Policy Indexes and Policy Incidence by Third Sector Organizations in Mexico[*]

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Abstract

During the last decade Third Sector Organizations around the world have developed and implemented policy indexes to measure an array of issues related to government performance and specific attributes. Such examples range from Transparency´s International Corruption Index, to the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index.

Mexico is no exception, and national Third Sector Organizations such as IMCO (Mexican Institute for Competitiveness), Transparency Mexico, and research centers such as FUNDAR, have implemented policy indexes in the expectation that such efforts will improve public accountability and make government perform better in a wide range of policy issues. The question this paper seeks to address is whether these efforts have the potential to make a difference. Furthermore, this research aims at analyzing the features that make policy indexes a good policy practice and good interventions by civil society or third sector organizations.

The paper shows an analysis of five Mexican Third Sector organizations that produce eleven policy indexes that have been made public in the second half of the first decade of the 2000`s by. The methods used in this research include an analysis of the theory of change that is embedded in the policy indexes --and that is expressed by the organizations managers and documents-- ; an analysis of the conformation of the policy index, in terms of variables, sources and methods used for its estimation and its relation to the theory of change; a review or the networks of users contemplated by the organization and a press analysis of the use the index has been given by different policy actors. Finally also we revise the communication strategies used by the organization, in terms of press conferences, publications and an analysis of their web pages.

The field and cabinet research involved was performed between March and July 2011, and it comprised interviews with the organizations managers, revision of the organizations documents and a press follow up around the time the indexes were made public. The research also took into consideration the academic literature on "evaluation use" in order to come up with a set of categories of attributes to be considered in the good policy index practice.

The intention of the paper is to show why and how Third Sector Organizations can have effective incidence in government policy by working as actual accountability watchdogs.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, the development and diffusion of indexes in different public policy areas has gained worldwide popularity. Without question, the Human Development Index (HDI) elaborated by the United Nations Development Program and the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) by Transparency International, both released during the first half of the 90's decade, have had great influence in the adoption of such a strategy by civil society organizations (see Roodman 2006). Thus, the use of specific indexes/indicators for measuring several concepts related to the public sphere or governmental performance has become a frequent practice. The increased availability of information, the attainability of rapid data processing and the accessibility to sophisticated quantitative methods have turned indexes into a known and common strategy for organizations that aim to place different important issues in the public agenda.

Besides the two indexes mentioned, there are several others which have a considerable diffusion and are significantly used by the international press and policy/decision makers. Such indexes include the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) used by the World Economic Forum, the Worldwide Governance Indicators from the World Bank, the Global Integrity Index and the Open Budget Index from the International Budget Initiative and the list could just go on and on.

In addition, within different social science disciplines, particularly within political science and economy, it has become a common place to find papers and research using indexes in order study/analyze multidimensional concepts such as participation, democracy, poverty, welfare, etc. These practices have enhanced and perhaps boosted a debate concerning the virtues, advantages, complications and risks that using this kind of measurements implies (e.g. Munk & Verkuilen, 2003).

The discussion goes beyond the academia. The public release of an index and of any measurement regarding a key concept of the public sphere has an important impact on the general understanding of the subject put forth. An index's publication has the potential to alter the way in which certain aspects of society and government are depicted. Therefore, it also affects the questions we may ask, the causal linkages that are found and even the way

we approach research. The use given to indexes on applied research also modifies the kind of policy advice provided to decision-makers (Munk and Verkulien, 2003).

Indexes can become a powerful tool for several reasons. First, they are useful to draw attention from stakeholders on the topics and issues on which a policy modification is being pursued. Indexes are data condensers and are easily seized and understood by the media. Awareness is quickly focused on the given topic as rankings or other types of orderings enhanced by indexes are published and discussed almost immediately by the media.

A second reason is that indexes also improve the exchange of knowledge and information on complex topics that may not be so familiar to public opinion, civil society or public officials. Revealing key elements on competitiveness, best budget-related practices, or even on the proper transparency mechanism regarding public information, increases the possibility of building conscience and consensus on what the national problems or topics are. Furthermore, providing information on which country or state is more competitive or transparent compared to others is valuable to stakeholders as this promotes designing useful diagnostics.

Thirdly, indexes may also provide action routes. An index reveals certain details about laws, processes or organizations that need to be modified, reallocated or eliminated in order to achieve a better position in regard to a specific standard. Indexes are mechanisms that generate incentives for change if these possess clear methodology and a coherent structure of the elements that compose it.

Following this logic, indexes have at least three functions or three different types of use: 1) to draw attention, 2) to generate information and data and 3) to establish alternatives for action. Not every index will fulfill every single one of these functions, but each one contributes increasingly to the potential of an index to influence changes in public policy. These types of index use can be related to what the evaluation literature identifies as the symbolic, the conceptual and the instrumental use respectively (Levinton & Hughes 1981, King & Pechman 1984, Balthazar 2008). These three utilization conceptualizations have been elaborated and harnessed by investigations addressing assessments and evaluations that aim to explain how this kind of knowledge helps to improve public or governmental intervention. After decades of studying program evaluation (especially the social field) one

of the biggest inquiry has been whether or not evaluation has helped to better and strengthen governmental activity. Research frequently shows concerns about the true usefulness of program evaluation and pinpoints factors that might boost any kind of their aforementioned uses in order to solve a diagnosed problem. In short, indexes are no strangers to this kind of questioning.

