

Extended Abstract

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Paper/Poster Title	Food Policy coherence: Regional wills against Urban actions (Discussion Paper)
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Abstract prepared for presentation at the 98th Annual Conference of The Agricultural Economics Society will be held at The University of Edinburgh, UK, 18th - 20th March 2024.

Abstract	200 words max
<p>This research paper addresses a gap in the study of Multi-Level Governance (MLG) and Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) within the specific context of food policies at the regional and city levels. It investigates how policies from regional and local governments interact and potentially conflict in promoting the organic food industry in the Valencian Community. The paper highlights the limited exploration of MLG and IGR in food policy literature, emphasizing their relevance in shaping policy agendas. The central question is whether conflicts arise between regional and local policies. A qualitative case study in the Comunitat Valenciana is conducted to analyse policies incentivizing the organic food industry. This research contributes by uncovering complex interactions and conflicts between regional and local food policies, challenging overly optimistic views on policy coherence. It underscores the importance of positive Intergovernmental Relations for effective Multi-Level Governance in food policy. These insights are valuable for policymakers and practitioners aiming to enhance Sustainable Food Systems performance in the region.</p>	
Keywords	Food policy, Rural Development, Food systems
JEL Code	O13, Q18, R11 see: www.aeaweb.org/jel/guide/jel.php?class=Q)
Introduction	100 – 250 words
<p>This discussion paper delves into the interaction of Multi-Level Governance (MLG) and Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) concerning regional and city-level food policies, focusing on the Valencian Community. MLG, introduced in 1992, primarily centred on European Union integration analysis, while IGR explores interactions among government levels. Despite scholarly attention, empirical research on MLG and IGR effectiveness remains limited, particularly in regional and city food policy contexts. The paper spotlights this research gap, emphasizing the need for further exploration of MLG and IGR dynamics, particularly regarding policy coherence. The paper also links MLG and the multi-stream model, highlighting their roles in shaping policy agendas. Furthermore, it connects IGR with policy coherence, underlining the importance of aligning policies across sectors and jurisdictions. In food policy, there's a lack of literature on how regional policies interact with local policies, especially in agriculture, rural development, and environmental areas. The paper addresses this gap by studying regional and local policy interaction, focusing on policy coherence. The central research question is whether conflicts can arise between regional and local policies. To answer this, the paper uses a qualitative approach, conducting a case study in the Comunitat Valenciana, analysing policies for promoting the organic food</p>	

industry. Ultimately, this research illuminates complex policy interactions and advocates for positive Intergovernmental Relations to ensure policy coherence within Multi-Level Governance systems. The findings offer valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners working to enhance Sustainable Food Systems in the region.

Methodology

100 – 250 words

Employing a qualitative approach, specifically an intrinsic case study using a policy narrative approach (Yin, 2018). This method is chosen to comprehensively understand the role of narratives in policy issues. It aims to investigate the relationship between regional and local government policies, categorizing them as neutral, complementary, unrelated, or having different but complementary objectives. The study also explores whether these policies align or conflict in their goals. The theoretical frameworks of Multi-Level Governance (MLG) and Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) inform the research. They help demonstrate ambiguity in these relationships and how regional and local governments address it by establishing relations in various policy domains. The study also delves into the concept of multi-stream policy, where actions in one policy area can affect decisions in others. Multiple sources are used, including literature on IGR and MLG, organizational charts of official bodies, and specific cases exemplifying these relationships. Policy and program documentation related to food policies from regional and local governments is analysed. Text analysis software, identifies key characteristics and relationships in the texts, summarized in a comprehensive table, presenting results regarding policy coherence. Participatory observation in meetings related to the development of the second regional plan for incentivizing the agroecological sector is also conducted. These meetings follow a structured format and aim to assess the internal coherence of the policy. In summary, this research uses a qualitative approach and a policy narrative framework to investigate the relationships between regional and local food policies in the Valencian Community, focusing on coherence and potential conflicts.

Results

100 – 250 words

The anticipated results of this study are expected to shed light on the complex interactions between regional and local government policies within the context of food policies in the Valencian Community. By employing a qualitative approach and policy narrative analysis, the research aims to uncover several key insights. Firstly, the study aims to categorize the relationships between regional and local policies as either neutral, complementary, unrelated, or potentially focusing on different but complementary objectives. It will also explore whether these policies align or conflict in their goals. These findings will provide a nuanced understanding of how different levels of government collaborate or diverge in policy implementation. Secondly, the research seeks to identify areas of ambiguity within these relationships and how regional and local governments navigate this ambiguity. The analysis will demonstrate whether these governments have established relations in various policy domains to address uncertainty. Thirdly, the study intends to explore the concept of multi-stream policy, where actions in one policy area may influence decisions in other areas. This will provide insights into how policy decisions in food-related matters can have ripple effects across various domains of governance. Moreover, the research aims to assess

policy coherence by analysing documentation from regional and local governments. It will extract main objectives, categorize them, and use text analysis software to identify key characteristics and relationships within the texts. The results will be summarized in a comprehensive table, offering a clear picture of policy coherence or potential inconsistencies.

Discussion and Conclusion

100 – 250 words

In examining the complex interplay between regional and local government policies within the realm of food policies in the Valencian Community, our research has uncovered several noteworthy insights. It's important to note that this paper serves as a discussion paper, and while we can discuss the findings and potential implications, definitive conclusions are still emerging as the study progresses. Our analysis has revealed that the relationships between regional and local policies in this context are multifaceted. They can range from neutral coexistence to complementary collaboration, or at times, they may appear unrelated or even conflictual in their objectives. This nuanced understanding of policy relationships offers a valuable perspective on governance dynamics. Furthermore, we have identified areas of ambiguity within these relationships, where the roles and responsibilities of each level of government may not be clearly defined. Yet, it's evident that regional and local governments have taken steps to address this ambiguity through established relations in various policy domains. The concept of multi-stream policy has also come to the forefront, illustrating how decisions in one policy area can significantly impact others. This interconnectedness underscores the need for comprehensive and coherent governance frameworks. As we delve into policy coherence, our analysis of documentation from regional and local governments has provided insights into the alignment of objectives and potential inconsistencies. However, it's important to note that these findings are still under examination.