Identifying the contributions of local public policies to social cohesion
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Francesco Chiodi
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Preface

Introduction

1. Methodological approach for analysing a local public policy from the perspective of social cohesion

2. Reconstruction of the logic of a local public policy

3. Establishing a reference framework for social cohesion
   3.1. Definition of the essential components of social cohesion
   3.2. Breakdown of components into subcomponents

4. Identification and analysis of the effects of a policy from the perspective of the components and subcomponents of social cohesion

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX: Notes on the concept of social cohesion
The methodological guides published by the Orientation and Coordination Office of the URB-AL III Programme are intended to offer a readily accessible presentation of knowledge on a subject chosen by virtue of its relevance to the Programme’s overall objective.

The following guide, *Identifying the contributions of local public policies to social cohesion*, presents local public policy from the perspective of how it helps to improve social cohesion. Identifying such contributions requires a process of reflection. To help in this task, the guide features a series of guidelines and an accessible framework of reference on social cohesion, organised into components and subcomponents.

The proposal is based on a two-step process: the first step involves reconstructing the logic of a public policy and the second identifying and analysing the effects of a local public policy from a perspective of the components and subcomponents of social cohesion. To help understand the process and accompany readers, the guide presents a simulated case of a local public policy to which it applies the methodology suggested.

This guide is aimed at people with political and technical posts of all kinds who work in local government. Its systematic application in a territory’s public policies not only allows public actions to be presented from a different perspective, but also gradually incorporates social cohesion objectives from the moment of their design.

This guide, the scope of which is broader than just a simple manual of methodology, provides the added value of inviting reflection with regard to what a territory needs and on the best approach to addressing social issues with a view to achieving greater long-term cohesion.

This guide is a tool born of the practical experience of analysis focused on the social cohesion aspect of the public policies of local governments, which play the main role in implementing public policies within the framework of URB-AL III Programme. We therefore recommend that it is applied and referred to in all areas of local public administration. We hope it is of use for designing new initiatives addressed to fostering social cohesion and thus prompting progress in our societies.

**Jordi Castells i Masanés,**
Director of International Relations at Diputació de Barcelona and General Coordinator of the URB-AL III Programme Orientation and Coordination Office
Introduction

The following guide proposes a method with which to observe a local public policy from the perspective of its contribution to improving social cohesion.¹

The guide is intended for people with political and technical posts and responsibilities for designing and implementing public policies. It is not designed as a manual, but rather intended to prompt reflection and at the same time offer some practical guidance. In other words, its purpose is to give the reader an insight into how local public policies are related to social cohesion and to provide useful elements with which to take public decisions that involve components of social cohesion.

The guide has not been designed with a view to specific types of local governments. Neither the size nor setting at a specific level on the scale matters. It may therefore be read and interpreted irrespectively of these factors.

The four chapters in the text deal with the method itself and provide different practical examples. The appendix, on the other hand, is intended to offer a conceptual approach to the political notion of social cohesion.

Lastly, this work indeed represents a modest contribution to understanding the connection between local public policies and social cohesion. We hope it is of use in designing methods of intervention with which to optimise this connection.

¹ This text systematises and develops on an illustrative basis a series of documents issued by the Orientation and Coordination Office of the URB-AL III Programme. Eduardo Feldman and Georges Bonan are also thanked for their contributions.
1. Methodological approach for analysing a local public policy from the perspective of social cohesion

Any local public policy\(^2\) can be analysed from the perspective of social cohesion regardless of whether or not it is designed with explicit social cohesion objectives. In either case, the purpose of analysis may be the design of the policy and/or its implementation.

Evaluation of the contributions (envisaged or achieved) of a social cohesion policy requires a notion of what social cohesion means. In other words, a perspective from which to examine the contributions is needed. Social cohesion is not an easily graspable concept however. It is broad, complex and many faceted. A less abstract focus is therefore required. This is the approach taken in this guide in which social cohesion is broken down into components and subcomponents.

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\(^2\) A public policy is a “series of coordinated and planned actions by a public institution designed to resolve a negative situation, or improve an existing situation, which affects all or part of the local population and which therefore aims to achieve an objective set in the government agenda as one of its strategic components. These actions must be carried out by the local public institution itself or at least be led by it, with the participation and collaboration of other actors” (Jean-Pierre Malé, 2012, Methodological guide: How can local institutions cooperate with each other? From specific projects to strengthening local public policies, OCO-URBAL III, Barcelona). http://www.urb-al3.eu/uploads/documentos/guia5.pdf

These components and subcomponents are more specific references for analysing a local public policy from the perspective of social cohesion. They form a matrix with which to interpret the different elements of an LPP and to understand how they are related to SC.\(^3\) For example, using “transparency of public administration action” as one possible subcomponent

\(^3\) For smoother reading of the text, the initials LPP and SC will henceforth be used to refer to “local public policy” and “social cohesion” respectively.
of social cohesion, the study of an LPP (e.g. a local policy aimed at reintegrating returning emigrants) should be guided by questions such as:

/ Does the LPP envisage the implementation of measures to ensure the "transparency of public administration action"?

/ If so, what measures are envisaged?

/ What specific advances (or effects) are observed? (If the LPP is already being implemented or in the process thereof)

For the policy to contribute to SC, it is necessary to demonstrate that the LPP has a positive impact or effect in terms of "transparency of public administration action". The effect, for example, could be "Information on subsidies awarded to returning emigrants to facilitate their reintegration has been published by different media and shows that the award of funding has been handled strictly in accordance with technical criteria and with complete independence, thus ensuring public acknowledgement that there has been no favouritism". In short, for an LPP to have made a contribution to SC, the policy must have a visible and positive effect, at least on one subcomponent of social cohesion.

According to the OECD, an effect is an "intended or unintended change due directly or indirectly to an intervention". Yet this definition is only partially helpful in understanding the relation between an LPP and SC. It cannot be taken for granted that the changes or effects will be self-evident. Moreover, they are not all of equal value. Some help to improve the social cohesion conditions of a society and others do not. This guide therefore sustains that the initial methodological step for deepening understanding how the

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4 Unless neutralised by unforeseen negative effects that jeopardise the positive effects.

LPP is related to SC is the reconstruction of a policy’s logic or, in other words, the sequence of cause-effect relations that a policy is intended to generate (when analysing its design) or is actually giving rise to (when analysing its execution during its implementation) or has given rise to (when analysing execution after completion). This allows for greater focus on the envisaged or achieved results (depending on whether the design or implementation is considered), upon which the process of analysis of the contributions of the policy to the components and subcomponents of social cohesion should be based. Reconstructing the logic of a policy should allow for the establishment, first, of whether one or more effects of the policy may have an impact, is/are having an impact or has/have made an impact (evaluated in accordance with the moment of the public policy cycle) on the different components and subcomponents of social cohesion; it should then show the contributions already made or still to be made. This exercise is based on the study of documents, if analysing the design of a policy, or on the findings of an investigation, when its implementation is the object of analysis.

In the following chapters, the guide takes an in-depth look at each of the three elements hitherto identified as necessary steps in understanding the relation between an LPP and SC:

i Reconstruction of the logic of the policy under review (cause/effect chain) (Chapter 2)

ii Development of a reference framework for social cohesion (Chapter 3)

/ definition of the essential components of social cohesion

/ breakdown of components into subcomponents

iii Identification and analysis of the effects of the policy from the perspective of the components and subcomponents of social cohesion (Chapter 4)

Before illustrating the three steps, an explanation is required as to why social cohesion indicators have not been considered. The first reason is that social cohesion is not a doctrine or, in other words, it is not a belief system that gives rise to prescriptive behaviours. We opted for an approach more adaptable to social cohesion and an open and flexible outlook that, without sacrificing conceptual accuracy, does not tie it to a set of predetermined targets or indicators. The framework of reference for SC developed in Chapter 3 is therefore based on the premise that its fundamental elements must be sufficiently specific in

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order to avoid general conclusions. This guide thus considers the need to specify chiefly what is covered by the notion of cohesion through components and subcomponents. The latter represent the balance between an overly abstract (and general) view of SC and a normative approach, which turns SC into a closed model. The latter, and more practical, reason is that even if there were a set of widely accepted social cohesion indicators, many local governments scarcely have the means to implement them. Does this mean abandoning the use of indicators? Not at all. However, the choice of indicators is not an abstract operation, but one that bears close relation to the nature of each policy and the agents involved.

By way of an illustration, once "transparency of public administration action" has been assumed as a possible subcomponent of SC, an LPP acting in this direction or, in other words, one that sets out public administration transparency objectives, could for example establish the following indicators to measure its achievements:

/ Public access to administrative acts;
/ Publication of progress reports in different policy actions;
/ Public debates on the implementation of the policy and its benefits;
/ Publication of the income of government authorities;
/ Etc.

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7 This approach avoids the risk of wrongly assuming that a policy only contributes to social cohesion if it influences the components thereof. By way of an example, if we accept that social inclusion is a core component of SC and decide that this is an appropriate and unique level at which to associate the effects of an LPP with SC, it could easily be concluded that an LPP is linked to the objectives of SC. The risk of such thinking would involve wrongly associating all LPPs with SC.

8 It should be noted that from a methodological point of view, the proposal set forth in this guide is an alternative approach to contributions to social cohesion, adapted to limitations that exist in pursuing other channels.
Another LPP could define other indicators associated with the same public administration transparency objective. What really matters is that the indicators are specific to the policy in question, and are reached by agreement and shared by its main agents.\(^9\) This guide therefore proposes that it is the agents of each LPP who, on the basis of the meanings they give the components and subcomponents of SC, should establish the indicators they consider most appropriate\(^10\) for measuring its progress from a SC perspective.

\(^9\) This option in fact limits the possibility of comparing how different policies contribute to social cohesion, as each policy is measured with different indicators.

\(^{10}\) A risk involved in this procedure is that the development of indicators is conditioned by the wish to establish the highest convergence between the policy and the components and subcomponents of social cohesion.
2. Reconstruction of the logic of a local public policy

Understanding the logic of a policy allows for clear differentiation between what the policy is intended to achieve (its effects) and the strategy designed to achieve it, i.e. the means and ends. The means, needless to say, play an instrumental role and act as causes designed to produce effects.

The logic of a policy lies precisely in the causal relations that are expected to be triggered in order to produce the desired changes (effects). These cause-effect sequences reflect the strategy assumed by a policy. To put it another way, any policy (like a project) is based on a forecast or hypothesis that the actions planned (causes) will yield some positive consequences (effects).

