors (Agranoff, 2018).

Empirical studies covering different policy sectors but all originating from the local level while exploiting the theoretical ideas of MLG, demonstrate that the notions of vertical governance not always live up to its expected essence (Dekker et al., 2015; e.g. Kokx & van Kempen, 2010; Scholten et al., 2018). This involves both ideas of MLG perceived as a subterfuge to impose rather strict vertical governance on municipalities or that truly ambitions of MLG only were achieved *ad hoc*.

Specifying policy integration and coordination

As we have made a few crucial distinctions concerning the perceptions of JUG and MLG and also emphasized their point of contacts, we specify our theoretical framework further by referring to two activities being crucial for counteracting siloism and fragmentation, namely policy *integration* and *coordination*. We thereby state that these phenomena can be seen as tools for delivering some of the objectives of JUG and MLG. Although integration and coordination are sometimes used interchangeably, recent contributions have demonstrated that they are conceptually distinct from each other and in empirical analyses they can be utilized separately (Cejudo & Michel, 2017; Trein et al., 2019). While more dated literature early described that these different ambitions differ in how comprehensive they are (Meijers & Stead, 2004), later research has refined such distinctions further. From the take of Cujedo and Michael (2017, p. 750), policy integration refers to decision-making processes being designed to solve complex policy problems exceeding aims of each partaking actor, coordination involves different organizations and their joint definition of tasks, allocation of responsibilities and distribution of information. Hence, we will turn to specify them further in turn.

The procedural perspective of policy integration (Bornemann, 2016; Candel & Biesbroek, 2016), referring to how adjacent domains are taken into account coherently in decision-making processes, are in the literature associated with several advantages. Tosun and Lang (2017) describe how policy integration is associated with positive values, such as increased effectiveness, they also state that it is perceived that certainly more complex political issues cannot be resolved without integrating different sectors. 6 et al. (2002) builds further on the procedural perspective and notice that such activities can be established in that they vary in extent. A basic policy integration involves a mere joint way of setting up work between different involved actors while closer ties builds on the establishment of common administrative bodies. Cejudo and Michael (2017) evolve the intellectual idea of gradual differences of integration but set higher standards for the existence of it, arguing that it is something fundamentally different than just integrating actors and policy. It is much more pervasive and comprises a process that will have repercussion on all concerned administrative tiers and all stages of the policy process. Similarly, Candel and Biesbroek (2016) stress the encompassing nature of the activity by referring to how actors involved are characterized by mutual dependencies and that the fact of policy integration covers different dimensions imply that they are not necessarily always in phase with each other. The latter risk creating discrepancies (in time or dimensions) embedded within its very nature. The far-reaching activities of policy integration requires what Cejudo and Michael (2017, p. 758) refer to as a decision-making body with authority to formulate the overarching objectives for all involved actors and to design the certain instruments for reaching such goals. This platform for decision-making can be compromised by a mixture of different of representatives of concerned actors or be in the exclusive hand of the government agencies.

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This being the premises for policy integration, scholars have particularly come to discuss how comprehensive the capacity and authority is for decision-making bodies (6, 2002). We here follow the distinctions made by Cejudo and Michael (2017), as is displayed in Table 1. At the most basic level, this policy integration involves that this body merely can make decisions over the operational and design aspects of the general objective underlying the aim of the policy integration. More developed, an intermediate stage would entail that the platform has the capacity to redefine the design and modify the operation of policy efforts but also to alter responsibilities and resources among the concerned actors. The redistributions of funds represent a more thorough policy integration. At a final stage, Cejudo and Michael (2017) refer to a far-reaching mode of policy integration that not only qualify a decision-making body to modify current instruments but also to terminate and create new ones.

Turning to policy coordination, it has been argued that if that such is successfully reached among involved actors in the deliverance of public services, it will lower costs, increase legitimacy and ensure that citizens get what they are entitled to (Peters, 2015). Unfortunately, it does not happen by itself but most be managed (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003) but still requires an organic origin to be truly successful. 6 et al. (2002, p. 53) list activities that comprises the activity of coordination. A first example, taking into account the activities of other organizations, originates from a parsimonious specification of the concept made within public administration (Hall et al., 1977). The other refers to more concrete activities, namely to maintain dialogues to ensure exchange of information and joint planning among concerned actors.

