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From PROGRESA to PROSPERA: understanding change and stability in Mexico’s conditional cash transfer programme

Kevin Zapata Celestino

PhD in Social Policy
The University of Edinburgh
2021
Declaration:
I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in parts, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Kevin Zapata Celestino

Word count: 64,154 (thesis only)
NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

I made all the translations from Spanish texts and interviews; therefore, any inaccuracy in the translations is solely my responsibility.
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Finally, a special dedication to my parents and family, in particular to Miguel Celestino Arias, María Teresa Sánchez Figueroa and Estela González González, their memory will live forever in my heart.
**Lay summary**

The lay summary is a brief summary intended to facilitate knowledge transfer and enhance accessibility, therefore the language used should be non-technical and suitable for a general audience. [Guidance on the lay summary in a thesis](#). (See the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study, General Postgraduate Degree Programme Regulations. These regulations are available via: [www.drps.ed.ac.uk](http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk).)

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This research aims to understand the endurance of the Mexican antipoverty programme PROGRESA-Oportunidades-PROSPERA (POP) by exploring the policymaking process that shaped the programme since its creation in 1997 until its abolition in 2019. By conducting interviews with the policymakers involved in the decision-making regarding POP, I studied the political factors that influenced the continuation of the programme during four different federal administrations. The evidence suggests that a relevant group of policymakers exercised influence to preserve POP with minimal changes by adopting various strategies to convince the government that the programme was the best policy to address poverty in the country despite its limitations.
Abstract

The continuation for over two decades of the conditional cash transfer programme “PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA” (POP) represents an anomaly in Mexican policy making. Traditionally, policies have tended to be substantially transformed or discontinued every six years that a new president arrives to power. For this reason, POP’s continuation throughout four different presidential mandates from 1997 to 2019 is striking. Moreover, it is intriguing that these successive governments endorsed POP as a successful policy to address poverty even though the official figures suggest that poverty levels in Mexico have remained almost the same after three decades. Although there is an abundance of literature on POP, research about the programme’s policy making has been sparse, and the policy’s endurance remains poorly understood.

This dissertation aims to understand how POP was able to continue for over four presidential mandates with relative stability. The analysis is based on semi-structured interviews with Mexican politicians, policy makers, and bureaucrats related to the programme. The main hypothesis is that a closed group of scholars and policy makers, as advocates of the human capital paradigm, formed a policy community that monopolised the decision making of POP, thereby, preventing substantial changes to the core design of the conditional cash transfers.

The study offers insight into how a group of technocrats with specific characteristics and shared values played a key role in the continuation of the programme after its creation in 1997. This group eventually expanded and formed a policy community that influenced the decision making and other relevant processes within key institutions such as the Ministry of Social Development and the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy. The actions of this policy community not only prevented major changes to the design of POP during specific political junctures but also generated an incremental process that allowed the programme to achieve stability for over two decades. Additionally, this research addresses the termination of POP in 2019, which is explained by the loss of influence of the mentioned policy community within the new government.
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<tr>
<td>AMLO</td>
<td>Andrés Manuel López Obrador</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAQDAS</td>
<td>Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis</td>
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<td>CCT</td>
<td>Conditional cash transfer</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIDE</td>
<td>Centre for Economic Research and Teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIESAS</td>
<td>Centre for Research and Higher Studies</td>
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<td>CNDS</td>
<td>National Commission for Social Development</td>
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<td>COLEF</td>
<td>North Border College</td>
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<td>COLMEX</td>
<td>The Mexico College</td>
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<td>CONAPO</td>
<td>National Population Council</td>
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<td>CONEVAL</td>
<td>National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECLAC</td>
<td>Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
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<tr>
<td>EED</td>
<td>Specific Performance Evaluations</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENIGH</td>
<td>National Survey of Household Income and Expenditure</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>FLACSO</td>
<td>Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>IADB</td>
<td>Inter-American Development Bank</td>
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<td>IFAD</td>
<td>International Fund for Agricultural Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFPRI</td>
<td>International Food Policy Research Institute</td>
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<td>IMSS</td>
<td>Mexican Institute of Social Security</td>
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<td>INEGI</td>
<td>National Institute of Statistics and Geography</td>
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<td>INSP</td>
<td>National Institute of Public Health</td>
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<td>ITAM</td>
<td>Autonomous Technology Institute of Mexico</td>
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<td>ITESM</td>
<td>Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGDS</td>
<td>The general law of social development</td>
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<td>MC</td>
<td>Citizens Movement Party</td>
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<td>MORENA</td>
<td>National Regeneration Movement Party</td>
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<td>PAN</td>
<td>National Action Party</td>
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<td>PET</td>
<td>Punctuated equilibrium theory</td>
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<td>POP</td>
<td>PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Revolutionary Democratic Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRI</td>
<td>Party of Institutionalised Revolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEDESOL</td>
<td>Ministry of Social Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCEP</td>
<td>Committee for the Evaluation of Poverty</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAM</td>
<td>Metropolitan Autonomous University</td>
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<tr>
<td>UBI</td>
<td>Universal basic income</td>
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<td>UNAM</td>
<td>National Autonomous University of Mexico</td>
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Glossary

- **Co-responsibility (or shared responsibility):** the idea that the poor are also responsible for overcoming their poverty. Consequently, they must be incentivised by the attachment of conditionalities to welfare benefits.

- **Conditionalities:** conditions imposed on the beneficiaries of a programme, with the aim of generating human capital.

- **Extreme poverty:** an individual is considered to be living in extreme poverty if they have three or more social deprivations (of the following six indicators: access to education, access to health, access to social security, quality housing, access to basic housing services, and access to food). In addition, the individual’s income is so low that they cannot afford to purchase a food basket that would cover their nutritional needs for ensuring a healthy life.

- **Equilibrium:** long and stable periods within a policy subsystem characterised by incrementalism.

- **Food poverty:** inability to purchase a basic food basket, even if the household uses its full income to try to cover this need.

- **Human capital:** knowledge or skills acquired during life and used to produce goods or services in the market.

- **Institutionalisation:** when a policy monopoly is accepted, embedded, and reproduced by an institution.

- **Policy communities:** closed policy groups characterised by a small number of participants, with strong and stable bonds. In these groups, the participants have the same understanding of a policy issue, share the same values, and agree to establish an institutional arrangement to reinforce that understanding and values.

- **Policy ideas:** a set of statements about how the world can be interpreted and how policy issues should be addressed. Policy ideas are embedded in policy paradigms.

- **Policy monopoly:** the policy community’s shared understanding or framing of a specific policy issue.

- **Policy subsystem:** the set of policy actors and stakeholders in a defined topic and geography. The interaction between these actors can occur at any governmental level and many involve actors inside and outside of the government such as
officials, representatives, the private sector, academia, scientists and researchers, media, non-profit organisations, and many others.

- **Policy paradigms**: frameworks that consist of deep structures of values and beliefs shared by specific communities that influence the policy process.

- **Poverty**: an individual is considered poor when their income is insufficient to acquire the goods and services required to satisfy their food and non-food needs. In addition, they have at least one social deprivation of the following six indicators: access to education, access to health, access to social security, quality housing, access to basic housing services, and access to food (the same definition applies for multidimensional poverty).

- **Punctuations**: short but intense periods of instability that break the equilibrium.

- **Technocrats**: policymakers with a high level of education and specialisation in different areas of public administration, who actively participate in politics, have ties with other power communities, and promote neoliberalism as the best governing model alternative.
1. Introduction

In Mexico, few programmes last more than six years because long-term planning is not part of the Mexican policymaking tradition (Vásquez, 2010). Each president develops a mid-term plan based on his personal views, beliefs, and interests and covering only his own presidential mandate. Therefore, it is unsurprising that many programmes last for just one or two administrations and are later discontinued (especially social programmes, due to their political and electoral implications; Levy and Rodríguez, 2005; Vásquez, 2010; Lustig, 2014; Cejudo, 2017; Madrazo, 2021). This is why the case of “PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA” (POP), a conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme created in the 1990s to combat poverty, is so striking. This programme is unique because it lasted over the period of four different governments, became a political symbol for three of them, and survived two political transitions (in 2000 and 2012). Moreover, despite the political relevance achieved by the programme, poverty remains one of the most challenging problems in the country (see Figure 1.1 – the different types of poverty are explained in the glossary). Hence, this thesis asks how it was possible that POP was able to endure so long, when official figures suggest that, after two decades, the programme had not accomplished its main purpose of reducing poverty.
CCTs started in the late 1990s in Latin America – including Honduras, Mexico, and Brazil – and eventually expanded to the rest of the region, plus Asia and Africa (Doetinchem et al. 2008). CCTs were presented as an innovation that would reduce poverty in a sustainable way, and for this reason, they successfully spread worldwide. Today, around 70 countries have some kind of CCT programme (Lindert, 2014). The introduction of the concept of “co-responsibility”, understood as the activation of the poor through the imposition of conditionalities on welfare benefits, with the goal of generating human capital, was disruptive but welcomed by international organisations such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (Heimo, 2014). Although some small-scale projects had been tested in other countries, Mexico was the first to implement CCTs on a large scale, under the name of “PROGRESA” (later “Oportunidades” and “PROSPERA”). Mexico’s model thus gained international recognition and became one of the most studied social programmes in the world (Paes-Sousa et al. 2013; World Bank, 2014). Initially, the reactions and feedback were positive, but then criticisms began to emerge. After the programme’s first decade in operation, evaluations began to point out its flaws and limits, with some suggesting that although the

Adapted from the CONEVAL (2020)
programme had accomplished some of its goals, it was not influencing levels of poverty. However, policymakers and officials in the Mexican government never deeply questioned the efficiency of POP. The programme was always defended by the Mexican government (and by a large sector of society)¹, who argued that POP was effective but that the structural conditions of the economy and the labour market were impeding the reduction of poverty (Levy, 2009).

The debate about POP’s efficiency was intense in the academic realm, but in the political field, POP remained unquestioned for many years. It is true that, over two decades, the programme underwent many incremental changes, but there was never any dramatic transformation of its core until its discontinuation in 2019. Despite extensive studies and evaluations examining POP and CCTs in Mexico, the literature focused in explaining the endurance of the programme is scarce. What is more, the literature is not conclusive and does not offer a complete picture of the decision-making process behind the programme. Since POP could be considered one of the most important anti-poverty programmes ever implemented in Mexico’s recent history, due to its design and political relevance (Levy, 2006; Hevia, 2009), it is necessary to investigate and analyse the factors that contributed to its continuation. An understanding of why POP was able to endure four presidential mandates could illuminate Mexico’s policymaking in recent decades.

In addition, the literature on the policy processes that led to the implementation of CCTs in Latin America and other regions around the world suggests that CCTs were implemented as a consequence of policy diffusion (García and Moore, 2012; Stampini and Tornarolli, 2012; Osorio, 2014; 2019; Lindert, 2014; Béland et al. 2018). However, this is not the case for POP, as the Mexican programme represented a policy innovation that had not been replicated previously on a national scale. For this reason, an investigation of the policymaking process that led to the implementation and continuation of CCTs in Mexico would be valuable.

It is important to mention that, despite POP’s remarkable longevity, it is not the only long-lasting programme. For instance, Liconsa (a subsidised milk programme to support poor families) and Diconsa (subsidised shops located in poor countryside areas) originated in the 1940s and 1960s, respectively. While these programmes are still in operation and have been part of the government’s strategy for combatting poverty and marginalisation for decades, neither has achieved the political relevance of POP (the summed budget of both programmes was less than 0.1 of the GDP in 2020). Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón’s administration

¹ Media, scholars, and international organisations were the main advocates of the programme.
presented *Oportunidades* as their political (and partisan) flag in the fight against poverty (Hevia, 2009). Similarly, *PROSPERA* became Enrique Peña Nieto’s main strategy and symbol for addressing this issue (Oropeza, 2019). In budgetary terms, no other social programme has received the similar level of resources as POP, at around 0.5% of Mexico’s annual GDP during the governments of Felipe Calderón Hinojosa and Enrique Peña Nieto (see Chapters 7 and 8). Moreover, POP has been consistently recognised by various international organisations as a successful model for combatting poverty (World Bank, 2014). However, despite the political and budgetary relevance of POP, there has been little research into POP’s policymaking.

Although many factors could have influenced the continuation of POP, I will focus on the dynamics of the group of policymakers, bureaucrats, and advisers behind POP to explain the rationale for this decision. (I will refer to this group as a “policy community” – the broader reasons for choosing this specific term are given in Chapter 2). I have chosen this focus because the scholarly literature suggests that technocratic elites, defined as small groups of policymakers in power positions, with strong ties between them, high levels of expertise, and a common ideology, have essentially controlled Mexico’s policymaking in the last decades (Centeno and Maxfield, 1992; Ai Camp, 1996; Cabrero, 2000; Babb, 2002; Salas-Porras, 2014). In addition, the literature recognises that this policy community was present at decisive moments in the programme’s history. Hence, the study of this policy community will provide answers that explain POP’s continuation. I will also explain how POP achieved stability after its implementation and the “muddling through” process behind this. During the period in which this research was being conducted, POP was abruptly discontinued. Although this is not the main focus of the research, I will also offer some possible explanations as to why the programme ended in this way.

Some of the contributions I aim to make with this research are to broaden understanding of Mexico’s policymaking by shedding light on the decision-making process of one of the most significant programmes of recent decades. Thus, I seek to open the “black box”2 that characterises Mexican politics. Likewise, I intend to reduce the gap in the literature on POP, providing a fuller picture of the actors involved in the programme, their interests, and their role in the continuation of CCTs. In this way, I seek to demystify the reasons for POP’s endurance over more than two decades. Since no other study includes interviews with the elite actors involved in the policy processes of the programme, this research will be the first extensive

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2 “Black box” refers to the opacity within the political system.
investigation to explain the politics behind POP, as seen from the perspective of leading policymakers. Furthermore, I hope this research will complement the literature on CCTs and their diffusion in Latin America. Equally, I intend to offer an illustrated case of how social policies are developed in the region.

This research is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, I present the analytical framework of the research. The chapter begins with an overview of the classical approaches of public policy analysis and the limitations of these “rational” approaches. I then discuss the “new institutionalism” current, which was created to provide a broader understanding of the factors that shape policy, with special consideration given to gradual change and punctuated equilibrium. These two approaches serve as the theoretical framework that guides this research.

In Chapter 3, I discuss some of the literature on CCTs, noting its main features, advantages, and criticisms. Likewise, I examine the literature on POP policymaking, pointing out the gaps. I describe Mexico’s policymaking tradition and show how certain actors have predominance in the decision-making process.

In Chapter 4, I present the research design and the methodology. The chapter begins with the research question that guides the investigation: namely, “how was PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA (POP) able to continue for over four presidential mandates with relative stability?” I then explain the decision to use a qualitative approach to answer this question. Following this, I introduce each of the actors interviewed and explain why they were considered for the research. I also discuss the process of conducting those interviews, the data analysis work, and other ethical considerations.

In Chapter 5, I present the background of CCTs in Mexico. This chapter begins with an explanation of the previous social policies concerning general subsidies, along with the political context in which they were developed. I then discuss the exogenous and endogenous factors that led Mexican policymakers to employ CCTs as an alternative to general subsidy programmes. Finally, the chapter introduces some of the basic premises of the newly created PROGRESA, showing how it represented a milestone and dramatic change in Mexico’s social policy.

In Chapter 6, I discuss how the initial policy community of POP was created and how it institutionalised a common understanding of Mexico’s social policy. I explain why this policy community engaged the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) to conduct the first evaluation of PROGRESA. I also delve into the involvement of this policy community in
protecting PROGRESA during the political transition of 2000, a year that saw a major critical juncture that threatened the continuation of the programme. Finally, I address the growth and changes within the POP policy community and the transition from “PROGRESA” to “Oportunidades”.

In Chapter 7, I discuss the transition of Oportunidades from the Vicente Fox to the Felipe Calderón government in 2006, noting how the POP policy community continued to influence the process of policymaking in relation to the programme. I also explain the second phase of incremental changes to the programme, highlighting the rationale for them. This chapter addresses the controversial use of the evidence to convince policymakers that POP was effective and how the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy, which legitimised this evidence, was closely related to the policy community of the programme.

In Chapter 8, I explain the political reasons for the evolution of Oportunidades into PROSPERA and how the POP policy community adopted different strategies to preserve the core of the programme. I also explain in detail the final phase of incremental changes, highlighting the primary modifications. I explain how the policy community continued to influence PROSPERA’s policymaking and show how the POP policy community was able to preserve its policy monopoly when challenged by the newly created Universal Income Network.

In Chapter 9, I present the end of POP under the populist government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador. This chapter discusses why the POP policy community was not able to preserve its policy monopoly and how a new network of scholars, politicians, and policymakers replaced the policy community. Finally, I show how the new government transformed PROSPERA into “Programa para el Bienestar Benito Juárez”, dismantling the core principles of CCTs and thereby officially ending POP.

In Chapter 10, I analyse the main findings of the empirical chapters, using the theoretical frameworks described in Chapter 2. This chapter offers an explanation of POP’s endurance, taking into consideration the action of the policy community behind the programme, the inner institutional dynamics in relation to balance of power, the compliance with and interpretation of the rules of the programme, and the self-reinforcing elements. Furthermore, I suggest that POP’s termination was due to the inability of the aforementioned policy community to influence the new government that arrived in 2018.
Finally, Chapter 11 concludes the research by summarising the main findings. This overview of the findings is intended to provide a conclusive answer to the research questions. Likewise, it aims to point out the importance of this research for Mexico’s social policymaking analysis and to indicate possible directions for future research.
2. Analytical framework

2.1 Introduction

Before beginning the analysis of Mexican social policy, it is necessary to review some of the existing literature on public policy analysis and to explain the theoretical approaches taken in this research. First, I discuss the rational approaches of public policy analysis (comprehensive and bounded), however, since these rational models have been shown to be insufficient to explain the complexity of the behaviour of actors and institutions in policy subsystems, I discuss new institutionalism and how its different currents may offer a better understanding of the factors that shape policy. From new institutionalism, I have selected gradual change and punctuated equilibrium as theoretical frameworks to guide this investigation. I chose these approaches because their emphases on institutional stability provide broader theoretical constructs to explain each of the elements that determine policy permanence. In combination, both approaches provide useful contributions to the development of a convincing explanation for POP’s endurance. While gradual change approach focuses on the inner dynamics of the institutions, punctuated equilibrium theory pays attention to the actions of the policy communities and their capacity to frame the government’s agenda. Thus, I sought to guide the research using elements of both approaches, taking into consideration the political circumstances in which change occurred and its impact on the development of the programme. Consequently, I aim to show that CCTs achieved institutional stability in Mexico due to endogenous and exogenous factors that influenced social policymaking.

2.1 Public policy analysis

There is no consensus definition of the term “public policy”, and a variety of broader and narrower perspectives are in use. Jenkins (1978) defines policy as “a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means to achieve them” (Ibid: p. 85). Anderson (2003) defines public policy as “a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or a matter of concern” (Ibid: p. 3). Meanwhile, Dye (1972) defines it as “whatever governments choose to do or not to do” (Ibid: p. 2). Similarly, for Aguilar (1992), public policies can be interpreted as intentional actions executed by governmental actors to solve or fix something and which influence social behaviour. However, the common element among all these perspectives is the
intentionality of the public actors’ efforts to address certain issues. Theodolou (1995) suggests that most scholars agree that public policy has a strong and direct influence on people’s daily lives. Therefore, public policy analysis covers “the whole set of solutions initiated by public authorities” (Bernier and Clavier, 2011).

The traditional approach to public policy analysis consists of identifying the relevant stages of the policy process. According to Easton’s “system theory”, the environment produces demands. These demands are processed by the political system, producing outputs (specific decisions or policies) that later interact with the environment, generating new demands and eventually forming a permanent cycle (Easton, 1965). Using this theory, scholars have identified various key stages that define public policy. Aguilar (1992) suggests that the policy process can be divided into four stages: problem identification, policy design, policy implementation, and evaluation of the policy. Similarly, Jordan and Adelle (2012) conceptualise the policy process in six stages: problem emergence, agenda-setting, consideration of policy options, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. Scholars such as Bardach (2012) divide the policy cycle into eight steps, with only slight differences from the previous models. Regardless of the chosen model, the classical approach to analysis tends to follow the same path, with problems stimulating policy formulation, policymaking takes place, and the policy decisions being implemented and later evaluated to decide on their continuation or termination (Cairney, 2016).

In this traditional approach, each stage can be analysed individually under optimal assumptions of rationality. These include the assumptions that the values of the society are reflected in the values of the policymakers, that a small number of policymakers entirely control the process of decision-making, that policymakers’ interests and values are aligned with the organisations’ goals, and that policy is a linear process (John, 2012). These optimal assumptions are often considered in what is known as “comprehensive rationality” (or a rational decision-making model), which is considered the entry point for public policy analysis (Ibid). This type of rationality assumes that policymakers create public policies in a logical, rational, and objective manner (Cairney, 2016; 2019). Moreover, rational approaches emphasise that self-interest drives the behaviour of political actors, even if this contradicts broader social goals (Petracca, 1991).

For Olugbenga (2017), comprehensive rationality is a normative approach that excludes emotions and other “subjective” considerations and simplifies policy formulation and policy
analysis. Likewise, Cairney (2019) suggests that comprehensive rationality enables the establishment of a logical order to the policy process. Moreover, it helps with identifying the policy options and comparing the costs and benefits of each one. However, the main problem with this perspective is that “often the costs and benefits of the various options are very uncertain and difficult to quantify for rigorous comparison” (Johnson, 2005: Para. 1). In addition, since this model is elaborated under very specific assumptions, it may not be applicable to the analysis of real-life situations: comprehensive rationality “neglects certain forces or factors that come into play in the actual course of policy formulations” (Olugbenga, 2017: p. 57). For this reason, scholars have introduced the notion of “bounded rationality” to explain that different conditions – such as the individual’s cognitive capacity, the time available to take a decision, and the difficulty of taking that decision – all limit an individual’s rationality (Simon, 1976; Klaes and Sent, 2005). Therefore, a bounded rationality model aims to develop a more realistic analysis, while maintaining a descriptive and normative approach (Olugbenga, 2017). In bounded rationality models, rather than choosing the “optimal” decision, individuals choose an alternative that satisfies their criteria (Campitelli and Gobet, 2010). As explained by Barros (2010), bounded rationality “is essentially a construction in negative: it is the negation of global rationality” (Ibid: p. 469). For instance, Lindblom (1959) proposes a notion of “incrementalism” that attempts to explain strategic change in a political context, from the perspective of bounded rationality.

Although the notion of bounded rationality has proven popular for addressing many issues in economics and the political science field, limitations on understanding of the behaviour of institutions and how these perform an informal function influencing people’s perception remain (Dequech, 2001). Hence, social scientists have begun to apply new approaches, from the behavioural and sociological perspectives (Furubotn and Richter, 1994). Many modern theories retain the concept of bounded rationality, while also taking into consideration incrementalism in combination with emotions and other psychological drivers (Cairney, 2019). Nevertheless, the criticisms made of the bounded rationality approach – in particular, its inability to explain informal distributions of power, attitudes, and political behaviour within institutions – have generated a current known as “new institutionalism” (Peters, 2003).

### 2.2 New institutionalism

New institutionalism is a set of theories concerning the context of the institutions that influence policies, including the “formal and informal rules, culture, norms, and ideas that create the
conditions, incentives, and limitations that affect people’s preferences” (Lahat, 2019: Para. 1). Institutions, according to Powell and Colyvas (2008), are restricted by both formal rules, such as laws and legislations, and the non-written (informal) rules and internal behaviours of the organisation. There are various interpretations of “institutions”; for instance, the term can refer to governmental structures (Newton and van Deth, 2010). “Institutions” can also refer to sets of rules that shape human behaviour (North, 1990; Rhodes, 2018). In the end, as stated by Cairney (2019), “institution” can refer to almost anything; hence, the focus should be on the rules and behaviours that influence the policymaking processes.

There are three primary streams of new institutionalism: rational choice, sociological, and historical (Hall and Taylor, 1996; Ishiyama and Breuning, 2014). Each stream have different strengths and assumptions regarding the interaction between institutions and individuals (Kato, 1996). Rational choice institutionalism is a model of analysis centred on the individual’s motivations. The main premise of this model is that “individuals always make deliberate and conscious choices in pursuit of their personal goals” (Pennigton, 2008: p. 16). In this model, it is not only formal and informal rules that are important for the analysis, but also symbols, values, and other conditions with significance for the organisation (Scott, 2013). Sociological institutionalism refers to the way in which institutions create a sense of belonging and influence attitudes within organisations (Saurugger, 2017). Historical institutionalism takes history as the main factor shaping institutional outcomes (Steinmo, 2013). The difference between this approach and the previous two is that historical institutionalism considers individuals more than mere rule-followers or utilitarian actors. Historical institutionalism suggests that the best way to understand actors’ behaviours is through the analysis of history: “historical institutionalists understand that behaviour, attitudes and strategic choices take place inside particular social, political, economic and even cultural contexts (...) historical institutionalist explicitly and intentionally attempt to situate their variables in the appropriate context” (Ibid: p. 127). According to Cairney (2019), constructivist institutionalism could be considered a fourth stream, as ideas themselves can build institutions. This approach seeks to understand how and to what extent ideas serve as “cognitive filters through which actors come to interpret environment signals” (Hay, 2009: p. 10). Moreover, institutional change is perceived as part of a paradigmatic shift. This analysis model is particularly interested in the role of ideas during periods of crisis, because ideas are questioned during these times, which affects the actors’ behaviour (Hay, 2009).
In the end, new institutionalism claims that, rather than being considered homogeneous entities, institutions are places in which ideas, interests, norms, and rules influence policymaking. There are several different currents of new institutionalism for the analysis of policy, but each one is useful for explaining certain aspects of the policy process. Applying multiple perspectives enhances understanding of how problems reach the government’s agenda, the dynamics of the actors, organisational patterns within institutions, and the outcomes of policymaking.

The existing currents of new institutionalism include numerous theories and approaches that seek to explain policy processes; and most of these currents are related to institutional creation, evolution, and change (i.e., multiple-stream framework, punctuated equilibrium, advocacy coalitions framework, ideational approach, and so on). However, these theories are often seen as too simplistic or deterministic in their theoretical analyses of institutional permanence (a broader explanation of this is given in the next section; Mahoney and Thelen, 2010; Bell, 2011). Although these new institutionalism theories offer a perspective on continuity and change of policies, broader theoretical constructs are required to show fully how this occurs (Cairney,
2019). Since the objective of this research is to identify how POP was able to endure for more than two decades, it is vital to find a theoretical framework that addresses institutional permanence in-depth.

### 2.3 Explaining gradual change and stability

According to Taylor (2009), theories of institutional change can be categorised according to whether they describe slow moving or abrupt change. Theories that emphasise policy change due to external forces tend to follow punctuated equilibrium models, referring to processes in which institutions are abruptly changed, discontinued, or transformed after long periods of stability (Krasner, 1984; True et al., 2007). These models are strongly influenced by path dependence in which positive feedback (self-reinforcement) raises the cost of switching policy alternatives (David, 2001; Pierson, 2004). Taylor (2009) argues that these approaches share a common assumption that only “disequilibrium” (or critical junctures) is required to produce change. Likewise, the author suggests that the literature tends to assume institutions will constrain agents’ behaviours through different institutional mechanisms; hence, their behaviour will be predictable and stable. Similarly, Mahoney and Thelen (2010) claim that the focus on exogenous shocks to explain changes in enduring pathways can be deterministic, as it assumes that agents are constrained by their institutional environments, which provides insufficient explanations of institutional change. Some authors, working from a constructivist perspective, have attempted to develop ideational and narrative approaches to explain change (Blyth, 2002; Hay, 2004; Schmidt, 2010). However, Bell (2011) criticises those approaches, arguing that they focus too much on the agents and lose sight of the institutional and structural variables that shape agents and institutional change: “the constructivists in question now run the risk of taking institutions ‘back out’” (Ibid: p. 884).

Streeck and Thelen (2005) argue that dynamic components explain the gradual changes and even those institutions with strong institutional arrangements are vulnerable to shift, even without a major external punctuation. Similarly, the authors argue that there are different modes of institutional change that depend on political context, institutional characteristics, and changing agents. Accordingly, Mahoney and Thelen (2010) developed a “theory of gradual institutional change”, in which endogenous change is driven by specific elements such as interests, mobilisation of resources, shifts in the balance of power, and issues of compliance (norms and rules may be subject to different interpretations and implementations by the agents). This suggests that institutions are embedded with tensions and there is a natural
struggle for power distribution between agents. Because of this, “there is nothing automatic, self-perpetuating or self-reinforcing about institutional arrangements” (Ibid: p. 8). From this perspective, Taylor (2009) argues that an analysis of public policy that emphasises the dynamic internal components of institutions is ideal for explaining gradual change. It is important to focus on those internal components because they are the key determinants of institutional choice (Acemoglu et al. 2005). Moreover, the policymaking process is the primary influence on elements such as the allocation of resources, power distribution, the interpretation and implementation of rules and norms, and other endogenous factors (Pierson and Skocpol, 2002; Pierson, 2003; Taylor, 2009).

In accordance with Taylor (2009), the policymaking process shapes institutions and institutional change in many ways, reshaping internal institutional responsibilities, shaping the internal institutional environment, and encouraging outsiders such as voters and constituencies to promote institutional change. Therefore, by focusing on the causal effects of the policymaking process, “it should be possible to better understand an important cause of endogenously determined institutional change” (Ibid: p. 491). However, one might ask why it is important to analyse policymaking and gradual institutional change to understand the endurance of POP. As mentioned by Mahoney and Thelen (2009), gradual change may not only explain major transformations, but also institutional stability. Since stability is determined by various factors besides positive feedback, an explanation of gradual change would provide better insights into the specific evolution of institutions. As will be discussed in Chapters 6, 7, and 8, POP was characterised by several incremental changes that had an impact not only on the outcomes of the programme, but also on the programme itself. Hence, an understanding the policymaking process that facilitated those incremental changes would help to explain the endurance of POP.