Reconstructing the logic of a policy therefore means ordering the different elements included in it and establishing the role that they play in the cause-effect sequence upon which its strategy is based.

To understand this concept, let us briefly look at an example taken from an OCO document on a policy of the Government of Santa Rosa de Copán (Honduras) with the backing of the URB-AL III Programme as part of the UNE project.

The reasoning is as follows: the performance of the chosen activities will yield certain results that, on a joint basis, will lead to the achievement of the established objectives.\(^\text{11}\) It therefore involves a forecast, and not a certainty, given that the implementation process will involve events that require changes to be introduced. Analysis of a policy in progress or implemented therefore involves examination of the results obtained and the way in which they have been achieved.

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\(^{\text{11}}\) By way of an example, when in 2008 the Province of Santa Fe (Argentina) initiated a regionalisation policy, it assumed (hypothesis) that by reorganising the territory into five regions and establishing a new form of government (causes), it would succeed (effects) in: (a) establishing closer proximity between State and citizens, (b) integrating previously disconnected territories, and (c) balancing State capacities throughout the province. The new way of governing can be summed up in the three notions of decentralisation, strategic planning, and public participation and coordination. Relations of cause and effect should, of course, not be interpreted on a mechanistic basis. Far from having a deterministic nature, what a policy proposes is a type of relation based on probability.
This document pertinently establishes the following hypothesis on cause-effect sequences (in the design of the policy):

/ the system of services designed to provide a response to situations of inequality and exclusion through actions implemented by local policy is strengthened;

/ the system of services —enhanced through the actions mentioned above— contributes to equality of opportunities and social inclusion as these services are intended to provide a response to situations of inequality and exclusion.

The following chart reveals some weakness in the association of cause-effect among the envisaged actions (forum, campaign, etc.) and the enhancement of the system of services. This shows that when reconstructing the logic of a policy controlling the coherence and consistency of the policy design is always highly recommendable, notwithstanding the rhetoric presented in this guide on identifying the contributions to SC. A policy (a plan, a programme, etc.) is, in fact, very often based on implicit assumptions or on a lack of prior empirical evidence to demonstrate its effectiveness. These assumptions are, rightly, associated with the causal agent function played by the different components of a policy. In the example

### Chart 2. Logic of the policy of the Government of Santa Rosa de Copán

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions (causes of)</th>
<th>Effect and, at the same time, cause of</th>
<th>Effect and, at the same time, cause of</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forum entitled “Encouraging the Development of Entrepreneurial Spirit” aimed at raising awareness among young people about entrepreneurial culture and fomenting the development of entrepreneurial spirit.</td>
<td>Strengthening the system of services.</td>
<td>Effective response of the system of services to situations of inequality and exclusion.</td>
<td>Improve-ment in equality and social inclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Local Sustainable Development and Local Agenda 21” Training Day for technicians and councillors of the municipality, ADELSAR, CUROC teachers and members of the Citizen and Civil Society Committees.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outreach campaign aimed at the general public with a view to encouraging men and women with the profile of future entrepreneurs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference on “Principles and Values in Business”, accompanied by [...]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
considered above:

/ Why have the actions mentioned in chart 2 (and not others) been chosen to strengthen the system of services?

/ Are these measures sufficient to strengthen the system of services? (As shown above, this is doubtful.)

/ Even assuming that these actions are enough to strengthen services, what guarantee is there that the services will start to provide more effective responses to situations of inequality and exclusion?

These questions are essential. It would be inappropriate to analyse only the actions and infer that they will yield conditions for equal opportunities and social inclusion on account of their positive intrinsic value or, in other words, because they are politically correct “good deeds” (participatory, intercultural measures, etc.). From an evaluation perspective, what matters is whether the actions have prompted a stronger system of services and whether this system—having been strengthened—has actually led to a reversal of situations of inequality and social exclusion (i.e., whether this change, if proved to have occurred, is wholly or partly attributable to the services strengthening in the LPP implemented by the project).

There follows an illustration, based on a simulated case, of the procedure by which the logic of a policy is reconstructed.

The example given may also be used to identify and analyse the effects of an LPP from the perspective of the components and subcomponents of SC.

The fictional municipality of Siete Saltos reached an agreement with the Tamara Association, winner of the respective competitive tender award, to provide protection to women victims of violence. The measure is part of the national plan entitled “Equal rights and opportunities and a reduction in gender gaps.” The objectives of this plan, which have been taken on board by the local government, are as follows:

1/ to reduce gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence;

2/ to provide shelter, protection and psychological and legal assistance to women victims of violence;

3/ to prevent violence, particularly domestic violence, by changing the cultural patterns in which it is rooted;

4/ to design new models of care and protection with a view to improving intervention in domestic violence;

5/ to encourage, establish and strengthen local networks with the participation of all the agents involved in the phenomenon of violence against women (health service, juvenile court, schools, and associations, etc.).
The measures taken locally are as follows:

a) extension of operating schedules and of staff at the Care Centre (telephone service, which already exists in the municipality, run by the Tamara Association);

b) creation and start-up (by agreement with the Tamara Association) of a Shelter for women victims of violence to protect their physical integrity and that of their children (temporary residence of up to 7 people, including children) and to provide initial psychological and social assistance; a university psychoanalyst, who provides services free of charge once a week, has also been incorporated;

c) referral of cases of physical abuse, sexual abuse and other forms of physical and psychological and/or emotional violence to the local health service, on the basis of an agreement with the Ministry of Health;

d) advice, assistance and legal support of women lawyers of the Association and of the National Service for Women;

e) creation of the municipal anti-violence network formed by public institutions and civil society;

f) design and implementation, by a network committee, of a community awareness campaign on domestic violence and forms of prevention;

g) mapping of institutional and social resources available in the region to attend to women victims of violence;

h) running of the first training course for primary school teachers and nursery and kindergarten educators on eradicating domestic violence and detecting symptoms;

i) production of a proposed review of standards and clinical procedures for the provision of emergency care services to victims of sexual violence;

j) employment training (pilot plan) for women victims of violence in agreement with the municipal office for employment and economic benefits for companies that hire them;

k) other.
The policy of the municipality of Siete Saltos, managed by the Tamara Association, has been subject to periodic external evaluations from a university in the country’s capital. The results of this evaluation exercise have been widely publicised among the population, both through announcements on the radio and in the awareness campaign mentioned above. Evaluation has also revealed the need to reinforce measures to prevent domestic violence. This has prompted the municipality to set up a new service, complementary to those already mentioned, for mediation and conciliation in family conflicts, which is also to be managed by the Tamara Association and by three parish groups already operating in the territory. The Municipal Health Department has provided care procedures and service quality standards.

Note that two years after the implementation of the policy measure, there appeared two articles in the local press in which it was insinuated that the mayor may have favoured certain persons associated with his political party. The press claimed that two members of the Tamara Association were closely involved with the campaign for the mayor’s re-election. In response, the mayor ordered the publication of the procedure for allocating services and information on the management thereof (financial and technical); he also instituted a committee of enquiry formed by representatives of different political parties and civil society agents (suggested by the City Council). This committee not only verified the absence of embezzlement and other irregularities, but also proposed that different candidates for election to the new municipal authorities should make public their views on the continuity of services and on the policy to protect women victims of violence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ends</th>
<th>Means</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To reduce gender-based violence, particularly within the family.</td>
<td>1. To design new models of care and protection with a view to improving intervention in domestic violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To provide shelter, protection and psychological and legal assistance to women victims of violence.</td>
<td>1. To encourage, establish and strengthen local networks with the participation of all the agents involved in the phenomenon of violence against women (health service, juvenile court, schools, associations, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. To prevent violence, particularly domestic violence, and change the cultural patterns in which it is rooted.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
This information is sufficient to review the logic of the policy measure or, in other words, its hypothesis on cause-effect relations. What is required, therefore, is to differentiate the causes from the effects, and to determine which are the ends and which are the means, without confusing them. Often, as in the case described here, it may be observed that a document describing a policy does not clearly separate the means from the ends (causes and effects): they all appear to be formulated as objectives.

Let us now classify the chart of the five objectives listed above in accordance with this criterion: two objectives are clearly and directly aimed at yielding changes that should result in benefits for women. The other three, however, form a group of intermediate objectives of a more instrumental nature. They are tools. Their contribution is more indirect.

This initial approach to the logic of the policy has allowed for identification of the real envisaged effects. Let us now undertake deeper analysis using the text that appears above (and a little intuition). The exercise involves arranging the essential elements of the policy measure and rebuilding all the cause-effect relations considered. The starting point should be the problem to which the local policy is addressed, given that any policy decision stems from a problem that the governmental agent has included on its agenda. This problem has different causes and a policy generally selects from the different causes the priority or more accessible ones. 

Let us therefore follow the route set out below to explore in detail the logic of the policy given in this guide as an example:

1. the phenomenon
2. the problem
3. the causes of the problem to which the measure is addressed
4. objectives and overall strategy
5. chain of causes and effects expected to yield the envisaged results (objectives) or, in other words, to solve the problem

Because of limited available resources, for example, a policy may be focused only on some of the causes of the problem in question.

The problem dealt with by a policy corresponds to a social phenomenon that is considered problematic. Put another way, a social phenomenon becomes a politically significant problem only when it is assigned such significance or, in other words, it is assumed as a problem to be dealt with in policy.
Episodes of violence against women, particularly domestically and perpetrated by family members, are fairly frequent in the territory. Most acts of violence go unpunished, as they are not reported. Existing services are few, fragmented and inefficient.

Violence against women is assumed to be a "public" problem as it is viewed negatively on the basis of acknowledgement of women’s human rights. Status as a woman victim of violence, based on this value judgment, seriously harms a woman’s personal freedom and integrity. It also has serious social consequences in terms of exclusion of a part of the population.

The problem can be formulated as follows:

\[
\text{The high rate of violence against women (which occurs mostly in the home and is perpetrated by family members) is unacceptable,}^{14} \text{ as is the status of defencelessness of victims of violence, whose physical, psychological and sexual integrity is violated.}
\]

Two causes of the problem to which the policy measure is addressed can be identified and separated from its objectives and measures. (In examining a policy, when official documentation thereupon does not clearly express the selected causes, these must be deduced on the basis of reading this documentation). If this procedure is followed, the following findings can be highlighted:

1st cause: lack of services of assistance to and protection of victims, which also leads to a feeling of impunity among perpetrators of violence.