Policy indexes are similar to program evaluation in the sense that both are exercises in which a standard is assumed to judge complex concepts where public or government intervention is key (transparency, accountability, competitiveness, etc.). Moreover both practices use "subject-level" data and involve sophisticated quantitative and qualitative methods for measuring several attributes or characteristics of a given concept. However, indexes, unlike program evaluations are much more specific on the measured concept and the standard is generally the result of a contrast between several national or international units of analysis. Furthermore, indexes can be quickly orchestrated and their diffusion is generally more structured and simple.

Not all indexes have a thriving success on public opinion and not all are successful in promoting public policy modifications. An index's policy incidence can be affected by external and internal factors. The former may include political context, the legal framework, alternative sources of information, specific characteristics of the target population and their ability to cope with change. The latter, that is the internal factors, allude to the organization's reputation, an index's accuracy and meticulousness on approaching a specific topic, its coherence while establishing a change theory via the information it produces, the soundness of their methodology and transparency of the variables and methods used, the communication and dissemination activities to raise awareness of the index and last but not least, the effective identification of potential users.

The incidence or influence a policy index may have, such as those discussed in this paper is the consequence of a very sophisticated process mediated by internal and external factors and also by observable and unobservable factors that are often unquantifiable. Incidence is the consequence of an index capacity to provide convincing evidence to argue for a change of public policy, but it is mostly be a conjunction of multiple factors at specific moments.

There are several critiques around indexes, or rather certain indexes. Such appraisals are generally related to methodological and instrumental aspects. For example, according to Gerardo Munck, the Global Corruption Barometer elaborated by Transparency International has serious weaknesses that are related to a changing and inconsistent sampling method. These factors, for instance, limit and considerably diminish the possibility of comparisons in time and between countries. Munck also criticizes the Corruption Perception Index by establishing and demonstrating its limited use for cross-sectional and time-series research. The author also argues that by not publishing the data utilized, the transparency/clearness and replicability of the index is also maimed[1].

From the instrumental perspective there are also doubts about the use of indexes as tools for public policy modifications, recently Nathaniel Heller from Global Integrity published:

"Publishing an index is terrific for the publishing organization in that it drives media coverage, headlines, and controversy. We are all for that. They are very effective public relations tools. But a single number for a country stacked up against other countries has not proven, in our experience, to be a particularly effective policy making or advocacy tool. Country rankings are too blunt and generalized to be "actionable" and inform real debate and policy choices. Sure, they can put an issue on the table, but that's about it [2]."

Despite their limitations, under certain conditions, indexes still are one of the best tools organizations can use to promote changes in public policy. The probability of the latter to happen increases when stakeholders have access to relevant information, when this information is reliable, comprehensible and presented synthetically. The probability for public policy modification also increases when the diffusion and understanding of information involves and encourages public debate among decision makers and it helps to plot courses of action.

For this to be possible, it is necessary to have rich/robust indexes on the concepts being measured. It is also important the use of solid, reliable public data sources and for methods

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[1] Ver http://www.iadb.org/datagob/home_esp.html

[2] Ver http://www.globalintegrity.org/node/792, Global Integrity - May 4, 2011

of aggregation to be pertinent and transparent. Another critical element is to have effective diffusion mechanisms and a clear notion of the desired change.

During the last decade, different third sector organizations in Mexico have formulated and released indexes that aim to measure diverse aspects of government intervention and its performance. Mexican civil society organizations have experienced a considerable advancement and a breakthrough in their capabilities in the last ten years. Nonetheless, the development of such initiatives still is at an early stage[3].

The main purpose of this paper is to initiate a debate about the potential incidence of these indexes and to suggest actions that lead to this objective. The document is divided in the following sections: conceptual framework, a general description of the indexes under study, methods used for the analysis, and findings.

Conceptual Framework

As pointed out above, policy indexes can be used in several ways: to draw attention towards a given topic, to disseminate information, to start a public debate or to provide specific routes of actions. These forms of utilization aim for changes in public policy. However, a complex process involving political, legal, economical and social factors mediates public policy changes. How then can we establish the contribution of a specific policy index to public policy modification? This question can hardly be answered promptly given the nature of the problem and the limited possibilities to isolate the range of variables that converge to generate such changes.

Incidence in public policy is one of the main goals pursued by third sector organizations. Whether generating rules to guarantee access to public information, or improving budget-related practices, developing an index is a main strategy that civil society organizations engage to achieve such goals. This strategy focuses in drawing attention from important stakeholders, providing information about the issue, promoting debate and presenting a careful mapping of the possible routes of action to be followed in order to achieve desired changes.

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[3] The indexes analyzed in for this study, with exception of Transparency Mexico, have a maximum of three emissions. Most have been issued only twice.