Recent works have used this perspective on gradual change to explain institutional stability. For example, Slater (2010) took this approach to explain the stability of the authoritarian regime of Suharto in Indonesia. Shangase (2018) offers a perspective on South Africa’s regime after the apartheid period, incorporating the study of many dynamic components of endogenous change. Similarly, Graf (2018) presents the case for academic upgrading and declining collectivism in German skill formation through a gradual change model. However, it should be noted that a focus on gradual institutional change does not replace the importance of punctuated equilibrium and path dependence models. As stated by Taylor (2009), punctuated equilibrium models provide an important guide to institutional development in relation to the exercise of
epistemic communities and their policy preferences for a specific path. Furthermore, a focus on endogenous gradual change would be a useful complement to this and other theories (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010; Graf, 2018). Consequently, as Mexico’s history has been marked by the actions of technocratic elites who gather in policy communities that monopolise power (Adler and Gil, 2002; Gil et al. 2005; Salas-Porras, 2014; Van Gunten, 2016), an emphasis should be placed on the analysis of those policy communities.

There are various theories that may be useful for a study of power communities (e.g., neo-pluralism), but I chose punctuated equilibrium to complement gradual change due to its historical perspective of the distribution on power. The historical perspective of punctuated equilibrium theory provides an understanding of how institutions distribute power unevenly among groups during a determined periods of time: “Rather than posit scenarios of freely-contracting individuals, for instance, they are more likely to assume a world in which institutions give some groups or interests disproportionate access to the decision-making process; and, rather than emphasize the degree to which an outcome makes everyone better off, they tend to stress how some groups lose while others win” (Hall and Taylor, 1996: p. 9). This theory explicitly seeks to explain institutional endurance by studying the action of the policy communities and their capacity to frame the agenda of the government (Cairney, 2019). Therefore, punctuated equilibrium may shed light on the actions and decisions of the policy communities involved in Mexico’s social policy. For this reason, I use a combination of gradual change and punctuated equilibrium theory to explain the endurance of POP.

2.4 Punctuated equilibrium theory

Punctuated equilibrium theory (PET) explains stability as a prolonged process of incrementalism, followed by a short but dramatic crisis (punctuation) that breaks the inertia and produces policy change: “most policy models have been designed to explain either change or stability. Punctuated equilibrium theory encompasses both” (True et al., 2007: p. 155). Although PET uses the concept of incrementalism as part of path dependency, a model highly criticised for being too rational (see section 2.1), it differs from path dependency because it addresses the process of decision-making and explains how this is influenced by different conditions. According to Cairney (2019), PET is supported by three basic policy concepts: issue definition, agenda-setting, and policy communities.
Influenced by Kingdon’s (1984) multiple-stream framework, PET shares the view that policymakers are not able to pay attention to all the issues in the political environment and will only address those that escalate into the policy agenda (True et al., 2007). This causes gradual or large-scale changes in the policy subsystem, depending on the attention of the policymakers (Ibid). Accordingly, the key element in the process of agenda-setting is the creation of “policy monopolies”, which can be understood as “the ability to control the interpretation of a problem and thus the manner in which it is conceived and discussed” (Howlett, 1997: p. 10). When a “policy community” – a closed and insulated but stable policy network that shares a common view regarding a policy problem (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992; Jordan, 2005; Jordan and Cairney, 2013) – is capable of establishing a policy monopoly, then the policy community is able to influence the agenda-setting process. Moreover, depending on their objectives, policy communities work to the logic of either keeping policy problems out of focus, if they are seeking equilibrium (maintaining the status quo), or attracting the attention of policy actors (policymakers, bureaucrats, stakeholders, constituents, etc.) if they want to produce change in the policy subsystem (Mortensen, 2005). Furthermore, policy communities can institutionalise policy monopolies when institutions internalise and reproduce their ideas and values, thereby creating formal and informal rules that ensure policy problems are addressed on the terms determined by the policy community (Cairney, 2019).

Policy communities frame policy issues in an attempt to control the number of actors involved in addressing them (Baumgartner and Jones, 1991; Howlett, 1997). Hence, to protect a policy monopoly, the policy community must frame the issue “in a way that limits wide interest and excludes most actors” (Cairney, 2019: p. 148). This can be achieved in various ways – for instance, by giving the appearance that the problem is largely solved or that it is very technical and only a few experts can participate (Ibid). The maintenance of the policy monopoly also requires the strong adherence of the members of the policy community and a common understanding of the policy problem: “when a single image is widely accepted and generally supportive of the policy, it is usually associated with a successful policy monopoly” (True et al. 2007: p. 162). Moreover, to avoid friction that could break the policy monopoly, those actors who do not subscribe to the agenda are excluded from the community (Cairney, 2019). In this way, the common understanding of the problem is reinforced and an institutional arrangement is created within the community (Baumgartner and Jones, 1991).

As mentioned before, policy communities must preserve strong cohesion and internal stability to protect their policy monopolies. This is achieved through socialisation, personal trust, and
commitment to reproducing the institutional arrangement (McPherson and Raab, 1988). Likewise, the sharing of common values contributes to the stability of the group (True et al., 2007). Internal stability is essential because it insulates the decision-making process (Jordan and Maloney, 1997), thereby preventing the intrusion of other actors, which could incite competition over the framing of the policy problem and influence the agenda-setting process (Cairney, 2019). However, if a policy community is not capable of maintaining the restriction of the policy problem, it could move into the political agenda and “it is then that major changes tend to occur” (True et al., 2007: p. 159). Consequently, the policy problem would be redefined and new actors would become involved: “new actors feel qualified to exert their authority whereas previously they stayed away. These new actors may insist on rewriting the rules and on changing the balance of power” (Ibid: p. 159).

The presence of these new actors increases competition, and policy communities may look for supporters in different audiences – a process known as “venue shopping” – to increase the number of spectators and venues in which the policy problem is discussed (Baumgartner and Jones, 2009). In the end, the reframing of the problem could break the policy monopoly created by the policy community, thereby producing punctuation (True et al., 2007). According to John and Bevan (2012), there are three types of punctuation, depending on the level of intensity: procedural, low-salience, and high-salience. Procedural punctuations occur when multiple minor issues within a single major topic attract the attention of policymakers. These procedural punctuations are categorised as such when unrelated issues within major topics are not large enough to be recognised as major punctuations on their own. Low-salience punctuations occur when policymakers are attracted to a single major topic that has no coverage (or limited coverage) in the media. These types of punctuations are often related to matters that are mainly technical and need reform. In contrast, high-salience punctuations occur when policymakers focus on a single major topic that is receiving a high level of coverage and attention by the media. These types of punctuations relate to particular policy issues driven by external shocks (Ibid).

Jones and Baumgartner (2005) suggest that, during punctuation periods, policymakers are highly receptive to new approaches or solutions, and depending on the public’s pressure, they may decide to implement major policy changes or not. Moreover, endogenous or exogenous factors – such as triggering events, crises, and measurement and technical indicators – will influence this decision (Cairney, 2019). When policymakers receive strong signals from the political environment to pursue change, this “overcomes inertia and produces explosions or
impressions from former states” (True et al., 2007: p. 162). If the status quo is broken, a new period of equilibria starts with the establishment of a new policy monopoly (Ibid; see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Basic premise of punctuated equilibrium theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settled policy</th>
<th>Punctuation</th>
<th>New settled policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long period of Stability</td>
<td>Short and intense Period of fluctuation</td>
<td>Long period of Stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After certain period: Incremental changes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on True et al. (2007)

PET has been applied to analyse policy change in many high-income countries. For instance, Cashore and Howlett (2007) used it to explain the dynamics of environmental law in the United States. Jones et al. (2009) used PET to study the budgetary distribution change in five countries of the OECD. Likewise, Seeleib-Kaiser (2016) applied it to study changes in the German welfare state. Regarding Latin America, Peña (2012) observes PET has not been widely used to analyse the processes of policy change and stability in the region: “In Latin America, there are only a few original cases. In our language, there is not even a proper translation for the term ‘punctuated equilibrium’” (Peña, 2012: p. 9). Nevertheless, some cases can be found. Freigedo et al. (2017) applied the theory to explore changes in Uruguay’s national health system; Osorio (2015) used it to analyse the diffusion of the CCT policy in Chile, and Béjar (2015) employed PET to explain the legislative process of transparency laws in Mexico. The lack of empirical or theoretical application of this theory to explain Latin America’s policy processes gives the current research the opportunity to close the gap in the literature on public policy analysis in the region.

I consider PET the appropriate approach to explain Mexico’s social policy change and stability because, as suggested by Jones and Baumgartner (2005), it takes into consideration all the forces in the political subsystem and how they interact and influence the policymaking process. Owing to its approach to policy communities and its role in framing the policy agenda, PET seems to offer a better theoretical explanation than other theories of POP’s institutional
stability. As noted by Peña (2012), PET not only focuses on the policy actors and their decisions, but also emphasises the importance of the structures and institutions that incorporate a broader perspective of the phenomenon. However, as mentioned in the previous section, PET will be complemented by a perspective of gradual institutional change. Thus, my research also aims to contribute to the study of Latin America by bringing PET and gradual change as relevant neo institutionalism theories for public policy analysis.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed some of the existing literature on public policy analysis, with special emphasis on new institutionalism, which seeks to address the shortcomings of previous comprehensive and bounded rational theories. Furthermore, this chapter outlined the two theoretical approaches chosen from new institutionalism for the analysis, namely gradual institutional change and PET. Both theories will be used in a complementary manner to produce a broader explanation of POP’s endurance. Since most new institutionalist theories seek to explain institutional change, I consider gradual change and PET the most suitable theoretical frameworks to guide this investigation, due to their focus on explaining the elements that promote stability (such as power distribution, resources allocation, rules compliance, and the exercise of policy communities). Thus, I aim to identify and analyse the factors that were influential from the creation of POP and which maintained its “equilibrium” for over two decades. These analytical frameworks are intended to help unravel the dynamics of the actors and their motivations, strategies, resources, relationships, and beliefs, as well as the nature of the institutional setting that influenced the policymaking process of the programme. I will revisit the chosen theories in the empirical and analytical chapters to provide a better understanding of the studied phenomenon.

In the following chapter, I will review some of the literature on CCTs and POP and explain some of the particularities of Mexico’s policymaking tradition.
3. Literature review

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review the literature on CCTs, with the objective of presenting an overview of this type of social intervention. I outline the main features of CCTs and some of the advantages of co-responsibility, which – according to its supporters – allows poverty to be overcome in a sustainable manner. I also discuss some of the major criticisms of CCTs, such as their paternalism and idealisation of human capital. There is an absence of literature on POP policymaking, which is unusual, considering the political relevance of the programme. Although the programme has been widely studied over the years, few authors have attempted to explain POP’s long-term continuity, and the limited work in this area is partial and insufficient. Thus, I explain the importance of this research as not only enhancing understanding of POP’s endurance, but also broadening knowledge of social policymaking in Mexico. In addition, this chapter addresses Mexico’s policymaking tradition to obtain insights into the specific elements that could have influenced the implementation and continuation of CCTs. I discuss how the “central planning paradigm” in which the executive had all the decisional power over policymaking was substantially transformed after the political transition in 2000, creating a new policy reality in which policymaking occurs in a context of democratic openness.

3.2 Conditional cash transfers

To obtain a comprehensive understanding of POP, it is necessary to understand how CCTs work. First, as explained by de Janvry and Sadoulet (2006), regardless of how complex CCTs programmes are designed to be, all operate under the same premise of conditioning the allocation of money (and sometimes other types of resources) to a specific population (usually the poor or other vulnerable people), with the aim of influencing the behaviour of the recipients. For example, in Latin America, a wide range of CCTs programmes operate in a manner that ensures the poor (sometimes only the extreme poor), who are covered under the programmes, are persuaded to use specific state-sponsored social services (see Table 3.1; Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011).
Table 3.1 Common conditionalities in conditional cash transfers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of conditionality</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>School attendance is required for children and youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Health checks (at predetermined intervals) for children and youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>Nutritional supplements must be picked up which are most commonly distributed concurrently with the money awarded to the beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Osorio (2014).

The main element of these programmes is the conditionality, which is also referred to as “co-responsibility”. According to Lindert (2014), co-responsibility means that both the recipients and the government work together to achieve mutual benefits. While the poor gain a consistent sum of money, the government gains a way to activate them economically and socially. For Braw and Hoddinott (2008), co-responsibility has the power to modify the behaviours of the poor so that their decisions coincide better with what governments perceive will be most beneficial for them. Furthermore, co-responsibility is justified by the necessity of having a framework for policy evaluation (Ibid). The effectiveness of general policies to combat poverty are difficult to evaluate. However, co-responsibility provides specific criteria that can be easily evaluated through the comparison of several indicators (Ibid). Moreover, co-responsibility may also have political appeal because it allows politicians to render positive accounts while still in office: “by conditioning transfer on behaviours that increase these indicators, politicians and policy makers can potentially demonstrate accomplishment long before the more important evidence of poverty reduction, in the form of increased productivity or better adult health, occurs” (Ibid: p. 359). Another reason for incorporating co-responsibility into CCTs is that it reduces the stigma associated with welfare payments (Addato and Hoddinott, 2009; Braw and Hoddinott, 2008; Lindert, 2014). Beneficiaries of welfare programmes may suffer stigmatisation, which produces embarrassment and may discourage individuals from participating in the programmes. In contrast, co-responsibility prevents this embarrassment because (in theory) beneficiaries are working to obtain these benefits (Heimo, 2014). Likewise, co-responsibility may correct some of the asymmetries within households, empowering the
bargaining position of the individuals whose preferences – regarding the allocation of the resources – are aligned with those of the government (Braw and Hoddinott, 2008).

However, co-responsibility within CCTs programmes is not free of criticism. For instance, Corona (2011) claims that co-responsibility should not be considered a “new social contract” but rather an imposition on the poor on the basis of their condition: “to enjoy rights, the poor have to assume their responsibility and be reciprocal. In this logic, the blame for the loss of rights would fall on the poor themselves” (p. 140). Similarly, the idea that it is necessary to impose conditionalities on the recipients of these benefits promotes the assumption that the poor cannot behave or act correctly and the government must therefore constrain their behaviour; thus, it could be considered paternalistic and a breach of individuals’ freedom (Heimo, 2014). Additionally, Freeland (2007) argues that imposing conditionalities is non-desirable from a human rights perspective. Social protection is guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to threaten the poor with the denial of these benefits if they were to fail to meet certain criteria would be a transgression of this amendment. Likewise, Bayon (2012) disputes the claim that stigma is inherent to receipt of welfare programmes, suggesting that not all societies share the same beliefs regarding welfare subsidies. Finally, it is argued that, to accomplish many of the co-responsibilities, the recipients incur financial, time, and opportunity costs that are not usually considered in the programmes (Son, 2008).

CCT programmes are also characterised by the targeting mechanisms that ensure they reach the designated population. According to Ceccini and Madariaga (2011), the targeting process is usually divided into different stages. In the first stage, the geographical units that represent the highest levels of poverty are selected. Second, households or families are chosen by conducting evaluations of their quality of life and personal circumstances (normally through a survey). A third stage may be implemented when the second-stage evaluations cannot be conducted with sufficient precision; this is known as “communitarian selection” it involves targeting the population using information obtained from the wider community. The aim of implementing those targeting mechanisms is to use resources efficiently “to make more with less” (ECLAC, 2010: p. 114). The idea is that budgetary resources are limited and should only be allocated to support those who are most in need (Ibid). Nevertheless, targeting mechanisms can be challenging to implement and are not exempt from inclusion and exclusion errors (Sabates-Wheeler, Hurrell, and Devereux, 2015). Consequently, inaccuracy in those targeting mechanisms.

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3 Those levels are built using different variables according to each country (or context).
mechanisms might reinforce inequality and marginalisation of those in poverty (Ladhani and Sitter, 2020). Likewise, since targeting externally defines who should receive the subsidy and who should not, it may overlook the background and context of the poor (Boltvinik, 2004).

Advocates of CCTs claim that these type of programmes promote “human capital”, which, according to the OECD (2015), can be understood as the wealth embodied in labour, skills, and knowledge, all of which are created by better health and education. Since CCTs aim to promote school assistance and health, they are considered ideal for generating human capital (Levy and Rodríguez, 2005). Likewise, it is argued that sustainable development can be achieved through human capital (Handa and Davis, 2006; Cecchini and Martínez, 2011). Therefore, CCTs have the potential to reduce present levels of poverty and break intergenerational poverty cycles (de Janvry and Sadoulet, 2006; Levy and Rodríguez, 2005). Healthier and more educated individuals can be more productive in economic terms when they are able to use their energy and knowledge to enter the labour market and obtain higher incomes and better development (Akhter and Wohab, 2006). According to Levy (2006), the focus of the CCTs on human capital can eliminate dependency on social welfare in the long-term. However, critics claim that the idealisation of human capital as the best solution to poverty neglects the structural causes of the problem (Sandoval, 2015). In addition, Corona (2011) claims that focusing solely on increasing human capital (through health and education) to solve poverty considerably reduces the responsibility of the state to address this issue.

According to Rawlings (2004), CCTs reflect an ideology that emphasises market-oriented policy, counting on multilateral organisations such as the World Bank and other regional organisations as its main promoters. Similarly, it is suggested that CCTs are founded on the assumption that the state should not interfere with the market, therefore the poor are responsible for their own success (Corona, 2011; Boltvinik, 2012). Lindert (2014) argues that CCTs are oriented to be budget-efficient and less assistance-based than other social policies. Moreover, she argues that CCTs are highly attractive to both sides of the political spectrum (left and right), and this is why many governments – regardless of political orientation – have implemented these types of programmes. There is a consensus that the implementation of CCT programmes around the world has occurred in the form of “diffusion waves” (Fiszbein et al. 2009; Ceccini, 2011; De la O, 2015; Osorio 2014; 2015; 2019). This means that international organisations

\[4\] In the sense that it increases demand for services that generate human capital, which then boosts economic performance.
and regional organisations (in particular, multilateral banks) pushed for and supported the replication of these programmes after the success of PROGRESA and Bolsa Escola in Mexico and Brazil in the late 1990s. Lindert (2014) claims that CCTs have gained popularity around the world because they have proved to be effective in reducing poverty. However, Howlett et al. (2018) argue that it was because an international community of scholars and policymakers promoted CCTs as a pre-packaged “one-fits-all” policy. Likewise, Borges (2011) explains that domestic factors such as political ideology, state capacity, and human development levels – as well as international pressure – played key roles in the diffusion of CCTs. Similarly, Béland et al. (2018) claim that a group of internal actors (“instrument constituencies”), linked to a broader international community of policymakers, promoted the adoption of CCTs in each of the countries.

3.3 What has been written about PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA policymaking?

As mentioned in the introduction, POP has been continually evaluated since it was first implemented, and it could be considered one of the most studied social programmes in the world (World Bank, 2014; Cejudo, 2017). The discussion about its effectiveness as an anti-poverty policy is extensive; and scholars, researchers, and politicians have divided opinions about it. Many studies have suggested that POP was effective at combatting poverty and addressing vital related issues, such as malnutrition and school dropout rates (Skoufias et al. 2001; Gertler and Boyce, 2001; Behrman et al. 2005; Behrman and Hoddinott, 2005; Levy and Rodríguez, 2005; Handa and Davis, 2006; Fiszbein et al. 2009; Braw and Hoddinott, 2008; Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011; Behrman et al. 2011; Behrman et al. 2019). In contrast, many scholars have highlighted the contradictions of the programme and questioned the effectiveness of the programme’s efforts to end poverty (Boltvinik, 2004; González, 2008; Gabarrot, 2012; Bracamontes and Huesca, 2011; Bracamontes and Camberos, 2014; Hevia, 2016; Cabranes, 2016; Boltvinik et al. 2019).

The existing literature tends to focus on evaluations, either measuring the programme’s overall effectiveness in reducing poverty or analysing its individual components (education, health, or nutrition). Little has been said about the policymaking behind the programme and its longevity. There have been attempts to explain aspects of the decision-making. For example, some authors claim that the POP’s policymaking was a highly specialised process in which renowned experts participated in different policy processes and engaged in evidence-based decision-making.
(Levy and Rodríguez, 2005; Levy, 2006; Behrman, 2008; Hernández, 2009; Lustig, 2014; Sanberg, 2015). From the perspective of these scholars, the consistency of the CCTs was due to evidence produced by “objective” scholars being the cornerstone of POP’s long-term endurance. They conclude that, by appealing to the evaluations of the programme, POP advocates were able to convince Mexican senior officials to avoid any drastic transformation of the CCTs.

However, the literature on the actors opposed to CCTs, other competing groups, the political motivations of the actors involved in the decision-making, the interactions with other actors in the policy subsystem (such as constituencies, bureaucracies, and other governmental corporations), and other institutional variables that could have influenced the policymaking is not exhaustive. Moreover, much of the mentioned literature, although relevant, was produced by scholars who were involved in or otherwise had relationships with POP. Therefore, it should be taken with caution, since their perspectives may represent only one side of the story.

In contrast, other studies suggest different reasons for POP’s endurance. For instance, some authors claim that POP’s longevity was due to elite control (Viveros, 2014; Díaz-Cayeros et al. 2016). In this view, POP was a strategy of the economic elite to manage poverty so as to avoid social eruptions akin to the rise of the Zapatilla guerrilla movement in the 1990s. Similarly, it is suggested that POP’s continuation was an attempt to avoid the implementation of other types of policies that would have required an increase in tax collection, or, “that may touch sensitive political interests or privileges of a predominant group” (Viveros, 2014: p. 18).

Another perspective found in literature regarding POP’s endurance relies on the idea that advocacy coalitions played a key role in policymaking. From this perspective, CCTs have lasted in Mexico primarily because of the actions of a specific advocacy coalition that have thwarted any attempt to make substantial changes to the social programme (Boltvinik, 2006; Valencia et al. 2016, Tomazini, 2017). This advocacy coalition, named “the Human Capital Coalition”, have defended POP and its continuation during times of political turbulence. This coalition was activate at junctures such as the political transition in 2000, the transformation of PROGRESA into Oportunidades in 2002, and during the discussion of the “general law of social development” (LGDS) in 2004. Moreover, the coalition – formed by scholars, international consultants, and domestic policymakers – aims to influence the policymaking of the programme by producing favourable studies and evaluations of CCTs.
Some authors claim that POP’s continuation is part of a path-dependence process in which the accumulated experience of the programme is reflected in incremental changes to it (Hevia, 2009; De Souza, 2016). They argue that CCTs have been maintained as result of a long learning process in policymaking. Rather than substantial changes and transformations, the programme was characterised by small adjustments that represented the accumulated knowledge of policymakers.

Finally, some authors suggest that POP’s policymaking was heavily influenced by a predominant neoliberal ideology (Boltvinik, 2004; 2006; Teichman, 2007; Medrano, 2011; Czarnecki, 2013; Salas-Porras, 2017; Stone et al. 2020). These authors argue that neoliberal ideology is the primary political determinant shaping POP and influencing the policymakers and institutions involved in the programme. In their view, the transmission of this ideology through the links between transnational policy networks and domestic elites, and reproduced by different institutional channels, has enabled the preservation of CCTs.

Although the literature proposes various reasons for the endurance of the programme, it provides little clarity on the policymaking process and the political determinants that shaped the programme. As suggested by Cabrero (2000), the process of policymaking in Mexico is very different to that found in other democracies and is characterised by very “informal” processes and arrangements. Similarly, Acosta (2009) claims that the analysis of public policy in Mexico became very difficult after the authoritarian model ended in 2000, since the country has not consolidated a specific “political behaviour”.

Owing to the above, this research represents a novel contribution, as it aims to shed light on the decision-making behind the programme and the factors that influenced this process. However, I must clearly state that this study does not seek to evaluate the programme in any way. Nor is it my intention to approach the study of POP from a normative perspective. I do not intend to engage in the discussion of whether CCTs were effective in reducing poverty and other related issues. Moreover, the research will solely describe and analyse the events that shaped the programme, the factors that influenced the decisions of the policymaking actors, and the relationships between those actors. In this way, I aim to offer an explanation of why (and how) POP continued for over 20 years as the main anti-poverty policy in Mexico. However, to explore the policy factors that promoted the institutional endurance of POP, it is first necessary to explain Mexico’s policymaking tradition.
To understand Mexico’s policymaking, it is necessary to have some background on Mexico’s history during the 20th century. After the Revolution that ended in 1920, the factions that won the war established an authoritarian regime known as a “hegemonic party system” (Klesner, 1997). In this system, the official party monopolised power and the president “ruled in effect as a six-year dictator” (Ibid: Para. 1). The official party, first created under the name of “the National Revolutionary Party”, later “the Party of the Mexican Revolution”, and finally “the Party of the Institutionalised Revolution” (PRI), managed to preserve power from 1929 to 2000. Although the system functioned in an authoritarian manner, the government remained symbolically divided into executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Nevertheless, the president had near total control over all three (González, 1965; Carpizo, 2004).

The authoritarian regime helped to strengthen the weak political and social institutions created after the Revolution, while constraining the advance of democracy (Krauze, 1997). This caused friction and social discomfort, which finally erupted in the late 1960s. As a result, in the 1970s, the authoritarian regime began to promote political openness in an attempt to regain some of the legitimacy lost in the preceding years. In 1977, a political reform was passed that meant, for the first time, new political actors were recognised and new political parties were able to compete in the elections (Bolívar, 2004). In the 1980s and 1990s, further reforms were approved, increasing political pluralism and electoral competence (Cámara de Diputados, 2005). However, despite these efforts, the official party retained absolute power, and the president held control over all decision-making (Hernández, 1994; Rodríguez, 2009). It was not until the late 1990s that the PRI lost its majority in Congress, and it eventually lost the presidential election in 2000 (Bolívar, 2013). Since then, presidents are no longer all-powerful (although they remain the most influential actor in the political system), with Congress and other social actors serving as counterbalances of the executive (Carbonell, 2002; Segovia, 2008; Bolívar, 2013; Cejudo, 2017).

Although is well-documented in the literature that the president is the most influential actor in Mexico’s policymaking processes, it is also understood that he shares power with a small elite:

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5 A massive student protest took place in Mexico City just before the start of the Olympics in 1968. The government violently repressed the protest and the army opened fire against the students. This episode is known as “the Massacre of Tlatelolco”. Likewise, in 1972, another student protest erupted and was violently repressed in an event termed “the Massacre of Corpus Christi”. According to Krauze (1997), those episodes stripped the authoritarian regime of its legitimacy and forced change.
“Mexico is governed by a power elite of interlocking political, economic and status leaders whose interest and attitudes overlap sufficiently to assure a considerable degree of cooperation” (Scott, 1965 in Ai Camp, 1996: p. 12). Carpizo (2002) suggests that the president’s omnipotent power during the authoritarian period was justified because of his duty to balance the national interest with the interests of the elite. Gil et al. (2005) claim that elites have been consistently present in policy-decision processes and they should be considered – along with the president – as the most relevant factors in Mexico’s policymaking. Moreover, some authors argue that, since the end of the authoritarian regime and the start of democracy, elites have gained more power over the president, capturing the state and controlling the policymaking processes (Aceves, 2013; Cokelet, 2013; Salas-Porras, 2014).

Cabrero (2000) points out various features of Mexico’s policymaking tradition. First, democracy and pluralism are only symbolic during decision-making; the central government remains is the actor that monopolises the process. Second, a small and closely bonded group of experts design the policies. Third, the government exclusively drives the implementation process. The policies are designed according to standards of efficiency and governance, meaning that they should be budget-efficient and accepted by the majority of the public. Finally, the information derived from the evaluations should be confidential and reserved only for the eyes of the government and policymakers. Overall, public policies are conceived as actions taken by the government to maintain control. Garza (2009) highlights the large gap between academia and the political realm that means decision-making is often characterised by a lack of true expertise. Marinez (2011) notes that, although advances have been made since the end of the authoritarian regime – with, notably, an increasing willingness to take into consideration different actors in the various policy process – many of the characteristics of the policymaking in the previous system remain.

The tradition in Mexico dictates that each president pursues their own projects according to their personal interests (Vásquez, 2010). Since the 1980s, each president has set his own policy ideas for the next six years at the beginning of his administration, in what is known as “the National Plan of Development” (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo) (Ibid). Typically, each new

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6 Some authors debate this point, arguing that there are many examples of bottom-up approaches in policy implementation processes in Mexico. For example, Palavicini (2012) claims that some municipalities built development strategies by working alongside local actors.

7 Although the national development plan is only a normative document that may not have a direct impact on the government’s performance, it symbolically represents the conviction of the government and its commitment to society (Sánchez, 2019).
president introduces their own vision of how to resolve the national problems, which often leads to the discontinuation of previously implemented policies – even when the new president’s follows a predecessor from the same party (Levy and Rodríguez, 2005; Vásquez, 2010; Lustig, 2014). Although this has meant that long-term planning is essentially non-existent, neither the democratic transition nor the participation of new actors in the political landscape has done much to resolve the problem (Vásquez, 2010). Some authors suggest that the executive’s dominant role in – and control over – policymaking is causing imbalances in Mexican public policies, known as “implementation gaps” (Grindle, 2009; Cejudo, 2017). This means that many policies do not accomplish their objectives because they are not adjusted to reality, leading to large divergence between the design of the policy and the implementation of the policy process. Similarly, Rubio (2013) expresses that this top-down policymaking style reflects institutional weakness and a monopoly of the decision-making from federal government. Moreover, this style of policymaking has caused many problems, such as “targeting errors, delays, lack of provisions on the field, incompatibilities within governmental offices, lack of consideration of the local traditions within the population, among others” (Ibid: p. 152).