Scholars have contributed with ways of gradating how far-reaching coordination can be, dating back to the work of Metcalfe (1994) but later refined such ambitions (Askim et al., 2009; Candel & Biesbroek, 2016; Cejudo & Michel, 2017). Both Askim et al. (2009) and Cejudo and Michel (2017) settle for a model in which coordination follows a scale of three levels and we exploit a similar ambition. At the lowest level, coordination entails information exchange and similar activities mainly for the actor to decisions relating to their own objectives but also to avoid negative coordination, meaning that policies, practices and procedures not interfere with those of other actors. An intermediate form of coordination refers to a more formalized process of exchange with the aim of contributing to a shared goal. It differs from the most developed form of coordination that involves, a formalized model for cooperation (e.g. partnerships, boards, commissions etc.) and entail participating actors to entail their own resources to be able to reach the common goal. For a summary of this, see Table 1.

Table 1 Gradations of policy coordination and integration

	Policy integration	Policy coordination
Level 1	The decision-making body's capacity is limited to modify operational and design aspects of the instruments (programs and agencies) of the overall strategy	Regular exchange of information between members' organizations for achieving their own goals more efficiently
Level 2	The decision-making body has the capacity to redefine the design, modify the operation, and reallocate the responsibilities and resources that the agencies and programs already have	Formal information exchange with which members' organizations make decisions regarding their own resources, and work individually, to contribute to a shared goal
Level 3	The decision-making body has the capacity to use and modify the existent instruments (programs and agencies), and also to create new ones or eliminate them	Formal information exchange with which members' organizations make joint decisions regarding the existent resources for archiving a shared goal

Source: Cejudo & Michael (2017).

As rightfully pointed out by several (Meijers & Stead, 2004; Peters, 2015), the coordination and integration literature has predominantly focused on horizontal forms of interaction, thereby often neglecting the vertical aspects. More frequently in the literature on policy integration, an expansion has been witnessed that also account for a vertical dynamic with linkages to ideas from MLG. Particularly it has been particular prominent in environmental policy (e.g. Schiffman & Robbins, 2011). Howlett et al. (2017, p. 72) describe that when accounting for the vertical dynamic in terms of integration and coordination 'the level of complexity increases exponentially'. One reason for this would be that the different tiers of government can be expected not only to have common objectives but also conflicting ones. One of their main findings is that success in such complex governance requires a facilitating institutional framework in which multipurpose actors have the possibility to cross agency and government jurisdictional boundaries (Howlett et al., 2017, p. 75). Bolleyer and Börzel (2010) also emphasize the importance of the institutional landscape, noticing that policy coordinating in MLG-settings will be influenced by incentives of the national government. When these operate in a setting in which power-sharing is compulsory, they will also be more prone to act through agreements which enables increased discretion among subnational actors.

Assumptions of integration and coordination

Based on the abovementioned, we reach two assumptions.

- Recent centralizations implemented together with pleas for bringing sectors and tiers closer (Lidén & Nyhlén, 2021), make us to expect that policy integration in the area of Swedish migration policy will be well developed. However, that representing the general picture we expect more complexity with significant variations both over time and administrative tiers (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016).
- We expect that policy coordination will be well developed among actors participating in the deliverance of Swedish migration policy. Even if a stronger governmental grip has damaged the organic and bottom-up character of coordination (Lidén et al., 2015; Qvist, 2016), government ambitions for establishing modes for cooperation should have facilitated this.

As a final caveat, these claims must be seen in considerations with the conditions of the policy area. Swedish migration policy embodies a complex and unpredictable policy area (Head & Alford, 2015) that finds itself in a multi-level setting (Howlett et al., 2017). This lowers our expectations somewhat.

Research design and data

This study draws from the methodological foundations of a case study covering both temporal and spatial dynamics (Gerring, 2017). Siloism and state-local relations within the policy area is examined both by enabling a longer time span, the period before and after the migrant crisis, and by giving consideration to a variety of interests within this sector. The data consist of interviews with 44 informants, a few of them also interviewed twice, and supplementary documentation. Semi-structured interviews have been conducted between 2018 to 2020 by the authors. Our ambition has been to cover all relevant actors to provide a broad understanding of state-local relations within the migration policy field.