The conceptual framework used in this paper to analyze policy incidence of policy indexes makes use of two different academic research traditions. The first one belongs to evaluation literature, specifically the concerning research on evaluation use (Cousins & Leithwood 1986, Weiss 1992, Leviton & Hughes 1981, Balthazar 2008). The second, refers to studies regarding governance indexes that demonstrate important lessons (Munk & Verkuilen 2003, Roodman 2006, Oman & Arndt 2010).

In both of these research traditions different authors point towards a set of elements that can boost use of evaluation research or policy indexes. These elements can be divided into internal and external factors. In this paper I focus on the internal aspects, that is, those under the responsibility and control of the organization in order to increase the usage probability of the index. These factors are listed below along with a brief explanation of each one.

a) Organizational Features
b) Conceptual clarity and accessibility
c) Applicability
d) Communication/Diffusion/Dissemination
e) Timing/ Political Momentum
f) Transparency
g) Acknowledging of limitations
h) Continuous public learning
i) Monitoring

Organizational Features allude to the organization's reputation, trajectory and credibility. These are factors that affect whether or not a decision maker accepts and uses the information provided by an index. They also impact the later incorporation and application of indexes in significant policy modifications.

Conceptual clarity and accessibility refer to the degree to which it is comprehensible what an index is trying to measure and its relevance on the public sphere. Clarity implies breaking down the measured concept, the variables, references and methods used. Without

these elements, an index won't be easily incorporated into public debate and will hardly influence public policy modification.

Applicability means promoting specific action towards decision-makers. It is important that according to information provided by an index, stakeholders can promptly identify effective actions in order to improve the scenario of a given issue.

Communication and dissemination strategies are key for an index to position it within public debate. On the one hand, it is important to gain media's attention; on the other hand, it is also relevant to gain the stakeholders' awareness even before an index is published. This strategy considerably boosts the probability of an index and of the responsible organization to influence the decision making process.

Also related to the communication strategy, Timing or the Political momentum of an index's release becomes important. When releasing an index, it is key not to be overshadowed by any other public or political event. However, the information must be made public at a proper time for decision making and meaningful for public policy modifications.

Transparency is a fundamental element that enhances an organization's index credibility and legitimacy. Data, information and the methodology used during the elaboration of an index must be made available to anyone. This implies that an index's calculation has to be replicable either by another organization or even by an individual. Moreover, the responsible organization should be able to answer any questions and inquires regarding the published index.

Indexes aim to measure multidimensional and complex concepts. Thus, the methodological and conceptual efforts are seriously undertaken. Nevertheless, as any measurement of social nature, they are bound to limitations and are subject to criteria, variables, and methodological changes and evolution. Hence, accepting and acknowledging limitations should not be seen as a weakness but rather as a sign of consolidation.

To overcome such limitations, organizations must be structured to allow continuous public learning. Indexes and their methodology are perfectible instruments that can benefit from a constant feedback from the targeted users and other interested organizations and

citizens. Such an interaction must oblige the organization to provide and establish the necessary spaces and mechanisms for learning.

Finally, organizations ought to monitor their interactions with index users. A clear record of stakeholders and organizations using the index must be kept and should be constantly updated. Knowing whether it is for diffusion, direct use or even registering the user's activity and position towards the issue signaled by the index is transcendental. In short, organizations must monitor any index-related activity.

The elements described above were used to analyze the five organizations and the eleven public policy indexes studied in this project. The upcoming section briefly describes the applied methods and afterwards the indexes' descriptions and principal findings are presented.

Methods

The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, public information and documents of each organization concerning the indexes were thoroughly reviewed. An initial description of the measured concept was elaborated with this information along with each index's estimation procedure and the communication products used by their respective organization. Their main sources of information were also traced and in order to clearly breakdown their data sources, approaches and specific methodologies. This allowed a network scheme to be built. The final part of this stage included an assessment in terms of transparency and accessibility of the organizations' websites and indexes' micro-sites.

Secondly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with managers and officers responsible of index projects for each organization. In addition, potential index-users such as consultants, academics, and government officials (specifically from the federal and state level) were interviewed as well. As a result, information concerning index-conceptualization, their change-theory and communication strategies were identified. Furthermore, potential users and their perception on the indexes' policy incidence along with the main challenges and difficulties could also be determined.

Third, following the interviews, organizations were asked to list the people and organizations they believe to be their potential users. The obtained information was analyzed using network analysis.

Fourth, a systematic media monitoring was carried out from October 2009 through May 2011. The analysis of media coverage was conducted to establish whether the indexes were mentioned in a positive or negative way and by which actors or stakeholders. The monitoring also focused on determining if media coverage alluded to actions or specific responses of the indexes' potential users.

From the information generated in these four stages, specific reports were prepared per organization. These reports were sent to organizations in order to receive their comments and feedback. The next section shows a brief description of the analyzed indexes.

General Index Description

The five organizations responsible for the development of the indexes analyzed in this project are: the Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE), Social Management and Cooperation, AC (GESOC), the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness, AC (IMCO), FUNDAR, Center for Analysis and Research, and Transparency Mexico. The charts in the appendix schematically describe these organizations in terms of their oldness, objectives, approaches and financing.