2nd cause: cultural patterns that favour the reproduction of violence against women.

In other words, breaches continue occurring as they are not countered effectively and firmly by the public authorities (lack of public action) and because the collective mentality tolerates or does not combat them (cultural complicity).

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14 The word “unacceptable” is used even though it sounds redundant and unnecessary to emphasize the fact that a phenomenon becomes a problem from the moment it is assessed negatively.
Objectives and overall strategy

The objectives are directly associated with the problem or, in other words, with solving the problem and correspond to the statements noted in chart 3:

/ Reducing gender-based violence, particularly within the family;
/ Providing shelter, protection and psychological and legal assistance to women victims of violence.

From a strategic perspective, the local policy features a combination of three elements.

First, it focuses on the problem of domestic violence and on the victims. It gives priority to defence and protection, i.e. the need for women affected to have:

a) the chance to report their problem and to be heard;
b) physical protection and shelter (which includes their children);
c) psychological support;
d) legal and social assistance to bring the situation of assault against them to an end (reparation);
e) support for the placement or reintegration in employment.

The second focus of the local policy strategy is the coordination of the different resources of the institutions and of civil society, and a call for concerted efforts and orderly work in order to maximise the positive effects of its different actions.

Lastly, the third strategic element is prevention, based on raising community awareness and training public agents in contact with children to identify situations of domestic violence.

Chain of causes and effects expected to yield the envisaged results (solution to the problem)

This is the crux of reconstructing the logic of the policy, as mentioned previously. It involves understanding how the policy is intended to work (or has acted, if implementation is analysed) in order to achieve its objectives.

Identification of the cause and effect chain of a policy requires the use of two complementary tools:

/ Guided conversations with its main agents and
/ Analysis of the documentation that describes it.

Continuing with the example given here, reading the objectives and envisaged actions with a view to ascertaining their exact role in the general strategy of the local policy, yields the following reconstruction:

1st cause of problem: Lack of services of assistance to and protection of victims, which also leads to a feeling of impunity among perpetrators of violence.

Solution 1: Presence and effectiveness of care and protection services for victims.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solution 1: Improvement of social care services for women victims of violence.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actions (to solve the problem):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ Design and implementation of a plan to improve the services provided by the Care Centre —extended with shelter building— in protection and reporting. This is intended to provide a prevention factor that will stop many men from intimidating or beating their spouses as they realise that their actions may be reported and this is indeed what is happening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ Design and implementation of a plan to improve the healthcare service for victims. It is expected that this will make women feel looked after and protected and prompt them to keep using the services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ Adoption and implementation of new rules and a procedure for emergency care services for victims of sexual violence. This is expected to improve the effectiveness of the services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ Training of women educators and teachers in recognising, managing and referring situations associated with violence. This is expected to increase the capacity for social monitoring of episodes of violence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Solution 2: Victims recover their physical, psychological and sexual integrity.  
Actions (to solve the problem):  
/ Creation of interdisciplinary offices that work together with victims in the process of recovering their self-esteem, their desire to live in normal circumstances, and their peace of mind with regard to their children’s development.  
/ Reporting and prosecuting offenders (with the help of the women lawyers of the Association and of the National Service for Women). This is expected to block impunity, significantly check the phenomenon of violence and provide the peace of mind required for them to embark on a new life project.

Solution 3: Recovery of the social autonomy (employment) of women victims of violence.  
Actions (to solve the problem):  
/ Encouragement of the training of victims, by giving them priority in the employment placement run by municipal offices, and provision of incentives to businesses to hire them. This is expected to help women return to work or even integrate them at work and also in the Social Security system for the first time.

2nd cause of problem: Gender patterns in the family-community environment favour collusion and reproduction of violence against women.  
Solution 4: Emerging changes in styles of relations between men and women, and between fathers and daughters, towards greater dialogue and cooperation.  
Actions (to solve the problem):  
/ Organisation of an awareness campaign by the municipal anti-violence network to work in close collaboration with educational agents trained in this area. This is expected to wear away indifference and to prompt social awareness in order to encourage the community itself to begin to question the discrimination and brutality that affect many women.
It is evident that the planned actions have been designed to address the causes of the problems, with emphasis on their positive impact. It is a logical assumption, precisely because expectation of such positive impact justifies their application, i.e. it is the very reason for the policy measure. Having identified and ordered the different elements of the policy measure according to the role they play, the logic of that measure can now be outlined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Intended effects of the policy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effects</td>
<td>Lower incidence of episodes of violence against women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes</td>
<td>Protection of women victims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presence and effectiveness of care and protection services (also legal) for victims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victims recover their physical, psychological and sexual integrity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recovery of social autonomy (employment) of women victims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emerging changes in styles of relations between men and women and fathers and daughters, towards greater dialogue and cooperation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes / causes</th>
<th>Actions</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Chart 5. Representation of the logic of the policy
The two intended effects (top right) represent solutions to the problems (top left). They express positively what the problems put forward negatively. To achieve the two desired effects, the policy measure provides four solutions or results (bottom right). The four results therefore act as causes of the two intended effects. These results are also the solutions of the two causes (bottom left) of the problems. Described in greater length, the logic of the policy measure can be established as follows:

If the policy measure achieves four results (expected effects of its actions), namely:

1/ Presence and effectiveness of care and protection services for victims;
2/ The victims recover their physical, psychological and sexual integrity;
3/ Recovery of social autonomy (employment) of women victims;
4/ Emerging changes in styles of relations between men and women and fathers and daughters;

it has therefore responded to the two causes (of the problem it is intended to solve), namely:

1/ Lack of services of assistance and protection;
2/ Gender patterns giving rise to reproduction...

and has therefore solved the problem of

/ High incidence of episodes of violence... and defenceless status...

i.e. the two expected effects have been achieved:\(^{15}\)

1/ Lower incidence of episodes of violence against women;
2/ Victim protection status.

---

\(^{15}\) These two effects do in fact correspond to the two previously identified objectives or ends (see chart 3): 1. reducing gender-based violence, particularly within the family, 2. providing shelter, protection and psychological and legal assistance to women victims of violence.
3. Establishing a reference framework for social cohesion

As mentioned, any exploration of how local public policies are positioned from the perspective of social cohesion above all requires a notion of what social cohesion is. The concept of social cohesion is, however, complex and many faceted. Hence the need to refer to its components or constituent parts in order thereafter to identify the subcomponents that may provide more specific benchmarks.

3.1. Definition of the essential components of social cohesion

A question that may arise spontaneously at this point is: on the basis of what criteria are certain components and subcomponents chosen and not others? The components and subcomponents presented here have been identified in a long process of collective reflection undertaken within the framework of the URB-AL III Programme, with the support of internal and external experts of OCO and by some projects. This process led initially to the selection of five components of social cohesion, namely: 1) equal opportunities and social inclusion, 2) belonging, 3) recognition, 4) legitimacy, 5) participation. The five components corresponded to the conceptual references upon which the Reference Document of the URB-AL III Programme is founded and can be resumed as follows:16

“A socially cohesive community on any scale, whether local, regional or national, depends on its members sharing a sense of inclusion and belonging, participating actively in public affairs, recognising and tolerating differences and enjoying a degree of equality in access to public goods and services and the distribution of income and wealth. All of this should take place in an environment where institutions generate confidence and legitimacy and where the rights of citizenship are fully exercised”.

Against this background, while the URB-AL III Programme was being developed, a methodology was devised to detect the contributions to social cohesion of the public policies implemented in Latin American territories where actions were carried out as part of the Programme. Agents of the policies themselves, OCO technicians and some external experts applied this methodology. The results of application also allowed for refinement of conceptual instrumentation and yielded the following key conclusions:

See http://www.forum-localgovts-uealc.org
/ The five components must be arranged in hierarchical order, as they are not of the same relative significance, i.e. of equal importance from the perspective of social cohesion: some might well represent an articulation of other components, and it would thus be difficult to establish boundaries among them given their close interdependence;

/ “Participation” is a political strategy that can be adopted both as a means and as an end; it is a cross-cutting operational dimension applicable throughout the policy, over and above its specific goals;

/ Social cohesion, from the perspective of an ideal of (cohesive) society, is also linked to a low level of conflict in a community or to appropriate management of internal conflicts (tensions and ideological, religious differences, etc.) in order to channel them democratically and keep them at a tolerable level.

Some contributions by external experts of the URB-AL III Programme also yielded similar conclusions, thus making a review of the framework of the five components recommendable. This guide similarly features a proposal to articulate social cohesion on the basis of three main components:

The first component (equal opportunities and social inclusion) is associated with the differences that exist in society on account of which some individuals and groups have no access to (and/or do not enjoy) the same goods and opportunities that are available to other people and groups. This refers therefore to the existence of circumstances of inequality and social exclusion and
economic differences in the exercise and enjoyment of rights universally enshrined in constitutional texts. When these differences are minor and society and the State intervene to remove barriers to equal opportunities for all and to include excluded groups, the society can be said to be moving towards higher levels of social cohesion.

The second component (good level of coexistence in society) refers to the capacity for coexistence, in accordance with the law, of citizens with different ideas, ideologies, values, religious beliefs, lifestyles and future outlooks. This capacity lies somewhere in a broad spectrum between civil wars (maximum degree of conflict) and the realms of utopia, in which harmony rules and everything is perfectly determined (maximum degree of agreement). As tensions and conflicts are normal in any society and at all moments in history, the former extreme must be avoided at all costs, while the second is unattainable. A society maintains or advances to higher levels of social cohesion when it is able to channel its conflicts and prevent them from escalating into violence and irreconcilable divisions. Essential aspects of this component are the recognition of the “other” and a sense of belonging or, in other words, a display of a sense of “social connectivity” in which citizens share basic values and commitments.

The third component (good degree of public confidence in governors and the public administration) is cross-cutting in nature and can be considered a type of condition with which citizens can manage their lives with some peace of mind. In increasingly complex societies like those that exist today, relations between the governed and governors resemble a relation between parties and counterparties. Citizens are aware that a popular vote is not the same as control of public management. Furthermore, public demand for public management to meet the highest standards of fairness, honesty and transparency has led to a public increasingly unwilling to delegate every decision regarding collective life to its administrators. A cohesive society or one that improves social cohesion is therefore also one in which mistrust and disillusionment do not flourish, where there is no divorce between the public, politicians and public administrators, but rather a good balance of active citizenship, delegation and citizen control and the intentions and actions of public representatives and institutions. Social cohesion depends largely on the legitimacy of institutions and is jeopardised when they are not representative. It also requires broad citizen involvement in public affairs (which here does not solely refer to governmental matters), their participation both in decision-making processes and in the management and control of measures.