Although it is clear that Mexico’s policy remains strongly influenced by the president, Cejudo (2017) states that analysis of Mexico’s policymaking must also consider other actors, such as, “Congress, political parties, academia, civil society organisations, and so on. The executive is no longer a sole decision maker, but a central player in the policy game” (Ibid: p. 37). Similarly, Marinez (2011) claims that Mexico is moving slowly through a process of change in which the actors who had no space in the previous authoritarian system are now being taken into consideration in decision-making. What is more, most of the government’s programmes and policies are now evaluated to measure performance with the results then made public (González and Hernández, 2010). According to Cejudo (2017), Mexico’s policymaking is undergoing a paradigm shift, from “central planning” (in which the executive has a monopoly) to the new dynamics of “pluralism, political competition, check and balances, and federalism” (Ibid: p. 42).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed some of the literature on CCTs, with the objective of presenting a general overview of the design of this type of social intervention. As explained, CCTs work on the premise of allocating money and resources to a predetermined population, with the goal of
influencing the behaviour of the recipients. In the case of POP, the programme was designed to promote human capital by imposing conditionalities related to education, health, and nutrition. This chapter reviewed what has been written about POP’s policymaking, noting the gaps in the literature and emphasising the importance of addressing this issue. In addition, I discussed the features of Mexican policymaking tradition, which is characterised by the strong control of central government and decision-making monopolised by a small number of individuals (though more plurality has emerged since the political transition in 2000).

The review presented in this chapter is intended to enhance understanding of Mexico’s social policymaking. In particular, aims to help to understand why POP – that broke Mexican tradition of discontinuing policies every six years – is so striking. In addition, POP was created during the transition to democracy and thus represents a policy that evolved alongside the Mexican political system. Finally, POP is probably the best example of a programme that has been opened to different actors (beyond the executive branch) and consistently evaluated and audited. Consequently, it would be part of the policymaking paradigm change described in section 3.4. Thus, I aim to shed light on how social policymaking has been transformed in Mexico.
4. Research design and methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter details the research design chosen for this thesis and the process that framed the empirical investigation. The main objective of this research is to offer an explanation for POP’s endurance over two decades, therefore, the research focuses in exploring the factors that shaped its policymaking. For this purpose, I developed a qualitative methodology based on semi-structured interviews with actors from the policy elite in Mexico, as this allowed an in-depth analysis of the actors’ rationality. I present a list of the policymakers, politicians, and bureaucrats who, according to the literature, were involved in the programme between 1997 and 2018 and who were available for an interview. This list also includes opponents of POP because I considered it important to include the views of people who have challenged the programme. In addition, the chapter describes the process of conducting the interviews, reviews some of the obstacles met when interviewing the participants, and the strategies implemented to overcome those. The chapter also reviews the data analysis process and notes the elements taken into consideration when analysing the interviews. Finally, I discuss other aspects of the research, such as positionality and ethical considerations. This chapter seeks to provide the reader with a better understanding of the research process that shaped many of the research outputs presented in the empirical and analytical chapters.

4.2 Research question and methodology selection

As stated in the previous chapter, there is a substantial gap in the literature on POP policymaking, despite the programme’s political relevance and the debate around its efficacy in reducing poverty. The international reputation of the programme (alongside that of “Bolsa Familia” in Brazil) has been an essential driver of the diffusion of the CCT policy worldwide (Lindert, 2014; Osorio 2014; 2015; 2019; Béland et al., 2018), but this has created many myths around POP. The “success” of POP is often cited in the literature to explain its endurance. Many scholars overplay the role of evidence in the decision to continue the programme, taking for granted the objectivity of the evidence and never seriously questioning the processes that produced it. Others cite the “Washington consensus” as the reason for POP’s long survival. Nevertheless, the existing literature only partially explains the endurance of the programme, without fully interrogating the political factors of the policymaking and how they ensured its
continuation. Therefore, the research question that guides the investigation asks how POP was able to achieve institutional stability for over two decades. This question aims to clarify Mexico’s social policymaking processes and demystify POP.

To answer the research question, I focus on one consistent element in the scarce literature on POP policymaking: namely, the presence of a strong community of scholars and policymakers in most stages of the programme (Levy and Rodríguez, 2005; Levy, 2006; Behrman, 2008; Hernández, 2009; Lustig, 2014). An analysis of the actions of the community behind POP will provide valuable insights into the policymaking processes that determined the continuation of the programme. Owing to the Mexican policymaking tradition in which technocratic elites monopolise decision-making (see Chapter 3), I hypothesise that the aforementioned group of scholars and policymakers formed a policy community that heavily influenced POP’s policymaking and advocated for its continuation.

I decided to pursue the objective of understanding POP’s continuation through the analysis of the community behind the programme, thus limiting the extent of the research. The motive for this was to make the research more manageable. As stated by White (2008), a broad objective can lead to the researcher becoming “over-ambitious, collecting unnecessary data, floundering in too much data and wasting their time down ‘blind alleys’” (Ibid: p. 35). Furthermore, as noted above, the only common finding in the literature is the presence of this group of scholars and policymakers playing an important role in the continuation of the programme. This starting point sets a clear path for the research, providing the first piece of the “puzzle”: namely, a focus on this community’s influence on the policymaking processes and the mechanisms by which that influence was exerted.

To answer the research question, it was first necessary to determine the type of methodology appropriate for the investigation. A qualitative methodology was considered the most helpful for identifying the mechanisms of power. In contrast to quantitative research, where the analysis is constrained to a data set, qualitative research allows a wider understanding of the phenomena through an interactive process between the researcher and the studied actors (Frattaroli, 2012). Although a quantitative approach can be useful for many purposes, in this specific case, it would not have allowed an exploration of sufficient depth into the motivations that guided the actions of the individuals under study.

Once a qualitative approach had been selected, it was necessary to select a specific method. Since the literature is explicit about the actors involved in POP (see Levy and Rodríguez, 2005;
Levy, 2006; Behrman 2007, Hernández, 2009; Lustig, 2014; Yaschine, 2019), interviews were one option. I ultimately chose this instrument for two reasons. First, as expressed by Vela (2004), interviews are a tool for defining problems and elaborating theoretical explanations for social processes. Since the objective of this research is to identify the policymaking processes that promoted POP’s continuation, the most appropriate approach was to interview the individuals involved in that decision-making (from the design of the programme to its implementation and evaluation). Moreover, as explained in the introduction, while there are countless studies of POP, there have been no interviews with leading policymakers.\(^8\) Second, interviews were considered the best approach due to the “political timing”. This research took place during the transition period in 2018, between the governments of Enrique Peña Nieto and Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and there was uncertainty about the continuation of the programme. Most of the main actors involved in POP (supporters and opponents) were willing to leave space in their agendas to talk about the programme and their expectations for its future. Moreover, since many of these actors were (or are) high-level officials, politicians, and bureaucrats, it was assumed that there would be limited time to interact with them and it would have been extremely difficult to employ any other method within that restricted period of time.

The interviews were semi-structured. This meant that many of the questions were open-ended to allow a deeper discussion of the topic, while following a prepared and flexible script that ensured a coherent order to the questions. As suggested by Adams (2015), semi-structured interviews should be thoughtfully prepared, based on an appropriate literature review, with an appropriately selected sample and a carefully designed script. This type of interview was deemed appropriate for this research because the goal was to obtain as much information as possible about POP and the decision-making of leading policymakers. As explained by Harvey-Jordan and Long (2001), semi-structured interviews are useful “to understand the reasons why people act in particular ways, by exploring participants’ perceptions, experiences and attitudes” (Ibid: p. 2019). Hence, it was the best methodology for exploring the actions of the policy community behind POP. Other types of interview would have been incompatible with the objective of the research. Structured interviews would have encouraged “yes or no” answers, providing only very limited information, while unstructured interviews would have been too broad and undesirable, as the objective was not to “explore” the topic but to define specific

\(^8\) This is perhaps with the exception of Behrman (2007). However, his work does not focus on explaining the continuation of the programme.
issues. In addition, the restricted time available meant it would not have been possible to conduct these types of interviews.

4.3 Selection of the interviewees

After an extensive review of academic literature; grey literature; reports; policy briefings; evaluations from governmental and international organisations; and publications in electronic outlets, websites, and media, it was possible to identify the most relevant actors in the POP policymaking process. In this regard, the Behrman (2007) study was particularly relevant. This study identified each of the actors involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the first programme, PROGRESA. Similarly, Osorio (2014) offers a very precise list of the individuals involved in the diffusion of CCTs in Latin America, which served as an approximation of the transnational epistemic community involved in POP. From this literature, a list of potential interviewees was created. The list was not restricted to actors who had participated in the programme, but also included the key opponents of both POP and CCTs more generally. This was done to gain a complete picture of the policy process of POP and a deeper understanding of why these actors had failed to influence the policymaking. Ultimately, the interviews with these individuals (supporters and opponents) enabled the identification of interactions between the actors, the resources they had mobilised when seeking a space in the decision-making process, and any other mechanisms that had played a key role in the continuation of the POP.

Of those on the initial list of potential interviewees, many declined to be interviewed (see Table 4.1 in the Appendix). For example, Susan Parker, who worked under José Gómez de León when he was director of PROGRESA and later acted as an advisor in Oportunidades, and Josefina Vázquez Mota, former minister of social development (2000-2005) and education (2006-2009), both initially agreed to be interviewed, but later declined, citing a lack of time. Roberto Gil Zuarth, personal secretary of President Felipe Calderón, and Paula Angélica Hernández, national coordinator of Oportunidades/PROSPERA (2012-2018), both agreed to be interviewed, but ceased all communication after their names were involved in cases of corruption. José Antonio Meade, former minister of social development (2015-2016) and

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9 Roberto Gil Zuarth was accused of receiving a bribe while he was senator, during Enrique Peña Nieto’s government. Paula Angélica Hernández was close to Rosario Robles, former minister of social development (2012-2015), who was accused of one of the largest state racketeering scandals and is now in prison.
finance (2016-2017), retired from the public scene after losing the 2018 presidential election and refused to give interviews.

In other cases, it was not possible to contact the individuals. Carlos Lastiri, former deputy minister of social development (2012-2015), who was directly involved in the transition from *Oportunidades* to *PROSPERA*, survived a kidnapping in 2019 and became impossible to contact. Likewise, Rodolfo Tuirán, close collaborator of José Gómez de León and former deputy minister of social development and education at different times under the governments of Vicente Fox, Felipe Calderón, and Enrique Peña Nieto, died from cancer in 2019. Similarly, Leticia Ánimas, who was coordinator of the programme “*Becas para el Bienestar Benito Juárez*” (the programme that replaced POP), died of Covid-19 during the pandemic. However, in many of these cases, it was possible to find other individuals who had also been involved in POP and were willing to participate in the research. The final list of the interviewees is presented in Table 4.2 below.
### Table 4.2 Interviewed actors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and date of the interview</th>
<th>Motive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Santiago Levy Algazi (January 2018)</td>
<td>Santiago Levy was the main architect and designer of PROGRESA. He is considered one of the most important advocates for conditional cash transfers (CCTs) and has strong links to international organisations and other transnational epistemic networks. He was deputy minister of finance during the presidency of President Ernesto Zedillo and director of the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS) during the administration of President Vicente Fox. At the time of this research, he was vice president of the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulina Rodríguez Salinas (October 2018)</td>
<td>Paulina Rodríguez served as director of international affairs for PROSPERA from 2013 to 2018. She was close to the national coordinator of PROSPERA, Paula Angélica Hernández Olmos. She has also worked in different positions in the federal government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julio Boltvinik Kalinka (October 2018)</td>
<td>Julio Boltvinik is a renowned Mexican researcher, specialising in social development, and a professor at Mexico College (COLMEX). He is considered one of the main opponents of PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA (POP) and an advocate of universal basic income. He served as Vicente Fox’s government adviser during the president’s initial years. He was also congressional representative for the Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD), and his wife (Araceli Damián) was congressional representative of the National Regeneration Movement Party (MORENA).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorge Álvarez Mányez (October 2018)</td>
<td>Jorge Álvarez is a politician currently serving as general secretary of the Citizen’s Movement Party (MC). He has been congressional representative of MC and is an advocate of universal basic income (UBI).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Scott Andretta (October 2018)</td>
<td>John Scott is a renowned Mexican economist and professor at Centre for Economic Teaching and Research (CIDE). He formerly worked as a consultant for PROGRESA/Oportunidades during the initial years of the programme. At the time of this study, he was an academic councillor for the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Hernández Franco (November 2018)</td>
<td>Daniel Hernández was two-time national coordinator of POP: first, from 2000 to 2001 (when it was PROGRESA), and again during 2012 (when it was Oportunidades). He is considered close to Santiago Levy and the former José Gómez de León and is a strong supporter of POP. He has occupied relevant positions in the Ministry of Social Development and Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Biography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Araceli Damián González</td>
<td>Araceli Damián is a renowned Mexican researcher, specialising in social development, and a professor at COLMEX. She is considered one of the main opponents of POP and an advocate of UBI. She was congressional representative for the MORENA, and her husband is Julio Boltvinik.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorge Castañeda Gutman</td>
<td>Jorge Castañeda is a politician who served as minister of foreign affairs during the administration of Vicente Fox. As a public figure, he has in recent years advocated for universal basic income. In 2018, he became the main adviser of Ricardo Anaya, presidential candidate from the National Action Party (PAN) during the election of that year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo</td>
<td>Rogelio Gómez was national coordinator of Oportunidades from 2001 to 2006. He is considered close to Josefina Vázquez Mota (former minister of social development) and a strong supporter of POP. At the time of this research, he was a consultant for the World Bank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pablo Yanes Rizo</td>
<td>Pablo Yanes is chief of research at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Mexico City. He is the founder of the UBI network in Mexico and one of its main advocates. Additionally, he has worked as a senior official in the Mexico City government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos Rojas Gutiérrez</td>
<td>Carlos Rojas was the main designer of PRONASOL and a politician close to President Carlos Salinas de Gortari. He advocates for social policies based on general in-kind subsidies, and he is opposed to CCTs. As such, he had a political rivalry with Santiago Levy. He was minister of social development from 1993 to 1998, during the presidencies of Carlos Salinas de Gortari and Ernesto Zedillo, and he was a senator from 2000 to 2006.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvador Neftalí Escobedo Zotello</td>
<td>Salvador Escobedo was national coordinator of Oportunidades from 2006 to 2012. He had a long career with the PAN and worked as a senior official with the Ministry of Social Development during the administration of Vicente Fox.</td>
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<tr>
<td>María Concepción Steta Gandara</td>
<td>María Steta was director of evaluation of Oportunidades from 2004 to 2009. She was close to Josefina Vázquez Mota (minister of social development) and to the national coordinator of Oportunidades, Salvador Escobedo. At the time of this research, she was a consultant for the World Bank.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jere Behrman</td>
<td>Jere Behrman is a renowned economist and professor at the University of Pennsylvania, having worked as a consultant (hired by the International Food Policy Research Institute [IFPRI] and the Mexican government) to conduct the first evaluation of PROGRESA. He is an advocate for human capital and considered one of the most prominent scholars in the field of development.</td>
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<td>Paul Schultz</td>
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<td>Vicente Fox Quezada</td>
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<td>*Anonymous</td>
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<td>Nora Lustig</td>
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<td>Bertha Elena Luján Uranga</td>
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<td>María Graciela Freyermuth</td>
<td>August 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosario Robles Berlanga</td>
<td>August 2020</td>
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</table>
| Vicente Arredondo Ramírez  | June 2021     | Vicente Arredondo was national coordinator of PROSPERA in 2001, the first one during Vicente Fox’s government. He is considered close to
Josefina Vázquez Mota (former minister of social development) and a strong supporter of POP.

Although only these 22 actors could be contacted for interview, this is a case of “quality over quantity”. Most of these actors played a relevant role in specific stages of the policy process of the programme, often with high levels of responsibility and power (from high-level bureaucrats to a president and including ministers and other cabinet members). The policymaking was concentrated in the hands of a small circle of individuals, and this list is very representative of that group. In addition, the critics mentioned are equally representative of the group of opponents of CCTs. Therefore, this list of 22 actors provides a strong picture of the programme.

As most of the actors involved in POP had different roles during the period in which the programme was in operation, a different interview guide had to be prepared for each case. Hence, I conducted reviews of different documentary sources and was able to frame the questionnaires according to the respective experiences of the actors. The sources used for this purpose include policy documents, official documents, working papers, and contracts from international organisations (i.e., the World Bank and the IADB). I also reviewed the operational rules of the SEDESOL programmes, national development plans, official transcriptions of presidential press conferences, evaluations conducted by the CONEVAL and other external organisations, electoral platforms, Congress debates, and many other sources.

I also used sources such as media, newspapers, political blogs, social media posts, and grey literature to prepare the questionnaires. These sources were rich in relevant information and other details not normally included in institutional sources. I tended to systematically consult these sources after reviewing the institutional sources to contrast the information and gain a fuller picture. In this way, I could identify specific issues to be addressed by the interviewees. For example, while interviewing Santiago Levy, I could ask about the IADB’s contracts with the Mexican government and about the criticisms of Oportunidades made by Rosario Robles in the press. Similarly, when I interviewed Julio Boltvinik, I could focus on his experience of advising Vicente Fox’s government and his animosity towards members of the POP policy community. As stated before, the questions aimed to illuminate the dynamics of the policymaking and the political factors that promoted the endurance of the programme.
4.4 Conducting the interviews

Interviewing elite actors can be extremely challenging, particularly because of the natural inequality of the power relations (Harvey, 2011). As many of the actors interviewed were politically active at the time the research was being conducted, the first challenge was to gain access to them. In many cases, this was made possible by using professional networks and pre-existing relationships. However, in other cases, it was necessary to “chase” the actors at their workplaces. For example, John Scott was visited directly in his office at CIDE; Jorge Castañeda was telephoned at his office in New York City; Salvador Neftalí Escobedo was contacted when he was about to enter the National Action Party headquarters at the state of Puebla; and Rosario Robles was contacted through her lawyer, as she is currently in prison.

However, as observed by Harvey (Ibid), the challenge goes beyond contacting the elite and includes gaining their trust to obtain quality data. Therefore, it is essential to build a rapport from the first contact. For this purpose, a display of soft and diplomatic skills was necessary. In many cases, this meant engaging in casual conversation before commencing the interviews, offering the interview subjects a drink, mentioning shared professional contacts, and even telling jokes to break the ice. Furthermore, Harvey (Ibid) explains that the manner in which researchers present themselves to the elite interviewees is important for making them feel as comfortable as possible. This meant presenting myself as a student or researcher when pertinent and sometimes as the “friend” of someone close to them. In addition, it required moderating my tone of voice, behaviour, and mannerisms.

When conducting elite interviews, the major challenge is to prevent these actors dodging the questions or taking control of the conversation, since its natural for them to be “in charge” (Ostrander, 1995; Moreno, 2020). To overcome these potential challenges, my strategy was to establish authority from the beginning of the meetings. A very useful tactic was to remark that the research was conducted under the supervision of the Department of Social Policy at the University of Edinburgh. This not only communicated my expertise in the field under study, but also indicated a “higher” institutional position (compared with local universities in Mexico), due to the international reputation of the University of Edinburgh. Moreover, as suggested by Ostrander (1995), to avoid losing control during the interview, it is important to structure the conversation in a way that facilitates the obtaining of the desired data; therefore,

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10 I worked as a researcher and political consultant for five years in Mexico. This facilitated contact with many of the mentioned actors.
it is recommended “to use pointed questions, asking for specific examples and occasionally interrupting while explaining why one is doing so” (Ibid: p. 147). For this reason, when undertaking the interviews, I ensured that the conversations flowed towards specific issues and prevented the interviewees from taking control by monopolising the conversation. As observed by Ostrander (Ibid), elites like to talk and they do so easily, but not all of what they say is relevant. Thus, it is the work of the researcher to claim their space, even if that means “stretching the bounds of etiquette” (Ibid: p. 150).

The final challenge, when conducting the interviews, was to ensure the interviewees were willing to speak openly in the presence of a tape recorder. The easiest solution was to offer the possibility of stopping the recorder any time they wanted to share something off the record. Goldstein (2002) explains that elites are familiar with journalistic rules and they understand what is meant by “on the record” and “off the record”. Surprisingly, none of the interviewees asked for that, and most appeared very excited by the opportunity to share their recollections of their participation in POP.

Most of the interviews were conducted in person, by telephone, or via video-chat applications such as Skype and WhatsApp. They were all conducted between January 2018 and June 2021. The interviews were an average of 40 minutes each, with the shortest lasting less than 20 minutes and a few extending over 1.5 hours. All were conducted in Spanish. In certain cases, it was not possible to arrange an interview and a questionnaire was sent by email instead. This was the case for Jere Behrman, Paul Schultz, Nora Lustig, María Graciela Freyermuth, Bertha Elena Luján Uranga and Vicente Arredondo, who agreed to complete a short questionnaire. (In some of these cases, the questionnaires were sent in English.)

At the start of the interviews, the purpose of the research was fully explained to the participant, and their oral consent to record the interviews and use the information for academic purposes was obtained. Although written consent is preferred in many European universities (including the University of Edinburgh), this was not feasible for this project due to the nature of Mexican politics. Unease around signing documents would have meant that many of these actors would have refused to give interviews. This issue was discussed with my PhD supervisors at the beginning of the research, and it was agreed that oral consent would be sufficient to meet the ethical requirements of the School of Social and Political Science. Owing to the political sensitivity of the topic under discussion, anonymity was offered to the individuals in case they
considered it necessary. With the exception of one person who requested anonymity, the actors had no objections to being quoted by name.

Most of the interviews conducted in person took place in Mexico City, with a small number conducted in other cities in Mexico or the United States. It is noted that, despite the precautions taken during the data collection process in Mexico, a major security incident occurred in December 2018 that forced me to stop the interviews and leave the country. My PhD supervisors were immediately notified about this situation, and the rest of the scheduled interviews (i.e. all interviews conducted after December 2018) were conducted at a distance. Fortunately, this incident produced only a temporary delay, and the research project continued without further problems.

4.5 Data analysis

Once the interviews had been conducted, a “tape-based analysis” was performed. This type of analysis involves listening to recorded interviews and transcribing only those parts that the researcher considers fundamental to answering the research question (Ongwegbuzie et al., 2011). I decided not to fully transcribe the interviews because, in many cases, the actors covered topics that were not relevant to the research – such as their personal experiences, jokes, and even political gossip. As a result, it would have taken too long to transcribe the interviews in their entirety. However, I was very careful not to overlook any important information. The transcripts were then analysed to identify the following:

- the role of the actors involved in the policy process of POP
- the mechanisms used to influence the decision-making of the programme

To develop this analysis, a coding process was conducted, applying the key elements found in the literature, complemented and expanded by the information obtained from the interviews. This coding process was helpful for establishing the interrelations between the actors and the mechanisms of control and identifying the narratives around POP proposed by the supporters and primary opponents of the programme. The coding exercise was initially an “open process”, which is an analytical process that focuses on the conceptualisation and categorisation of a phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin, 2002). Thus, the data obtained from the interviews were broken up into smaller parts to be analysed and developed into codes. Each part was then reviewed to identify similarities and differences, so the codes could be amalgamated into
different categories. Finally, the codes and categories were integrated into a theoretical framework, from which it was possible to observe the relationships between them.

The second stage of the coding was a “selective process”, which meant choosing the core categories that better described the studied phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin, 2002; Vollstedt, 2015). Those core categories made it possible to address the research question. For the coding process, although the use of a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) was recommended (i.e., ATLAS.ti or NVivo), a “traditional” process was preferred for two reasons. First, the CAQDAS software is normally used to efficiently organise large volumes of text gathered from many documents. However, the volume of text in this study was completely manageable and there was no inconvenience in applying a traditional analysis process. Second, despite the technical advantages of using CAQDAS software, there was a real risk of “data distancing”, which means paying more attention to the mechanical process of coding and less to the data themselves (Blismas and Dainty, 2003). The traditional process of analysis was thus employed to avoid losing focus on data.

4.6 Positionality

An important element to consider during the analysis of the information was the “positionality” of the research. “Positionality” refers to the initial stance of the researcher regarding the phenomenon under study (Coghland and Brydon-Miller, 2014). From the beginning, it was clear that I had certain biases against the programme, mainly because I had previously conducted on research that had found Oportunidades was being used to build partisan clientele through a corruption scheme to influence elections in a city in the north of Mexico. Additionally, I distrusted the claims about the effectiveness of the programme, as the levels of poverty in the country remained almost the same as they were three decades ago. On a personal level, I found it disturbing that POP was being presented as a “successful case” worldwide, when it was unclear that the programme was actually achieving its goal of reducing poverty.

To avoid these predispositions affecting the research process, I had an open and honest discussion with my PhD supervisors before commencing the research. In this way, any prejudice or bias I had were addressed from the beginning. I was clear that the research was not to be an evaluation of the programme and would not seek to determine whether POP was

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11 The traditional process involves, among other things, printing the documents, highlighting the quotes with different colour markers, making handwritten notes, creating collages, and so on.
a good or bad intervention. As a further strategy for managing my initial stance on POP and avoiding making moral judgements about the programme, the work remained constantly under review by my PhD supervisors throughout the research process. The work was also presented to an external and neutral audience, thereby obtaining feedback that helped to maintain the objectivity of the study.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter detailed the research design of this thesis. As explained previously, the main objective of this research is to understand the reasons for the endurance of POP; therefore, the a qualitative methodology was deemed the most suitable. Semi-structured interviews with key actors involved in POP were considered the best way to “assemble the puzzle” of the programme’s longevity and to fill the related gap in the literature. Additionally, the methodology aligns with the chosen theoretical framework, which employs historical institutionalism to develop a narrative approach. Thus, it was deemed possible to develop a broad explanation for POP’s continuation based on the experiences of the leading policymakers involved in the programme.

This chapter also described the process of conducting the interviews and the main challenges that arose. With most of the interviewees considered members of the Mexican policy elite, it is remarkable that 22 interviews or questionnaires were successfully completed. This enabled rich, high-quality data to be obtained for the development of a proper analysis of the rationale behind the POP’s policymaking and continuation. Finally, this chapter discussed other important aspects, such as the positionality of the researcher and the strategies implemented to avoid subjectivity during the investigation, as well as the ethical considerations, standards, and procedures adhered to during the study. This chapter has provided the reader with an understanding of the basis and scope of the research, and the empirical analyses and main findings of the dissertation will be presented in later chapters. Before that, in the following chapter, I present the historical background of POP.
5. The background of PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of Mexico’s social policies for tackling poverty and explains how CCTs became the government’s preferred social intervention for addressing this issue. Before considering POP’s institutional endurance, it is necessary to understand some of the key political processes that have shaped Mexico’s reality: specifically, those events that displaced previous paradigms in social policy and the rise of a new generation of policymakers known as “technocrats”, who changed many of the old practices in the Mexican political system. Moreover, this chapter seeks to explain the role of certain actors in the policy subsystem who were able to reach the government’s agenda and promote CCTs as a replacement for previous social interventions. These actors would later form a policy community that maintained a policy monopoly over social policy for almost two decades. Thus, the implementation of CCTs under the name of “PROGRESA” was not solely due to the specific political and economic circumstances of the mid-1990s, but also a product of the successful efforts of a group of technocrats who acted as policy entrepreneurs and used the circumstances to influence the government in favour of their policy idea. This chapter also presents the core design of CCTs and some of the basic principles that guided the implementation of PROGRESA during Ernesto Zedillo’s government.

5.2 Social policies before conditional cash transfers

According to Villareal (1993), before 1970, there were no specific programmes to combat poverty; charity was the only measure in place to address this problem. It was in this decade that President Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970-1976) introduced the notion of “shared development” (“desarrollo compartido”) and the Mexican government implemented the first policies to reduce social inequality. During this period, the government implemented a series of social development policies with the aim of reducing the growing rates of poverty in the country, following the collapse of the economic development model in the first years of the decade (Ceja, 2004). The economic model, based on import substitution industrialisation, collapsed because public spending was not accompanied by appropriate tax collection, thus

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12 This is a trade and economic policy that advocates replacing foreign imports with domestic production (Brian, 2009).
increasing the deficit and inflation rates. Additionally, the sudden increase in international oil prices during those years created an external shock for Mexico, which was a net importer of oil and petroleum derivatives (Lustig and Székely, 1997).

The economic crisis boosted the creation and implementation of programmes to fight poverty, the most relevant being the “integrated rural development project” (PIDER; 1970-1983), which had the purpose of reducing migration through the creation of jobs in poor countryside communities. Likewise, the National General Coordination for Depressed Areas and Marginalised Groups (COPLAMAR; 1970-1982) was created to fight marginalisation in the countryside. In addition, the government implemented the Mexican alimentary system (SAM; 1980-1982), which sought to improve the economy of the countryside by generating better income sources for peasants and other rural workers (Lustig and Pérez, 1982). These and other social programmes attempted to reduce poverty in the country, but the economic crisis affected the effectiveness of these programmes (Ceja, 2004). In addition, during the early 1980s, economic and political ideology shifted in favour of reducing the size of the state, which led to the discontinuation of these programmes. This paradigm change was promoted by international figures such as Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom, whose influence reached Latin America’s social policies in the subsequent decades (Sottoli, 2002). In Mexico, this change was promoted by a new generation of policymakers known as “technocrats” (Krauze, 1997; Rodríguez, 2009).