The following two tables describe the eleven projects that are analyzed in this paper. The first one shows indexes grouped by the responsible organization; the second, summarizes the measured concept, method of calculation, and products generated. After this summarized description, the following section focuses on the overall findings.

Table 1 Policy Indexes by Creating Organization

Organization	Index
CIDE Center for Economic Research and Teaching	Metric of Transparency (Métrica de la Transparencia **MT**)
IMCO Mexican Institute for Competitiveness	Competitiveness State Index (Índice de Competitividad Estatal **ICE**) Competitiveness Urban Index (Índice de Competitividad Urbana **ICU**) State Budget Information Index (Índice de Información Presupuestal Estatal **IIPE**) Municipal Budget Information Index (Índice de Información Presupuestal Municipal **IIPM**)
GESOC Social Management and Cooperation,	Design Quality Index (Índice de Calidad deI Diseño **ICADI**) Monitoring of Federal Program Evaluation Reliance (Monitoreo de la Confiabilidad de las Evaluaciones a Programas Federales **MCEPF**) Public Program Performance Index (Índice de Desempeño de los Programas Públicos **INDEP**)
FUNDAR Center for Analysis and Research	Open Budget Index (Índice de Presupuesto Abierto **IPA**)
	Right to Information Index (Índice del Derecho a la Información en México **IDAIM**)
TRANSPARENCIA MEXICANA Transparency Mexico	National Corruption and Good Government Index (Índice Nacional de Corrupción y Buen Gobierno **INCyBG**)

Table 2 Index General Characteristics

ORGANIZATION	INDEX	MEASUREMENT CONCEPT	METHOD	PRODUCTS
IMCO	ICE	Competitiveness. It is defined as entity's ability to attract and retain investment and talent. There are ten main factors, into which conjoin 120 variables.	Multi-factor models are used to calculate the index. The data are based on government and non-government statistics Perception indices are integrated.	• Ranking (0-100) per state • Analytical report • Microsite
	ICU	Competitiveness. It is defined as entity's ability to attract and retain investment and talent. There are ten main factors, into which conjoin 120 variables.	Multi-factor models are used to calculate the index. The data are based on government and non-government statistics Perception indices are integrated.	• Ranking (0-100) per city • Analytical report • Microsite
	IIPE	Best practices in transparency and accountability in states.	It is a perception index It is calculated using questionnaires about the content of states' budget information (43 questions) The index score is the resultant of the number of questions answered.	• Ranking (0-100) per states • Microsite • Overview of findings
	IIPM	Best Practices in Transparency and Accountability in municipalities.	It is calculated using questionnaires about the content of (373) municipalities' budget information (31 questions) The index score is the resultant of the number of questions answered.	• Ranking (0-100) per states • Microsite • Overview of findings
GESOC	ICADI	The quality of program designs regulated by operational rules.	The index is constructed on external evaluations of 104 federal programs. It is comprised of three sud-indexes: (i) design and strategic alignment, (ii) operation and (iii) focus on results and citizen. The final index is a weighted sum of them.	• Methodological and analytical reports • Ranking of federal programs • Microsite
	MCEPF	Reliability between evaluated institution and assessor using three categories: contractual-relationship, fees and technical skills of assessing.	Monitoring data were drawn from external evaluations of 104 federal programs. The variables were cost of evaluation, kind of assessor, government institutions that contract, contracting process and results of evaluation.	• Analytical report

ORGANIZATION	INDEX	MEASUREMENT CONCEPT	METHOD	PRODUCTS
	INDEP	Performance. It seeks to measure the achievement of objectives and efficient use of resources.	This index is structured with secondary information (Performance Evaluations of Federal Programs) that is organized into two components: (i) progress on indicators and (ii) indicator system.	• Analytical report with disaggregated data by budget and category of government spending • Index by program • Microsite
CIDE	MT	It is an analysis of the transparency system in Mexico. The basic premise is that access to governmental information in Mexico should be understood as a system, with different components that reinforce each other. The study is structured in four dimensions: legal framework, public information in websites, response to information request and institutional capacities.	Each dimension involves an index (0-1)) that includes diverse indicators and variables	• Presentations • Indices for each dimension • Methodological and analytical report • Databases • Microsite
FUNDAR/IBP	IPA	Access and timeliness related to mexican budget information in contrast to best international practices.	Expert assessment using a questionnaire. 92 out of 123 questions are used to calculate the index. Each response is validated by two specialists at least. The questionnaire was designed following the best practices established by IMF, OECD, among other international organizations.	• Methodological and analytical report. • Microsite. • Database • Follow-up press
FUNDAR/Article 19	IDAIM	Transparency and access to information.	Assessment of the 32 accesses to information state laws and the federal legislation. The assessment is based on minimum international standards of access to information. The information is grouped into 3 main variables (legislation, institutional design and access procedures) and 31 indicators.	• Methodological and analytical report. • Microsite. • Database.