In outlining some core elements of the three components (further details of which will be given below), terms such as “good”, “degree”, and “level”, etc. have been introduced. There is thus no dogmatic or universal rule with which to determine when a society can be
considered cohesive. These measures are relative: each society, on the basis of its parameters, guidelines, circumstances and possibilities, must itself determine the actual significance of these measures.

3.2. Breakdown of components into subcomponents

It was mentioned earlier that social cohesion has a great number of meanings and hence the need to isolate what we consider to be its constitutive components. However, since these components are also quite abstract, their possible subcomponents must be identified. These offer better working definitions of the components and meanwhile capture their essence, while also allowing for a less abstract approach. In other words, instead of working with intangible concepts such as equality or inclusion, the focus is instead placed on facts and phenomena that are truly observable and that also represent a core part of what these concepts mean. These components and subcomponents can be worked on a simultaneous or on a separate basis, as each bears great influence in social cohesion.

By way of an example some subcomponents of the three proposed components are given below.

The best approach is for the key agents of a public policy (decision-makers, officials, stakeholders, etc.) to reach agreement, in each event, as regards the essential features of the components of the policy they are designing or they intend to analyse from the perspective of its contribution to social cohesion. In order to facilitate the successive task of identifying how the policy is tied to the subcomponents, the subcomponents are formulated in terms of policy challenges or actions.
As can be observed, the subcomponents cover a wide range of measures and situations. Both contributory and non-contributory social protection systems are defined nationally, and the envisaged benefits almost always depend on national institutions. However, local governments have areas of action of varying size in which to fight situations of exclusion and to prevent or mitigate vulnerability. They also manage their regional policies and plans or programmes and coordinate with other levels of government to implement their policies. Lastly, several services (including schools, health centres, conditional transfer programmes, etc.) are provided at a local level and involve both the public and private sectors. Furthermore, despite the differing restrictions to which a local government is subject, it is clear that local public policies generally affect all areas of the subcomponents mentioned above.

17 Equal opportunities and social inclusion component

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Subcomponents17</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is perhaps the component most commonly associated with social cohesion. Equal opportunities and social inclusion are closely interrelated concepts, given that inequality of opportunities hinders a reduction in social exclusion.</td>
<td>The local public policy:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion refers both to a status or circumstance and to a process (one can go from being excluded to being included and vice versa). It is well known that although constitutions and laws enshrine formal equality among all citizens, in practice real inequality exists and affects different sectors of the population. Difficulties in social mobility experienced by the children of poor families demonstrate such inequality, as do wage differences between men and women, to give a couple of examples. Exclusion is not only associated with economic insecurity, but manifests itself in the obstacles a person or a group experiences in participating in the economic, social, political and cultural development of a society. Similarly, social inclusion can be defined as a situation in which all citizens have the effective opportunity to participate fully in social, economic, political and cultural life. From the point of view of society and the State, this leads to the responsibility of guaranteeing all persons certain goods and decent living conditions so they can opt for and develop a life project consistent with their values and preferences.</td>
<td>1. Acts to ensure that all people can access social benefits relating to basic rights, particularly in the following fields:</td>
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<td>As societies are dynamic or changing bodies and internally differentiated, there are two types of limitations to ensuring or maintaining inclusion:</td>
<td>/ Income (ensuring sufficient income —through measures that increase employment or economic benefits— in order to meet basic needs and not to succumb to or remain in circumstances of poverty and deprivation, as defined in national standards);</td>
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<td></td>
<td>/ Work (cover in situations of unemployment, respect for employment rights, promotion of access to employment, pension coverage);</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/ Health and social protection (access to basic services, protection in situations of illness, temporary or permanent disability, etc.).</td>
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The first concerns defects in the social system that hinder the exercise of rights (for example, a discriminatory educational system, a health system that does not treat everyone, etc.). These are gaps or even conditions of inequality that are passed from one generation to another and become structural deficiencies that have a greater impact on population groups with fewer resources either to insist that their rights are respected or to procure a state of well-being using their own means (marginal urban neighbourhoods, abandoned rural areas, discriminated ethnic minorities, etc.).

The second limitation arises because of adverse events throughout life that undermine personal autonomy and/or increase difficulties, and can lead to social exclusion (unemployment, old age, disability, illness, etc.).

An inclusive society does not intend everyone to be equal. In other words, the intention is not to standardise citizens according to pre-established patterns. Its ideal and standard is for all citizens to have equal opportunities for development. It ensures that the disparities between individuals and groups do not exceed a certain threshold, and provides aid to the most vulnerable. On the one hand, therefore, it strives to break down structural barriers that trigger exclusion, while on the other it creates systems of services and benefits to provide all citizens with the protection necessary to deal with circumstances that entail a risk of exclusion. The purpose of protection systems is to neutralise (and/or protect people from) the negative impact of disadvantageous circumstances, with greater emphasis on the marginal sectors for which the risk of social exclusion is higher (the unemployed, immigrants, single parents, young people and adults with a low level of training, etc.). One of its features is encouragement of support for individuals and groups with a view to enabling them to acquire or recover the maximum possible independence.

On the whole, the most significant elements from a perspective of social cohesion are universality (ensuring access and use, etc.) and prioritisation (actions to eliminate circumstances of exclusion of individuals and specific groups).

Education (access to compulsory education, encouraging permanence in the education system and combating school drop-out);
Security (protection, effective access to justice);
Housing (decent housing with regard to quality and space);
A clean, healthy environment.

1.2 Acts to eliminate the circumstances of exclusion of individuals and specific groups such as:
Poor families;
Discriminated groups (ethnic minorities, immigrants, the disabled, etc.);
Backward or less developed territories.
The ideal of social cohesion does not seek an absence of conflict, but rather the existence of rules to follow and institutions with which to channel it and manage it democratically. From the perspective of social cohesion, a desirable community is one in which conflicts and contrasts are appropriately counteracted. This requires a community to have effective systems of justice, which are able to settle disputes quickly and unbiasedly find in favour of those in the right, and an institutional system capable of dealing with differences of an ideological or other type in order to prevent incurable ruptures from occurring.

Justice ensures equal treatment and respect for rights; democratic management of differences enables individuals and groups to develop their way of thinking and live according to their preferences and affiliations (political, religious, cultural, identity, associative, etc.) without suffering discrimination. Citizens who perceive that others accept and acknowledge them contribute to social cohesion. The same applies when citizens feel protected against arbitrariness.

Cohesion can be defined precisely as a sustained capacity for “togetherness”. For this to happen, society must have mechanisms that constantly prioritise the general interest. In the complex balance between general interests and individual and group interests (of a minority, a guild, or a neighbourhood area, etc.), the latter of course have their place and are only restricted so far as they do not affect the rights of each of their members and of society in general.

In other words, a good level of coexistence in society is essential to preserve or improve social cohesion. Only in such a system does a sense of “social connectivity” exist, against the background of which citizens share basic values and commitments. These circumstances also prompt a sense of belonging, which surpasses identification with a primordial nucleus in order to embrace a larger community.

Many of the guarantees that ensure that justice fulfils its mission and that divisions do not cause rupture depend on the national institutional system. Local governments and societies nevertheless have wide margins in which to operate. In addition to institutional mechanisms themselves, it is essential to bear in mind the structure and dynamics of areas that are more traditional, deeply-rooted in the community and shape the universe of the sense of belonging of groups and individuals: traditions, the neighbourhood, religion, adherence to practices and political parties, the trade union and, more generally, the different systems of affinity and identification with groups and identities. These are forms of association that secure ties and very often operate independently from great socialising institutions and governmental policies.

### Component

The local public policy:

2.1 Yields initiatives that reinforce the practice of shared values among the majority of the local population, and in particular civic conducts (respect for rights and duties in interpersonal coexistence), as well as personal freedom and security.

2.2 Promotes swift and effective justice in association with the competent authorities.

2.3 Initiates mediation and conciliation mechanisms among sectors of the public in conflict.

2.4 Prevents and/or combats manifestations of intolerance towards bearers of exclusive identities (gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, political views, etc.) through assertive action (preferential treatment) in favour of groups that have historically been discriminated against and by encouraging positive interaction among the different expressions (cultural, ethnic, etc.) that exist in the community, within a common framework of values and rules of coexistence.
Contemporary societies, whatever their scale, are characterised by the core role played by public institutions in deciding, regulating and managing many areas of community life, including political models that advocate “reduction” of the State. The internal cohesion of a community is therefore weakened if people perceive politicians and public institutions as self-referential, indifferent or even hostile institutions; the opposite is also true; the greater the degree of legitimacy thereof, the more it is enhanced.

Legitimacy depends basically on two challenges faced by any public administration (and “policy”): the true extent of their independence from groups with great power resources and their ability to serve the public efficiently and effectively. They both ensure that the objectives of public action are not affected by changes of government and that public administration neither depends on the propensity of rulers to remain in power nor is subject to pressures from corporations or from sectors fighting to assert what best suits them. Against such a background, there are therefore low levels of volatility and arbitrariness in establishing the objectives of public action.

A public administration that enjoys a high level of legitimacy generates “quality” local public policies. These explicitly pursue the common good, both for present and future generations. These policies are stable, i.e. they are intended to last, based on a strategic vision of the territory, and also effectively and practically viable.

A public administration that enjoys a high level of legitimacy seeks efficiency and fairness in allocating and using resources (often what matters is not what is spent but rather how it is spent). Additionally, accountability mechanisms must be devised and all its activities and the services it provides must be based on transparency in order to provide the public not only information, but also a certain level of control.

A public administration that enjoys a high level of legitimacy performs actions arising from policy options based on social consensus. This is not the same as the “popularity” of these options. As social consensus is inevitably the result of mediation and compromise, a positive quality of public action lies in its ability to establish opportunities for participation and mediation with regard to different interests.