“Technocrat”, in Mexican literature, has a very specific connotation. According to Centeno and Maxfield (1992), technocrats (or political technocrats) belong to a younger generation of policymakers; their socio-demographic origin tends to be urban, from middle-class to upper-classes, and they are often the sons of politicians. They have a high level of education and have often obtained PhDs from renowned overseas universities. Their political activities began in the late 1970s and tended to occur in the Ministry of Programming and Budget. Their main difference from other technicians and bureaucrats is that technocrats participate in politics and party management, while others only participate in specific areas or institutions. Babb (2002) and Ai Camp (2010) suggest that technocrats have strong ties with the economic elite, in particular with foreign banks and international organisations. Similarly, Meyer (1995) claims that technocrats promote neoliberalism as an alternative governing model to replace the failed

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13 “Marginalised people” were defined as those groups left out by the welfare state (Rabell, 1997).
14 Today, that would be the Ministry of Finance.
15 Ai Camp (1985) suggests that the line that divides technocrats from politicians can be very fine.
populist model of development that proved to be inefficient and corrupt. In this sense, neoliberalism is understood as a strategy that seeks to rationalise public resources by replacing previous economic state interventions with new models promoting free market dynamics. Under the neoliberal paradigm, the foremost objective of state reform would be to create a competitive economy (focused on exports), while reducing the size of the state by selling, merging, or closing public companies and reducing public spending (Millan and Valdés, 1995).

The economic collapse due to the poor financial management of the populist governments of Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970-1976) and José López Portillo (1976-1982) helped to bring the technocrats to power. According to Krauze (1997), President José López Portillo, despite being a populist politician, was a supporter of this new generation of policymakers because he believed they knew how to deal with the country’s economic and financial problems. For this reason, President José López Portillo chose Miguel de la Madrid as his successor. Miguel de la Madrid was a lawyer from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and had a master’s degree in public administration from Harvard. Moreover, he was former student of José López Portillo at UNAM and had become his minister of Programming and Budget in 1979. As noted by Ai Camp (1985), de la Madrid’s cabinet was populated by technocrats specialised in economics and finance.

Miguel de la Madrid become president in a difficult economic context, with an inflation rate of 100%, a debt crisis, and the flight of capital. In this context of scarcity of resources, the new president promoted a new perspective on the role of the state in the economy, implementing an aggressive austerity policy and a free market orientation (Tello, 2010). This had an impact on Mexican social policy, with the fight against poverty becoming a secondary issue for the government (Barajas, 2002). Social policy was reformed, with all attempts to deliver even a minimal level of social security to the population set aside and the state withdrawing from its role as the main provider of welfare. (In this case, “welfare” can be understood as the range of services provided to protect the population – such as health, education, pensions, public housing, and so on). The underlying idea was that state intervention had distorted and impeded the market from interacting freely with the people (Haagh, 2002). This explained the severe

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16 According to Gabriel Zaid (quoted in Krauze, 1997), José López Portillo was spending on average 70 million dollars per hour, most of them, in unproductive projects.

17 Barajas (2002) states that the word “poverty” was not even mentioned in the National Plan of Development 1983-1988.
reduction in public spending, from 17% of GDP to just 9% (Garza, 1989), and the elimination of anti-poverty programmes such as PIDER, COPLAMAR, and SAM during the early 1980s.

During the Miguel de la Madrid presidency, a new focus was given to social policy, rethinking state action in three aspects: “communities were recognized as groups with organisational capacity to generate their own productive alternatives; government would not solve all the social demands; and it was necessary to find new ways to finance social spending without generating inflation” (Mendoza 2011: p. 235-236). Most of the existing programmes were replaced by “regional development programmes”, which merged basic infrastructure programmes (rural electrification, states roads, rural roads, etc.), social assistance programmes (sewage and drinking water, social security, food assistance), and productive programmes to invest in the production of basic goods for the poorest. These programmes were jointly operated by states and municipalities to make the budget “efficient”, meaning the allocation of resources according to established goals at the lowest cost possible (Barajas, 2002). These programmes were limited and did not ensure access to fundamental rights such as health and education, primarily due to the scarcity of resources (Ceja, 2004). Ultimately, it was impossible to identify the concrete effects of the regional development programmes due to the lack of publicly disseminated information (Ordoñez-Barba, 2002).

The austerity measures imposed by the de la Madrid government caused profound anger amongst the public, as they deteriorated the standard of living of large sectors of the population. As a result, the elections of 1988, for the first time since the 1930s, saw the Revolutionary Institutional Party in real danger of losing the presidency. However, the official party managed to win the election of that year, and Carlos Salinas de Gortari, de la Madrid’s minister of Programming and Budget, became president. However, that election was considered “fraudulent” by the opposition, as Carlos Salinas de Gortari was declared winner despite anomalies and inconsistencies in the statistical data from the electoral institution (Krauze, 1997). This episode was later termed “the fall of the system”. Although Carlos Salinas always denied fraud, he acknowledged that there had been technical problems and Miguel de

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18 Decentralisation became a worldwide trend during the 1980s and was part of the economic liberalisation programmes of many countries in Latin America.
19 According to Krauze (1997), another contributor to public anger was the slow reaction of the government and the lack of support provided to people after the earthquake that hit Mexico City in 1985 and killed more than 10,000 people.
20 Carlos Salinas said, “Did the system fall silent in 1988? Yes, the telephone lines that fed the computer that was part of the alternative vote-tracking mechanism fell silent. Nevertheless, the counting of votes in the election did not fail in any way. The PRI’s political adversaries, attempting to discredit the results of the election and to cover up their defeat” (Salinas, 2002: p. 936).
la Madrid later admitted that this episode had involved manipulation by the PRI to preserve power (Thompson, 2004).

The Carlos Salinas victory was considered a consolidation of the technocratic elite. Like his predecessor, Salinas graduated from Harvard and his cabinet was populated by economists with the same technocratic profile. Moreover, they shared an acceptance of the neoliberal paradigm described by Medrano (2011) as “those political prescriptions focused on expanding the role of the free market, improving economic efficiency and international competitiveness, which had been promoted by the Washington Consensus” (p. 47). However, the lack of legitimacy in the elections led Carlos Salinas and his government to act promptly to calm the political and social unrest (Barajas, 2002; Medrano, 2011). The great lesson of the poor electoral results was that a large-scale economic programme could not be implemented without the support of a social base.21 According to Carlos Rojas, former minister of social development from 1993 to 1997, before the new government of Carlos Salinas was launched, an internal discussion occurred between two political groups with opposite visions of social policy:

There was a debate between two groups. Those who wanted a participative policy, let say, wider and extended, and the others who already had the formulas from the World Bank. I was a participant in the debate, and the counterpart was the people that were part of the Ministry of Finance. Pedro Aspe (the new minister of finance) and his group had already asked the World Bank for recommendations. In this internal debate with the president our vision won, which was a vision more focused on the social (Rojas – Interview).

Following this debate, according to Rojas, President Salinas decided to create a new social programme with communitarian features to promote citizen participation. The National Solidarity Programme (“Programa Nacional de Solidaridad”), also known as “PRONASOL” or “Solidaridad”, was created as an alliance with the social base who felt betrayed by the economic measures that had been implemented (Barajas, 2002). However, this new policy was different from the populist policies of the 1970s that had been based on universal subsidies, as it introduced the concept of “co-responsibility”: “The modern welfare state does not identify with paternalism, which only overrides and inhibits the efforts; today, the rise of the quality of life will only be product of the responsible and shared action of the state with the society” (speech of President Carlos Salinas, quoted in Ontiveros, 2005: p. 4).

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21 Carlos Salinas won with 50% of the vote, until then the lowest result in the PRI’s history.
The idea that the state intervention was ineffective and undesirable – coupled with the need to preserve market confidence – gave rise to a new social policy compatible with the new economic policy (Ceja, 2004). The people were now “co-responsible” (forced to actively participate in the programme to receive the social benefits), which represented the beginning of the neoliberal paradigm in Mexican social policy. Seen from an operational perspective, co-responsibility favoured the saving of resources, provided more control of the processes, allowed the decentralisation of public action, and incorporated “efficiency” criteria into the social programmes (Gordon, 1996; Medrano, 2011). Thus, PRONASOL marked the beginning of a new social policy paradigm for tackling poverty, reconciled with the neoliberal perspective of the role of the state in the provision of social protection. This paradigm was in tune with the traditional anti-poverty strategy developed by international organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Medrano, 2011). Nonetheless, Carlos Rojas disagrees with what has been suggested by other authors, stating that many of the subprograms within Solidaridad were based on programmes previously implemented by populist governments. Rojas considers that co-responsibility itself is not a “neoliberal” feature, but rather an effective method of ensuring that people – and not the government – establish the priorities in which the government should invest:

In Solidaridad, we built “custom-made shirts” and not “straitjackets”. For example, there was a huge need to rehabilitate public schools; they were deteriorated and the best way to improve them was through the direct participation of the citizens. We had to be congruent with our speech, which meant not only asking people’s opinions (on what the government should invest in) but giving and allowing them to manage the resources (…) The people in assemblies decided everything; we did not make surveys. So, it was a relatively slow process, but it was more legitimate. The results were almost always good (Rojas – Interview).

According to Salinas (2002), the programme was conceived to primarily support the extreme poor. Carlos Rojas argues that the limited budget and resources did not allow them to extend coverage to all those living in poverty. In contrast, Tetrault (2012) suggests that resources were allocated only to the extreme poor because the government had the objective of being efficient in its use of resources. Additionally, scholars such as Boltvinik and Damián (2004) suggest that the decision to support only the extreme poor reflected the belief that the regular poor were not impeded in their ability to participate in the market and generate their own income. It is noted that, according to Carlos Rojas, PRONASOL did not have a specific methodology by which to
identify the extreme poor because, in his view, the use of a poverty line as a strict measure would have been unfair:

It would be nonsense to impede people from getting the benefits of the programme just because they are one peso above the poverty line. Do you think being one peso above or below that line will make a substantial difference in their life? Of course not (Rojas – Interview).

Thus, the poorest were identified through the assemblies, where people pointed out to the officials of the programme the poorest families in the community. This communitarian targeting method can be effective because local people often have a better understanding of the context of the community. However, it can also be risky, as it can threaten community cohesion and local people are not necessarily exempt from bias (Samson et al., 2006; Ladhani and Sitter, 2018).

According to Gordon (1996) and Levy (2006), while it was intended to be more efficient, the lack of an objective targeting methodology left many of the extreme poor without the benefits. Moreover, some authors argue that the programme was in reality an attempt to influence the following elections, rather than a real strategy in the fight against poverty (Dresser, 1991; Molinar and Weldon, 1994; Ordoñez-Barba, 2002). However, Carlos Rojas rejects this argument, insisting that the programme was effective at resolving the real needs of the people, thus the people were satisfied with the government, which explains the strong electoral results:

A programme like this, where people mobilise to accomplish their own specific goals, made them very excited. They mobilised according to their own need, not ours [the government’s] (…) When society is in a “good mood”, when the people have hope, when their surroundings start changing, when they realise that things are working, all of that is translated into good electoral outcomes. We never used the programme for electoral promotion, but the good social mood of the country led us to a strong victory in Congress in 1991 and 1994 (Rojas – Interview).

Despite the good electoral results, the programme received much criticism from technocratic groups within the government. Two of the main critics were Luis Téllez Kuenzler, who was the economic adviser of the presidential office, and Santiago Levy, president of the Federal Competition Commission. Both rejected the strategy based on generalised subsidies that they considered to be inefficient: “Most of the resources were channelled through generalised subsidies, with a large share of the benefits captured by the non-poor; targeted programmes had very limited coverage in rural areas and a large inclusion and exclusion error in urban
areas; it was not feasible in short run (nor desirable in the medium run) to extend the network of public rural stores where food items were sold at a discount; and no agency or ministry had the ability to rapidly identify and deliver income transfers to the set of poor households, particularly in rural areas, that were not covered by these programmes” (Levy, 2006: p. 14).

These policymakers instead proposed transforming the programmes to provide direct support through cash transfers to the extremely poor. Luis Téllez Kuenzler defended direct cash transfers, arguing that they were more effective solutions to the conditions of the extreme poor than generalised subsidies: “The historical experiences in Mexico and around the world indicate the inefficiency of trying to increase the population income through indirect mechanism, such as generalized subsidies. It is more efficient to undertake a programme to attack the conditions of the extreme poor” (Téllez, quoted in Ornelas, 2006: p. 49).

Although PRONASOL increased the availability of basic services, the evaluations conducted by the technical committee found that the programme was unable to raise income levels above the poverty line without creating jobs or other sources of income: “the conclusion was that PRONASOL did not make a substantial contribution to the reduction of extreme poverty” (Gordon, 2006: p. 510). Solidaridad was discontinued after President Carlos Salinas’s term in office ended. However, it left important lessons that contributed to the development of the programme that replaced it during the Ernesto Zedillo presidency (Levy, 2006). These lessons are explained in the following section.

5.3 The background of PROGRESA

The final year of the government of Carlos Salinas was characterised by severe political and economic instability. In 1994, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (an anti-capitalist movement led by indigenous groups) declared war on the Mexican government following the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Luis Donaldo Colosio, the candidate chosen by Carlos Salinas as his successor to the presidency, and other important political figures from the PRI were assassinated during the general election campaign of that year. Despite the PRI being the winner of the 1994 general election, the political instability created substantial flight of capital, which triggered a macroeconomic crisis just a few days after the
arrival of Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León (1994-2000) to power. This led to a drop in GDP of approximately 6% during 1995, the largest reduction in more than five decades.

Ernesto Zedillo, like Carlos Salinas, had a strong technocratic profile. He was an economist from Yale and had worked as minister of programming and budget and minister of education during the previous administration. He also endorsed neoliberalism as the governing model (Ornelas, 2000; Adler and Gil, 2002). However, the new president had a negative perspective of PRONASOL, with studies having shown its failure to increase the standard of living amongst the poorest. In this context of efforts to improve governmental efficiency, a debate commenced between Zedillo’s policymakers as to how to resolve the crisis in a manner that protected the poorest. For Santiago Levy, it was clear that it would be a mistake to continue the general subsidies policy and it was necessary to take advantage of the window of opportunity opened by the economic crisis of 1994/1995:

There was a crisis in 1995 and everyone knew this macroeconomic crisis was going to have a negative impact on the extreme poor. The crisis led to a very difficult fiscal situation, which opened a window of opportunity to ask, what to do? To keep doing the same as we had done in the past was not working and it was expensive. Increasing the subsidies was expensive, and we already knew it was inefficient from the budgetary and nutritional point of view. Therefore, there was a window of opportunity to push a new focus and new strategy. President Zedillo is a person with great analytical capacity; he listened to our arguments and he did not have any bias. He only wanted to know what the arguments were and what the evidence was. Based on that, he took a decision (Levy – Interview).

President Zedillo supported the creation of a new programme that would effectively tackle extreme poverty (Medrano, 2011). However, Carlos Salinas (2002) refutes this version of events, arguing that PRONASOL received positive feedback from international organisations such as the OECD and the World Bank. Moreover, he suggests there were political reasons for the discontinuation of the programme: a “betrayal” by the “technocrats” linked to Ernesto Zedillo. Confirming the above, Carlos Rojas claims that political differences between the presidents were the trigger for the discontinuation of PRONASOL:

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22 The political instability in the country alarmed investors who had bought Mexican bonds, causing them to sell quickly and empty the international reserves. This crisis was named the “Tequila effect”, having consequences for the entire Latin-American region.
The break can be explained by dramatic political differences between Ernesto Zedillo and Carlos Salinas. The programme suffered as collateral damage of the dispute between them (...) It was not a problem of efficiency. It was not about whether the programme was working or not; the explanation is very simple: Ernesto Zedillo wanted to destroy Salinas, and the programme was associated with Salinas (...) The real intention of the discontinuation of the programme was to damage Salinas, and unfortunately we (the people working at the SEDESOL) were the collateral damage. Zedillo knew very well that, although Solidaridad had a lot of autonomy, it depended administratively on the Ministry of Programming and Budget; and guess who the minister was during the first three years of Salinas’s presidency? Zedillo. Do not try to find other explanations regarding the operational side of the programme or the economic circumstances of the country. The explanation is simple: it was political (Rojas – Interview).

From a theoretical perspective, the events described above clearly represent a critical juncture that broke the equilibrium of PRONASOL. The political differences between the presidents and the urgent need to address the macroeconomic crisis generated instability that brought to the fore the discussion on how to address poverty. As suggested by Jones and Baumgartner (2005), during periods of instability, policymakers focus their attention on those issues they consider a priority. Therefore, it was important for Zedillo to find a new strategy to combat poverty that was not associated with Salina’s image and which made effective use of budgetary resources.

In 1997, Zedillo’s government discontinued Solidaridad and replaced it with “Education, Health and Alimentation Programme” (Programa de Educación, Salud y Alimentación; PROGRESA). PROGRESA, systematised the experiences of the two subprogrammes of PRONASOL: “Children in Solidaridad” (“Niños en Solidaridad”) and the “Programme for Health Services for the Open Population” (“Paquete básico de salud para la población abierta”). In both programmes, welfare services were linked to conditions and specific criteria to be met by the targeted population. The theoretical foundation of the new programme was a report prepared by Santiago Levy to the World Bank, titled, “Extreme poverty in Mexico: a policy proposal” (Esquivel, 2010). The basis of this report was the argument that any future social intervention must meet seven criteria (see Table 5.1).
Table 5.1 Basis of *PROGRESA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Actions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Make a greater effort to invest in food support, health, and education</td>
<td>- Establish a line of extreme poverty and a methodology to identify it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Provide total coverage for the extreme poor</td>
<td>- Ensure all the extreme poor have access to basic levels of services (health, food, and education)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3) Ensure programmes have an integrated approach and administrative efficiency | - Build a unique programme  
- Let Congress know the budgetary situation |
| 4) Conduct a coordinated effort | - Generate a global perspective on the actions needed to improve health, food, and education, as well as the monetary transfers linked to those actions |
| 5) Create a unit to coordinate the efforts | - Achieve important synergies and scale economies |
| 6) Prevent electoral promotion | - Guarantee that the programme is free from any suspicion of electoral promotion |
| 7) Ensure the institutions responsible for providing health, education, and nutrition are coordinated and strengthened (in budget) | - Seek effective coordination of the institutions  
- Allocate as much of the budgetary resources as possible to those institutions |

Based on Levy and Rodríguez (2005).

According to Valencia and Aguirre (1998), Santiago Levy believed that poverty could only be solved through market action; therefore, it was necessary to create a programme that rigorously respected market guidelines. This was congruent with the “general orientation of the economic policy”, which sought to incorporate poor individuals into the job market by providing them with training and health (i.e., the basis of human capital theory). Additionally, it was mandatory to make the poor actively involved and co-responsible through monetary transfers because “it was the only way to break the vicious circle of poverty” (Ibid: p.73).

*PROGRESA* was designed to minimise the disincentives to work by conditioning transfers so as to promote the generation of human capital through school attendance, medical assistance, and better nutrition, with the goal of helping to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty.
The new programme diverged from previous policies, employing technical criteria based on specialised socio-demographic knowledge to select the beneficiaries of the programme (Gordon, 2006). PROGRESA was innovative, not only in its method of targeting populations of extreme poverty, but also in its benefit scheme, which – instead of being delivered as subsidies in-kind – was delivered as cash payments. To prevent the money being used for political purposes (such as political co-optation and electoral control), the decision was made to deliver it through public or private financial agencies and even through the telegraphic money system (Hevia, 2009). Also considered innovative was the decision to invite external evaluation by international organisations and scholars (in addition to internal evaluations), thereby ensuring that PROGRESA’s effectiveness as a social policy intervention was properly scrutinised.

Table 5.2 Conditionalities of PROGRESA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of conditionality</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Boys and girls (from the third grade of primary school to the last year of secondary school) must attend 85% or more of school days each month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Regular attendance at a health clinic (frequency of visits depended on household composition). Mothers must receive a series of talks that deliver information on various health and nutrition topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>Nutritional supplements must be collected. (These were commonly distributed along with the money awarded to the beneficiaries.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Levy and Rodríguez (2005).

The creation of PROGRESA represented a dramatic change of how social policy was implemented in the country (Levy, 2006). First, it meant the discontinuation of the policy based on general subsidies, and second, because a large-scale project of delivering money conditionally to the poor had never been tried before. Third, despite discussions in the cabinet, a consensus had never been reached between the officials. Thus, from a theoretical perspective, PROGRESA represented the beginning of a new social policy paradigm that dismantled the

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23 Frequency decreased as members grew older.
status quo. Hall (1993) explains that a paradigm shift is an issue of authority over policy, and President Zedillo had the power and the willingness to transform social policy. As suggested by Levy (2006), ultimately, the decision to implement CCTs was exclusively that of the president: “The programme was at a point where leadership (from Zedillo) was not merely important, it was critical; indeed, without it there would have been no programme” (Ibid: p. 116). Nevertheless, some authors have suggested that Zedillo’s decision was strongly influenced by a group of scholars and policymakers who supported him and encouraged him to change the social policy (Medrano, 2011; Lustig, 2014). Although I will expand on this in the next chapter, I mention here that the influence of this group was indeed a fundamental factor – not only in the implementation of PROGRESA but also in its long-term continuation. This group formed a policy community that framed the issue on poverty and guided some of the key decisions taken during the policymaking process.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the historical background of PROGRESA, the first CCT programme in Mexico. I described some of the preceding policies, which delivered general subsidies to combat poverty and marginalisation during the 1970s and early 1980s. In addition, I explained that these programmes failed because of the recurrent economic crises during these years and the poor management of the Mexican government. I also discussed how the cut in social spending in the 1980s sparked social anger that had a powerful impact in the 1988 presidential election, where the PRI obtained its lowest result in decades. The urgent need to regain legitimacy led President Carlos Salinas to launch a new programme to address poverty. Although subsidies in-kind remained a fundamental element of PRONASOL, the new programme also incorporated concepts linked to neoliberal rationality, such as co-responsibility and efficiency.

While PRONASOL enabled the PRI to regain approval, some technocrats advocated changes to the social policy, arguing that the programme was inefficient in budgetary terms and failed to raise income levels. However, Carlos Salinas and his officials dismissed these arguments because, as explained by Jones and Baumgartner (2005), policymakers address multiple problems at the same time and have limited attention to do so. Therefore, they must prioritise issues that require immediate action. In this case, Carlos Salinas’s government had obtained favourable electoral results, which were attributed to the implementation of PRONASOL, thus the government saw no urgent need to change the policy.
It was not until the arrival of Ernesto Zedillo in power – and the eruption of the macroeconomic crisis – that the government seriously considered a new strategy to address poverty. The rivalry between the presidents and the urgent need for action to protect the poorest from the crisis generated political instability. From a punctuated equilibrium perspective, the critical juncture drew the attention of the government to the issue of poverty, and this allowed the technocrats involved in the debate to place their recommendations on the government’s agenda. As suggested by True et al. (2007), during periods of instability, new voices are able to participate in debates and reframe the issues, as policymakers become more receptive to new ideas. Hence, the conditions arose that enabled the technocrats to present their idea to President Zedillo.

As evidence showed that PRONASOL was not effective at improving standard of living, and President Zedillo was then willing to implement a new social policy, PROGRESA was created. The new programme diverged from previous policies based on generalised subsidies and comprised something entirely new. I argue that the instability that led to the repeal of PRONASOL also opened the door to the specific policy community that endorsed CCTs. However, the implementation of PROGRESA did not mean the end of this instability. In Chapter 6, I will discuss the creation of the policy community behind PROGRESA and the actions taken to prevent the programme’s discontinuation during the political transition of 2000.

As well as giving the background to the creation of POP, this chapter has identified the circumstances that helped the policy community to achieve the position needed to influence the programme. Additionally, the chapter gave an insight into the specific factors that drove Mexican social policy and the rationality of the decision-making behind the implementation of PROGRESA.
6. The creation of the PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA policy community and the continuation of conditional cash transfers under the government of Vicente Fox

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the creation of the POP policy community during Ernesto Zedillo’s government and its expansion under the subsequent administration of Vicente Fox. It is important to address the creation of the policy community because their actions were essential to the survival of CCTs and POP’s institutional endurance. Therefore, I aim to identify the main features of this policy community and the institutional arrangement built to protect the programme. I emphasise that the POP policy community is a closed and highly selective group, populated by experts who have specific characteristics and share the human capital paradigm. Furthermore, their common belief that other types of social interventions are ineffective for addressing poverty and their acceptance of targeting and co-responsibility allowed them to build a stable and united group. As a result, the POP policy community was able to cope with the political transition of 2000, adopting various strategies to convince the new officials that CCTs had a strong potential to end intergeneration poverty. The policy community also worked to prevent major changes being made to the design of PROGRESA. Although the community’s initial reluctance to change the programme generated friction with the SEDESOL, their ability to adapt to the new circumstances enabled them to save the core element of CCTs. Thus, the transformation of PROGRESA into Oportunidades meant only an incremental change, laying the ground for further modifications in the future. Understanding the actions of the POP policy community is important because this explains how they successfully framed the government’s agenda and established their policy monopoly.

6.2 The beginning of the policy community

The POP policy community was born as the result of the close relationship between the main architects of the PROGRESA, Santiago Levy and José Gómez de León, with the government, academia, and international organisations. First, I must emphasise that both José Gómez de León and Santiago Levy, besides being public servants, were renowned scholars with long experience working as consultants for the World Bank, UN agencies, and the IADB. Second, both were close to President Ernesto Zedillo and had a long personal and professional
relationships with him. According to Lustig (2014), the men had known each other since the 1970s: “Zedillo first met Levy and Gómez de León when he was in the research department at the Bank of Mexico in the late 1970s (perhaps even earlier)” (p. 115). Zedillo knew the work of Santiago Levy very well, particularly his evaluation of the effectiveness of the traditional anti-poverty programmes in Mexico.\(^\text{24}\) José Gómez de León was an expert in the topic of intergenerational poverty transmission and served as the chief adviser of Zedillo at the Ministry of Budget and Programming (Cervantes and Gutiérrez, 2018). Daniel Hernández Franco (who was national coordinator of POP on two occasions) claims that President Zedillo had so much trust in them because of their unquestionable reputations as highly trained experts. Furthermore, both shared Zedillo’s vision that government decisions should follow evidence:

For (President) Zedillo, merit did matter, and Santiago Levy and José Gómez de León were the culmination of merit. They were people that acted based on one principle: the evidence is the evidence, period (…) they were people who were clear about the technical basis that a programme should have (Hernández – Interview).

Hence, at the beginning of his government, Ernesto Zedillo appointed José Gómez de León general secretary of the National Population Council (CONAPO).\(^\text{25}\) Santiago Levy, who was the president of the Federal Commission of Competition under the previous government, was named deputy minister at the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit.

When the macroeconomic crisis erupted at the end of 1994, worried about the consequences for poor families, President Zedillo asked his officials to design a new social programme that would meet the needs of the extreme poor (Levy and Rodríguez, 2005; Levy, 2006; IADB, 2017). It is noted here that there are competing narratives about the creation of PROGRESA, particularly regarding the party responsible for its design. Some authors suggest that the way in which an event is narrated builds positionalities and is determinant to attract specific audiences (Czarniawska, 2004; Dawson and Buchanan, 2005). Therefore, each version of events regarding the creation of PROGRESA might suggest an attempt to legitimise (or delegitimise) the programme and the roles of certain individuals and other conditions, according to the personal views of the speaker. For instance, according to Santiago Levy,

\(^{24}\) Santiago Levy was hired as a consultant for the World Bank in the early 1990s to evaluate the effectiveness of the tortilla subsidy.

\(^{25}\) The role of the CONAPO is to design and evaluate policies concerned with the growth of – and changes in – the population.
President Zedillo asked him personally to design the programme, while José Gómez de León was in charge of managing the agency responsible for the programme:

The decision to create a specialised agency within the Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL) that would operate the programme was taken, and “Pepe” de León was the person selected by President Zedillo to manage this new agency within the SEDESOL to operate PROGRESA. “Pepe” did a great job creating a new body from zero and implementing the programme (Levy – Interview).

However, Nora Lustig, who was a close collaborator of José Gómez de León, refutes Levy’s version. Although Lustig recognises that both had extensive expertise and interest in issues related to poverty, she claims that the design and development of PROGRESA was a task performed mainly by José Gómez de León:

PROGRESA was developed 100% by José Gómez de León. Santiago Levy had worked on a pilot programme similar to PROGRESA during the government of Carlos Salinas. However, Zedillo asked José Gómez de León to be in charge of implementing the programme from A to Z. He even designed the targeting mechanisms, since he was a demographer with great expertise in mathematics and statistics (Lustig – Interview).

The IADB offers a third version, stating that Santiago Levy and his team were already working on the design of the programme. Interested in using the databases on poverty and marginality that the CONAPO was developing, Santiago Levy invited José Gómez de León to collaborate on the project, thereby starting a “friendly and professional relationship” (Bate, 2017: Para. 7). However, Lustig (2014) disagrees with this version, suggesting that Santiago Levy and José Gómez de León were already part of a close group of scholars and researchers that also included herself and Miguel Székely.

Carlos Rojas disputes Levy’s version that he was the one who designed PROGRESA, arguing that PROGRESA was a plagiarised Carlos Salinas programme termed, “Children in Solidaridad”, and did not represent an original idea:

Levy did not create PROGRESA; that is a lie. PROGRESA is a copy of the programme “Children in Solidaridad”. It is plagiarism, he (Levy) says that he invented PROGRESA but it is not true (…) The only new element of the programme was that the selection of the

26 Miguel Székely would later become deputy minister of social development during the government of Vicente Fox.
beneficiaries was made with what they called “the poverty line”, where we used to select the beneficiaries through public assemblies. So, now, being part of the programme depended on whether people were under the line or not. That is the only difference (Rojas – Interview).