We provide an overview of the interview material and its distribution in Table 2. The table contains a division that is influenced by how Guiraudon and Lahav (2007) have distinguished between various influential actors in migration policy, following from their administrative belongings, and thereby enabling the analysis of state-local relations. In accordance with the Swedish political system, we divide informants whether they originate from the central, regional or local level. While classification according to central and local levels are unproblematic, more details should be given regarding the intermediate category. It solely includes actors that works for public authorities in which either the complete organization or the individual informants maintains a regional commitment, such as informants from the PES or the County Administrative Boards.

As a complement to this, we also distinguish between public and non-public actors. To the first category, we include informants representing the government, public authorities or municipalities, counting both elected politicians and public officials. The other category comprises actors from the civil society and the business sector. Even if the material in a strict sense is lacking non-public informants representing the regional level, it should be stated that several of the informants from this category representing the local levels are operating in organizations that not unusually also takes on a broader scope.

Table 2 Compilation of informants (*N*)

Public	Non-public	
7	2	Central
8		Regional
22	5	Local

Of Sweden's 290 municipalities we have selected three of them to represent the municipal sector at the large but also to enable comparisons. Instead of drawing on average characteristics with the aim to sample a Sweden in miniature, we exploit the situation with the migration crisis and how it directly affected local governments. While the first two cases represent how differences in policies were maximized, the latter appears to be unaffected by policy change (Gerring, 2017; Seawright, 2016). Taken together, this selection makes it possible to jointly examine when circumstances for altered state-local relations were exhausted as well as a scenario representing business as usual.

Qualitative analysis and coding

In terms of the analysis of the qualitative material, we drew from content analysis (Boréus & Bergström, 2017) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As such, we endeavoured to find patterns that illustrates processes and results that are vital to our research questions. The empirical material has been looked upon according to theoretical assumptions presented above and empirical events that were relevant to the study. These theoretical premises helped us to understand the empirical events and their consequences that are the focus of the study. We have nonetheless complemented this deductive way of working with inductive objectives, for example by paying attention to empirical findings that, although not specifically covered by the theoretical framework, are still valuable. Hence, an interaction between empirical phenomena and theoretical categorizations helped us to find meaningful categorizations. These themes also informed the interviews conducted. The analysis was used both to analyse the transcriptions of the interviews that were carried out and in the documents reviewed. In this we were inspired by Schreiser and Flick's (2014) method to systematically categorize the empirical material on the basis of a coding scheme.

One problem that can arise in qualitative research is that the degree of subjectivity in interpretation can be high. This is also the case in applied analyses. However, there are various methods for mitigating this. We chose to use double coding to reduce the personal bias in the interpretation of empirical material (Boréus & Bergström, 2017). Some of the interviews were also carried out by both authors together and the interpretations of the material were discussed and reconciled by the authors to reduce the personal bias in coding and interpretation of the material. We also took measures to ensure that the material presented which is based on the interviews, is correct and shared by involved actors. This can include different events, facts and other information that appear in the interviews.

Findings and analysis

In our analysis of the empirical material that is theoretically driven and conducted with the assistance of content and thematic analysis, we notice a number of decisive empirical findings, developed in three themes below.

Siloes and fragmentation nationally but closer integration locally

The division of power and responsibility within Swedish migration policy has found itself pending back and forth between different tiers over the years, notably concerning the central government and the municipalities. Reforms have been implemented to make policies work more efficiently and have come with declared ambitions of enhanced coordination and integration (Lidén et al., 2015). As the policy debate has been more focused on the quality of the measurements taken rather than actual question of governance and formal responsibility, other challenges have arisen. According to some authors, neglecting these aspects have created a policy area which is fragmented and decoupled (Qvist, 2012, 2016).

In interviews with top managers from the central government, these challenges are acknowledged, and ambitions have been taken to link different functions closer together and to ensure that political efforts are matched with needs in municipalities. According to one of these managers, developing steering across all involved actors will create a better common thread for immigrants from arrival to integration in focus. However, the current problem with siloism, where agencies are subordinated to different ministries with various legal framework to relate to, counteracts ambitions of an efficient policy integration and coordination (*Analyst, the Swedish government*). When turning explicitly to the relation of the administrative tiers involved in migration there is an apparent and visible difference in the organization of functions. At the governmental level, admission of immigrants and their social integration is clearly two different sectors. This order is visible from the level of ministries to their subordinate agencies. As a concrete example, while the Ministry of Justice handles admission policy, channelized further to the SMA, the Ministry of Employment manage the social integration of immigrants which is particularly implemented by the PES.