### The local public policy:

3.1 Demonstrates capability to pursue the progress of the regional community as a whole, and bears future generations in mind (rather than the forthcoming election). To this end:

- it establishes assessments and publicises governmental actions and results;
- it devises governmental action in accordance with an outlook that reconciles short-term emergencies with prospects based on a longer time horizon;
- it takes decisions after seeking the broadest possible consensus among citizens and sectors involved in public decisions, and avoids improper constraints of private interests and cronyism;
- it fights corruption and penalises conduct that breaches the proper exercise of public functions;
- it implements public action transparency mechanisms (publicity of and access to information on procedures, content and decisions adopted in the exercise of public functions);
- it accounts for the use of budgetary resources and their allocation;
- it develops a policy of ongoing improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of services and provides access and use by the public.
A public administration that enjoys a high level of legitimacy foments responsible information and participation, and encourages mastery of planning, negotiating and executive tools and capabilities, particularly among socially excluded sectors. Participation is nevertheless difficult terrain: not everyone can or wants to participate in everything; not everyone has a democratic spirit; and not everyone has the skills required to participate appropriately. That notwithstanding, enhancing citizen participation, insofar as it reinforces social ties, trust and willingness to cooperate and reciprocate, provides for progress towards higher levels of social cohesion.

A public administration that enjoys a high level of legitimacy encourages the capacity for independent initiative of civil society organisations and citizens' groups who perform public functions (of general interest) and promotes formulas for association with these groups to benefit the public as a whole.

A public administration that enjoys a high level of legitimacy is recognised as a member of a multi-stakeholder governmental system that favours and foments greater connection among individuals, civil society groups (including the private sector) and institutions.

| 3.2 Encourages and recognises independent initiative, commitment and the involvement of civil society subjects (private agents, associations, etc.) in performing acts in the public interest, based on the principle of horizontal subsidiarity. |
1. Equal opportunities and social inclusion

The local public policy:

/ Acts to ensure that all people can access social benefits relating to basic rights (income, employment, health and social protection, etc.).

/ Acts to eliminate the circumstances of exclusion of individuals and specific groups (poor families, excluded groups, backward territories).

2. Good level of coexistence in society

The local public policy:

/ Yields initiatives that reinforce the practice of shared values, particularly civic-minded conducts and personal freedom and security.

/ Promotes swift and effective justice in association with the competent authorities.

/ Initiates mediation and conciliation mechanisms among sectors of the public in conflict.

/ Prevents and/or combats manifestations of intolerance towards bearers of exclusive identities and encourages positive interaction among the different expressions (cultural, ethnic, etc.) that exist in the community.

3. Good degree of public confidence in governors and the public administration

The local public policy:

/ Demonstrates capability to pursue the progress of the regional community as a whole, and bears future generations in mind (rather than the forthcoming election).

/ Encourages and recognises independent initiative, commitment and the involvement of civil society subjects (private agents, associations, etc.) in performing acts in the public interest.
The two previous chapters have featured an explanation of how to reconstruct the logic of a policy and provided a reference framework for social cohesion. It is now therefore possible to explore the guide’s core issue: the contributions of a local public policy to social cohesion. Once again it is important to distinguish between means and ends; between actions, results of an instrumental nature and effects of an LPP, the latter being the true object of an analysis intended to assess their impact on the circumstances of social cohesion.

To interpret an LPP from the perspective of social cohesion, let us take a fresh look at the case of the municipality of Siete Saltos. This will start with a reference to the design of the policy presented in Chapter 2 and continue with an attempt to identify its possible contributions to SC bearing in mind the logic of such a measure. The work is therefore based on the reconstruction of the policy described previously using secondary sources (written documentation). For ease of presentation, focus will first be placed on the correlations between the policy and the first component of SC (equal opportunities and social inclusion). We shall then try also to cover the other two components: good level of coexistence in society and public confidence in governors and the public administration.

Three basic questions should be used as a starting point:

1 / Does the policy adopted by the municipality of Siete Saltos lead to equal opportunities and social inclusion?

2 / How does it do so? In other words: What are the envisaged effects on the problems of inequality and exclusion?

3 / What are its specific, verifiable contributions?

We shall also start from a premise: the question of whether a policy aimed at combating violence against women and providing protection to victims is fully established within the SC component “equal opportunities and social inclusion”, can only be answered once all three questions (and not just the first) have been dealt with. To answer all the questions raised it is also necessary to distinguish accurately and analyse the hypothesis of cause-effect sequences considered in the design of the measure. It is at this point that the “specific and verifiable contributions” to SC are included.

The procedure proposed primarily involves identifying the links or analogies between the envisaged effects and the reference framework adopted to contrast them with a view of SC. As well as identifying them, they must also, of course, be analysed and explained. The way to establish these correlations is to place the elements of the logic of the policy under review and the components/subcomponents of SC in two columns and analyse, in a third column, the correlations identified:

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4. Identification and analysis of the effects of a policy from the perspective of the components and subcomponents of social cohesion
Correlations

| Object of analysis: design of the policy | Subcomponents of equality-inclusion | Identification and analysis of the contributions |

SOLUTION 1: Presence and effectiveness of care and protection services for victims.

**ACTIONS (to solve the problem):**

- Design and implementation of a plan to improve the services provided by the Care Centre—extended with shelter building—in protection and reporting. This is intended to provide a prevention factor that will stop many men from intimidating or beating their spouses as they realise that their actions may be reported and this is indeed what is happening.
- Design and implementation of a plan to improve the healthcare service for victims. It is expected that this will make women feel looked after and protected and prompt them to keep using the services.
- Adoption and implementation of new rules and a procedure for emergency care services for victims of sexual violence. This is expected to improve the effectiveness of the services.
- Training of women educators and teachers in recognising, managing and referring situations associated with violence. This is expected to increase the capacity for social monitoring of episodes of violence.

SOLUTION 2: Victims recover their physical, psychological and sexual integrity.

**ACTIONS (to solve the problem):**

1. **Acts to ensure that all people can access and enjoy social benefits relating to basic rights, particularly in the following fields:**
   - Health and social protection
   - Security and justice
2. **Acts to eliminate the circumstances of exclusion of individuals and specific groups:**
   - Discriminated groups

The first three solutions envisaged in the design of the LPP address the policy’s main interest: defence and protection of and support for women victims of violence. There is thus full correlation with subcomponents 1.1 and 1.2, because their function is to ensure that a specific and discriminated population group “has access to and enjoys the social benefits relating to basic rights” (particularly health, social protection, security and justice). The LPP is designed as a “positive action” that favours this group. In fact, the LPP of Siete Saltos:

- Allows access to social, care and legal benefits for people who were previously unable to exercise this right; it is thus specifically aimed at extending opportunities to and including in society the victims of violence, and providing physical, psychological and emotional protection, plus assistance and opportunities for reintegration;
| / Creation of interdisciplinary offices that work together with victims in helping them to recover their self-esteem, their desire to live in normal circumstances, and their peace of mind with regard to their children's development. / Reporting and prosecuting offenders (with the help of women lawyers of the Association and of the National Service for Women). This is expected to block impunity, significantly check the phenomenon of violence and provide the peace of mind required for them to embark on a new life project. |
| SOLUTION 3: Recovery of the social autonomy (employment) of women victims of violence. ACTIONS (to solve the problem): |
| / Encouragement for the training of victims. / Giving them priority in the employment placement run by municipal offices, and offering companies incentives to hire them. This is expected to help women return to work or even integrate them at work and also in the Social Security system for the first time. |
| SOLUTION 4: Emerging changes in styles of relations between men and women, and between fathers and daughters, towards greater dialogue and cooperation. ACTIONS (to solve the problem): |
| / Organisation of an awareness campaign by the municipal anti-violence network that works in close collaboration with educational agents trained in this area. This is expected to wear away indifference and prompt social awareness in order to encourage the community itself to start questioning the discrimination and brutality that affect many women. |

/ Allows women victims gradually to recover their violated rights by bringing an end to their victim status and isolation with a guarantee of security and justice; / Acts to contain and deter violence.

Solution 4 contributes more indirectly to subcomponent 1.2, as changes in mentality take place over a very long time. However, in accordance with the logic of the project, this solution is designed with a view to supporting the other three and is an objective that is complementary and necessary to influence the community as a whole (i.e. more than just women and victims) in order to prompt less abuse.
It can be concluded therefore that the policy measure is clearly aimed at improving social cohesion in the territory from the perspective of equality and social inclusion (even though it is still not explicitly universal). Below, the same exercise is applied to the other components and subcomponents of social cohesion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Object of analysis: design of the policy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subcomponents of coexistence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identification and analysis of the contributions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLUTION 1: Presence and effectiveness of care and protection services for victims. ACTIONS (to solve the problem):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Yields initiatives that reinforce the practice of shared values among the majority of the local population, and in particular civic conducts as well as personal freedom and security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Promotes swift and effective justice in association with the competent authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Initiates mediation and conciliation mechanisms among sectors of the public in conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Prevents and/or combats manifestations of intolerance towards bearers of exclusive identities by encouraging positive interaction among the different expressions (cultural, ethnic, etc.) that exist in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The subcomponents most directly related to the LPP are 2.2. and 2.3. In the former case, the protection services provided by solutions 1 and 2 also include the “advice, assistance and legal support of women lawyers of the Association and of the National Service for Women”. Assistance and protection are therefore strongly associated in terms of justice and reparation. As for subcomponent 2.3, the original design of the LPP did not anticipate anything in this regard. However, evaluation of the LPP led the authorities to establish a family conflict mediation and conciliation service. This service represents a reinforcement of solutions 1, 2 and 4 and a contribution to subcomponent 2.3.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SOLUTION 2: Victims recover their physical, psychological and sexual integrity.

ACTIONS (to solve the problem):

/ Creation of interdisciplinary offices that work together with victims in helping them to recover their self-esteem, their desire to live in normal circumstances, and their peace of mind with regard to their children’s development.
/ Reporting and prosecuting offenders with the help of women lawyers of the Association and of the National Service for Women. This is expected to block impunity, significantly check the phenomenon of violence and provide the peace of mind required for them to embark on a new life project.

SOLUTION 3: Recovery of the social autonomy (employment) of women victims of violence.

ACTIONS (to solve the problem):

/ Encouragement for the training of victims.
/ Giving them priority in the employment placement run by municipal offices, and offering companies incentives to hire them. This is expected to help women return to work or even integrate them at work and also in the Social Security system for the first time.

Lastly, solution 4 is intended to change patterns of conduct and, as such, is linked to subcomponent 2.1 in that it fosters the values of personal freedom and security of all human beings.

Subcomponents of public confidence

3.1 Demonstrates capability to pursue the progress of the regional community as a whole, and bears future generations in mind (rather than the forthcoming elections).