ORGANIZATION	INDEX	MEASUREMENT CONCEPT	METHOD	PRODUCTS
TRANSPARENCIA MEXICANA	**INCyBG**	Corruption understood as an extra payment to the cost of a public or private service.	The index measures the frequency of bribes that the citizens paid in order to get a public or private service as a percentage of the total time that the service was used over the course of one year for each of the 32 federal entities in Mexico. The NCyBG records the opinions and perceptions of the heads of household on topics such as the origin of corruption, the relation between corruption and public officials, the role of the government in fighting corruption, the evolution of corruption, interpersonal trust, and compliance with the law.	• Index by state and service. • Report. • Media release. • Database.

Overall Findings

This section is organized considering the nine internal implementation aspects stated in the conceptual framework section, and considering the evidence gathered in the analysis of the documental sources for each index, the interviews to directors of organizations and the media monitoring. These nine aspects are again: organizational features; conceptual clarity and accessibility; applicability; communication/diffusion/dissemination; timing/political momentum; transparency; acknowledging of limitations; continuous public learning; and monitoring.

Organizational Features

-The set of organizations analyzed have diverse origins and approaches (see appendix).

-Most are young organizations but nonetheless have achieved national and international recognition.

-They all aim to influence decision making processes and governmental quality standards.

-Organizations recognize applied research as a main tool to influence public policy.

-All of the studied organizations continuously strengthen their work, organizational capacities, and funding. They also unceasingly increase and improve their linkages with other national and international organizations.

Conceptual clarity and accessibility

-Organizations systematically strive to clearly establish the concept that their indexes aim/seek to measure. In most cases organizations successfully develop and work with concepts at an aggregate level, e.g. competitiveness, transparency, open access to public information, etc. Such concepts have been easily incorporated and used by the media.

-The methodological structure of an index ought to be built parsimoniously in order to gain public interest and awareness. In that sense, most indexes clearly define the dimensions and factors that configure them. Nevertheless, some indexes have a complex

methodology and include a considerable amount of variables, which in short, becomes an obstacle for the media to frequently and specifically use them.

-Most organizations properly identified their sources of information and data references. (See Figure 1)

-Information used by organizations to build their indexes mostly comes from the executive, legislative and judiciary branch of government, private sector, international agencies, civil society organizations, credit rating agencies and others.

-Public and governmental sources of information clearly have a predominant presence in the index building process.

-While some organizations use a variety of sources and references, others depend on a sole data source for calculating/estimating their index.

-The National Institute of Statistic and Geography (INEGI by its name in spanish), the Secretariat of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP) and the National Council of Social Development Policy Evaluation (CONEVAL), are the most common and frequently used sources of information.

Figure 1 Sources of Information
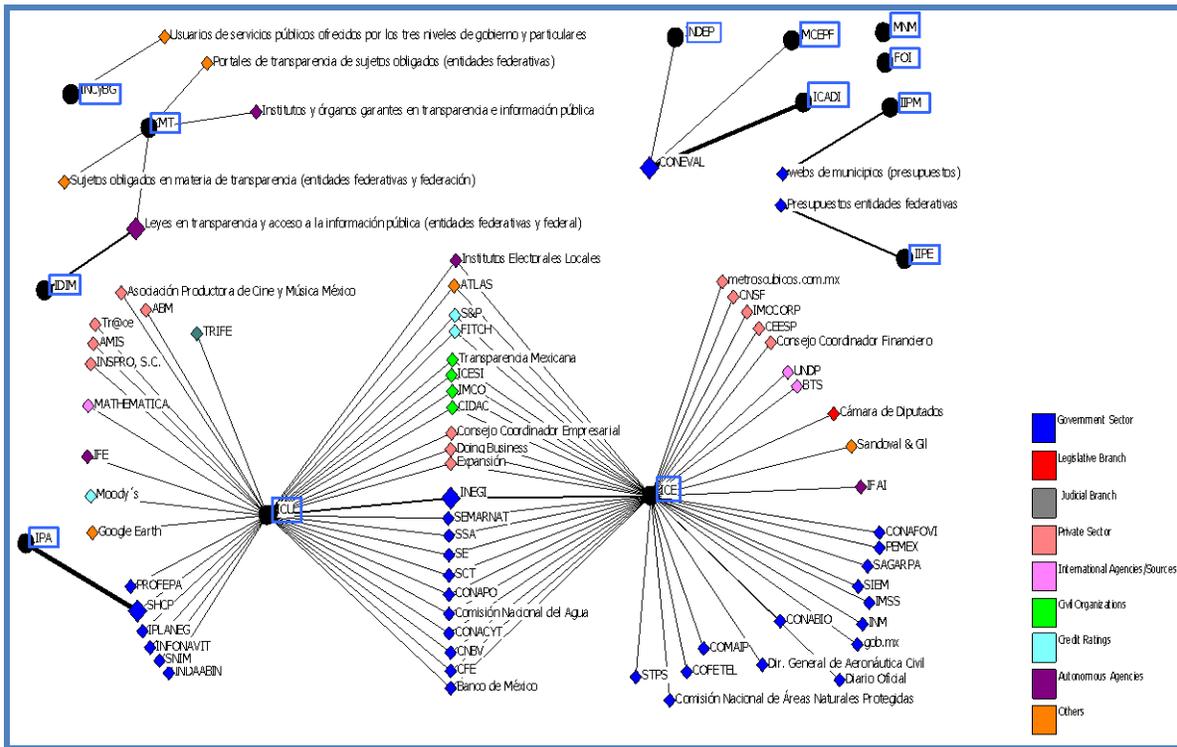
Applicability

-In general, there is little association between the information given by an index and the specific actions taken by decision makers to modify public policy. In most cases this phenomena is related with an index's timing. There is a time gap between the measured variables and the possible actions decision makers can undertake. In other situations, the weak association between an index and public policy modifications is related to regulation and legal framework. The subject of evaluation is not the one neither capable nor responsible for carrying out the necessary changes.