At subordinate levels a completely different landscape arises. From the County Administrative Board to the municipalities, it is acknowledged that the two spheres of migration policy intersect, making demands for a developed policy coordination necessary. This is paired with the pragmatism that is commonly found at subnational levels (Oliver et al., 2012). Here, it appears to exist a greater understanding for that changes in reception of immigrants also affect the outline of integration policy. Both the scope of admission and the character of incoming immigrants will pose effect on local design of policy. For example, when reception of immigrants diminishes, municipalities find it particularly difficult to maintain an organisation focused on the social integration. Even if there is a greater understanding of the intersection of these policy frames at the local level, how municipalities outline their organizations differ. Some have settled for a separate solution in which the integration work takes place in a separate organisation while other municipalities have chosen to integrate the work across departments (*Analyst 1, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions*). Even in cases where the organizational conditions can obstruct efficient policy coordination, another element has been inserted to ease this, namely the establishment of an integration coordinator. In all covered municipalities this position was recently introduced and thereby came to embody local aims of policy coordination. This senior public official placed at the office of the municipal board has a strategic role in coordinating different policy measurements and actors relevant for the implementation of the policy. This could be actors both within the municipal organisation as well as actor outside the municipal organisation, for example business, NGO:s and regional and central agencies (*Local Government Official 1, Avesta Municipality*; *Local Government Official 1, Vallentuna Municipality*; *Local Government Official 3, Östersund Municipality*).

Another important facilitator for maintaining a more cross-sectoral policy coordination is the County Administrative Board, an agency that is involved in both dimensions of migration policy and manoeuvres at the regional level. In its coordinating role, it is perceived as a vital catalyst for maintaining networks that gathers relevant actors and organises regular meeting. Its role is not operational, rather it constituted a platform for distributing relevant information to the municipalities

and addressing the need for knowledge within specific areas, as requested by the local governments (*Public Official, County Administrative Board Dalarna*). That this institutional setting also has the capacity to found joint decision-making and thereby facilitate policy integration is accurate, but its potential is limited. Hence, even if the networks *per se* can involve reorientation of policy instruments they lack more far-reaching mandate.

Governance modes enhancing coordination but negative external effects

Somewhat contradictory, a faster governmental grip on the policy area in general has been imposed together with elements of network like steering models (Lidén & Nyhlén, 2021). One way to achieve more coherent policy efforts has been to improve cooperation in networks between actors at different levels of government as well as actors outside government. This includes civil society organisations, NGOs and actors from the business sector cooperate in network-based forms as well as in a MLG manner. The government have encouraged actors to participate in such forums through specific forms of funding that have had requirements of policy coordination.

We can notice several such examples. One is the Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants (DUA) with the pronounced objective to enhance dialogues between municipalities, organizations, employers and government agencies. To facilitate relations among these actors the government offers extra funding. To which extent this has been a desirable form for improving integration differ in the empirical material. While some local government officials and their PES partners perceive it as a passable route (*Local Government Official 3, Östersund Municipality*; *Public Official, Public Employment Service Östersund*), representatives from a local business sector in another municipality did not experience such advantages (*Representative of the Business Sector, Vallentuna*).

Another example, though reached without specific government funding, is the frequent establishment of agreements between municipalities and local PES offices. It is not uncommon that such agreements are signed on a yearly basis with the ambition to find ways on how to formalize joint efforts in the integration of immigrants. This exemplifies more of a bottom-up initiative, making the content of these modes for enhancing policy cooperation ranging from rather vague goals to specified tasks. In one of the covered municipalities, these agreements have created a crucial foundation for further modes of policy integration. Embedded in that, practical forms of coordination took place through monthly meetings in which representatives from the relevant municipal departments participated together with the PES, the Social Security Agency and the Tax Agency. The presence of case workers with different roles and responsibilities for individuals made it possible, as described by a municipal official, to update each other on: "*If there is someone we need to discuss…If we see that we need to cooperate* [concerning that individual]" (*Local Government Official 2, Avesta Municipality*). A PES representative we interviewed was even more positive to such self-organising forms of cooperation and described the core ambitions to maintain close relations by reassuring that individuals would not be affected by the lack of smooth relations between public actors (*Public Official, Public Employment Service Dalarna*).