3.2 Encourages and recognises independent initiative, commitment and the involvement of civil society subjects (private agents, associations, etc.) in performing acts in the public interest.

Identification and analysis of the contributions

The LPP "encourages and recognises independent initiative, commitment and the involvement of civil society subjects" (subcomponent 3.2). This is demonstrated by the participation of universities and civil society agents in the municipal anti-violence network, and by the fact that management of the services has been entrusted to an association. This option of the LPP lies in the realm of the instruments and actions (the lower rung in the logic of the policy). Comparison of this contribution with those related to equal opportunities and social inclusion distinctly shows therefore that the LPP’s four strategic solutions are more clearly and forcefully addressed to this component of SC.
Contributions to the three components of SC are, therefore, envisaged; they do not, however, all have the same significance because, as the logic of the policy has shown, this LPP is aimed primarily at objectives associated with social inclusion and equal opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components / Subcomponents</th>
<th>Identification and analysis of contributions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal opportunities and social inclusion</td>
<td>The first three solutions envisaged in the design of the LPP under analysis address the main interest of this LPP: defence and protection of and support for women victims of violence. There is therefore correlation with the subcomponents 1.1 and 1.2 as their function is to ensure that a specific and discriminated population group &quot;has access to and enjoys the social benefits relating to basic rights&quot; (health, social protection, etc.). The LPP is designed as a &quot;positive action&quot;. The LPP in fact: (a) allows access to social, care and legal benefits for people who were previously unable to exercise this right; it is thus specifically aimed at extending opportunities to and including in society the victims of violence, and providing physical, psychological and emotional protection, plus assistance and opportunities for reintegration;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SOLUTION 4: Emerging changes in styles of relations between men and women, and between fathers and daughters, towards greater dialogue and cooperation.

**ACTIONS (to solve the problem):**

- Organisation of an awareness campaign by the municipal anti-violence network that works in close collaboration with educational agents trained in this area. This is expected to wear away indifference and to prompt social awareness in order to encourage the community itself to start questioning the discrimination and brutality that affect many women.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.2 Acts to eliminate the circumstances of exclusion of individuals and specific groups.</th>
<th>(b) it allows women victims gradually to recover their violated rights by bringing an end to their victim status and isolation with a guarantee of security and justice; (c) it acts to contain and deter violence. Solution 4 contributes more indirectly to subcomponent 1.2, as changes in mentality take place over a very long time. However, in accordance with the logic of the project, this solution is designed with a view to supporting the other three and is an objective that is complementary and necessary to influence the community as a whole (i.e. more than just women and victims) in order to prompt less abuse.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coexistence in society</td>
<td>The subcomponents most directly related to the LPP are 2.2 and 2.3. In the former case, the protection services provided by solutions 1 and 2 also include the &quot;advice, assistance and legal support of women lawyers of the Association and of the National Service for Women&quot;. Assistance and protection are therefore strongly associated in terms of justice and reparation. As for subcomponent 2.3, the original design of the LPP did not anticipate anything in this regard. However, evaluation of the LPP led the authorities to establish a family conflict mediation and conciliation service. This service represents a reinforcement of solutions 1, 2 and 4 and a contribution to subcomponent 2.3. Lastly, solution 4 is intended to change patterns of conduct and, as such, is linked to subcomponent 2.1 in that it fosters the values of personal freedom and security of all human beings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Yields initiatives that reinforce the practice of shared values among the majority of the local population, and in particular civic conducts as well as personal freedom and security.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Promotes swift and effective justice in association with the competent authorities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Initiates mediation and conciliation mechanisms among sectors of the public in conflict.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public confidence in governors and in the public administration</td>
<td>The LPP &quot;encourages and recognises independent initiative, commitment and the involvement of civil society subjects&quot; (subcomponent 3.2). This is demonstrated by the participation of universities and civil society agents in the municipal anti-violence network, and by the fact that management of the services has been entrusted to an association. Comparison of this contribution with those related to equal opportunities and social inclusion distinctly shows therefore that the LPP’s four strategic solutions are more clearly and forcefully addressed to this component of SC. The adjustments introduced to the initial design of the LPP (mediation and conciliation service, publication of management information and committee of enquiry), exemplify the will and institutional capacity to act with a view to subcomponent 3.1 (better effectiveness/efficiency of services; transparency in public acts; accountability in the use of resources; dissemination of government actions and of their results).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Demonstrates capability to pursue the progress of the regional community as a whole, and bears future generations in mind (rather than the forthcoming elections).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Encourages and recognises independent initiative, commitment and the involvement of civil society subjects in performing acts in the public interest.</td>
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The exercise described above revolves around the envisaged effects and identifies the causes intended to produce them on the basis of the logic of the policy. The desired effect is the yardstick with which to examine the design of the policy.

Indeed, the closer one gets to the design of a policy, the easier it is for this policy to be consistent with a social cohesion approach.\(^\text{18}\) The main issue, however, lies in the specific acts of a policy that citizens can appreciate in terms of greater social cohesion. Any policy is judged not by its aims and how perfect its design is, but by the changes it prompts or provides for in the real lives of citizens.

It is well-known that reality can subject forecasts to great duress: throughout the implementation of any plan or policy there arise new, unforeseen and unintended effects and these require strategic decisions to be made along the way. Both the ability to make the right decisions and a solid architecture (plus common sense and a little luck) are the determining factor in levels of achievement.

It is precisely in the implementation phase that a policy, programme, project or intervention assumes its true shape: "Anyone with experience in public programmes indeed knows that implementation is as important as the decision and that ‘true’ intervention does not mean the decisions that were taken, but rather what was eventually done."\(^\text{19}\)

Analysis of contributions should therefore be extended to the implementation of the LPP and assessment of its actual effects from the perspective of social cohesion. The procedure is analogous. It involves detecting the specific logic that has been applied, i.e. observing and interpreting cause/effect relations implemented by the policy in question that give rise to its end results. This requires conducting an investigation with a view to identifying and evaluating its effects within the context of the logic of the policy effectively implemented, and thereupon contrasting them with the components and subcomponents of SC.

That notwithstanding, an action developed by a policy cannot really be understood without heeding the significance given to it in the logic of that very policy. The Care Centre and Shelter in the example dealt with should fulfil a specific function with a significance that arose from the overall design of the policy measure; they are therefore actions with effects that can only be deciphered by referring to the functions upon which they are established.

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The questions asked to investigate the measures implemented by a policy and their intermediate and eventual effects must therefore necessarily be suggested by the way researchers represent the policy when they begin to address it.

This process must always unavoidably start with a study of its design (objectives, strategy, etc.). Returning to the case dealt with in this guide, the investigation should feature some initial questions such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Role of actions in accordance with the logic of the policy</th>
<th>Investigation questions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/ Extension of Care Centre schedules and staff (telephone service, which already exists in the municipality). / Establishment and start-up of a Shelter for women victims of violence to protect their physical integrity and that of their children (temporary residence of up to seven people, including children) and offer of primary psychological and social care.</td>
<td>CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM (A): Lack of services of assistance to and protection of victims, which also leads to a feeling of impunity among perpetrators of violence. SOLUTION 1: Presence and effectiveness of care and protection services for victims. CAUSES (actions to solve the problem)</td>
<td>Extension of Care Centre schedules and staff: / Has there been an increase in the number of calls? / Are all calls attended? / Has waiting time been reduced and care time increased? Is there a guarantee that problems and situations reported are properly dealt with? / Are there any shortfalls in the coverage of real and potential cases? / After calling, are women helped and do they receive effective protection? How many? Are there any cases that are not dealt with? Why? / Etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ Establishment and start-up of a Shelter:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Establishment and start-up of a Shelter: / Is the Shelter operating at full capacity? / Has there been an assessment of the phenomenon in order to establish whether the capacity of the Shelter is sufficient or should be increased?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Referral of cases of physical abuse, sexual abuse and other forms of violence to the local health service, through an agreement with the Ministry of Health.

Advice, assistance and legal support of women lawyers of the Association and of the National Service for Women.

The Care Centre—extended with the Shelter—provides protection and encourages reporting, which ultimately becomes a factor of prevention because many men stop or are discouraged from intimidating or beating their wives as they know their actions can be reported and are being so.

Victims come to the Shelter; cases are referred to the local health service, where they are dealt with efficiently; women feel cared for, protected, and continue to use the services.

Reporting of violence suffered and prosecution of the perpetrators (with the help of the Association and of the National Service for Women) blocks impunity and significantly checks the phenomenon of violence.

Is restraint, emotional stabilisation and protection for all persons dealt with by the Shelter being achieved? What are the results? (and what criteria are being used to measure the service?).

Do any women attended by the Shelter refuse help and return home? What is done in these cases?

Referral of cases of physical abuse, sexual abuse and other forms of violence:

Does the referral and counter-referral service work? Are referred cases receiving adequate care? (and what criteria are being used to measure the service?)

What monitoring is being implemented?

Advice, assistance and legal support of women lawyers of the Association and of the National Service for Women:

Is the care provided by the Centre encouraging victims to report cases?

With what results?

Is this factor helping to prevent new cases and/or stop abuse by men?

What guarantees are given to women who have lodged a complaint related to their physical integrity?

Is collaboration work with the lawyers of the Association and of the National Service for Women working?

Is legal action being brought?

Is it bearing fruit?

Is there appropriate monitoring of cases of violence to ensure they do not occur again when women return home?

With regard to the services as a whole:

Are there any unintended effects that have a negative impact that invalidates the benefits? If so, what measures have been taken?

How is the economic sustainability of the services ensured once the agreement with the association has expired?

What guarantees are there for the continuity of services provided upon changes in government?
This guide does not deal with the methodological aspects of an investigation. Raising a few questions, such as the above examples, is enough to show that only through a process of investigation into the implementation of an LPP is it possible to discover the real scope of the policy and to draw conclusions as to its contributions to social cohesion.