-Most organizations are able to list a group of identifiable index-users (see Figure 2).

-Four out of the five analyzed organizations were able to provide information about their index-users. Thus, it is possible to confirm that indexes' potential users belong to the academic sector, civil society, media, federal government, legislative power, international agencies, private sector and autonomous organizations. Each group relates to or uses an

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index according to its issue. However in some cases it is evident that only a symbolic use of an index is considered. In short, indexes are used to draw attention on a specific issue.

-Third sector organization themselves are important index-users, particularly the Social Management and Cooperation Organization AC (GESOC) and the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness AC (IMCO).

Figure 2 Potential Users
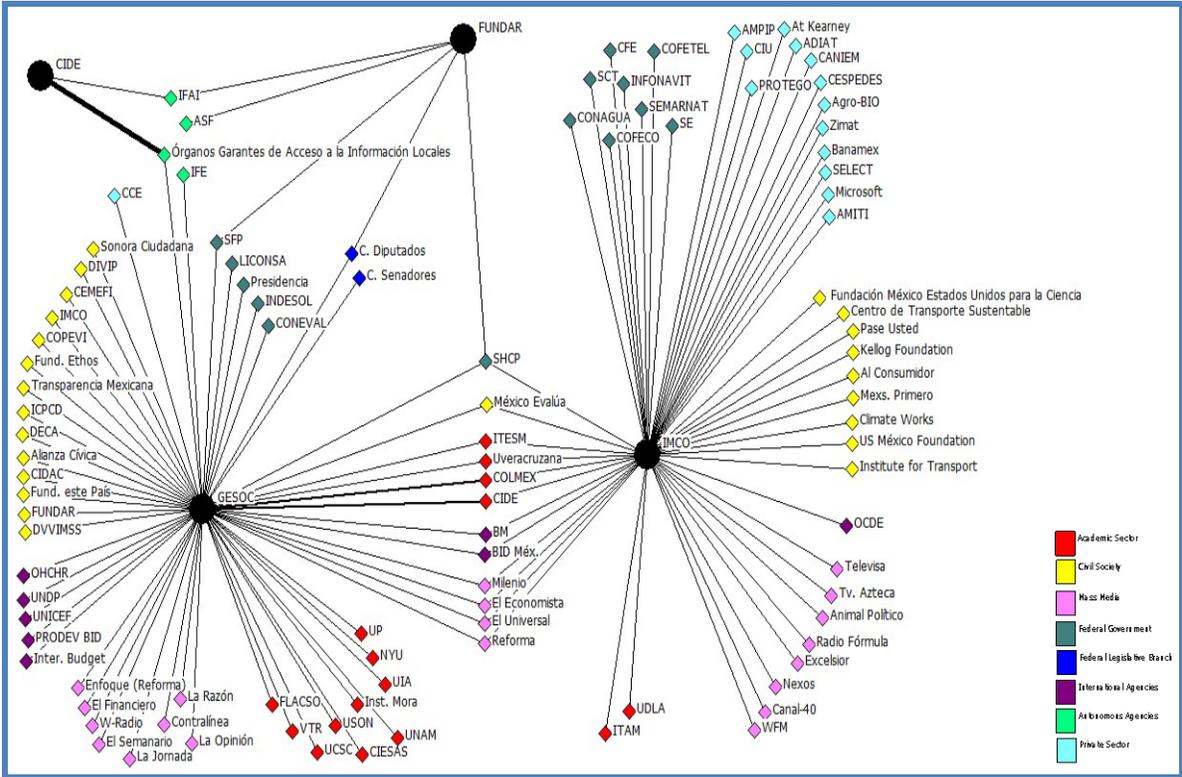
Communication/Diffusion/Dissemination

-Organizations make significant efforts to develop different mechanisms of diffusion and dissemination.

-Interviews and media monitoring revealed that organizations use at least twelve different communication strategies/mechanisms (See graph 1) . The most common practices include press conferences, seminars, symposia, web sites, social networking, and cooperation between organizations. The least popular practices are: (previously)

establishing direct contact with potential index users, publishing brochures and producing CD's or documentaries.

-Press communication focuses only on highly ranked stakeholders and decision makers. Citizens are given little or no attention at all.

-Organizations are not used to systematically and periodically monitor and track the results their communication strategies produce.

-Media generally focuses on the issue or topic rather than on the particular index.

-Media fails to articulate/establish a link between an index and the proposals made for modifying public policy. It must be emphasized that media is a strategic index-user because of its ability to articulate public debate and to influence other sectors decision-making procedures.