In another municipality, the trajectory of local management through the described agreement between the PES and local government is different. It is witnessed that aims of policy integration has been struggling due to imposed reforms by the government: "*It has developed. Distinguishing who should do what has not always been easy. The more we met* [each other] *and the more we worked, the more these details came to light*" (*Public Official, Public Employment Service Östersund*). This was verified by a representative of the municipality (*Local Government Official 2, Östersund Municipality*). These agreements have become more specified, for example, the one from 2017 regulated which actors should handle the different tasks in the numerous stages covering local integration policy (Public Employment Service, Östersund, 20170614). However, aims of policy integration have not been isolated from external shocks. A later concern revolves around the modified orientation of the PES and cutbacks in its funding. This change was part of the so-called January agreement in 2019, that comprised arrangements between the national government and supporting parties. There were concerns about this at the local level, and indeed, the

initiation of the reform has negatively impacted the established methods for cooperation since the PES has been pre-occupied with its own reorganisation.

Policy integration and coordination is even more of a challenge in cases where the municipality outsourced some of it tasks to private actors through procurement, as is the case with language training (*Local Government Official 6, Östersund Municipality*). This enhance the complexity further, as pointed out by 6 et al. (2002). A further concern that was raised was that the potential withdrawal of government commitments could force municipalities to expand their own involvement and become the actor that has to do what nobody else does (*Local Government Official 1, Östersund Municipality*; *Public Official, County Administrative Board Jämtland*).

Weak policy integration and coordination creating decoupling

The implementation of the Settlement Act functions as a final example on challenges with policy integration and coordination. The fact that it has been applied somewhat differently in the various municipalities do not signals a coherent and unified policy. While a few municipalities terminate the housing that the immigrants are granted once the two-year establishment period ends, others provide longer temporary or even permanent housing contracts (County Administrative Board in Stockholm, 2020). It should be clearly stated that these varying interpretations of the reform was not the intention of the government who did not expect various outcomes of its legislation. Rather it opted for more long-term housing solutions for immigrants in municipalities. Diverging opinions exist between the central government and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions on how to handle the more restrictive stance that is perceived as particularly delicate. There are different interpretations of the legal basis for such a standpoint and the government's opinion is that there is no legal support for the restrictive approach. This interpretation has evolved into practice in some municipalities and, from the government's point of view, it is not seen as a desirable trajectory. According to one of the informants, in the worst case scenario this type of behaviour from the municipalities can lead to homelessness for the individual and difficulties for them to become established and to integrate (*Analyst, the Swedish Government*).

This very tension is evident in our collected material. In one of the examined municipalities, the public ensures that immigrants assigned to the municipality would receive a first-hand contract for an apartment. One of the local government officials describes that this policy also implies a long-term commitment from the municipality:

> Because when you get your first-hand contract then you do not need to focus on where should I live when the introduction period ends. Instead, I know that I will live and work here in the municipality (*Local Government Official 5, Östersund Municipality*).

However, in another municipality covered the tone was completely different resulting in a stricter interpretation. In an interview with a representative of the ruling majority, two reasons are brought to the fore. First, fairly soon after the Settlement Act was implemented in 2016, the municipality received its first immigrants assigned in accordance with the new regulation. As such, the first housing contracts issued began to expire already in 2018. The accommodations that had been available in the municipality at the time was thereafter filled. However, it was possible to extend housing contracts for a short period of time, but not for one-two years. The second reason for the stricter application was that the municipality's approach was to treat all local residents equally (*Leading Politician 1, Vallentuna Municipality*) This argument thereby revolves around the notion that granting immigrants more long term housing solutions could be made at the expense of other citizens with similar aspirations.

This aligns with what Guiraudon and Lahav (2000) suggest when they stress that although the government has other aims with its policies, significant local variations in the interpretations of the policy will occur. It also corroborates what other researchers have stated that the relations between different governing levels have become more complex with local adaptations of central government policy (Dekker et al., 2015; Kokx & van Kempen, 2010). This shows that even when more vertical

governing modes are developed, local adaptation will occur as a counteracting response to increased centralization if the institutional framework permits discretion. Hence, when the state tries in different ways to enforce policy integration through its vertical tiers it also deviates from the ideas of integrated, well-coordinated, non-hierarchical way of governance as otherwise is associated both with JUG and MLG.