Therefore, it is clear that there are different versions of events, and although they may not be extremely different, there could be different motivations behind each of the narratives. Santiago Levy might be endorsing his historical position as the “designer” of POP. Nora Lustig might be attempting to get more recognition for her former colleague José Gómez de León. Meanwhile, Carlos Rojas could be seeking to redeem the of PRONASOL. I do not intend to make any statement about the reasons for these different versions, but I must point out the evident differences and the possible motivations for the various narratives. As observed by McBeth at al. (2014), actors compete to create the most compelling narrative because this gives them the opportunity to become a reference within the political subsystem.

In 1996, Santiago Levy’s team conducted a pilot project in the state of Campeche, with the purpose of analysing CCTs in practice. The Autonomous Technology Institute of Mexico (ITAM) and the Salvador Zubirán National Institute of Medical Science and Nutrition evaluated the pilot programme. The evaluation concluded that CCTs were more efficient than untargeted and unconditional subsidies, but the beneficiaries valued cash more than in-kind transfers (Levy and Rodríguez, 2005; Levy, 2006). For example, Levy and Rodríguez (2005) claim that the evaluations showed the administrative costs were lower than for in-kind subsidies programmes. In addition, 97% of the beneficiaries were happier because CCTs allowed them to access a greater range of food choices. Finally, the programme had a positive influence on the nutrition received by the children.27 The results were presented to President Zedillo, who decided to create an inter-ministry group that included the Ministries of Finance, Education, Health, Social Development, and the CONAPO to discuss the details of the programme’s nationwide implementation.

After the elections of 1997, the Mexican government implemented PROGRESA, with José Gómez de León appointed the first director of the programme (Cervantes and Gutiérrez, 2018).

27 It was not possible to access those evaluations because they were sponsored by the Ministry of Control and Administrative Development (“Secretaría de Contaduría y Desarrollo Administrativo”), which closed in 2003. The documents were not preserved – or were at least unavailable in the internet catalogue of the Mexican government. Likewise, the coordinators of the studies – Dr Enrique Alba Guerra and Dr Teresa Shamah – did not respond to the emails sent requesting information about the evaluations.
However, the minister of social development, Carlos Rojas Gutiérrez, confronted Santiago Levy, arguing that the programme was only a palliative and his vision lacked social sensibility: “Those technocratic views are unfamiliar with reality and lead to the end of social participation and communitarian sense, which are critical for our country (...) there are two different visions. Two visions that are completely different” (Rojas, quoted in Ballinas, 2000: Para. 12).

Ultimately, Ernesto Zedillo supported Santiago Levy’s position and, in 1998, asked Carlos Rojas for his resignation from the SEDESOL. According to Valencia and Aguirre (1998), this represented the victory of the technocratic group of the Ministry of Finance and the imposition of the “human capital paradigm” on social policy.28

From the launch of PROGRESA, Santiago Levy and José Gómez de León were interested in evaluating the programme, with the objective of generating sufficient evidence to survive the political transition of 2000 and prevent the termination of the programme (Levy – Interview). According to Jere Behrman (2008), Levy’s team first contacted the World Bank, but they were advised to consider the IFPRI instead as a possible evaluator, as it would be viewed as more neutral.29 Later, Evelyn Rodríguez (Levy’s closest collaborator) attempted to contact the IFPRI, without success.30 It was not until José Gómez de León asked Nora Lustig to mediate that a meeting with the experts of the IFPRI was held: “On November 11, 1997, Lustig sent an email to Haddad, Gary Burtless at the Brookings Institute, and 13 staff members of the World Bank inviting them to a workshop on December 10, 1997 to be held at the Inter-American Development Bank under the sponsorship of the Poverty and Inequality Advisory Unit to discuss evaluation schemes of the recently launched target programme in Mexico called PROGRESA (she also noted that, ‘the workshop will start with a presentation by Dr. José Gómez de León, the Director of PROGRESA,’ and provided a brief summary of the programme) (...) On December 3, 1997, Lustig sent an email addressed to Lawrence Haddad, Jere Behrman, Paul Gertler, Paul Schultz, and James Heckman (but not to Burtless or the World Bank invitees in that email), enclosing the programme for the meeting on December 10, 1997, and further information and asking for references regarding these individuals’ expertise”

28 The media reported that, after the resignation of Carlos Rojas, the Ministry of Finance took over the social policy.
29 The World Bank had a negative reputation with the Mexican public because it was involved in the structural adjustment during the 1980s and 1990s.
30 The literature is not clear on why contact was not made.
(Behrman, 2008: p. 19). At that time, besides being an expert on the field, Nora Lustig was also working at the IADB as a high-level officer and had many useful contacts and resources:

The launch of the programme coincided with my joining the IADB as senior adviser and head of the Poverty and Inequality Unit in 1997. José Gómez de León and I were friends and colleagues and talked extensively about the need to start assessing the impacts of the programme to give it legitimacy beyond the political vicissitudes. This is how we set up the first meeting of experts at the IADB (I think it was December 1997). This meeting eventually resulted in the evaluation of PROGRESA by the IFPRI (Lustig – Interview).

Daniel Hernández Franco, who was close collaborator of José Gómez de León and his successor as director of PROGRESA, supports the accounts of Behrman and Lustig, confirming that both meetings were held at the World Bank and the IADB (interview). The first meeting at the World Bank was attended only by the group of Santiago Levy’s collaborators, while José Gómez de León and his collaborators were present at the second meeting called by Nora Lustig at the IADB. The Mexican team of PROGRESA attended the meeting at the IADB, along with representatives from the IFPRI and the evaluation experts from the American universities called by Nora Lustig – namely, Jere Behrman, Paul Gertler, Paul Schultz, and Petra Todd, representing James Heckman31 (see Table 4.1 and Figure 6.2; Behrman, 2008; Lustig, 2014). Some of these actors are considered among the best and most highly renowned economists worldwide. For instance, James Heckman was already a Nobel Prize winner at that time, and Paul Gertler would later become chief economist for the World Bank.

The above evidences how influential Nora Lustig was, and this is why Santiago Levy and Daniel Hernández give her special recognition, as she was able to summit the Mexican policymakers, the IFPRI representatives, and the American evaluation experts. Although her participation in PROGRESA was otherwise limited, her personal relationship with Santiago Levy and José Gómez de León and her professional bonds with the international organisations made the mediation possible (see Figure 6.1). Her influence is corroborated by the fact that Levy’s team had tried previously to contact the IFPRI and been unsuccessful, and it was not until she had spoken with Lawrence Haddad (the IFPRI’s director of the Food Consumption and Nutrition division) and Per Pinstrup-Andersen (the IFPRI general director and member of the Board of Trustees) that the matchmaking could be done.

31 Daniel Hernández (interview) claims that Paul Schultz did not attend the meeting but was later integrated into the project.
The meeting at the IADB served to cultivate the PROGRESA-IFPRI relationship. The IFPRI agreed to participate as an evaluator of the programme, and the Mexican policymakers took the decision to hire the American experts through the IFPRI\textsuperscript{32} (Levy, 2006; Behrman, 2007; Lustig, 2014; Hernández – Interview). As mentioned, the evaluation provided scientific evidence for the effectiveness of the programme and legitimised the efforts made by PROGRESA’s team during the administration of Ernesto Zedillo. A further goal was to provide the new government, elected in 2000, with objective evidence that would ensure the programme’s continuation (Levy, 2006; Interview). The Mexican government solicited the IFPRI to conduct an impact evaluation of three specific areas: an increase in school enrolment, improvement in health and nutrition, and increase in household consumption (Levy and Rodríguez, 2005). In addition, the Mexican policymakers solicited information on the effects of incentives to take up work and on the issues of monetary transfers and population targeting. The evaluation was conducted by the IFPRI team composed of the following: Emmanuel Skoufias, Michelle Adato, David Coady, Sudhansu Handa, John Hoddinott, John Maluccio,}

\textsuperscript{32} The decision to hire the American experts through the IFPRI was a financial one, as it would have been very expensive to hire them through their respective universities.
Agnes Quisumbing, Marie Ruel, and Graciela Teruel. In addition, Jere Behrman, Paul Schultz, Paul Gertler, and Petra Todd served as external consultants and developed the quantitative technique used for the evaluation.\textsuperscript{33} Bonnie McClaffery and Susan Parker assisted the external consultants (Behrman, 2007; see Table 6.1 in Appendix).

The group of experts had extensive expertise in the evaluation of social programmes, and although each one had their own interests and views regarding economics, all were supporters of the human capital paradigm. Furthermore, many were part of – or later become part of – international organisations that endorsed this paradigm. For instance, Emmanuel Skoufias later worked for the IADB and the World Bank. David Coady became part of the International Monetary Fund. Sudhansu Handa and Agnes Quisumbing, after leaving the IFPRI, went to the IADB and the World Bank, respectively. Similarly, at that time, Benjamin David already had experience working at the World Bank. Moreover, many of the journals and papers produced by these individuals appear to share a consensus that targeting is the best mechanism for ensuring the efficiency of social programmes.

6.3 Lobbying in favour of PROGRESA

In 2000, the results of the evaluation were presented to the Mexican government in the report titled, “Is PROGRESA working? (¿Está dando buenos resultados PROGRESA?) Under the terms applied to evaluate the programme, a positive impact on school enrolment and attendance was demonstrated (children stayed 0.7 years longer in school). Similarly, there was evidence of an improved nutritional and health state amongst the beneficiaries (children had a 12\% lower incidence of disease and adults registered a 19\% decrease in the number of days that they were sick or incapacitated due to illness). The report concluded the following: “After only three years, the Mexican children living in poverty in the countryside areas where PROGRESA has been implemented are more likely to keep attending school, to have more balanced diets, to receive medical attention, and to learn that the future can be different from the past. The majority of the results obtained in the evaluation suggest that the combination of education, health, and nutrition services offered by PROGRESA are an effective means of ending intergenerational poverty. However, PROGRESA remains in its initial phase and it is probable that many other outputs will appear in the future (…) Only the continuation of PROGRESA

\textsuperscript{33} For the evaluation, a survey (ENCEL98M) was conducted in 1998. For further details about the survey, the sample, and the methodology aspects of the evaluation, see Behrman and Todd (2000).
and its medium- and long-term evaluation will determine if the poverty cycle and its intergenerational transmission can be broken” (Skoufias, 2000: 2). According to Santiago Levy, he and the American experts presented the results to the newly elected President Vicente Fox:

I presented and explained the programme to President Fox during the transition period and told him “these evaluations were done”. Later, the external consultants came to Mexico and met with Fox (…) President Fox turned out to be a very pragmatic person, who said, “Look, this is working, I don’t have to remove the programme”; he only decided to change the name and to continue it (Levy – Interview).

PROGRESA’s policymakers used the transition period between the presidencies of Ernesto Zedillo and Vicente Fox to present the results of the external evaluation to the new officials: “These results, and the databases, were made public before the conclusion of the administration of President Zedillo. This would contribute to decisions about the programme being made on objective basis and to the new federal administration having greater elements of judgment” (Levy and Rodríguez, 2005: 176). The favourable results added legitimacy to the work done during the previous three years of Zedillo’s government. Furthermore, they helped to overcome the scepticism of senior officials who were concerned that the substitution of in-kind subsidies for cash would lead to increased spending on alcohol and cigarettes (Levy, 2006; Interview). Jere Behrman (an American expert from the University of Pennsylvania) considers these results critical to the continuation of the programme after the political transition in 2000:

Critical to maintenance and expansion of the initial programme was the effective use of the evaluation results by the then deputy minister of finance, Santiago Levy, to persuade the first two presidents and the Congress (Behrman – Interview).

Vicente Fox, former president of Mexico (2000-2006), mentions that, during the transition period, there was a consensus among actors from both parties that the programme should be continued:

Some actors tried to convince me to continue the programme: some media and political scientists from the PRI. Internally (within the PAN), there was a strong consensus amongst the presidential cabinet, advisers, scholars, and NGOs that I consulted that the best choice was to continue PROGRESA and to later extend it (Fox – Interview).
However, Daniel Hernández Franco expresses that, in addition to providing evidence, the lobbying strategy involved handing to each member of Congress a folder containing essential information about PROGRESA:

We had the poverty evaluation reports, which – for the purposes of subsistence (of the programme) – are worthless because nobody reads them. So, we designed a folder with key messages on the cover, in the middle, and at the end, and I gave it to each member of Congress during the transition period between Zedillo and Fox (…) I talked with David Penchyna (congressman of the PRI), and I asked David to help us so that the PRI would understand the programme and take care of it. After that, I went with the members of the PAN and Felipe Vicencio (congressman of the PAN) opened the door for me. I gave him the folder and he asked me many questions (Hernández – Interview).

Similarly, Lustig (2014) explains how she and other social actors attempted to persuade the officials of the new government to continue the programme: “The author (Nora Lustig) had the opportunity to meet with Fox’s minister of social development, Josefina Vázquez Mota, very early in the administration. Vázquez Mota was sceptical of PROGRESA. A good number of social policy analysts wrote columns and commented on the electronic media on the importance of keeping PROGRESA, citing the impact evaluation results as evidence of its success in reducing poverty and improving school attendance and health outcomes among the extreme poor. In the end, Vázquez Mota – an intelligent policymaker and shrewd politician – was persuaded and the programme survived” (Ibid: p. 113). Additionally, another push for the continuation of PROGRESA came from the acquisition of a billion-dollar loan from the IADB, the largest ever granted by the bank to finance a social programme (Levy and Rodríguez, 2005; Levy, 2006). According to Santiago Levy, he personally lobbied in favour of the programme with the president of the IADB:

I also talked with Enrique Iglesias, who was the president of the IADB during that time, explaining that the support of the multilateral agencies in a different political context could help to strengthen the programme; and I believe that that was a good decision (Levy – Interview).

Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo, who served as national coordinator of PROGRESA/Oportunidades (2001-2006), adds that the loan served as a “padlock” to ensure the continuity of the programme:
The fact is that you have a contractual commitment with an external entity. Therefore, if the government had refused to assign a budget for the programme, we would have had penalties for not fulfilling this contract. If Congress had not assigned a budget to PROGRESA, we would have failed to comply with the conditions of the loan. This means that, financially, the government would lose a source of income. Certainly, if we had not executed the programme, the IADB would not have disbursed the money (…) it was never necessary (the additional money), but the loan was made to ensure that no one in the government would decide not to give money to PROGRESA. The “padlock” was in the contract tied to the budget (Gómez – Interview).

At this point, I must point out what seems to be a major contradiction by PROGRESA’s policymakers regarding this loan. Santiago Levy (in his interview) always states that neither the World Bank nor the IADB participated in the initial stages of the programme, intending to avoid potential criticisms. What is more, Hernández (in the interview) claims that “PROGRESA was 100% a Mexican outcome”. However, Santiago Levy also suggests that one of the main reasons why the loan was easily approved was that technicians from the World Bank and the IADB had served as advisers since the beginning and throughout the design and implementation stages (Levy, 2006). In addition, Levy and Rodríguez (2005) claim that PROGRESA’s pilot program (see section 6.2) was designed, implemented, and evaluated alongside “domestic specialists and [others] from abroad” (Ibid: p. 79). Although Behrman (2007) suggests that international organisations did not influence the design of PROGRESA, it is difficult to determine the point up to which the technicians from the World Bank or the IADB were involved during the initial stages of the programme and how much this influenced the granting of the loan. Although there is not sufficient information here to explain this contradiction, one could speculate that this is another issue of narrative. Since the leading policymakers of the programme have always presented PROGRESA as a purely Mexican creation, they may choose not to recognise the role of the technicians from international organisations, with the goal of protecting the programme’s reputation.

Moreover, it is clear that the loan and other actions adopted by PROGRESA’s leading policymakers were essential for the survival of the programme during Vicente Fox’s government. Since this was the first new party to rule Mexico in more than 70 years, there was a real risk that the new government would be motivated to erase the legacy of the predecessor. As media reports suggest, President Fox initially intended to replace PROGRESA with a new programme (Venegas, 2002). Furthermore, when Vicente Fox made public his intention to
replace the programme, various political actors – amongst them, David Penchyna (mentioned by Daniel Hernández as one of the congressional representatives with whom he lobbied in favour of PROGRESA) – rejected Fox’s decision. According to media, the negative reactions of these political actors led to President Fox retracting his decision (Proceso, 2002); therefore, it is likely that the lobbying of PROGRESA’s members also influenced the government’s decision to continue the CCTs.

6.4 The expansion of the PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA policy community

Daniel Hernández Franco served as national coordinator of PROGRESA after the death of José Gómez de León in April 2000, and for a few months, he was ratified in office by Vicente Fox (Levy – Interview; Hernández – Interview). Although Daniel Hernández was replaced soon after, during his brief period as national coordinator, he encouraged the integration of new researchers and scholars into PROGRESA:

In this (expanding the policy community), I have more responsibility than Santiago Levy or José Gómez de León. I tried to involve many technically well-trained new young scholars into the programme, which provided the knowledge mass that persists in the programme to this day. Mónica Orozco, Maricarmen Huerta, and Humberto Soto were young people who were working with us – all of them very well-trained from a technical point of view (...) We began to develop a constructive dialogue with young people from academia; they were John Scott, Graciela Teruel, Luis Felipe López Calva, and Rodolfo de la Torre. All of them would later help us create the “Technical Committee for the Evaluation of Poverty”, which would eventually become the basis of the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL; Hernández – Interview).

According to Daniel Hernández, these individuals were chosen because they all had strong academic backgrounds and were experts in research methods. In addition, all had some interest in and knowledge of the programme and were able provide a wide range of technical recommendations:

They were people who knew a lot (about research methods) and that was the basis. It was a group that gave us technical recommendations; it was the best option to keep it open (to technical recommendations). If you keep your evaluation processes closed, then you do not have a mass of people giving you recommendations about the programme. This (expanding the group) helped by providing a mass of critical knowledge in the programme (Hernández – Interview).
Their main work was to evaluate different aspects of the programme (such as the targeting mechanisms, the impacts in school attendance, etc.) and to give feedback on the design and the technical elements of it. Hernández further argues that the aforementioned actors were highly specialised in quantitative methods, and they eventually sought out additional qualitative research experts such as Salomón Nahmad and Agustín Escobar (two renowned Mexican social scientists). This combination of quantitative and qualitative expertise allowed the group to imposed their vision on social policy and replace those such as Carlos Rojas who defended previous social policies based on non-targeted in-kind subsidies:

Hegemonic thinking about poverty was promoted, and the “universalistic” school of thinking (politicians and scholars who defended generalised in-kind subsidies) lost relevance in the country because, even where the universalistic vision prevailed, the budgetary resources were not enough to allow them to materialise their ideas (Hernández – Interview).

As mentioned by Hernández, these experts – alongside officials from the SEDESOL, the CONAPO, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), and the presidential office – would form, in 2001, the “Technical Committee for the Evaluation of Poverty” (see Table 6.2 in the Appendix). The committee would be in charge of setting the poverty thresholds and conducting the first evaluations of the extent of poverty in Mexico. It is noticeable that some of the experts invited to participate in the programme or the Technical Committee for the Evaluation of Poverty at this time could hardly be considered as “neoliberals”. In fact, some had taken critical stands on neoliberalism, the most representatives cases being John Scott, Fernando Cortés, and Salomón Nahmad. However, all seemed to endorse the human capital paradigm and the efficient use of resources through targeting.

In 2001, Daniel Hernández Franco was replaced as national coordinator of PROGRESA, with Vicente Arredondo taking his place – albeit only for a few months, as he apparently lacked the competency to succeed in the position34 (Hevia, 2009; Hernández – Interview). Later, the new minister of social development, Josefina Vázquez Mota, would appoint Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo as the new national coordinator.

34 Vicente Arredondo claims that he received the order of leaving the National Coordination without further explanations (interview).
The new minister of the SEDESOL, despite being an economist with a long career in the third sector, did not have a technocratic profile. She had not graduated from renowned schools abroad nor did she have strong links with the economic elites. Moreover, she lacked experience working in government or in any other relevant economic or financial agency. This is important because President Fox initially declared that he was only going to appoint ministers with the best qualifications. However, because of the above, many experts criticised her for not having the proper skills to perform the task (de Mauleón, 2012). Nonetheless, she was able to form a team of experts to advise her: “She does not try to pretend nor hide her lack of expertise. What she does is surround herself with a solid team of experts. This is how she has survived in a brutal environment (politics). She showed from the beginning that she was good at listening to others, identifying key actors and reconciling interests. She understood that she lacked the technical skills but she looked for people that could provide them to her” (Székely, quoted in de Mauleón, 2012: Para. 28-29). Julio Botvinik (then adviser of President Fox) agreed that Josefina Vázquez Mota was able to collaborate with experts: “Josefina did not start well. However, after two or three days of being named minister, she met with the transition teams and listened to them carefully. She asked smart questions. She asked about PROGRESA. She had a good attitude, understanding and listening” (Boltvinik, quoted in de Mauleón, 2012: Para. 27). The new head of the SEDESOL ultimately formed a group of experts, including Rodolfo Tuirán and Miguel Székely, two renowned economists who had collaborated closely with José Gómez de León and Santiago Levy (see section 6.2). Rodolfo Tuirán was named deputy minister of Urban Development and Land Management, and Miguel Székely was named deputy minister of planning, prospective, and evaluation. Despite Daniel Hernández being removed from the National Coordination of PROGRESA, he became a member of the SEDESOL team of advisers.

Although Vicente Fox decided to continue PROGRESA, he replaced the most visible leaders of the programme. According to Hevia (2009), this decision was motivated by the friction between Josefina Vázquez’s personal group (i.e., Vicente Arredondo and Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo) and Santiago Levy’s group. The major cause of conflict was the changes being made to the programme – in particular, adding new elements to PROGRESA and increasing the coverage (Ibid). While Josefina Vázquez’s group promoted those changes, Levy’s group

35 His intention, according to media, was to form a “super cabinet” (“gabinetazo”) with the best people of Mexico.
opposed them. Vicente Arredondo confirms the above, claiming that one of the main problems during his brief period was the advocates of PROGRESA’s opposition to change:

The programme had many advocates and promoters inside and outside Mexico. Therefore, there was a feeling that the programme had to be protected (…) I felt there was not space to promote any innovation or change to the programme (Arredondo – Interview).

Consequently, Santiago Levy, despite being appointed director of the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS), had less participation in PROGRESA. Evelyn Rodríguez (who was the closest person to Santiago Levy) was forced to resign as treasurer of the Republic, ending Levy’s influence over the allocation of resources in the programme. Similarly, Daniel Hernández was removed from the National Coordination of the programme, although he was later incorporated into Josefina Vázquez’s team of advisers (Ibid). Nevertheless, Santiago Levy argues that those removals did not constitute a deep change to the programme, as the operational staff remained in place:

Josefina Vázquez Mota replaced Daniel, but the technical staff remained because it was a relatively new office – it was only three years old – it was a relatively new programme with a lot of risk and she did not want to change everything very quickly. So, maybe, you can change the CEO of an airline but you do not change the pilots (Levy, 2018).

Furthermore, Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo, as the new national coordinator of PROGRESA, attempted to expand the policy community to find new national technical experts who could help them improve the programme and avoid the need to depend on external consultants. These experts, he believes, ultimately became the basis of the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL):

What I did was “nationalise” this (the team of experts involved in PROGRESA), without removing the “big ones”: Jere Behrman, Petra Todd, and the others. They are people who I admire, but we did not want to depend only on them. Of course, Paul Gertler, Jere Behrman, and the others were key; and Gonzalo Hernández Licona, Miguel Székely, Daniel Hernández, Mónica Orozco, Santiago Levy, Evelyn Rodríguez, and so on, were already in government. But what I did was to try to expand the knowledge network, strengthen the qualitative approach with Agustín Escobar, Mercedes González de la Rocha, Fernando Cortés… Basically, what we did was create CONEVAL (Gómez – Interview).
For Czarnecki (2013), the expansion of the policy community was of great importance because it brought new actors in the programme. Those actors later participated in the formation of the Technical Committee for the Evaluation of Poverty (the background of the CONEVAL) and then in the CONEVAL, ultimately legitimising the application of a social policy based on CCTs (see Table 6.3).
Table 6.3 Members of the extended policy community of *PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA* (POP) who later participated in the Technical Committee for the Evaluation of Poverty (TCEP) and in relevant positions at the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL)

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<tr>
<td>Rodolfo de la Torre</td>
<td>External consultant</td>
<td>Member of the committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Felipe López</td>
<td>External consultant</td>
<td>Member of the committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mónica Orozco</td>
<td>General director of evaluation of <em>PROGRESA/Oportunidades</em> (1997/2003)</td>
<td>Member of the committee</td>
<td>Adviser in 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernando Cortés</td>
<td>External consultant</td>
<td>Member of the committee</td>
<td>Member of the academic council (2010/2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graciela Teruel</td>
<td>External consultant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Member of the academic council (2006/2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Rivera</td>
<td>Designer of the Nutrition component of <em>PROGRESA</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Member of the academic council (2006/2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agustín Escobar</td>
<td>External consultant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Member of the academic council (2006/2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Scott</td>
<td>External consultant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Member of the academic council (2010/Present)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salomón Nahmad</td>
<td>External consultant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Member of the academic council (2010/Present)</td>
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Elaborated by the author, based on the information of the curriculums of the mentioned actors and CONEVAL(a)

Hevia (2009) suggests that the initial confrontation between Santiago Levy’s team and the new officials, as well as the expansion of the network of experts involved in PROGRESA, occurred as the programme adapted to the new political context. One of the main political needs of Vicente Fox’s administration was to differentiate itself from the previous government. Thus, it promoted incremental changes to the programme: “Implied serious modifications that allow us, if not to talk about two different programmes, at least to talk about two different stages, becoming a paradigmatic example of incrementalism within a social programme” (Ibid: p. 46). Similarly, Santiago Levy argues that those changes are considered only incremental because they were superficial and did not modify the original design of PROGRESA:

> In terms of substance, there were no deep changes. We continued advancing the coverage of the programme, continued improving the mechanisms, improving the targeting system, the operations… and later it was decided to keep extending the benefits of the scholarships, etc. (Levy – Interview).

*PROGRESA* continued to be evaluated externally at the request of the deputy minister of the SEDESOL, Miguel Székely (Behrman, 2007). However, while some experts were invited to participate actively in the SEDESOL, PROGRESA, or the Technical Committee for the Evaluation of Poverty (later the CONEVAL), others were excluded. According to Julio Boltvinik, while President Fox initially included him in his team of advisers in social development, he was excluded and marginalised by Miguel Székely, Daniel Hernández, and other members of Santiago Levy’s team. There were two reasons for this. First, he was against the targeting mechanisms:
I was excluded and I am going to explain why. I was part of the transition team of Vicente Fox (…) I explained to the president how PROGRESA worked and I recommended a deep redesign of the programme. The first strong recommendation I made was to eliminate targeting in rural areas (…) We discussed this a lot and we had a very intense discussions (with Daniel Hernández and Vicente Arredondo) because I made those recommendations and they told me that I was not “being serious”, and I answered, “yes, I don’t care”, because if we keep playing this targeting game of discriminating between households that are “extreme poor” and households that are not, we are going to have serious problems with exclusion errors. It was bullshit; it was completely absurd to maintain targeting. The programme was badly designed (…) It was all the fault of (Miguel) Székely, he was so arrogant and proud that he did everything he could to exclude me from Vicente Fox’s government (Boltvinik – Interview).

Second, Julio Boltvinik confronted and questioned Santiago Levy, who was then the most relevant and influential actor in the policy community of POP:

This is what I call “the first mistake of Levy”. He believed that the Engels coefficient was 0.8 because he read Michael Lipton and his bullshit about Africa. In Africa, maybe people spend 80% of their income on food, but not in Mexico. That is the main reason why poverty was only identified in the countryside. That is why (Santiago) Levy believed that extreme poverty was located only in rural areas; this explains many design errors (Boltvinik – Interview).

Those critical stances regarding the programme and Santiago Levy earned Boltvinik the animosity of the rest of the members. Likewise, Araceli Damián, Boltvinik’s wife and an expert in social development, claims that she and other scholars were excluded from participating in the Technical Committee for the Evaluation of Poverty because they were critical of PROGRESA and of CCTs in general:

There was a tolerant position (taken on PROGRESA). All the counsellors selected to be part of CONEVAL or who participated in some way in this institution – such as Agustín Escobar, Mercedes González de la Rocha, Fernando Cortés, Gerardo Ordoñez – all of them had an uncritical attitude towards the programme. Those who did have a critical attitude were Julio Boltvinik, Carlos Barba, Pablo Yanes, but only them (…) There were chains of knowledge that explicitly excluded us. They excluded us from participating in the Technical Committee (for the Evaluation of Poverty) and in the election of the counsellors of CONEVAL. They excluded anyone who did not think like them (Damián – Interview).
The members of the policy community of PROGRESA clearly distrusted these scholars and experts. For example, John Scott, a former consultant of PROGRESA and academic counsellor of the CONEVAL since 2010, was explicit about his rejection of Julio Botvinik and his ideas.\textsuperscript{36} Equally, Daniel Hernández made implicit references to these scholars, accusing them of having the wrong idea about the programme:

All those who blame neoliberalism and transnational actors, and the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and any other nonsense, do so because they clearly have no idea how the programme works (Hernández – Interview).