Graph 1 Communication Strategy
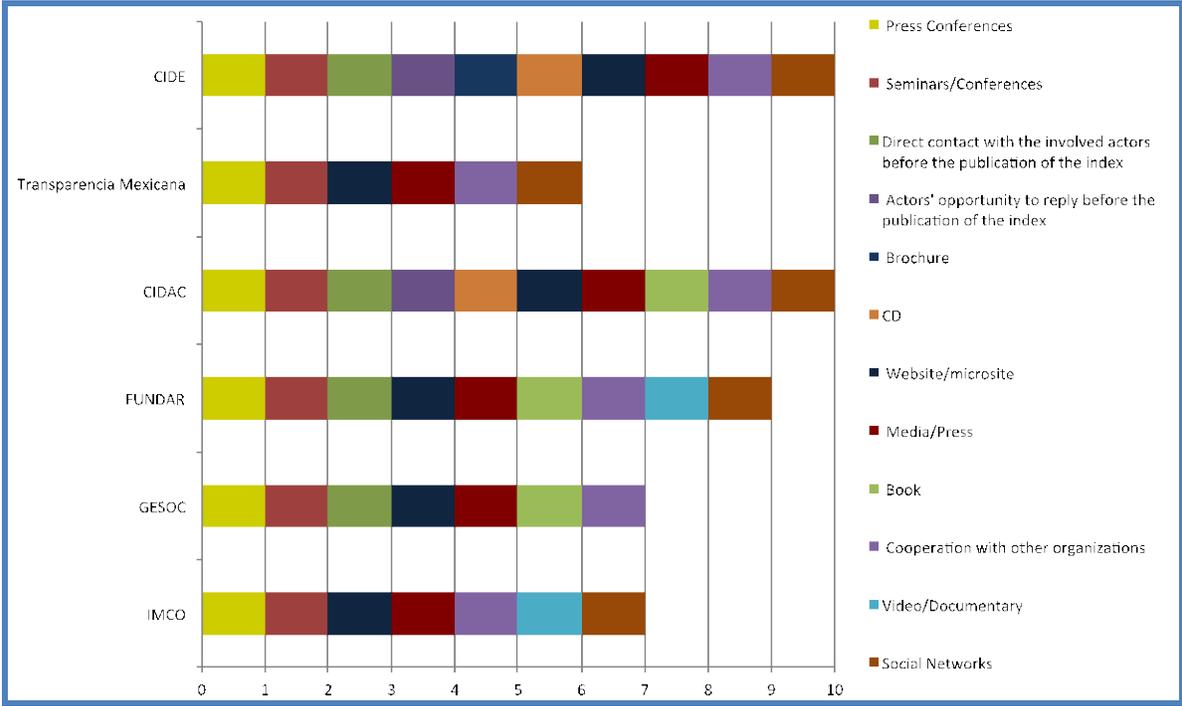
Timing/ Political Momentum

-Organizations have no evident strategies regarding the appropriateness of timing the release of an index in order for it to concur with other important political agendas and

administrative or budget-related calendars. This lack of planning seriously diminishes media coverage and public awareness.

-Publishing and presenting several indexes with a similar topic reduces significantly the chances of prolonging media coverage. As a result, indexes have a limited time to communicate their results and the identified possible routes of actions for public policy modification.

Transparency

-The websites of the organizations and their projects' micro-sites offer information about the organization such as their mission, vision and institutional strategy on which indexes projects are allocated. The websites and micro-site also have information concerning indexes' methodology and related results.

-Most websites have a friendly interface and are easily accessed. Most of them can rapidly display either a detailed report or an executive summary of the specific/selected index (See Graph 2).

-Most websites do not properly exploit the user-interactive tools internet has to offer. Using such technologies could enhance an index's attractiveness and usability. By adapting an index's display to the needs of the user, organizations could considerably boost index consultations.

-Primary data sources and data bases have a low level of accessibility (See Graph 2).

Graph 2 Transparency
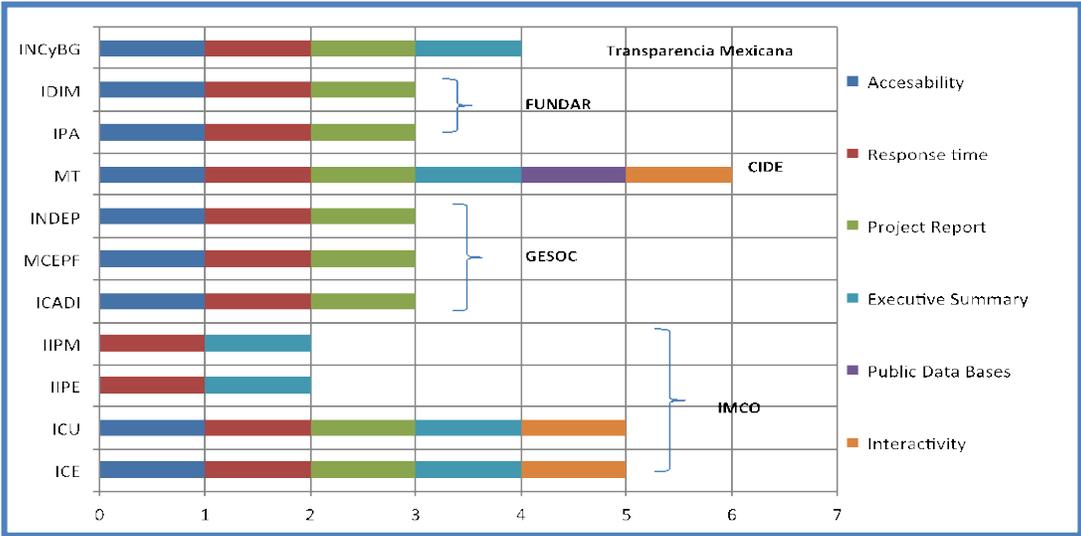
Acknowledging of limitations