Conclusions

Building on the wicked policy area of migration policy, particularly tested during the European migrant crisis, we have exploited the theoretical frameworks of JUG and MLG to examine policy integration and coordination. The different identified themes do not provide us with a single answer to the extent of successful endeavors in that vein. That finding in itself makes it possible for us to emphasize a situation that very starkly resembles expectations launched by Candel and Biesbroeks (2016, p. 215); policy integration does not move in a concerted manner across the examined dimensions. We will elaborate upon the nuances that such findings contain below.

In terms of policy integration, our stated assumption could not be verified. The centralization of the policy area does not match a well-developed policy integration. Those traces that can be witnessed, do not refer to an encompassing strategy and only exceptionally to traces of a joint decision-making body. In such examples, as the networks facilitated by the County Administrative Board or embedded within agreements between the PES and municipalities such collaboration of actors can have some influence over policy efforts, but not anything more expanded. Hence, we can classify this as only reaching level 1 (Cejudo & Michel, 2017). We can notice several reasons to why policy integration is struggling in this area, jeopardizing aims of a coherent delivery of policy measures. One would be the strong autonomy that local governments possess in Sweden (Ladner et al., 2019; Lidström, 2011), making it hard for the government to enforce common goals and, yet, strategies for reaching them (Howlett et al., 2017). Another reason concerns the fact that public actors isolated cannot reach the challenge of receiving and integrate immigrants by themselves. Rather, they are dependent on the role played by actors from the civil society and the business sector which engagement cannot be commanded.

When turning to policy coordination, it is apparent that the policy area examined contains several of its trademarks. Such examples have been aided by government funding and incentives and thereby corresponds to our expectations of policy coordination being well developed in Sweden but seldomly organically emerged. Findings in that vein is found in the relations between the involved actors. It resembles what Cejudo and Michel (2017) have described as a policy coordination that aim to solve shared goals, either reached through individual contributions of actors (level 2) or through joint contributions and resources (level 3). Such activities can be exemplified through how the government aim to solve challenges of social integration of immigrants to gather crucial actors (municipalities, government agencies, civil society, etc.) either by modes of cooperation that involves funding or giving the task to facilitate policy coordination to the County Administrative Board. Although such actions undoubtedly lowers fragmentation through ways of distribution information, to which extent all involved actors share the same goal formulation is more unclear.

Analyzing the different intersections of migration policy - ranging over administrative tiers, functions and sectors – yields substantial challenges in policy coordination at the national level. It is spelled out that the different spheres of migration policy is managed isolated from each other, in a way that Hooghe and Marks (2003) once argued that MLG could function. This overly ambitious sectorization to enhance internal coordination, has, however overlooked that some tasks, such as the very examined policy area, either need to make up a complete policy of itself or, if separated, that policy coordination must easily be facilitated. This has not been achieved. Nonetheless, there are also examples of more vertical character that imply challenges for avoiding fragmentation. When the government tries to enforce a unified legislation, as in the case of housing policies for immigrants, a scattered outcome arise across local governments. Not being the objective of the legislator this typical example of policy integration and coordination that misses out reaching a consistent policy over tiers, bringing a policy failure to

mind. The challenges connected to vertical relations clearly mimic the experiences that have been seen from the neighboring Norway that made Christensen et al. (2014) to refer to problems with avoid fragmentation was primarily a vertical issue and not a horizontal one across various sectors.

However, sub-national examples of both policy coordination are evident, through well-developed forms for assuring information exchange and joint decision-making, as well as the existence of platforms that can resemble decision-making bodies and thereby implying examples of policy integration. With the latter we refer both to the more generic network maintained by the County Administrative Boards but also the more specified institutional arrangements (DUA and agreements between municipalities and local PES offices) that can be classified as decision-making bodies but with limited capacity over anything else than to the design of policy efforts. To some extent, this is not surprisingly. Drawing on Stoker (2005), we can verify that JUG like actions are therefor particularly evident locally. Also in terms of our other theoretical perspective, Agranoff (2018) proves how local governments are crucial in establishing an efficient multi-level governance. We thereby reach a final conclusion, aims to counteract siloism and fragmentation in Swedish migration policy is mainly reached at subnational levels through elements of policy coordination and cooperation from a bottom-up approach, though encouraged by the government through incentives and funding.

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