By excluding people who were critical of the programme, the extended community was able to reaffirm their ideas and frame social policy using studies that presented CCTs as the best social intervention. For instance, in 2004, Miguel Székely, as deputy minister of the SEDESOL, ordered the carrying out of the survey, “What the poor say?” (“Lo que dicen los pobres”).\textsuperscript{37} Gonzalo Hernández Licona, then the director of evaluation at the SEDESOL, developed the study to conduct the survey. This is significant, as he eventually became the executive secretary of the CONEVAL. The study, which sought to understand the views of the poor regarding their own situation, ultimately served to legitimise CCTs: “In terms of design of policies, the results imply that it is necessary to focus on governmental actions that generate opportunities. The poor, mostly, do not ask for assistance actions; they ask opportunities to work, they ask for opportunities to use their abilities in order to get an honest income (…) regarding what the poor say about government intervention in social policy, the following stands out: the poor prefer actions focused on groups with few resources, instead of universal actions that benefit everyone equally, the poor prefer to collaborate with the government, and it must be government who decides who should receive the support” (Székely, 2005: p. 13).

According to Székely (Ibid), two questions from the survey were particularly relevant for this conclusion. First, “In your opinion, why are you poor?” Half of the respondents (50%) answered that it was a matter of destiny, luck, or God’s will. This led to the conclusion that it was necessary to make poor people aware about their own power and capabilities. In answer to the second question, “What could you do to live better?”, 43% stated that they could “work more”, which reaffirmed the anti-assistance stance of the social policy. However, it is

\textsuperscript{36} When asked about Julio Boltvinik’s criticism of PROGRESA/Oportunidades, John Scott said, “And now what did this man say? Let me guess, you don’t have to tell me, he said that ‘everything is the fault of neoliberalism’, isn’t it?”, speaking with a mocking tone and gestures that indicated a clear dislike.

\textsuperscript{37} The methodology of the survey is explained in detail by Székely (2005).
interesting that Miguel Székely did not give the same attention to other questions and results in the survey. For instance, the study also showed that “half of the poor believe governmental programmes are not enough and are only a palliative to manage poverty (…) most of the poor, either beneficiaries or non-beneficiaries of governmental programmes, perceive that antipoverty programmes help but do not solve the problem” (Hernández and del Razo, 2004: p. 25). Therefore, the conclusion of Székely (2005) that the “governmental programmes included in the survey accomplish largely the objective of generating well-being, at least regarding how the poor perceive it” is questionable (Ibid: p. 27). For this reason, Barcelata (2008) argues that officials and policymakers did not consider in-depth the implications of the results obtained: “the opinion of the poor continued to be ignored” (p. 182).

The results of the survey served to validate the core elements of PROGRESA/Oportunidades, especially targeting and conditionalities. This study was particularly relevant since it was presented at the same time as the LGDS was being debated in Congress. The LGDS proposed the creation of the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL), while also marking the overall orientation of social policies in the country. The CONEVAL was designated the official body responsible for measuring the effectiveness of the social programmes implemented by the federal government. President Fox appointed Gonzalo Hernández Licona as executive secretary of the CONEVAL, and most of the elected members who formed the academic council of the new institution related to the programme (see Table 6.3). For Czarnecki (2013), this marked the official institutionalisation of the POP policy community’s vision into the social policy.

From a theoretical perspective, the exclusion of the expert critics by Vicente Fox’s government and the selection of people with strong bonds to PROGRESA for the CONEVAL’s academic counsel formed a clear attempt to frame the poverty agenda. As suggested by Cobb and Elders (1972), to obtain control over a policy issue, it is necessary to privatise it. Equally, Baumgartner and Jones (1991) suggest that restricting the number of actors is key to protecting a policy monopoly. Hence, limiting the input of individuals with different views on poverty allowed to the newly created policy community of PROGRESA to influence the government’s agenda. Thus, the policy community ensured that key institutions – particularly the SEDESOL and the CONEVAL – endorsed CCTs (a broader analysis of this is presented in Chapter 10).
6.5 From PROGRESA to Oportunidades

Although the programme continued to be evaluated and to receive positive feedback, the government attempted to dissociate PROGRESA from the efforts of Ernesto Zedillo. In 2002, PROGRESA changed its name to “Programme of Human Development Opportunities” (Programa de Desarrollo Humano Oportunidades), also known simply as Oportunidades. Likewise, there was an ambitious expansion of its coverage, with other modifications implemented to strengthen it: “Thus, for 2001, the first year of the administration of his administration, Vicente Fox proposed three important modifications, and the Congress approved them. First, to extend coverage to 750,000 more families, with penetration in urban areas. Second, to extend educational scholarships three more years so they could cover high-school education, maintaining differentiation in favour of women. Third, health actions which focused on teenagers were expanded, and talks about sexuality, drug addiction and domestic violence were added” (Levy and Rodríguez, 2005: p.177). According to Levy and Rodríguez (Ibid), the modifications made were based on the conclusions of the evaluations conducted by international experts. For example, the decision to extend the programme to urban areas was one of the main recommendations made by these evaluations: “At general level we have some recommendations: 1. PROGRESA must be extended to poor urban areas…” (Escobar, 2000: p. 27). Similarly, other recommendations – such as granting bonuses to encourage students to complete their studies (later implemented as the component “Youth with Oportunidades” (Jóvenes con Oportunidades) – can be found in the studies conducted by the IFPRI.

Between 2001 and 2006, the government incorporated new elements into PROGRESA’s design that aimed to help poor families find opportunities to improve their situations. For this reason, the programme was officially renamed “Oportunidades” (“Opportunities”; Proceso, 2002). There was also a political motivation for the renaming – namely, to disassociate the programme from Ernesto Zedillo’s government (Lustig, 2014). Moreover, the programme was extended from the countryside to include urban locations, and the number of families covered by the programme doubled at the end of Vicente Fox’s term in office – going from 2.4 million families in 2000 to 5 million in 2006. The scholarships for students were also extended to cover middle-high education (high school). In 2003, the component “Youth with Oportunidades” was added, providing a monetary incentive to young people to complete high school. For Levy and Rodríguez (2005), this component had two goals: “first, strengthen the incentives to finish middle-high education; and second, introduce a component that would support future
consumption” (Ibid: p. 179). However, according to the operational rules of the programme, this incentive was restricted and could be used only for productive activities such as continuing studies to the higher education level, starting a business, buying health insurance, or buying a house (see changes in Table 6.4).

Table 6.4 Incremental changes in PROGRESA/Oportunidades 2000-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Incremental changes</th>
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| 2001  | - Expansion of the coverage to include urban areas  
- Coverage expanded from 2.6 million families to 3.2 million  
- Educational scholarships are extended to high-school level |
| 2002  | - PROGRESA is renamed “Human Development Programme Oportunidades”  
- Coverage expanded from 3.2 million families to 4.4 million |
| 2003  | - The component “Youth with Oportunidades” is added (a monetary incentive for young people to finish high school before 22 years old and engage in a productive activity)  
- Coverage expanded from 4.4 million families to 4.6 million |
| 2004  | - Coverage expanded from 4.6 million families to 5 million |
| 2005  | - Coverage remains at 5 million families |
| 2006  | - The component “Support for the elderly” (Apoyo a Adultos Mayores) is added (providing monetary support for family members above 70 years old)  
- Coverage remains at 5 million families |

Elaborated by the author, with information from Yaschine (2019).

In 2005, the government added the component “Support for the elderly”, with the objective of supporting families with members above 70 years old. According to Vicente Fox, he added the component as a matter of social justice: “Today, I am here to fulfil a promise of social justice with the elderly, with those who do not have an income or any kind of patrimony that allows them to live with dignity” (Fox, quoted in Proceso, 2006). However, this component generated controversy within the policy community:

I was against this change, not because I am against or in favour of non-contributory retirement pensions, but, do you want the programme – that is focused on generating human capital – to start doing things for which it was not designed? The cash transfers
were a mechanism to support people, but for logistical and design reasons, I believe that the programme should focus only on generating human capital (Levy – Interview).

The changes to PROGRESA/Oportunidades were ultimately part of a broader agenda in social policy, termed “With You” (Contigo)\(^{38}\), which had four main goals: to extend people’s skills through health and education, to generate development opportunities, to provide social security, and to help people build their patrimony (Valencia, 2006). These changes to the programme were accompanied by a considerable increase in budget, primarily because of the decision to expand the programme into urban areas (Levy, 2006; see Graphics 6.2 and 6.3).

Graphic 6.2 Coverage increase in PROGRESA/Oportunidades

Elaborated by the author, with information from the Presidency of the Republic (Presidencia de la República; 2018).

\(^{38}\) “Contigo” was the official strategy of social policy of the federal government established in the National Development Plan 2001-2006.

Although evidence played a key role in the decisions around these incremental adaptations to PROGRESA/Oportunidades, other reasons must also be taken into account. First, the programme was sufficiently flexible (in political terms) that Vicente Fox could add his “own mark”, as suggested by John Scott:

> PROGRESA was a programme that allowed the next administration to make superficial changes, rename it, and add their own mark without scratching the basic core (…) it is a fact that the programme had a lot of political flexibility (Scott – Interview).

For Santiago Levy and Daniel Hernández (interviews), the changes can be explained as “Christmas tree baubles”, as the modifications were additional elements that made the “tree” (the programme) more attractive (in political and social terms), without changing its essence.

> All these changes are like “Christmas tree baubles”, they do not change the programme, but are additional elements that make it look better. Ultimately, the programme remained the same (Levy – Interview).
Additionally, the subsequent governments were ideologically homogeneous in terms of how they framed the country’s social policy:

These administrations (during the governments of the PAN) were not radically different in terms of social policy (from the PRI). I mean, there was no big difference in how social policy was conceptualised. In terms of targeting the resources effectively and trying to coordinate different areas, the homogeneity was helpful for preserving the programme during different governments (Scott – Interview).

This also explains why close collaborators of Santiago Levy and José Gómez de León were later incorporated into senior positions in the SEDESOL. From the perspective of Santiago Levy, the changes were only a continuation of what had occurred under Ernesto Zedillo’s administration.

Second, political motivations also triggered the incremental adaptations. Daniel Hernández suggests that some of the changes had a political purpose, rather than reflecting a technical need:

Often, those who are in charge of the political decisions make decisions with no scientific basis, and those who are on the side of the technical decisions does not always have the strength to prevent this. In some cases, the cost of these decision is relatively low and does not affect the essence of the social policy, so you keep working (…) The last year of Vicente Fox’s government, they started to “play” with the programme, and they added new elements to the programme. The reason for this was to gain political support, and I am very clear on this (Hernández – Interview).

Proceso (2006) suggests that the decision to implement the “Support for the elderly” component was driven by political motivations. When Vicente Fox was in office, the mayor of Mexico City, and then presidential candidate of the coalition of left parties, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), proposed a similar programme. This programme, which supported people over 70 years old, made AMLO very popular and boosted his candidacy. Initially, Vicente Fox and his officials opposed this subsidy, arguing that it was extremely expensive and unfair to the taxpayers. However, in an attempt to maintain the popularity of the PAN in the elections of that year, President Fox decided to add this element to Oportunidades (Ibid).
Lustig (2014) agrees with the above, to some extent, arguing that the incremental changes – such as renaming the programme and extending its coverage – reflected Vicente Fox’s need to preserve political capital (understood as public recognition and partisan support). Hevia (2009) even suggests that the political conflict between Santiago Levy’s group and the new officials of the SEDESOL regarding PROGRESA’s decision-making triggered the incremental changes (see section 6.4). The conflict led the new officials to clarify their power to shape social policy, implementing new changes such as the renaming of the programme to “Oportunidades”.

In contrast, Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo refutes the suggestion that the programme changes were motivated by the prospect of “political gains”, while acknowledging that the changes helped the public to identify the programme with his party. He also disputes Levy and Hernández’s notion of “Christmas tree baubles”, arguing that the modifications made to the programme represented substantial changes:

There were many complaints about the political use of the programme; I even had to fight against the electoral use of PROGRESA during the 2000-year election when I was working in the third sector. One thing I want to say very clearly is I was not going to allow the electoral use of the programme. We were certain that PROGRESA/Oportunidades was not operating in favour of any party or candidate. The decision to transform PROGRESA into Oportunidades was a political decision, the president wanted a “new PROGRESA” (…) I am not sure if the changes can be considered “Christmas tree baubles”. I am pretty sure Santiago Levy already mentioned the metaphor to you. We did not make any “Christmas tree”, what we did was reinforce its design. We were not destroying or eliminating the programme. We did not think that the programme was bad; we only said the programme could be better, and that is always possible. I think we made it better; those modifications improved the programme (Gómez – Interview).

Similarly, Vicente Fox denies any electoral or partisan use of the programme and claims that the modifications were implemented because he considered PROGRESA’s design to be lacking, from an “integral human development” perspective. For him, it was better to preserve the good qualities of this programme, rather than creating a new one from scratch. Nonetheless, the modifications were constrained by the budget:

The programme needed to consider an integral human development perspective, taking into account not only education, health, and nutrition, but also other elements (…) Unfortunately, in a developing country such as Mexico, the budget is not enough to
accomplish this objective (to support all the poor). For this reason, we could not expand to cover all poor, only those living in extreme poverty, and my decision was to do the most we could in the best way possible (Fox – Interview).

Another important theme regarding the incremental changes was how these modifications – particularly the expansion of coverage – became essential for the continuation of the programme. The expansion of Oportunidades to cover urban areas and the inclusion of millions of new families, which were measures applied to “correct” the original design of PROSPERA, had an unexpected policy effect that strongly influenced its continuation. According to Daniel Hernández, these changes increased the political cost of scrapping the programme:

The programme has “scale” and the scale matters. You cannot erase a programme that covers millions of families just because. We never thought of this when we designed it, but the urgent need to reach a “big scale”, around two million families, helped to ensure that everybody was going to be cautious with decisions regarding the programme (…) The volume of this kind of programme always has to be taken account as an element that makes its deconstruction difficult (Hernández – Interview).

John Scott agrees that the expansion of the programme prevented its termination, but he disagrees with Hernández about the intentionality of this action:

The programme strategically expanded to such a large size that it became irreversible or very difficult to throw it away. I think that the idea of growing very fast, right from the beginning of the administration of Vicente Fox, was intentional, so there could be an important “constituency” that would make it impossible to dismantle (Scott – Interview).

Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo also claims that the expansion was planned from the beginning of the new administration. He argues that this decision was taken because it was necessary for President Fox to show the public the results of his fight against poverty during his first years in office:

My first assignment was to expand coverage. This was very important because it was one of the announcements that President Fox wanted to make during his first speech at the State of the Union. The minister Josefina Vázquez Mota asked us, “What is the president going to say? Are we going to achieve the coverage goal?” And yes, we accomplished it (Gómez - Interview).
Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo also suggests that the expansion of *Oportunidades* was the best defence against those who suggested discontinuing the programme. The incrementalism within *PROGRESA/Oportunidades* can be analysed from a gradual change perspective. Some actors promote change with the purpose of preserving the status quo. Thus, institutions evolve under a logic of continuity that reinforces previous institutional agreements (a broader analysis of this is presented in Chapter 10).

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the birth of the POP policy community and its expansion during the government of Vicente Fox. It also showed how this policy community gathered for the first evaluation of *PROGRESA* and how its members deployed different strategies for lobbying in favour of the programme to ensure its continuation after the political transition in 2000. Moreover, the chapter described how the policy community institutionalised CCTs by gaining relevant positions at the SEDESOL, the Technical Committee for the Evaluation of Poverty, and later the CONEVAL, thus influencing Mexico’s social policy by controlling key processes of policymaking.

This chapter has captured the essence of the POP policy community, showing how determined individuals with similar backgrounds and shared values concerning a policy issue were able to coordinate to influence the government’s agenda. Santiago Levy and José Gómez de León and their respective teams formed a group to operate the programme, which consisted of experts with solid academic backgrounds and strong expertise in quantitative methods. Only certain people with this specific profile who also accepted human capital paradigm and CCTs were involved in the project. Later, this initial policy community of PROGRESA expanded after the decision of the government to evaluate the programme. For this purpose, Santiago Levy and José Gómez de León used their professional networks to connect with other individuals of similar backgrounds. The collaboration between the Mexican policymakers, IFPRI, and the American experts eventually would form the policy community of POP.

Their common understanding of poverty and CCTs created adherence and stability within the group, which was key to defending their policy monopoly. Likewise, the insulation from other groups with different values once in government allowed them to gain stability in the policy subsystem. Once they had established their predominance in the involved institutions, the POP policy community was in a position to ensure the continuation of the programme. While there
was initially friction between the original community of PROGRESA and the new officials, there was an implicit agreement to keep intact the core design of the programme.

In addition, the chapter showed how the changes in PROGRESA, such as the transformation into Oportunidades and the expansion of the coverage, produced positive feedback that promoted a path-dependence process. As suggested by the interviewees, the initial actions undertaken at the beginning of PROGRESA/Oportunidades created a path that would be difficult to revert. As will be presented in the following chapters, the changes in Oportunidades represented a self-reinforcing incrementalism that influenced future changes seen during the governments of Felipe Calderón and Enrique Peña Nieto. Hence, the actions taken by the policy community to preserve their policy monopoly and the endogenous changes within the programme offer major explanations for POP’s endurance.

In the next chapter, I discuss the role of the POP policy community during the government of President Felipe Calderón and the reasons for the additions to Oportunidades during his administration.
7. The role of the PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA policy community during Felipe Calderón’s government

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the continuation of Oportunidades during Felipe Calderón’s government, as well as the second phase of incremental changes to the programme. During this period (2006-2012), Oportunidades became very important for President Calderón in political terms, especially after the legitimisation crisis at the beginning of his government. This relevance prompted a considerable increase in the resources allocated to the programme, with the coverage of the programme doubling in size. Moreover, new components were introduced that made Oportunidades even broader in terms of its social interventions. These changes, some of which had strong political motivations, were legitimised by the POP policy community, whose role as a consultation actor helped them to exercise influence over the government. Though their presence was less visible during this government, they remained very relevant in their protection of their policy monopoly. In addition, this chapter discusses how the POP policy community framed the government’s agenda by using evidence to endorse CCTs’ efficiency in addressing poverty. This chapter recounts how the CONEVAL and the SEDESOL presented evidence to higher official in a very discretionary manner to present a much favourable panorama of the programme, with studies that showed the substantive deficiencies of Oportunidades toned down or dismissed altogether. Once again, the coordinated actions of the POP policy community silenced critical voices, thus preserving the community’s monopoly. Taken together, this suggests that the Oportunidades policymaking process was strongly shaped by the POP policy community, in accordance with government’s political needs.

7.2 The decision to continue Oportunidades

In 2005, one year before the presidential election, most of the polls and surveys showed a clear lead for AMLO, from the coalition of left-wing parties, over any other candidate from other party. AMLO was a strong supporter of non-conditioned general subsidies, therefore the risk that he may win the election and decide to discontinue Oportunidades caused alarm within the POP policy community. According to Levy (interview), to protect the programme, the officials of the SEDESOL requested a new loan of 1.2 billion dollars from the IADB. Similarly, Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo (interview) suggests that the loan, once again, represented a padlock that
forced to the Mexican government to allocate resources to the programme and keep its core design intact:

The loan was authorised and the IADB accepted that we would operate the programme within our own rules. However, the rules had to be authorised by the IADB and they added a “padlock” that prevented changes to the programme design (Gómez – Interview).

Gómez expresses that the loan was also useful for strengthening the knowledge network that backed up the programme because it allowed them to remain in contact with the people from the IADB and the World Bank.

The presidential election in 2006 was close and polarised, and Felipe Calderón from the PAN beat AMLO by less than 1% of the vote. The media considered Felipe Calderón to be a member of the technocratic elite of Mexico. He was a lawyer from the Free University of Law (Escuela Libre de Derecho), with master’s degrees in economics from ITAM (a school with strong ties to the power elite and an orthodox view in their economic teaching39) and public administration from Harvard. He had previously served as general director of the National Bank of Public Work and Services and as minister of energy during Vicente Fox’s government. Felipe Calderón was a strong supporter of the free market and the neoliberal economic model (Hernández, 2014). Moreover, he had a positive attitude towards the programme. According to Vicente Fox (interview), this was because the values of Oportunidades were similar to those of the PAN ideology:

He probably thought Oportunidades was well-planned and well-operated, had adequate management mechanisms, but also coincided with the ideology of the PAN. The programme had international recognition and he decided to keep it. In fact, the programme was planned to be long-term, and (Felipe) Calderón thought that it was necessary to maintain this programme along with others from my government.

This would be consistent with what has been expressed by authors such as Meyer (2015), who argues that despite the political differences between Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón,40 in general terms, they shared the same economic agenda and had similar points of view about

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40 Despite being from the same party, Vicente Fox did not initially support Felipe Calderon’s candidacy, as he belonged to a different group within the PAN.
social policy, thus explaining why certain programmes and policies continued during this period.

In December 2006, Felipe Calderón began his administration as the new president of Mexico. However, he started in the middle of a political crisis due to allegations of electoral fraud, which brought the legitimacy of his government into question. According to Schedler (2009), the allegations arose because, although the results showed that he and AMLO were divided by less than 6% of the vote, the electoral authorities refused to conduct a recount and instead rushed to name Felipe Calderón the elected president, thus creating a general belief that fraud had been committed.

This development may also explain why the new president was in favour of continuing Oportunidades. According to an anonymous source who was close to the president and worked for him during this period, Felipe Calderón’s lack of legitimacy forced him to use the programme to raise his popularity amongst the public:

Felipe Calderón had neither credibility nor legitimacy. The left accused him of fraud. He needed to recover some legitimacy and that is why Oportunidades became so important for him (Anonymous – Interview).

As argued by this anonymous source, President Calderón used Oportunidades to seek the support of poor and vulnerable people, who had traditionally been the electoral basis of the left parties in Mexico:

Felipe Calderón did not give a damn about the poor at all; he did not care about people (…) President Calderón always said that he was going to “gain the support of the left using left-wing policies”, but what happened to the programme? Well, the programme ended up being used to create the political clientele who proved to be electorally profitable (Anonymous – Interview).

President Calderón appointed Beatriz Zavala as the new minister of the SEDESOL and Josefina Vázquez Mota, who during that time was part of the transition team, was named minister of education, taking with her the team of advisers from the previous government: Miguel Székely, Rodolfo Tuirán, and Daniel Hernández Franco. The new minister, like her predecessor, did not have a technocratic profile; she was not an economist and, despite having a degree in social

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41 The original phrase used was “rebasar a la izquierda por la izquierda”.}

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sciences from the University of Kentucky and having been a scholar for over a decade, her expertise was not related to economic or financial areas. In addition, most of her professional trajectory was related to political positions within the PAN. However, unlike what happened with Josefina Vázquez Mota, who was recognised even by her critics as a person with the ability to effectively manage the SEDESOL, Beatriz Zavala was accused throughout her administration of politicising poverty. She allocated members of the PAN to the SEDESOL and Oportunidades who, according to media, used their positions to gain partisan support. For example, Graco Ramírez, politician and then senator of the Revolutionary Democratic Party, claimed that she was using the social programmes within the SEDESOL to serve the benefit of PAN (Ramírez, in *El Siglo de Torreón*, 2007). As seen in Tables 7.1 and 7.2 in the Appendix, most of the officials designated to operate in the states were politicians related to the PAN. According to the media, the ultimate goal was to control the SEDESOL’s resources and create political clientele who would influence future elections. Likewise, Zapata (2014) claims that many of the officials designated as representatives of the SEDESOL or coordinators of Oportunidades in the states not only lacked the expertise to perform their assigned jobs, but were also individuals with strong political-electoral interests. In some cases, these individuals were denounced for diverting resources allocated to the programme for electoral purposes.

Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo suggests that these actions were driven by Felipe Calderón’s desire to use social programmes to gain partisan support:

> Felipe Calderón was not a technical president; he was a man of the party, and his government was a government for the party. It was clear that, during his time, the programme operated with political intentions (Gómez – Interview).

Likewise, the anonymous source agrees that social programmes were used strategically for political and electoral purposes. The team of Beatriz Zavala was formed exclusively by members of the PAN. For instance, Juan Carlos Romero Hicks, former governor of the state of Guanajuato and personal friend of Vicente Fox, was named deputy minister of Urban Development. Gustavo Merino Juárez, former officer at the SEDESOL and member of the PAN, was named deputy minister of Social and Human Development. Félix Vélez Fernández Varela, also with strong ties to the PAN, was appointed deputy minister of Planning and Evaluation. Other high-level positions in SEDESOL were also given to renowned members of the party. In many countries, it would be a surprising to find party actors involved in the management of the bureaucracy in charge of addressing poverty and inequality. Indeed, the
above contrasts with the practice of Josefina Vázquez Mota, who formed a group of collaborators based on expertise (see Chapter 6). Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo was removed from the National Coordination of Oportunidades after the end of Vicente Fox’s government, and Salvador Neftalí Escobedo Zoletto was appointed the new national coordinator. He was a respected surgeon and member of the PAN, and he had previously served as an official at the SEDESOL.

According to Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo, no one from the new government took the previous officials of Oportunidades into consideration – either during the transition period or at the start of the administration – and they were not asked to give their views about the programme:

I did not participate in the transition team. Gustavo Adolfo Merino was in charge of the transition team in the area of social development. They did not look to me and I did not look to them. I was willing to cooperate, I even tried to express my own personal opinions about the programme to the new minister (Beatriz Zavala), but they did not offer me the opportunity. This is something that happens in politics; it is not a personal issue. But to be clear about this, we gave Zedillo’s people better treatment than the new officials of Felipe Calderón’s administration gave us, despite being from the same party (Gómez – Interview).

Salvador Neftalí Escobedo argues that it was not necessary to approach the previous officers of Oportunidades because they learned that the programme was working and had no problems:

The programme was fully functional. During the transition period, there was not a single problem, everything worked perfectly, and (Rogelio) Gómez Hermosillo left everything working fine (Escobedo – Interview).

I note here that, regardless of the changes in the SEDESOL and Oportunidades at the beginning of Felipe Calderón’s government, many of the technical bureaucrats from the Vicente Fox and Ernesto Zedillo administrations continued working in the programme.

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42 For example, Concepción Steta Gandara, director of Planning and Evaluation, Ramiro Hall Ornelas, director of Attention and Operation, and Angelica Castaneda, director of Settlement and Registry, worked under both governments. Maria Farell Campa, general director of administration and finance, can be traced to the Ernesto Zedillo administration.
7.3 Incremental changes in Oportunidades

Beatriz Zavala lasted two years in office, before resigning in 2008. According to different media, Felipe Calderón was disappointed with her work at the SEDESOL due to her lack of capacity to effectively operate social programmes, in particular after the emergency state produced by the hurricane that hit Mexico in 2007.\textsuperscript{43} Salvador Neftalf Escobedo agreed with this highlighting that Zavala’s work was deplorable:

\textit{(President) Calderón appointed this woman, but she was an awful minister. She did not get the expected results (Escobedo – Interview).}

Similarly, the anonymous source suggests that President Calderón was not happy with Zavala’s performance and decided to replace her with someone more skilled. However, during her time in office, a relevant change made to the programme was the addition of the “Energy component” (\textit{Componente energético}). “According to Gertler et al. (2009), this new component was a monthly monetary transfer given to the poorest families to compensate for increased gas and electricity prices.\textsuperscript{44} However, the component was only created to fulfil an electoral promise made by President Calderón during his campaign, and as such, the subsidy was provisional and lasted until 2010 (Barajas, 2016).

In her place, Felipe Calderón appointed Ernesto Cordero, who was a close friend of the president and had a strong technocratic profile. Ernesto Cordero had a degree in statistics from ITAM, and a master’s degree and doctorate in economics with a specialisation in quantitative methods from the University of Pennsylvania. He had previously worked at the Ministry of Energy in technical positions and served as deputy minister at the Ministry of Finance. Cordero was considered part of the second generation of public servants formed by Pedro Aspe, former minister of finance, during the government of Carlos Salinas (Aguirre, 2018). According to the anonymous source, his appointment at the SEDESOL was due to the urgent need for a skilled

\textsuperscript{43} Some media expressed that her inability to distribute the benefits of the social programmes created discomfort amongst the population. Even Gerardo Esquivel, today the sub-governor of Mexico’s central bank, has written on his personal blog that Zavala’s lack of ability at the SEDESOL irritated Felipe Calderon.
\textsuperscript{44} According to official figures, the cost per kg of gas grew from $4.82 Mexican pesos in 2002 to $9.34 in 2007 – a substantial increase of 94%. Likewise, the average cost per kilowatt grew from $0.89 pesos in 2002 to $1.13 in 2007, an increase of 27%.
minister with strong ties to the Ministry of Finance to streamline resources for social programmes, especially after the global economic crisis of 2008.\textsuperscript{45}

According to Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo (interview), the above represented the forming of an implicit alliance between the SEDESOL and the Ministry of Finance. Equally, Daniel Hernández Franco (interview) considers the appointment of Ernesto Cordero to have reproduced the de facto relationship between the ministries and shown the power of the technocratic group in the government. \textit{Oportunidades} thus became the main governmental mechanism in the fight against poverty, with the largest budget of any within the SEDESOL and operating under strict criteria set by the Ministry of Finance:

The programme represented 90\% of all the social policy in the country\textsuperscript{46} (...) it was an alliance, based – like everything done by the Ministry of Finance – on two basic criteria: spending efficiency and impact efficiency (Hernández – Interview).

The arrival of Ernesto Cordero in office was accompanied by a considerable rise of budgetary resources allocated to \textit{Oportunidades} (see Graphic 7.1). According to the anonymous source, the decision to appoint Ernesto Cordero at the SEDESOL was not only intended to put someone into post with close ties to the Ministry of Finance, it also had a political logic:

Ernesto Cordero was a “man with resources” and it was very clear that Cordero was Calderón’s “chosen one”. He tried to position him as his successor in the party. It was very clear the intention of the president was to turn Cordero into the next presidential candidate of the PAN in 2012 (Anonymous – Interview).

In the opinion of Julio Boltvinik, the aforementioned was proof that a technocratic group within the Ministry of Finance controlled the SEDESOL and \textit{Oportunidades}. This group controlled the budgetary resources for their own political purposes:

The decision (to give more resources to the programme) was taken by this community and the president. It is a small and closed group that works in the Ministry of Finance and the presidential office where the power is concentrated. This small community represents the conceptual triumph of neoliberalism in Mexico (Boltvinik – Interview).