-Organizations were positively receptive and embraced the external index analysis. Furthermore, they pointed out that an investigation such as this complements and enriches the diagnoses they have developed regarding their indexes (5).

-There is no systematic information about the answers organizations have given to external and public questioning.

Continuous public learning

-Organizations that have released their indexes at least twice, have clearly gone through different improvement and learning processes. Changing methodologies or variables may limit contrasts and may also suggest changes in the measured concept. However, a communication strategy based on making public such learning and modifications may strengthen the pubic perception about the measurements earnest and legitimacy.

Monitoring

-Organizations neither monitor nor track activities concerning the use of their indexes. Doing so can significantly boost public awareness, understanding and general knowledge of an index.

-Index-projects managers do perform follow-ups on an index's trajectory. However, the majority of these activities are neither documented nor performed periodically or systematically.

Conclusion & Recommendations

This paper aimed to provide elements for the analysis of indexes' policy incidence potential. It was also intended to present several recommendations with the purpose of

increasing the public influence of such projects. Hence, eleven indexes elaborated by five different organizations were studied and analyzed.

On the on hand, the analysis considered the three types of uses indexes may have: 1) attention drawers, 2) data enhancers and 3) action-routes establishers. On the other hand, elements related to an index's utilization, particularly those under control of the organizations responsible were also taken into consideration. This section presents the main conclusions and most important recommendations.

There is no doubt that the set of studied organization have greatly contributed to public debate on issues of national relevance in Mexico. National and international press and media coverage, along with the academic research regarding topics such as transparency, accountability, corruption and competitiveness, prove the magnitude of their contribution. In short, indexes have had a successful symbolic use, that is, they have thrivingly drawn consciousness and awareness on specific topics.

Indexes' contribution towards investigation and knowledge generation is less evident. Despite the fact that organizations have conducted their index's projects with a clear and proper methodology, there is not enough information to establish whether or not this effort has struck/permeated/penetrated the proper stakeholder. Media monitoring suggests that indexes and the issues or topics they measure are still captured, treated and understood on a simple and perhaps superficial basis. The analysis also indicates that there is no clear relation between indexes' results and any public policy- related activity.

Indexes have been more weakly used to establish action routes for public policy modification. A specific and structured set of recommendations for decision-makers can only be formulated by thoroughly and rigorously analyzing a variety of external and internal factors. There is no denying that third sector organizations have experienced a paramount development in regards to their institutional capabilities. Nonetheless, in order to boost their policy incidence potential, it is necessary for them to develop specific and strategic policy recommendation and communication mechanisms. These tools ought to enhance feedback to the index elaborating process, mutual learning between index responsible and potential users, and last but not least, these mechanisms must enable the elaboration of specific instruments for the generation of policy recommendations.

The recommendations presented below are structured around the idea of strengthening organizational capacity to increase the potential impact on public policy with reference to the set of index projects analyzed in this paper.

First, organizations need to improve the conceptual accessibility of their index projects. They have to strengthen and make their index methodology more transparent in order to generate products that can be constantly used by the media and several other actors ,thus allowing an effective communication which clearly relates the measured concept with concrete public policy activities.

Second, communication strategies and activities should always consider an early approach towards potential users. It is also important to consider the distinct uses index can be given. In short, communication activities must be designed regarding the different types of identified index users.

Third, organizations must make an effort to continuously ensure the transparency of their index-projects. The legitimacy of a project depends on the evidence of an impartial and replicable analysis. As a consequence, information should always be publicly available and accessible.

Fourth, organizations have to structure a systematic method for tracking and monitoring: 1) the organizations' relation with potential users, 2) public policy modifications associated with the measured concept and 3) information given by media concerning an index. These actions will help to better understand an index's usage and its evolution over time.

There is considerable national and international experience regarding policy indexes. There are several successful projects and practices, but also numerous failures. An interesting debate about the usefulness of policy indexes is currently taking place among third sector and international organizations. An important contribution to these projects may be the exchange of national and international knowledge and experience. For the latter to happen two types of activities can be promoted: First, seminars and workshops where different national and international policy index projects are presented and discussed. Interaction among organizations along with the exchange of experiences could be considerably helpful. Second, the systematization of cases in a publication could

permanently format the generated and accumulated experience, thus boosting learning in the medium and long term.

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