The questions that appear above by way of an example are all intended to yield understanding of whether implementation of the Siete Saltos LPP does indeed provide “presence and effectiveness of care and protection services for victims”. Remember that this outcome, along with three other results (or intermediate effects) shaped the cause that gave rise to the eventual effects envisaged by the LPP, namely: (a) lower occurrence of episodes of violence, and (b) protection of women victims. According to the logic of the policy, the reduction in violence against women depended on four causal factors that the LPP assumed as its intermediate results or effects. These four intermediate effects (and in particular the first three) likewise offered victims the “protection” necessary to bring an end to their defenceless status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Intended effects of the policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effects</td>
<td>Lower incidence of episodes of violence against women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects</td>
<td>Protection of women victims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes</td>
<td>Presence and effectiveness of care and protection services (also legal) for victims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes</td>
<td>Victims recover their physical, psychological and sexual integrity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes</td>
<td>Recovery of social autonomy (employment) of women victims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes</td>
<td>Emerging changes in styles of relations between men and women and fathers and daughters, towards greater dialogue and cooperation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 5. Representation of the logic of the policy
The task of researching implementation therefore involves checking, first, the effectiveness of the four intermediate results/effects and, second, how the cause/effect link proposed in the design phase of the LPP works, i.e. determining whether episodes of violence have decreased and whether the victims have adequate protection on account of the achievement of these four intermediate results/effects. Only if they have can the policy measure be said to have contributed to an improvement in social cohesion.

The purpose of an investigation into the implementation of an LPP is not to determine whether cause-effect relations have worked properly, with a view to establishing the difference between what was planned and what has been accomplished. It has been reiterated that it is more important to establish the specific effects in order to contrast them with the components/subcomponents of SC.20 Therefore, although analysis of the design of the policy measure pointed to a clear correlation with the “equality-social inclusion” component of SC (and with the others), examination of its implementation yields less categorical conclusions and highlights both successes and problems and progress and grey areas. To conclude, an example based on a simulation is given below. First, chart 10 displays the results and effects of the LPP of the municipality of Siete Saltos, based on the assessments made; these effects and results are then (chart 11) compared with the two subcomponents of the SC component “equal opportunities and social inclusion”.

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20 It would, of course, be unwise and mechanistic to attribute unequivocal meaning in terms of social cohesion each time a policy advances. Some changes of social phenomena may, moreover, accompany the implementation of a policy and not depend thereupon, at least partly.
### Outline of implementation of the LPP (according to the initial design)

**SOLUTION 1:** Presence and effectiveness of care and protection services for victims.

**ACTIONS (to solve the problem):**

- Design and implementation of a plan to improve the services provided by the Care Centre—extended with shelter building—in protection and reporting. This is intended to provide a prevention factor that will stop many men from intimidating or beating their spouses as they realise that their actions may be reported and this is indeed what is happening.
- Design and implementation of a plan to improve the healthcare service for victims. It is expected that this will make women feel looked after and protected and prompt them to keep using the services.
- Adoption and implementation of new rules and a procedure for emergency care services for victims of sexual violence. This is expected to improve the effectiveness of the services.
- Training of women educators and teachers in recognising, managing and referring situations associated with violence. This is expected to increase the capacity for social monitoring of episodes of violence.

**SOLUTION 2:** Victims recover their physical, psychological and sexual integrity.

**ACTIONS (to solve the problem):**

- Creation of interdisciplinary offices that work together with victims in helping them to recover their self-esteem, their desire to live in normal circumstances, and their peace of mind with regard to their children’s development;
- Reporting and prosecuting offenders (with the help of women lawyers of the Association and of the National Service for Women). This is expected to block impunity, significantly check the phenomenon of violence and provide the peace of mind required for them to embark on a new life project.

### Results and effects of implementation

Solutions 1, 2 and 3 together are designed to provide suitable protection of and assistance to victims, with a view also to recovery of decent physical, psychological, sexual and social and employment living conditions.

Solution 1: The Shelter and Care Centre are dealing with a large number of cases; the second year saw a 150% increase in demand for care on the first year. However, due to the shortage of skilled staff, it has not been possible to cover all demand beyond the first level of care fully (calls requesting help). According to a survey conducted every four months, referrals to the health service are being made using the proper procedure and 100% of examinations and tests required to prove harm suffered have been performed. The proportion of potential demand and referrals made is unknown. There was also a significant increase in cases of domestic violence reported to health centres (a 12% increase at the end of the second year). The Shelter, however, does not have enough rooms (or staff) to accommodate women who need to leave their homes. The problem of accommodating children who have to stay with their mothers at the Shelter has not been solved either.

Solution 2: According to the data obtained from two intermediate evaluations, virtually all of the women attended by psychologists, doctors and social workers feel protected. A determining factor is the order restraining the offender from approaching the victim, which includes his presence in the common home or in her home. In 100% of these cases there is substantial improvement from the perspective of self-esteem and the wish/ability to develop new personal projects (formation of a new couple, work, etc.), despite her wish to continue receiving support from the services.
SOLUTION 3: Recovery of the social autonomy (employment) of women victims of violence.

ACTIONS (to solve the problem):

/ Encouragement for the training of victims.
/ Giving them priority in the employment placement run by municipal offices, and offering companies incentives to hire them.
This is expected to help women return to work or even integrate them at work and also in the Social Security system for the first time.

SOLUTION 4: Emerging changes in styles of relations between men and women, and between fathers and daughters, towards greater dialogue and cooperation.

ACTIONS (to solve the problem):

/ Organisation of an awareness campaign by the municipal anti-violence network that works in close collaboration with educational agents trained in this area. This is expected to wear away indifference and prompt social awareness in order to encourage the community itself to start questioning the discrimination and brutality that affect many women.

Data supplied by the courts, however, shows that court proceedings against the perpetrators of violence move very slowly. The first two years of implementation of the policy have seen court sentences in only 17% of cases. There has nonetheless been a 27% rise in cases reported over this time.

Solution 3: Lack of coordination with employment offices has jeopardised the strategy designed to facilitate job placement. Few companies also make use of the benefits provided, either because of disinterest or a lack of information.

Solution 4: The evaluation process has shown that there is no evidence that the awareness campaign by the municipal network has had any influence on male/female styles of relations. The increase in complaints could be related to the campaign, among other factors.

Conclusions on the connection among the 4 solutions and the effects of the LPP: Solutions 1 and 2 have succeeded in yielding the envisaged “protection of women victims” effect, thus solving the problem of their “defenceless victim status”. Public policy is nevertheless defective insofar as the capacity of services to meet demand is concerned. Protective measures fail to extend integration into the employment market effectively.

Solution 4 does not seem to have had an impact on the appearance and evolution of cases of violence recorded by the authorities. The success of the LPP strategy (set of solutions to the problem) has not led to the envisaged “lower incidence of episodes of violence against women”. Although there is no unequivocal explanation for increased demands and complaints, they may point to a rise in cases of violence, rather than to its decline. It is likely, however, that this increase is because victims are more likely to use the instruments of protection, which therefore points to the success of the LPP.
Chart 11. Analysis of the implementation of an LPP: identification of contributions to SC (equality-social inclusion component)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equality-inclusion component</th>
<th>Identification and analysis of contributions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Acts to ensure that all people can access and enjoy social benefits relating to basic rights, particularly in the following fields:</td>
<td>The LPP measure contributes to social cohesion from the perspective of equality and social inclusion. Analysis of implementation shows progress in the two subcomponents. Although coverage issues (lack of universality) are still to be resolved and even though some instruments (promotion of employment and swift and effective justice) need to be improved, the LPP is allowing a specific and discriminated group of the population “access and enjoyment of social benefits relating to basic rights” (particularly health, social protection, security). Prior to the LPP, women victims of violence could not exercise this right fully. The LPP has implemented a series of services and measures that act positively to “eliminate the circumstances of exclusion of individuals and specific groups” (women victims of violence). It nevertheless still has a long way to go —over and above the protection and reparation of victims—as conditions of exclusion are rooted in cultural conducts and patterns that the LPP has not been able to combat effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ Health and social protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ Security and justice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Acts to eliminate the circumstances of exclusion of individuals and specific groups:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ Discriminated groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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ECLAC (2007): Social Cohesion. Inclusion and a sense of belonging in Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago de Chile, ECLAC.


Understanding what is meant by contribution of local public policies to social cohesion requires a clear notion of the terms “local public policies” and “social cohesion”. Although everyone assumes they understand these expressions, their meaning should not be taken for granted. Nor is it necessarily true that everyone’s understanding is the same. Different approaches are even to be found in the specialist literature.

Only the concept of social cohesion will be discussed here. It is a notion expressed in the context of sociological studies and has become a catchphrase when referring to policy.

It is well known that in Europe many common policies in EU member states are implemented under the name and in accordance with social cohesion. These policies are specifically intended to preserve and increase the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the countries and regions of the EU.

This concept has, however, spread over time and is no longer exclusively identified with the doctrinal heritage of Europe. In Latin America, social cohesion is referred to repeatedly. Although it has not replaced other more traditional terms and categories, it has nonetheless entered political jargon. In Latin America, however, “the concept of social cohesion is relatively new, has attracted less debate and any discussion has been limited to relatively small political and technical circles. If the concept has ‘caught on’ in political rhetoric this is largely due to the fact that it has been introduced into bi-regional political dialogue, particularly at the behest of the EU, although it should be noted that any use made of it is neither solely nor primarily because of the influence of the EU, but because...

APPENDIX: Notes on the concept of social cohesion

“The European Union was probably the first major political institution, on the basis of its experiences in the process of its own construction as a Union from several States, to include the specific objective of social cohesion in its texts, declarations and treaties, thus exceeding the traditional notion of Union as purely economic convergence (or of markets and currencies); it was also the first to encourage programmes seeking to establish policies and mechanisms that strengthen the social cohesion of European citizens within each Member State and among Member States as a whole. The concept has been the core feature of the development model for this region, which has considered that economic growth in itself is no guarantee of social development”. Claudia Jacinto (coord.), 2010, Formación profesional y cohesión social, Fundación Carolina - CeALCI, p. 2.

With the Maastricht Treaty (1992), cohesion was established as an objective of the EU and a way to achieve “harmonious, balanced and sustainable development”.
of its validity for understanding a social and economic reality that is characterised precisely by considerable lack of social cohesion. In the region this concept often refers to the fight against poverty and inequality within each State or is used as a synonym for social policy. It is more rarely associated with social dialogue and social contracts, or with the fight against discrimination on account of gender, ethnicity or of another factor.\(^{21}\)

That established, the question now is what is meant by social cohesion. There is no better way to approach the notion of social cohesion than by acknowledging, like José Antonio Sanahuja, that it is “as vague a concept as it is controversial”.\(^{22}\)

Although it is indeed an ambiguous concept, it is also an effective and evocative one. Social cohesion does not fit into a definition and first and foremost represents an ideal of society that could be defined as a utopia. Although as such it is not achievable, it is nonetheless possible to work very specifically towards it. This means that even though social cohesion can never be fully attained, work can be done towards it and progress can be made in improving social cohesion.