\textsuperscript{45} According to the World Bank, in 2008, the number of people living in poverty in Mexico had risen by 4.2 million since the previous year.

\textsuperscript{46} To be precise, during that time, the \textit{Oportunidades} budget represented around 80\% of the total sum allocated to anti-poverty programmes in the SEDESOL. Thus, it is clear that this was the largest programme in terms of budget.
Although Boltvinik’s argument would be difficult to corroborate, an indication of this could be the manner in which Felipe Calderón appointed his cabinet. For example, Ernesto Cordero claims that the decision-making regarding the selection of cabinet members was highly concentrated in the hands of a small group of individuals: “President Calderón never delegated this responsibility, but he did set a first stage in which he requested that three of his closest aides, including myself, create a brief list for every position (…)’ – ‘Can I ask who the other two aides were?’ – ‘Juan Camilo Mouriño, who was the minister of the Interior, also was his first head of the presidency. He passed away a few years ago. Juan Camilo Mouriño, myself, and there was Alejandra Sota”47 (Cordero, quoted in Joyce, 2015: p. 4). All these individuals were concentrated in the presidential office, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of the Interior.

According to Salvador Neftalí Escobedo, the increase in the budget was possible because Ernesto Cordero indeed had a special relationship with President Calderón:

I had an interview with President Calderón and he made various enquiries about the programme and what was needed to increase the coverage. Fortunately, there was a direct relationship between Felipe Calderón and minister Ernesto Cordero (…) (which meant that) this issue was solved very easily. Ernesto Cordero had a meeting with the president, and in only 30 minutes, they decided to increase the budget and the coverage. The argument of Cordero was that it would be unfair not to address more families, and he was right. Once the budget was assigned, there was no problem with making incremental changes (Escobedo – Interview).

Escobedo adds that Cordero, as deputy minister of finance, was in charge of the public expenditure of the federal government, therefore he knew how to allocate more resources to the programme. For him, this was extremely positive for Oportunidades because he was conscious about the importance of the programme for combating poverty, and he had direct access to the Ministry of Finance.

In December 2009, Felipe Calderón named Ernesto Cordero the new minister of finance, and appointed Heriberto Félix Guerra as minister of the SEDESOL. Félix Guerra was an economist from the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education (ITESM), a successful businessman and renowned member of the PAN, and he had previously served as deputy

47 Juan Camilo Mouriño, Ernesto Cordero, and Alejandra Sota were close friends of the president. The three of them had strong technical skills and a long history with the PAN. In addition, Cordero and Sota had studied with Felipe Calderón at the ITAM.
minister of the economy. Some journalistic sources wrote that his assignation had been awarded on the basis of his ability to continue the good work of Ernesto Cordero. However, other media outlets cited political reasons, as Felipe Calderón also considered him a possible candidate for the presidency in 2012.48

Although Cordero was no longer at the SEDESOL, according to Escobedo, he was committed to allocating more resources to the programme because it was of great importance for Felipe Calderón:

He knew Oportunidades well, so when he was appointed minister of finance, he continued to look out for the programme. He understood the relevance of Oportunidades for combatting poverty, as well as the personal relevance of the programme for President Calderón (Escobedo – Interview).

The budgetary rise gave the opportunity to add new components and include more families in Oportunidades (see Graphics 7.1 and 7.2).

![Graph 7.1 Oportunidades coverage increase 2007-2012](image)

Elaborated by the author, with information from the Presidency of the Republic (Presidencia de la República; 2018).

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48 *El Universal* and *Proceso* were amongst the media outlets that suggested President Calderón had considered Ernesto Cordero as his successor.

In 2008, the government created the component “Support for better living” (Apoyo vivir mejor) and in 2010 implemented “Support better living for children” (Apoyo infantil vivir mejor). The first of these had the purpose of compensating the rise in food prices during the economic crisis. The rationale for this was that poor people needed to spend a larger proportion of their income to cover their nutritional needs than wealthier citizens did. The 2010 component than had the objective of helping those children aged under the age of 9 years, who were not old enough to obtain a scholarship (Araujo and Suárez, 2013). For Daniel Hernández Franco (interview), the latter component was urgent because the programme design had given insufficient consideration to early child development. Other changes were made to improve the “Youth with Oportunidades (Jóvenes con Oportunidades) component and to remove the “Support for the elderly” (Apoyo para adultos mayores) created during the previous government (see Chapter 6). According to Salvador Neftalí Escobedo, “Youth with Oportunidades” was changed because it did not work:

Miguel Székely created the component “Jóvenes con Oportunidades” and he was against us changing it. He was angry with me because I told him that the subsidy was not enough to incentivise young people to finish high school. It was a shitty subsidy. I proposed
improving it by increasing the amount of money transferred to the youth after they finished school so they could use it freely.

As explained in the previous chapter, this component offered a sum of money to young people who finished high school to start a business or develop another productive activity. This was changed so the young people could use the money without restriction after completing their studies. The component “Support for the elderly” created in 2005 with the purpose of supporting families who included at least one member over the age of 70 years, was not eliminated, but the government noted that this subsidy had been duplicated by the social programme “70 and over” (70 y más) created in 2007, which also gave monetary support to people over 70 years old. Therefore, the government made the beneficiaries choose one of the two subsidies. If they chose “70 and over”, they were removed from the list covered by Oportunidades, and vice versa (Araujo and Suárez, 2013; see main changes listed in Table 7.3).

49 According to Félipe Calderón (quoted in Herrera, 2007), he created this programme to prevent elderly people becoming electoral clientele (clearly referring to AMLO, his opponent in the 2006 presidential elections).
### Table 7.3 Incremental changes to *Oportunidades* 2007-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Incremental changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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| 2007   | - The “Energy component” (*Componente energético*) is added, providing monetary support to compensate for increased gas and electricity prices  
        - Coverage of 5 million families                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 2008   | - The “Support for better living” (*Componente vivir mejor*) component is added, providing monetary support to compensate for increased food prices  
        - Coverage increases from 5 million families to 5.5 million                                                                                                                                               |
| 2009   | - Coverage increases from 5.5 million families to 5.2 million                                                                                                                                                        |
| 2010   | - The “Support better living for children” (*Apoyo infantil vivir mejor*) component is added, providing monetary support for families with children under the age of 9 years  
        - The “Energy component” is removed  
        - Coverage increases from 5.2 million families to 5.8 million                                                                                                                                 |
| 2011   | - Beneficiaries forced to choose between “70 and over” (*70 y más*) programme and “Support for the elderly”  
        - Coverage remains at 5.8 million families (with the addition of only a small number of new families)                                                                                                 |
| 2012   | - Coverage remains at 5.8 million families (with the addition of only a small number of new families)                                                                                                                 |

Elaborated by the author, with information from Araujo and Suárez (2013), and Yaschine (2019).

In the view of Barajas (2016), the new components and the changes implemented during this government did not produce any substantial change to the original design of *PROGRESA*. However, they did represent a more complex management of it: “To start with, after a first division between beneficiary and non-beneficiary families, beneficiaries were subsequently divided into several groups: families with children in school; families with elderly dependants; and families with children under nine years old. These divisions represented an administrative tangle, hindering the efficiency of the programme” (Ibid: p.6).
During Felipe Calderón’s government, POP’s policy community continued to participate in the federal government, though their presence was more discreet. According to María Concepción Steta, evaluation director of Oportunidades from 2006 to 2009, the programme maintained a close relationship with experts from different institutions:

It was a group of scholars from national and international organisations such as the National Institute of Public Health, Berkeley, the London School of Economics, CIDE, UNAM, ITESM (…) All of them were people interested in the continuation of the programme (Steta – Interview).

Salvador Neftalí Escobedo states that during his time as national coordinator, there was a evaluations were conducted continually by the General Direction of Evaluation, which was part of the SEDESOL, and all the changes implemented in the programme were first evaluated by experts. Moreover, he ordered the creation of a “working table”50 (i.e., a working group) of experts to give feedback on the programme. However, unlike in the past, where only certain members of the POP policy community were consulted to advise on the programme, this time, more people with a diverse range of perspectives were invited to participate. This, according to Escobedo, generated some friction amongst the participants:

Most of the experts were scholars; (María) Concepción Steta was in charge of organising the working tables (…) Eight working tables were carried out, and each table lasted 2 days. Of course, there were conflicts and discussions amongst the experts. There were two scholars who were the most combative – (Julio) Boltvinik and Rolando Cordera. They were very critical and, many times, they said to me that the programme was badly designed and should be changed (Escobedo – Interview).

Although these critics expressed their discomfort with the programme, their opinions were not fully considered by the officials of Oportunidades. This was presumably because these officials had a vested interest in continuing the programme:

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50 In Spanish, “mesas de trabajo”.
I told them that the purpose of the table was not to throw the programme into the bin. I encouraged them to give me feedback on the things that I could improve, and they often had good ideas (Escobedo – Interview).

Another reason could be that the members of the policy community marginalised the critics’ views about the programme and “hijacked” the working tables. However, this cannot be corroborated because, when asked about his participation in those working tables, Boltvinik argued that he did not remember them. Despite the friction, Salvador Neftalí Escobedo and María Concepción Steta (interviews) ensured they kept the working tables diverse to avoid any biases. According to them, the tables had positive outcomes that guided some of the changes later implemented in the programme, while allowing the policymakers to confer with a broader community of experts. Escobedo even mentions that Amartya Sen was invited to one of the working tables as a guest of honour. However, it was not possible to find official information about these working tables (lists, records, transcripts, or specific outcomes), even in the media. When Escobedo was asked about this, he answered that María Concepción Steta should have the information, but she was unsure where the lists and the records could be.51

The anonymous source partially agrees with the other actors about the importance of the policy community of POP in the continuation of and changes within Oportunidades. However, this source claims that President Calderón was not fully convinced about the work of these scholars and emphasises that the role of the experts was only to legitimise the policy:

    Calderón did not even pay attention to these scholars (...) For the president, the academic focus of the programme was a waste of time. For him, the work of the scholars was not “rocket science”. However, in the official discourse, it was necessary to be legitimised by a bunch of scholars (...) Yes, their presence (the scholars’ presence) was important, particularly the presence of Santiago Levy from the IADB (Anonymous – Interview).

Likewise, Araceli Damián argues that Felipe Calderón’s government used the academic experts only to back up the programme and was uninterested in the results they obtained:

    Many of the scholars accepted the programme from a tolerant and uncritical position. All the counsellors of CONEVAL – Agustín Escobar, Mercedes de la Rocha, Fernando Cortés, Gerardo Ordoñez (...) – their thinking was that the programme should continue because,

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51 It was not possible to find the full list of experts invited to these tables, and no information was found on the SEDESOL website. In addition, the Mexican government did not provide the requested information. However, checking the curricula of John Scott and Paul Gertler revealed that these two men were present.
According to the statements of the government, a huge effort was being made to combat poverty. Their thinking was too conformist (Damián – Interview).

Julio Boltvinik goes further with his accusations, stating that Ernesto Cordero pushed the academic counsellors of the CONEVAL:

Ernesto Cordero ordered that poverty levels must be less than 50% (of the total population) in terms of multidimensional poverty, and my “friends” at CONEVAL followed his instructions. Those scholars that were supposed to be independent. It is a shame; this is a country of cowards (Boltvinik – Interview).

According to Boltvinik, the role of the POP policy community was to provide evidence to support the efforts made by the government, including Oportunidades, without proper objectivity in their studies. Similarly, Alejandro Agudo (2015), former external evaluator for Oportunidades, claims that the members of the policy community and senior officials from SEDESOL insisted on shielding the programme against any criticism: “The pressures of influential actors and external groups were substantial enough to cause nervousness in the National Coordination of Oportunidades, where we were required to provide ‘arguments to defend the programme’ (...) Although in Oportunidades’ evaluations, the researchers had the freedom to design the research methodology, our work and the result were already defined by certain binding documents (...) A scholar who served as an external reviewer criticised our reports, warning us that we should be more careful since Oportunidades ‘was the one of the best models of social policy she knew’ (...) Once the programme was shielded against any enquiry that questioned its design or implementation, it was only necessary to agree on an ‘acceptable story’ that could be transformed into a ‘widely shared consumer item’” (Ibid: p. 141-142). In addition, he argues that the IADB funded most of the external evaluations conducted since 2005. This created bias due to the close bonds between some members of the programme and the bank, which could explain why some evaluations were slanted to prevent criticism of the programme.

7.5 The controversial use of evidence and the renewal of the CONEVAL

Despite the pressure from the POP policy community, some of the evaluations conducted in 2008 to mark the 10th anniversary of the programme were highly critical and brought into doubt the effectiveness of Oportunidades. Boltvinik et al. (2019) point out that these studies provided evidence of the failure of Oportunidades to end intergenerational poverty: “The deficiencies of
POP were evident after ten years of operation (...) it is possible to argue that POP did not achieve its central objective because, even with beneficiaries attending school and health services, two main conditions were not met: a) the assistance did not translate into better learning and health; (and) b) these individuals were not successfully inserted into the labour market with the possibility of obtaining higher returns for their human capital” (p. 185-185). For instance, the study conducted by González (2008) concludes that serious deficiencies in welfare services hampered human capital creation: “The ethnographies show a generalized overview of deficiencies and failure in quality (...) The evidence obtained showed the problems that affect quality: insufficient infrastructure and poor conditions, lack of personnel, non-attendance of doctors and teachers, limited resources. (...) But even in the localities with the privilege of having schools or health clinics, the coverage does not guarantee the quality of services required for education or health” (Ibid: p.131). Other studies also presented unfavourable results. Ibarra and Villa (2010, quoted in Boltvinik et al. 2019) summarise some of these: “Behrman found no other positive effect on various indicators of human capital such as learning, educational achievement or nutrition (...) Parker and Behrman found only a significant five percent impact on writing skills for girls between 17 and 21, and five point four percent in mathematics. Educational achievements are described by the author as discouraging (...) Mancera and others showed that POP beneficiaries have lower levels of achievement than non-beneficiaries in similar schools. The results of these evaluations paint a grim picture that emphasises the need for complementary actions” (p.189).

Although some of the 2008 studies were particularly harsh and evidenced serious deficiencies in the programme, Julio Boltvinik argues that they did not generate any controversy:

Year after year, the evaluations said “everything is perfect, everything is working wonderfully”. There was a consensus that PROGRESA and Oportunidades were working very well, and suddenly, in the evaluations of that year, everything goes wrong (...) These evaluations showed it was a disaster, but nothing happened. It is surprising how, after the results of those evaluations, they (the officials of SEDESOL and Oportunidades) did not make any real changes to the programme (Boltvink – Interview).

For Boltvinik, the results of those evaluations had a minimal impact on the public debate and created no scandal because the political agenda was focused on solving the severe problems of
violence and insecurity.\textsuperscript{52} Therefore, there was no pressure to implement changes to fix the deficiencies in the programme. In accordance with Jones and Baumgartner (2005), the above would be representative of what is known as the “politics of attention”. Governments prioritise problems, normally addressing those that require immediate action. Moreover, as suggested by Adler and Wilkerson (2012), there are so many issues that require immediate action that governments are more responsive to those that are a priority for the public. Consequently, other issues must wait until awareness has been raised amongst the public. The Mexican public was more concerned with addressing violence and crime than poverty. Therefore, Felipe Calderón’s government was less responsive to the deficiencies of \textit{Oportunidades} shown in the external evaluations.

Agudo (2015) proposes a different reason, arguing that policymakers did not actually read the studies, but only the executive summaries. Thus, they did not have a complete picture of the programme: “In the technical annexe of the agreement for the evaluation signed by SEDESOL and CIESAS (the academic institution responsible for hiring the evaluators), the formats and the structure that all the documents and reports made by the consultant must have was established (…) The two most important sections were the “executive summary” and the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). The executive summary and SWOT are the only things that politicians and experts will read. In fact, the main text could be less important for policy production” (Ibid: p.137). From a theoretical perspective, the above clearly suggests a process in which bounded rationality promotes path dependence. As stated by Koch et al. (2009), some conditions – in particular how policymakers process information – increase the probability of institutional lock-in. Under conditions of “positive feedback”, the decision-making process is oriented towards path dependence. If the Mexican officials only read the executive summaries – and these tended to indicate an adequate performance by the programme – it is understandable that only incremental actions would be considered.

While the policymakers responsible for \textit{Oportunidades} ignored the criticisms made in the 2008 studies, they also counterattacked dissenters by conducting other studies to respond to those that doubted the “effectiveness” of the programme:

The evaluations showed that the objectives of health, education, and nutrition were met, but what was measured was whether the beneficiaries overcame poverty. That is, they did

\textsuperscript{52} In December 2006, Felipe Calderon declared a “war against drug trafficking”, which produced a spiral of violence without precedent in Mexico’s history.
not measure the same objectives. Getting out of poverty is not the same as increasing human capacity (…) The failure was, in part, that of the ministries of health and education, which did not provide quality services (…) We commissioned a study to evaluate the quality of the health and education services for Oportunidades beneficiaries. The results were very negative for them; they did not say anything anymore (…) The critics were silent (Escobedo – Interview).

To deflect from the shortcomings of Oportunidades, advocates redirected the criticisms away from the programme itself and towards the institutions that provided health and education services. Thus, it was possible to argue that the programme was fulfilling its objectives, but the institutions on which it relied were not. Therefore, the policymakers of SEDESOL thus reached a conclusion on this basis:

It was the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, the Mexican Institute of Social Security, amongst others, that were doing their job poorly. Even so, it was better to maintain the programme than to leave the beneficiaries without those services (Escobedo – Interview).

The evaluations conducted in the following years reduced their level of criticism and even emphasised the positive results of the programme – namely, improvements in access to basic services for the poor population. For example, the “Specific Performance Evaluations” (EED; Evaluaciones específicas de desempeño)53, painted a very positive picture of Oportunidades. The 2008/2009 EED concludes that, “Oportunidades should continue because its design and operation are adequate (…) The evaluations show that it has positive impacts on its beneficiaries. Specifically, it has been shown to improve education, health and nutrition” (CONEVAL, 2008). I note that is peculiar that the evaluators here recommend the continuation of the programme partly because its mechanics were functional, since the main focus of the EED should have been on measuring the effects of the social policy. The EED of 2009/2010 was even more positive, although suggesting some “opportunity areas”: “The results of these studies show that the programme has had positive impacts on the indicators related to human capital. In this case, we found an increase in school attendance, a reduction of child malnutrition, and an improvement of the health condition of the beneficiaries. However, the evaluation reveals some opportunity areas that require further research and new attention

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53 According to CONEVAL, the EEDs measure the accomplishment of the objectives and goals of the social programmes. They are designed for decision making at top managerial level.
strategies” (CONEVAL, 2009). *Oportunidades* obtained the highest-possible scores for most of the criteria evaluated by the CONEVAL (see Table 7.4).

Table 7.4 Results of the “Specific Performance Evaluations” (EEDs) 2007-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>EED score</th>
<th>Relevant comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007/2008</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>No comments are included in the EED.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/2009</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>The programme reduces social inequality, therefore it must be continued and reinforced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/2010</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>The programme has had positive impacts related to human development. However, there are some opportunity areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/2011</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>There are positive impacts, but there are substantial deficiencies in the quality of the services provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/2012</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>There are positive results and its design accomplishes its goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/2013</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>The programme had positive impacts in the beneficiaries in rural areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


These evaluations were conducted by prestigious institutions such as the National Institute of Public Health (INSP; *Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública*), UNAM, and the North Border College (COLEF; *Colegio de la Frontera Norte*), amongst others. Nonetheless, some of the people who conducted the evaluations were part of the POP policy community. For example, Iliana Yaschine participated in the EED 2008/2009 and was previously chief of evaluations in *Oportunidades* until 2006. Gerardo Ordoñez Barba, member of the Technical Committee for the Evaluation of Poverty, which had close bonds with the POP policy community, was the researcher in charge of the EED 2009/2010. Similarly, Evelyn Rodríguez, who was the closest collaborator of Santiago Levy, participated in the EED 2012/2013. According to the CONEVAL, these people conducted the evaluations because they were the most highly recognised experts in their field. However, there is a chance that their evaluations may have
been biased. These experts were involved in earlier stages of the programme – either in its design or its operation; thus, in a sense, they would have been assessing their own work. However, Graciela Freyermuth (interview), who was during that time part of the academic council of the CONEVAL, denies any bias towards the programme. She explains that this specific group was in charge of conducting the evaluations because they were so close to the programme they were entirely committed to improving it:

*Oportunidades* was evaluated from the beginning by a group of evaluators; and as happens with any programme, when a group establishes a strong bond with a programme, they become informally part of it. What I mean is that their evaluations sought to improve the programme and their expectations were to continue the programme because of the benefits it represented (Freyermuth – Interview).

However, it is difficult to determine whether those experts were entirely objective when evaluating *Oportunidades*, as their “commitment” to the programme may have influenced their interpretation of the evidence. Although I have no proof of it, this could be a case of the selective use of evidence to support a policy. These people were highly engaged with the programme, so it would not be strange if they lacked a neutral stance. No other programme in the entire public federal administration obtained good results, and it is suspicious that *Oportunidades*, which was developed and evaluated by the same parties, was the only one to obtain such positive feedback.

Furthermore, since the CONEVAL was the body in charge of these evaluations, it is also conspicuous that the election of the academic council of the CONEVAL was conducted in 2010. According to the LGDS, the six academic counsellors are elected for a period of four years, and half can be re-elected. The process of selection would be through a vote of the members of the National Commission for Social Development (CNDS), which was composed of representatives from legislative institutions, federal government, states, and municipalities. This selection was important because the CONEVAL academic council would legitimise the actions taken by the federal government to fight poverty and inequality. The CNDS ultimately chose those scholars listed in the table below (Table 7.5).

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54 According to the review of the EEDs of various years, only *Oportunidades* obtained positive reviews.
55 According to the LGDS these members are the Ministries of Social Development, Education, Health, Labour, Agriculture and Environment; the local ministries of social development of each state, the representatives of the national mayor’s association; and the presidents of the social development commission of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.
Table 7.5 Elected members of the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL) academic council 2010-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counsellor</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Counsellor</th>
<th>Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Fernando Alberto Cortés Cáceres   | - PhD in social sciences from the Centre for Research and Higher Studies (CIESAS)  
- Researcher at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO)/COLMEX  
- Served as external consultant for PROGRESA |                                    | He continued to the next period                                                                 |
| Agustín Escobar Latapí            | - PhD in sociology from University of Manchester  
- Researcher at CIESAS  
- In charge of the official qualitative evaluation of PROGRESA/Oportunidades from 1999 to 2008 |                                    | He continued to the next period                                                                 |
| Graciela María Teruel Belismélis  | - PhD in economics from University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)  
- Researcher at Ibero-American University (UIA)  
- Consultant to the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) to work on PROGRESA evaluation |                                    | She continued to the next period                                                                 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Félix Acosta Díaz</th>
<th>PhD in social science from COLMEX</th>
<th>María del Rosario Cárdenas Elizalde</th>
<th>PhD in population studies from Harvard University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher at the North Border College (COLEF)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher at the Metropolitan Autonomous University (UAM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No specific relationship with PROGRESA/Oportunidades before entering CONEVAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>No specific relationship with PROGRESA/Oportunidades before entering CONEVAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>María Graciela Freyermuth Enciso</th>
<th>PhD in social anthropology from the UAM</th>
<th>Salomón Nahmad Sitton</th>
<th>PhD in anthropology from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher at CIESAS</td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher at CIESAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative adviser for Oportunidades</td>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative researcher for PROGRESA/Oportunidades</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Juan Rivera Dommarco</th>
<th>PhD in international nutrition from Cornell University</th>
<th>John Scott Andretta</th>
<th>Master’s in economics from Oxford University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher and Director of the National Institute of Public Health (INSP)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher at Centre for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Designer of the Nutritional component of PROGRESA</td>
<td></td>
<td>External consultant for PROGRESA/Oportunidades</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Gonzalo Hernández Licona, the executive secretary of the CONEVAL (quoted in Boltvinik, 2010), the decision to re-elect the aforementioned scholars was due to their satisfactory performance: “They played a good role; therefore, they deserved to be re-elected” (Para. 8). However, critics such as Julio Boltvinik described the selection as driven by the political interests of the government: “the people chosen for the convenience of the government of PAN were ‘neoliberal scholars’, they made very light evaluations and ignored the problem of poverty. The federal government (PAN) and a small part of PRI must be happy” (Enciso, 2010: Para. 5). Similarly, Czarnecki (2013) argues that Fernando Alberto Cortés Cáceres, Agustín Escobar Latapi, and Graciela María Teruel Belismelis were chosen for re-election because “they had the strongest bonds with SEDESOL and the Technical Committee for the Evaluation of Poverty” (Ibid: p.189). He reinforces Boltvinik’s suggestion that political interests influenced the CNDS decision, arguing that it was highly suspicious that the three
new members got the same number of votes: “clearly there was more political negotiation in the 2010 election than in the previous one in 2006, when the first six members were elected. In that election, the elected members were those with more votes, nobody got all the votes. In the 2010 election, it is strange that everybody voted exactly the same, they voted for the re-election of Fernando Cortés, Graciela Teruel and Agustín Escobar, and for the three new members, Salomón Nahmad, John Scott and María del Rosario” (Ibid: p.187). Although María Graciela Freyermuth rejects the accusation of political bias in the selection of the members of the CONEVAL, she recognises that all the counsellors were chosen because of their strong bonds with the executive secretary, Gonzalo Hernández Licona:

Four of the counsellors during 2006-2010 were former evaluators of Oportunidades and close collaborators. All of them were strongly linked with the executive secretary Hernández Licona. He was very politically skilled and had strong bonds with the people who chose the counsellors in the next period. He had a lot of legitimacy and, clearly, he had a lot of influence over this selection (Freyermuth – Interview).

Freyermuth concedes that the counsellors were “a compact group of evaluators of Oportunidades”, but she considers them objective scholars without an agenda. Similarly, John Scott rejects any accusation of political or ideological bias within the CONEVAL, stating, “we do not have an economic agenda. The selection of the directive members and the academic counsellors of the CONEVAL is pluralist” (quoted in Excelsior, 2019: Para. 7).

From a theoretical perspective, the presence of the POP policy community within the CONEVAL clearly represents their institutionalisation. As suggested by Cairney (2019), this occurs when institutions internalise and reproduce a policy monopoly, creating rules to make sure that policy issues are addressed on the terms determined by the policy community. The selection of new members of the CONEVAL who were close to the executive secretary, Gonzalo Hernández Licona, and related to Oportunidades ensured that the evaluations would be conducted from their specific perspective and understanding of social policy. This meant framing the issue on poverty such that only certain actors would be able to participate and a limited range of actions would be considered. As stated by Jones and Baumgartner (1993), limitations help to preserve a policy monopoly by reducing the number of voices that can criticise the status quo.
7.6 Conclusion

This chapter explained how *Oportunidades* became important for Felipe Calderón’s government – not only for addressing poverty, but also in political terms, in particular by allowing him to regain legitimacy after the election of 2006. The chapter also discussed the second phase of incremental changes and how the close relationship between the Ministry of Finance and *Oportunidades* facilitated those changes. Furthermore, the chapter showed how the POP policy community played a less notorious but still relevant role during this term by conducting favourable evaluations of the programme. I also showed how the selection of the new counsellors of the CONEVAL reinforced the influence of the POP policy community and framed the agenda on poverty.

This chapter made visible how the POP policy community protected their policy monopoly by adapting the programme to the political context. The insulation of the agenda, the exclusion of actors with critical stances, and the elaboration of evidence with a clear purpose of protecting their policy monopoly created an environment of continual positive feedback. Although the decision-making power was concentrated in the hands of government officials, the POP policy community were sufficiently influential to prevent major changes. Once again, the endogenous changes within *Oportunidades* were part of a strategy to ensure its continuation without modifications to the core design of the CCTs.

As explained in this chapter, POP’s institutionalisation in the SEDESOL, the CONEVAL, and the working tables served as a framing mechanism that protected the policy monopoly. Most of the incremental adaptations reinforced the direction of the programme and generated institutional inertia. The increase in the resources allocated to *Oportunidades* and to its coverage strengthened the returns of the programme, thus making it extremely difficult to change direction. This will be discussed in the next chapter, which considers the transformation of *Oportunidades* into *PROSPERA* during Enrique Peña Nieto’s government.
8. The influence of the PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA policy community during Enrique Peña Nieto’s government

8.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the transition of Oportunidades to PROSPERA during the Enrique Peña Nieto government (2012-2018), including the reasons for this transformation and the changes it involved. This was important because it represents the last period of changes to POP under a PRI government that had strong political motivations to make modifications to the programme. This chapter will also explain how the policy community of POP used its power to preserve CCTs and to prevent substantial changes being made to the design of the policy. Once again, it will be shown that the policy community was the actor primarily responsible for maintaining the design of the CCTs, while working – during this period – with a government that had initially criticised the programme and which had strong motivations to terminate it. To protect the programme, the POP policy community took a more active role than it had under the previous government, participating substantially in the redesign of the programme into PROSPERA, as well as in other processes within the SEDESOL and the CONEVAL. In addition, this chapter will provide evidence for the power of the policy community, comparing its influence against that of other groups who supported other kinds of social policies, particularly universal basic income. The above is relevant because it demonstrates once again that the POP policy community was able to exercise strong influence over institutions to effectively preserve CCTs, even in a context of political competition within the policy subsystem. In addition, it indicates that not even the political transition between the PAN and the PRI was able to break the monopoly of this policy community.