The Reference Document of the URB-AL III Programme refers clearly to the utopian nature of social cohesion:\(^ {23}\)

“A socially cohesive community on any scale, whether local, regional or national, depends on its members sharing a sense of inclusion and belonging, participating actively in public affairs, recognising and tolerating differences and enjoying a degree of equality in access to public goods and services and the distribution of income and wealth. All of this should take place in an environment where institutions generate confidence and legitimacy and where the rights of citizenship are fully exercised”.

To understand the concept better, it may be useful to recall that, according to CENSIS—an important Italian centre for studies—in physics “the term ‘cohesion’ refers to the property of bodies to resist rupture and separation, on account of the presence of forces of attraction that hold the molecules

21 Sanahuja, op. cit., p. 80. The author also adds that the foreign origin of the term prompts some resistance to the use thereof.


In linguistics, meanwhile, cohesive mechanisms are syntactic and grammatical resources with which to form texts, i.e. functions that are used to connect parts of a text and shape it as a whole endowed with meaning perceived as correct by speakers.

Similarly, in social matters cohesion refers to the establishment of the stability/instability dialectic in social behaviours that are able to ensure that justice and solidarity prevail among the members of a community.

The stability/instability dialectic refers to the existence—in any society and at all times—of differences and confrontation, as well as the presence of capabilities, practices and mechanisms to ensure that these do not run out of control and become unmanageable, on pain of causing a state of anomie. The tendency for division is normal in human communities, as is a propensity for unity. Differences and social tensions, however, can be devastating and lead to irreparable rupture. Political battles that cannot be solved democratically may, for example, lead to civil war. Likewise, highly accentuated social inequalities that demean the living conditions of some groups give rise to resentment and sometimes very violent struggle. A similar situation is suffered by communities subject to discrimination within mainstream societies such as indigenous nationalities or, in another ambit, homosexuals. To what extent can exclusion be endured? When it exceeds certain limits and becomes intolerable (on account of its objective and subjective consequences), there follows reaction.

As mentioned before, however, societies are also counterbalanced by, for example, laws, values and customs, or a sense of responsibility among (or among some of) the ruling classes that offset the disintegrating forces upsetting them.

This is precisely where behaviours come into play. This refers particularly to behaviours aimed at either mitigating the negative consequences of divisions and imbalances, or at correcting them. Some are spontaneous or take root in everyday practices that, in turn, stem from common values. This occurs, for example, when neighbourhood groups in conflict opt to reduce their respective claims with a view to reaching compromise and putting an end to the confrontation or, for the sake of coexistence, people act sensibly in the knowledge that individual and general interests must be compatible. There are, however, other behaviours that obey rules and are prescriptive. Non-discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, ethnic origin or religious faith, for example, is a behaviour controlled by legislation. It is not left up to the individual to choose one option of the other. While justice reflects values that change over time, its intention is always to ensure

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the greatest possible harmony among the members of a society by establishing rules that govern relations among individuals (and of individuals with institutions, etc.). In a social cohesion approach, the mention of justice-oriented behaviour has strong connotations with restoring rights and with respecting acknowledged rights.

Lastly, there is solidarity. This term here is not used to refer to a feeling, but rather to the will of a society to remain united (integrated) and to allocate resources and target actions to provide the most vulnerable individuals, groups and regions (even for historical and structural causes of social injustice) with more: first, as a way of compensating them, and second, so that they may bring an end to their disadvantaged status. Progressive income tax, whereby those with more contribute a greater amount, is a mechanism for establishing a more equitable redistribution of the wealth produced by a society, thus favouring people with fewer resources. Another typical example of solidarity is levelling policies that are implemented to remedy inequality of revenues among regions in a State. Different capacity for tax contribution leads to different public spending needs. Collection (arising for example from exploitation of territories’ natural resources) in these cases is not distributed impartially according to tax contributed by each territory, but involves the transfer of resources to poorer regions. The European Union’s social cohesion policy, for example, in fact arose in response to the challenge of convergence among the States and regions in the EU or, in other words, to reduce disparities and bring the poorest areas up to common standards.

Solidarity is, furthermore, a principle that underlies regulatory and corrective policies. According to José Antonio Sanahuja: “In a broad sense, the concept of cohesion refers to the ‘European social model’, which is intended to combine the economic efficiency resulting from market deregulation with redistribution policies based on the principle of solidarity, with a view to enhancing both in a ‘virtuous circle’ of growth and job creation. This requires regulatory mechanisms to correct ‘flaws’ in the market, a universal system of
social protection, and guarantees of social dialogue”.

It is evident that social cohesion concerns a wide range of areas of community life; a set of interconnected areas and not the sum thereof. It is not only related to territorial asymmetries, to social inequalities or to ideological conflicts: the level of cohesion of a society involves all these. This is because social cohesion is multidimensional. As an instrument, its purpose is to seek the best possible balance (i.e., fairer and more beneficial to the community) in order to preserve a certain degree of unity in society.

Tironi defines the conceptual framework of social cohesion as the “capacity to absorb change and social conflict through a legitimate structure for the distribution of its material and symbolic resources —socioeconomic (welfare), sociopolitical (rights) and sociocultural (recognition)— that employs a combination of allocation mechanisms including the State, the market, the family, civil society and community networks”. Similarly, ECLAC proposes the following definition of social cohesion: “Dialectic between established mechanisms of social inclusion or exclusion and citizens’ responses, perceptions and dispositions towards the way in which they operate”; a notion it considers allows for the identification of three major components that interact to generate specific processes and results of cohesion, namely: i) distances or gaps; ii) institutional mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion, and iii) a sense of belonging.

Other definitions

“A cohesive society is a community of free individuals who rely on the search for these common objectives under democratic means”.

“Social cohesion is the set of positive externalities accruing from social capital, in addition to the sum of factors promoting equity in the distribution of opportunities among individuals”.

“Absence of social exclusion, interactions and connections based on social capital and shared values and interpretation community based on group identity”.

25 Sanahuja, op. cit., pp. 66 and 67
27 ECLAC (2007), Social Cohesion. Inclusion and a sense of belonging in Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago de Chile, ECLAC
The starting point for all the definitions is the fact that polarised positions and social differences are inevitable. However, as already noted,

the purpose of a social cohesion policy is not unity, but rather the management of differences—including those that give rise to social, economic, and territorial, etc. imbalances—with a shared framework of decisions on the rules for processing them and preventing social fractures.

Its main purpose—redundancy notwithstanding—is to channel tensions and ruptures (among which social disparities, defined as “gaps” in access to welfare, are particularly important) with a view to conserving or building a dynamic balance among the various components of the society. These mechanisms are possible when there is some “general consensus”—which transcends personal and corporate outlooks and interests—on acceptable forms of “togetherness”, i.e. on the values that connect citizens, that extend beyond them and that require sacrifice and waivers on behalf of the collective good. It is precisely by virtue of this consensus and its specific application that a sense of belonging to a greater community is forged. A cohesive society is one in which different stakeholders are involved in an ongoing search for ways of positive coexistence and feel neither exploited nor mistreated.

To sum up, the path to social cohesion is determined by the capacity of individuals and institutions to seek and encounter unifying proposals, even in the presence of centrifugal, disruptive pressures. In other words, it arises when different stakeholders are committed to cooperating in the interest of the collective good; when a common outlook prevails over differences and conflicting interests, without ignoring or disregarding them, but rather subjecting them to a capacity for responsibly connecting the individual and groups to society.

The essence of social cohesion therefore lies in an awareness of the need to develop public and private behaviours that reflect the superiority of the general interest. This occurs when individuals and groups are convinced that there is something much more important than their own individual interests. Economic growth and social cohesion are not exclusive terms.

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31 A somewhat exaggerated comparison could be that social cohesion is to social inclusion what the Constitution is to a law. The former is the framework that accommodates and gives meaning to the struggle against social exclusion. This is one of the outstanding and most thought-provoking aspects of the concept of social cohesion, which is committed to society as a whole not only to encourage inclusion, but also to implement all the mechanisms for people’s self-actualisation.

32 This commitment must also lead to cooperation among regions, so that living in a particular city or region does not mean unequal access to quality public services or, more generally, to welfare.
If a society seeks sustainable growth, then cohesion and competitiveness must go hand in hand.

“Common outlook” is a core notion of social cohesion. Such an outlook is not something that arises definitively, but rather is renewed as the challenges facing society evolve. More precisely, it is the solutions designed to yield greater social cohesion that transform and update faster, while common outlook (their basis) changes more slowly as it is based on values rooted in a people’s history. What, therefore, should be the hallmarks of policies designed to yield social cohesion? Social cohesion, it has been asserted, is not so much a model as a benchmark that may yield diverse policy options to suit different political, social, economic and cultural contexts. Still, one essential feature that brings together possible policy alternatives is the central importance of public policy.

This central importance is a *sine qua non* condition for social relations to arise without affecting some components of society, but rather for all citizens to have the same opportunities to develop and enjoy collective goods. These are therefore public policies focused on releasing energy, correcting distortions and securing welfare by assigning greater priority to disadvantaged groups. From this perspective, a cohesion policy is measured primarily by the capacity to include and, in turn, encourage the autonomy of individuals and groups in an environment where there are effective democratic means to resolve conflicts.

Although social cohesion is not a political doctrine, it does nevertheless inspire political work. It is not only an end but also a means: the more cohesive a society, the greater its capability to progress in this direction.

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33 According to Borrell: “Social cohesion does not arise from a social and institutional vacuum and this means that applying external models (in this case the European) to Latin America can be rather reductionist. Experience shows that there is no ‘right’ path for social cohesion”. (J. Borrell, 2008, “La cohesión social en las relaciones Unión Europea-América Latina”, paper presented at the conference on the New Agenda on Social Cohesion in Latin America, organised by the European Commission and the United Nations Development Programme, Brussels, 25 and 26 September 2008).
URB-AL III is a regional decentralised cooperation programme run by the European Commission, the aim of which is to contribute towards increasing the level of social cohesión in sub-national and regional groups in Latin America.

Led by Diputació de Barcelona, the URB-AL III Programme Orientation and Coordination Office’s mission is to facilitate the implementation of the programme by providing technical assistance and support in the different projects in order to help achieve the programme’s objectives.