8.2 The transformation of Oportunidades into PROSPERA

In 2012, the elections changed the party in power. After 12 years of having the PAN in office, people voted for the PRI and chose its candidate, Enrique Peña Nieto, to rule the country for the following 6 years. While the PRI won by more than six points, the opposition – led by left-wing party coalitions – once again alleged electoral fraud (Gómez, 2013). The media considered the new president to be the “grandson” of former President Carlos Salinas, despite

56 The argument of the left was that the PRI’s candidate had received illegal funds that had far exceeded the sums permitted by the electoral authority for an electoral campaign. However, the electoral body denied the allegations and determined that no fraud had been committed.
his lack of a technocratic profile (Proceso, 2013). Peña Nieto was a lawyer and former governor of Estado de Mexico, widely known by the public to be lacking in technical knowledge and skills related to economics and finance.\(^{57}\) According to Rocha-Quintero (2014), the victory of Peña Nieto meant the continuation of the neoliberal economic model and, therefore, the continuation of some of the policies implemented in the recent past, despite the change of political parties in government. For this reason, many of the officials who had previously served under Felipe Calderón were later appointed to the new government. The most relevant example would be José Antonio Meade Kuribeña, who had previously worked as minister of energy (2011) and minister of finance (2011-2012) and was later appointed minister of foreign relations (2012-2015), minister of social development (2015-2016), and minister of finance (2016-2018).\(^{58}\) Similarly, José Antonio González Anaya\(^ {59}\) worked as deputy minister of finance (2010-2012) and was later appointed director of the IMSS (2012-2016) and minister of finance (2017-2018). This is extremely important because, according to the anonymous source, this was a clear representation of the symbiosis between the PAN and PRI economic ideologies:

> The fact that (José Antonio) Meade went to work with (Enrique) Peña Nieto was a very clear representation of what AMLO called the “PRIAN” or the “Power Mafia”\(^ {60}\) (Anonymous – Interview).

When Enrique Peña Nieto entered the government, he named Rosario Robles – who had served as the coordinator of social policy during the transition period – the new minister of SEDESOL. Rosario Robles was once an important political figure of the left in Mexico, and in the early 2000s, she had entered into a direct conflict with AMLO while both were part of the Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD). Robles was a founding member and formerly president of the PRD and served as mayor of the Mexico City (1999-2000). However, she resigned from the PRD after being accused of corruption and worked as an independent consultant for some years. Eventually, she became adviser of the then-governor of Estado de México, Enrique Peña Nieto. When Peña launched his presidential candidacy, Rosario Robles was included in the new government. Her appointment as minister of SEDESOL, as suggested by Gil (2019), was due to her proven capacity as a politician while working as Peña’s personal

\(^{57}\) During the electoral campaign, he demonstrated complete ignorance on these topics, revealing himself to be entirely unfamiliar with even basic knowledge about the Mexican economy.

\(^{58}\) His career with the Mexican government goes back to the early 1990s, when he worked under Carlos Salinas and Ernesto Zedillo.

\(^{59}\) He is the brother-in-law of former president Carlos Salinas.

\(^{60}\) AMLO always accused the PRI and the PAN of sharing the same economic ideology and claimed that the power elite controlled both.
adviser. Nevertheless, the media suggested that her appointment was because she was considered a skilled political operator who could use the economic resources of social programmes to benefit the PRI candidates in future elections (Proceso, 2015). Robles was an economist from UNAM, with a master’s degree in rural development from the Metropolitan Autonomous University (UAM). Although she would not be considered a technocrat, as her professional experience was political and not technical, she was not linked with international or financial agencies and her personal views were more closely related to the progressive left (Televisa, 2019).

Regarding Oportunidades, Paula Angélica Olmos replaced Daniel Hernández, who was appointed for the second time a national coordinator of the programme during the last year of Felipe Calderón’s government.61 Her appointment and role, according to Rosario Robles, was necessary to give a feminist perspective to the programme:

> It was important to have women participating in PROSPERA; this is why the role of Paula was so important. She was helpful for organising the priorities of the poor communities where the programme operated (Robles, 2020).

Paula Angélica Olmos was a civil engineer with an extensive political background linked to Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong, who was the minister of Interior. This meant that, for the first time, the programme escaped from the influence of the Ministry of Finance officials, as Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong was not a technocrat and had a political rivalry with the minister of finance, Luis Videgaray Caso.62

From the beginning of the new administration, Rosario Robles and other senior officials harshly criticised Oportunidades, arguing that it was flawed and changes were needed (Barajas, 2016). The president continued Oportunidades the first two years of his administration, but in 2014, he officially announced its transformation into “PROSPERA, Programme of Social Inclusion” (PROSPERA, Programa de Inclusion Social) : “The merits of the programme implemented 17 years ago have been internationally recognised, but its limitations are more evident every day (…) The number of Mexicans in poverty is the same as it was three decades ago. For this reason, I am announcing the transformation of Oportunidades into PROSPERA. All the families will continue to receive the programme’s benefits, but from now on, they will

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61 Hernández replaced Salvador Escobedo, who resigned to compete in the 2018 elections.
62 Osorio Chong was a lawyer with a long political career at PRI. He served as congressional representative on many occasions and was governor of the state of Hidalgo. The rivalry between the two ministers arose because both desired to be chosen as the next presidential candidate of the PRI in 2018.
also have new opportunities to be part of the labour market, which will reduce poverty in the country” (Presidency of the Republic, 2014). Although the government did not offer an explicit explanation for the renaming of the programme, “PROSPERA” was intended to match the official slogan of the government, which was “México Próspero”.

I assume the motivation for the renaming was to end the association between the programme and the PAN, as Oportunidades was clearly associated with Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón’s governments.

Among the most key changes to the programme were the strengthening of the three original components (health, education, and nutrition) and the adding of a new productive and financial component (SEDESOL, 2014). The scholarships for high school were extended to include distance and online modalities. In addition, they were extended to cover the first three years of university. The main change to the health component was the extension of the coverage for preventive actions and interventions, taking the total covered from 13 actions to 27. Moreover, the government added new interventions to prevent child malnutrition, reduce obesity in pregnant women, promote breastfeeding, and provide follow-up appointments for pregnant women and mothers with children under the age of five. There were no tangible changes to the nutrition component (Yaschine, 2019). The new “Productive component” (Componente productive), added in 2016, comprised four lines of action: productive inclusion, which encouraged families to generate their own income; labour inclusion, which provided beneficiaries with job training programmes; financial inclusion, which allowed beneficiaries to access credit and savings accounts; and social inclusion to promote families’ access to other social programmes (Barajas, 2016; see Table 8.1).

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63 All governmental actions concerning social development were referred to under this slogan.
64 These actions included vaccination programmes for vulnerable groups and early disease-detection programmes.
65 A negative change was that the cash transfers to cover nutrition needs were no longer to be adjusted for inflation.
Table 8.1 Main changes to PROSPERA

| Education          | “Youth with Oportunidades” (Jóvenes con Oportunidades) was removed  
|                    | Scholarships for the first three years of university were added   |
| Health             | Preventive actions and interventions were extended, from 13 specific actions to the 27 actions included in the Universal Catalogue of Health Services  
|                    | Beneficiaries were enrolled in “Popular insurance scheme” (Seguro Popular) (alternative health insurance that provides access to healthcare to people who are not covered by other programmes) |
| Nutrition          | No notable changes                                                |
| New component: “Productive and financial linking component” | Based on four strategies:  
|                    | o productive inclusion  
|                    | o labour inclusion  
|                    | o financial inclusion  
|                    | o social inclusion     |

Elaborated from Yaschine (2019).

This redesign was followed by an increase in the programme’s coverage and in the budget allocated to the programme after 2015 (see Graphics 8.1 and 8.2).
Graphic 8.1 Coverage increase of *Oportunidades*/PROSPERA 2013-2018

Elaborated by the author, with information from the Presidency of the Republic (*Presidencia de la República*; 2018).

Graphic 8.2 Budgetary increase of *Oportunidades*/PROSPERA 2013-2018


According to Rosario Robles, these changes were required because the programme was insufficient to cover the social needs of the poor families:
It was necessary to conceive of *Oportunidades* as a welfare safety net, as a protection of the most fundamental human rights related to not only education or health, but also many other elements (Robles – Interview).

Moreover, the most severe of Robles’ criticisms of the programme was that, “The *Oportunidades* programme strengthened capabilities in health, education, and nutrition, but failed in its fundamental purpose: breaking the intergenerational poverty cycle. Despite the increase in resources allocated to the programme and the expansion of the families covered, it failed to place the following generations in a better position than their parents (…) This redesign of the programme known until then as ‘*Oportunidades*’, that today is called ‘*PROSPERA*’, was given its name precisely because it aims to help people prosper and leave poverty, and the cash transfers should only serve as a provisional bridge while the individuals build their own chances to leave poverty and build their own success stories” (Rosario Robles in her appearance at the Senate of the Republic: *Senado de la República*, 2014). However, Santiago Levy refutes this, arguing that the main objective of *PROGRESA* and *Oportunidades* was not to solve poverty, but to generate human capital:

The criticism (of Rosario Robles) is not well founded (…) *PROGRESA* was not a programme to reduce poverty. *PROGRESA* was a programme to invest in the human capital of the poor. The indicators of whether *PROGRESA* was working or not were, *are children attending school more? Yes or no? Are children better nourished? Yes or no? Do they have fewer diseases? Yes or no? Are they in a better health state? Yes or no? And the answer is yes, the poor are in a better state. Solving poverty is a complex topic that is related to the income that people generate, and if the labour market is dysfunctional then the income of these people will continue to be low. The criticism that *PROGRESA* failed is unfounded because the critics are measuring the results of the programme incorrectly (Levy – Interview).

Nevertheless, Santiago Levy’s position on this question is partial because, as seen in Chapters 5 and 6, *PROGRESA* did have the objective of ending the cycle of intergenerational poverty. In the first evaluation conducted by the IFPRI, it is stated clearly that this was one of the long-term objectives of the programme. Furthermore, Felipe Calderón’s government explicitly established in its operation rules that “reducing intergenerational poverty” was the main objective of *Oportunidades*. Even the IADB, on their website, claim that the purpose of *PROGRESA/Oportunidades* (and most of the CCT programmes in Latin America) is to break
the cycle of intergenerational poverty. The above seems to be change in the narrative of Santiago Levy about POP. According to McBeth et al. (2014), a change in narrative is used to reinforce or to oppose a certain policy decision. Therefore, Levy’s changing narrative could be interpreted as motivated by the aim of protecting CCTs. Moreover, it is interesting that, despite the apparent consensus for years that CCTs were the best policy for addressing poverty, there was no agreement on their central objective. While the POP policy community (i.e., Santiago Levy, Daniel Hernández, and Susan Parker) argued that the programme had only the purpose of developing human capital, the governmental officials always conceived of it as a policy to reduce poverty. This may explain why some members of the POP policy community never fully endorsed most of the elements added to the programme, as they were seen as unnecessary – or as “Christmas baubles” (see Chapter 6).

While rejecting the criticisms made by the new officials of the programme, the POP policy community participated in the redesign of Oportunidades. According to Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo (interview), the government consulted him, as well as Daniel Hernández and other members of the policy community, to give advice on the redesign. Their role, he adds, was to help the new officials to improve the programme and ensure the government would make the best decisions. Similarly, Paulina Rodríguez, who was director of foreign affairs of PROSPERA, points out that the changes were made in consultation with national and international organisations, with evidence used as guidance for the improvements:

The National Coordination consulted not only international organisations such as the IADB and the World Bank, but also scholars from CIDE and COLMEX and many other experts who had worked with Oportunidades in the past; and all the redesign was based on studies and evaluations. New studies were conducted to find out what could be done to improve the programme (…) The studies and consultations agreed that the most important thing was to create a new element of financial, productive, and social inclusion (Rodríguez – Interview).

However, she explains that the consultations with experts and national and international organisations did not necessarily involve direct supervision from them, but rather cooperation. Thus, the policy community continued to participate in the decision-making of the new programme, but under the rules set by the Mexican government:

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66 See the following blog entry (in Spanish): https://www.iadb.org/es/noticias/el-fin-de-la-pobreza-heredada
67 The information from the National Coordination of PROSPERA also indicates that the programme signed many cooperation agreements with other international organisations, such as the United Nations Development
When we talk about recommendations, we mean technical assistance. Indeed, we received technical assistance from international organisations that helped us improve the programme, but they did not make direct recommendations. For example, this government signed new loan contracts with the IADB and the World Bank. Therefore, it was necessary to define the areas in which we required technical assistance. This could be the elaboration of new studies, evaluations, and diagnoses for further interventions, as they have the expertise to aid with decision-making (Rodríguez – Interview).

The above is confirmed by Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo, who states that their role was only to propose recommendations and the government could decide whether to listen to them:

We (the experts) presented the recommendations, but in the end, it was the government who decided if they followed them or not (…) I do not think that my “friends” from PROSPERA knew what they were doing (Gómez – Interview).

Rogelio Gómez, Daniel Hernández, and Santiago Levy were not convinced that the new officials understood the purpose of the programme, despite their participation in the redesign. This is important because Enrique Peña Nieto’s government conceived the programme with a perspective that was different to that of the POP policy community. This could explain the rationale for most of the additions to PROSPERA. The newly added elements were not focused on developing human capital, but rather on constructing a safety net to ensure poor families had access to fundamental services (as previously stated by Rosario Robles). While Oportunidades had the objective of helping poor families access basic health, education, and nutrition services, PROSPERA added components that went far beyond the original design: “Oportunidades was a specific programme; PROSPERA was a whole structure that coordinates programmes and social policy actions” (Barajas, 2016: 111). This was why the objective of breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty was removed from the operational rules of the programme in 2016: the programme was now visualised as a tool for providing poor families with access to their fundamental rights, rather than as a mechanism for generating human capital (Ordóñez-Barba & Silva-Hernández, 2019).

Although the change in the orientation of the programme could have represented a substantial shift in the direction of POP – or what Hall (1993) would call a “second-order policy change”, understood as a change in the strategy that affected the policy design – the reality is that this

Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), and many other actors.
did not occur. The newly added component did not receive extra funding from the Ministry of Finance, thus its impact was extremely limited (this is explained in the next section). Equally, the actions added to the programme only extended many of the existing components of health, education, and nutrition. In practical terms, the aim of transforming POP into a welfare safety net was not attained, and the members of the POP policy community were responsible for that, as they had prevented any major changes being made. As suggested by John Scott,

At the beginning of the administration, the government wanted to innovate the programme and they consulted the scholars. There was a sincere concern in the government about the programme failing to resolve poverty. Unfortunately, instead of fixing the deficiencies in the quality of the public services, the government decided the problem was that Oportunidades lacked a “productive” component (…) All the people around the programme had the same goal of protecting the core of the programme, and the changes were seen as something unnecessary but inevitable. For example, the “productive” component was an interesting idea, but it was something that just could not be put into practice. The scholar community were not favourable to this idea (Scott – Interview).

The scepticism of the community about the new component may explain why cooperation with the international organisations was primarily based – at least during the first years of the administration – on loans, rather than technical advice. As observed by Concepción Steta, former evaluation director of Oportunidades who then was working at the World Bank, the approach of these relationships was largely financial:

At least as far as I know, the relationship between the government of Enrique Peña Nieto and us (the World Bank) was exclusively based on loans, not so much on technical support (…) The assistance from international organisations such as the IADB, the World Bank, and the UN was defined by the government for specific projects (Steta – Interview).

In this sense, the loans provided by international organisations remained important for PROSPERA. In 2013, when the programme was still “Oportunidades”, the IADB approved a loan of 600 million USD. In the following years, after the redesign, new loans were acquired (see Table 8.2).
Table 8.2 Loans made to Oportunidades/PROSPERA 2013-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Loan amount</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>IADB</td>
<td>600 million USD</td>
<td>Support the redesign of the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>WB</td>
<td>350 million USD</td>
<td>Support beneficiaries’ access to productive programmes and create a wider net for social protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>IFAD</td>
<td>6.5 million USD</td>
<td>Support productive entrepreneurship by the beneficiaries in rural areas (countryside)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>IADB</td>
<td>600 million USD</td>
<td>Investment to improve families’ access to nutrition, health, and education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elaborated by the author, with information from Budget Transparency (Transparencia Presupuestaria; 2018)

I note that, according to the document titled, “Support for the strengthening of PROSPERA, Programme of Social Inclusion”, the loan approved by the IADB in 2017 was conditioned so that the bank could take part in the evaluation of the programme and the dissemination of its results. Similarly, the contract established a collaboration with the federal government to participate in future adjustments and to review the CCTs’ core design and any other changes: “This work agenda will provide the elements to perform adjustments to the operative rules that govern the delivery of the cash transfers. These potential modifications, which are expected to be considered for the fiscal year of 2018 and especially for 2019, are the mechanism by which the study agenda impacts the incentives and amounts of the transfers” (IADB, 2016). Thus, the POP policy community ensured that they would take part in the decision-making of the programme, preventing any undesirable changes that could put in danger the core of the CCTs. In addition, the loan granted the IADB the right to participate in the evaluations. This is important because, since the beginning of the programme, the evaluations had provided evidence to support the continuation of the programme.
8.3 PROSPERA and the reduction of poverty

In August 2015, Rosario Robles was removed from the SEDESOL and, according to the media, the decision was due to poor results (Barragán, 2015). The evaluation by the CONEVAL showed that during the first two years of the Enrique Peña Nieto government (2012-2014), poverty had increased by 0.7% (from 53.3 million people to 55.3 million). However, Robles denies her removal from the SEDESOL was due to the increase in poverty, arguing that the government had expected it:

The results of the structural redesign of social policy were not reflected in the first CONEVAL survey (in the National Income and Expenditure Survey of the Households). We always said that results were going to be visible in the second survey (in 2016) and towards the end of the administration (in 2018), and we were right. At the end of this government, there was a large decrease in poverty – mostly extreme poverty. It was necessary to give this strategy some time to prove it was working (Robles – Interview).

Robles also considered the CONEVAL measures of poverty to be inappropriate because the surveys underestimated the income of poor families and the evaluations criteria were too difficult to meet. The CONEVAL multidimensional poverty assessment considered eight specific aspects: namely, income and the seven fundamental rights of access to education, health, nutrition, social security, high-quality housing (e.g., concrete floors), basic public services (e.g., drinking water) in the household, and social cohesion. Therefore, a household is poor if its total income is below the welfare poverty line and lacks at least one of the aforementioned fundamental rights. According to Robles, this method of evaluating poverty was too strict and needs to be changed:

I believe measuring poverty is very important, but there is an issue with the standards. The standards are too high, and as a consequence, evaluations are always going to show that half of the population is poor (…) We had many discussions with CONEVAL, and we argued that it was better to measure inequality – rather than poverty – or at least to measure both. Inequality is even worse than poverty and triggers many social problems like

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68 According to the CONEVAL, the increase of poverty was mainly because of low economic growth and an increase in the population.

69 The SEDESOL argued that poor families often report lower incomes in the survey used to calculate poverty due to the belief that reporting higher incomes will result in them losing the benefits of the social programmes.

70 This is the total cost of a food basket plus other essential services.
violence and resentment. Besides, CONEVAL took part in the redesign of the programme and the social policy. They evaluated other programmes as well with positive results.

Enrique Peña Nieto’s government had questioned the credibility of the CONEVAL since the beginning, with the aim of discrediting the evaluations that suggested poor results from the government’s fight against poverty (Tourliere, 2017). This is presumably why the PRI, as the largest party in Congress, passed a legal reform to change the legal status of the CONEVAL, in particular affecting the way in which academic counsellors were to be chosen.71 The reform would have meant that the academic counsellors would have been selected by a vote in Congress (Zamitis, 2017). The public considered this an attempt by the PRI to influence the poverty evaluations in favour of the government. Even Gonzalo Hernández Licona publicly denounced the reform, stating that it could affect the objectivity of the CONEVAL evaluations: “CONEVAL needs independence from the Congress and the political parties (...) The (selection) process must be technical and not an issue of partisan quotas” (Enciso, 2014: Para. 3). Congress discarded the reform (probably due to public pressure) and the National Commission of Social Development indefinitely postponed the selection of new academic counsellors, apparently to avoid any suspicion (CONEVAL, 2014).

President Peña Nieto moved Rosario Robles to the Ministry of Agrarian, Land and Urban Development and named José Antonio Meade, then minister of foreign relations, the new minister of the SEDESOL. The media speculated that his appointment was due to his technocratic profile that made President Peña Nieto believe he could reduce poverty. Once in office, José Antonio Meade’s first action was to conduct the “International Workshop on Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy of the Productive, Labour, And Financial Inclusion Components of PROSPERA”72. Among the experts invited were Gonzalo Hernández Licona from the CONEVAL, John Scott and Susan Parker from the CIDE, Enrique Seira from the ITAM, Joaquín Lozano from the FIDA, Claudia Ruíz Ortega from the World Bank, Paul Gertler from UC Berkeley, Adriana Kugler from Maryland, and Sebastian Galiani from Georgetown (Diestro, 2015). The outcome of the workshop was the creation of an international group of experts to advice PROSPERA’s officials (Ibid). This meant the re-involvement of the network of experts who seemed to have been ignored during the Rosario Robles period. In addition, this showed that some members of the POP policy community continued to be heavily

71 The selection process for the members of the CONEVAL academic council is explained in Chapter 7.
72 The workshop was inaugurated during the last days of Rosario Robles at SEDESOL.
involved in the policymaking of the programme after so many years. For example, John Scott stated that Susan Parker (mentioned above) was of great importance for the continuation of the programme:

Susan Parker is definitely one of the most active members involved in the programme. She has conducted many studies about CCTs. Her work has definitely helped the continuation of this policy (Scott – Interview).

Daniel Hernández (interview) agrees with Scott about the importance of the role of Susan Parker and her work in the CIDE and the University of Maryland in support of POP. It is noted that Parker was involved with POP from the 1990s, when she was an adviser to José Gómez de León (see Chapter 6).

The newly appointed minister of the SEDESOL focused on strengthening the new components of PROSPERA: “Right now we are helping the beneficiaries of the programme to develop some productive projects, we want that PROSPERA’s families can build a bridge toward productive activities that allow them to generate their own income” (José Antonio Meade, quoted in Excélsior TV, 2016). These efforts were observable in the more than 10,000 productive projects that benefited around 35,000 families (Presidency of the Republic, 2018). However, in practical terms, that covered only 0.5% of the total number of beneficiaries. According to Yaschine (2019), no budget was allocated to the productive and financial components because those activities were conducted in coordination with other ministries, such as the Ministry of the Economy, the Ministry of the Labour, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, which already had budgets for those projects. The considerable increase in the budget in 2016 (see Graphic 8.2) was due to the merging of PROSPERA with the “Programme for alimentary support” (Programa de apoyo alimentario), created in 2003 to assist those living in extreme poverty who were not covered by Oportunidades. According to the Ministry of Finance, these programmes were merged to increase the efficiency of the resources of the SEDESOL. This fusion boosted the number of beneficiaries from 6.1 million in 2015 to 6.7 million in 2016 (see Graphic 8.1).

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73 The information is not detailed and it is not possible to determine the budget allocated to each project, nor the impact of these projects on the families.

74 In financial terms, it is unclear how the merger saved resources, as the total resources allocated for both programmes in the previous years was even lower (at least in nominal terms). For example, in 2014, the budget for the programme for alimentary support and PROSPERA was 74,819 million Mexican pesos; in 2015, it was 78,801.2 million pesos. After the merger, the budget for PROSPERA grew to 82,780.9 million pesos in 2016, but decreased to 78,855.9 million pesos in 2017 (see Graphic 8.2). The SEDESOL stated that the merger saved time in some operational procedures and avoided the duplication of some tasks.
During José Antonio Meade’s time in office (2015-2016), CONEVAL registered a tangible reduction of general poverty,\(^{75}\) from 46.2% of the total population to 43.6% (from 55.3 million people to 53.4 million), and a reduction in extreme poverty from 9.5% to 7.6% (from 11.4 million to 9.4 million). According to Meade, this was possible because he was able to use “experience and real solutions” to tackle poverty.\(^{76}\) However, the media were suspicious about the figures. First, changes were made to the National Survey of Household Income and Expenditure,\(^{77}\) which is the tool used by the CONEVAL to measure poverty in the country: “The changes in the survey produced biases in the income distribution (...) What are the implications of that? It means that people who reported zero income were reported to have a higher income, and people with low income were also adjusted upwards” (Castañeda, 2017).

Those modifications were due to pressures from the SEDESOL on the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), the institution responsible for conducting the survey, arguing that the survey underestimated people’s real income (García, 2018). Initially, the CONEVAL released a public disclosure explaining that it was not possible to measure multidimensional poverty using that survey. However, a commission of experts led by Nora Lustig and other members of the POP community later adjusted the survey to make the measurement feasible.\(^{78}\)

This represented a controversial method of reducing poverty because it meant poor households were now reporting higher incomes than they actually had. Tourliere (2017) notes that poor people were also induced by the pollsters who conducted the survey to report higher incomes. This was a clear attempt to manipulate the official numbers, and it occurred with the complicity of some members of the POP policy community: “when their numbers were not credible, instead of recognizing their mistake, they adjusted the model with the approval of the committee of experts (of the CONEVAL)” (Jaramillo, 2017: Para. 8). Despite the initially negative reaction of Gonzalo Hernández Licona, who was the most critical voice, the CONEVAL continued with the evaluation. This was despite the alternatives available: “CONEVAL could have chosen a different option: 1) CONEVAL could have ended the historical series of multidimensional poverty evaluations of 2008-2014, and started a new one in 2016. 2) It could have demanded that INEGI carry out two different surveys, one using the

\(^{75}\) For further details about how poverty is measured in Mexico, see “*Metodología para la evaluación multidimensional de la pobreza en México*” (CONEVAL, 2019).

\(^{76}\) Those phrases were included in his propaganda during the electoral campaign of 2018.

\(^{77}\) The survey had a sample of 64,000 households, with a 90% confidence level and a 7.2% margin of error.

\(^{78}\) The survey was adjusted, but the experts included a note to clarify that, in technical terms, it was not possible to use it to compare with previous years.
previous methodology and a new one using the new methodology. 3) It could also have refused to measure poverty that year” (Ibid).

As explained by García (2018), the SEDESOL devised another method of influencing the poverty statistic: attending exclusively to very specific problems, without really solving them: “As a good technocrat who only visualizes poverty in numbers and statistics, the minister devised a practical and effective method to influence CONEVAL’s numbers (…) all the public institutions and government agencies were told they were obligated to report any action or programme aimed at the poor to the SEDESOL. None of the budgets from any areas of the government could be used without the approval of (José Antonio) Meade. If an indicator of extreme poverty was that children did not have access to kindergarten education, the SEDESOL decided that the people working in the nurseries and day-care centres of the state were considered kindergarten teachers, and automatically those children no longer had that problem, no matter they had not received the proper kindergarten education (…) this way, attending only specific problems, though poverty was not being solved, the numbers started moving down” (Ibid: Para. 3-5). Thus, the SEDESOL and the federal government used a questionable methodology to artificially meet the criteria established by the CONEVAL and then informed the public of their success in tackling poverty.

In 2016, José Antonio Meade was removed from the SEDESOL and appointed minister of Finance, and he was later nominated to be the PRI’s presidential candidate in the 2018 elections. Paula Angélica Hernández resigned as coordinator of the National Coordination of PROSPERA to stand in the 2018 elections, and Jaime Gutiérrez Casas, who was the planning director of the programme and a close friend of José Antonio Meade, was chosen to replace her.

8.4 The PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA policy community vs. the universal basic income network

To show how influential the POP policy community was in framing Mexican social policy, I will present a comparison here with the Universal Basic Income (UBI) network. I have chosen the UBI network because this was the only group in the policy subsystem that actually organised and brought to the public debate an alternative policy to CCTs. Moreover, they explicitly attempted to challenge the policy monopoly. However, I am not seeking to explain why the UBI network failed to place their proposal on the agenda, but rather to show the asymmetry between the groups’ influence over policymaking. With the comparison, I aim to
show how the POP policy community was able to effectively protect their policy monopoly and to reveal how institutionalised were CCTs – and the human capital paradigm as a whole – within Mexican institutions.

The challenging group was not a policy community itself, but an open network. This is important because the lack of cohesion and the inability to generate a common platform to effectively challenge the POP policy community ultimately prevented the escalation of their policy proposal to the government agenda. The UBI network brought together people from the entire political spectrum who advocated for the introduction of a UBI. During Enrique Peña Nieto’s government, various actors advocated in favour of this proposal. For instance, in 2016, the UN ECLAC proposed it to the Senate of the Republic. Between 2016 and 2017, the MORENA proposed that UBI be included in the new Constitution of Mexico City and in the Congress as a constitutional reform. Likewise, the PAN included UBI in its electoral platform for the 2018 presidential elections. In contrast, the SEDESOL conducted three international events in Mexico City, with the participation of organisations such as the UN, the IADB, the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, and others to promote CCTs. The officials of the SEDESOL and PROSPERA participated in at least 59 international events and seminars to “share knowledge” with other countries and organisations (PROSPERA, 2018).

The UBI proposals presented by the network all lacked any kind of conditionalities, promoting instead a universal focus, meaning that all Mexican citizens would receive the benefit. However, there were some differences between the various proposals. For example, in some cases, the frequency and duration of the UBI were not specified, while others specified monthly instalments and a permanent duration. The specific proposal of the PAN considered replacing all existing social programmes with a UBI, while the proposal from the MORENA suggested preserving certain programmes. The main difference was in the funding of the UBI. The MORENA proposed mandatory taxes rises to obtain the financial resources required to implement the UBI. In contrast, the PAN believed that the resources to fund the UBI could be obtained through austerity and the abolition of many existing social programmes.

According to Pablo Yanes (interview), chief of research at ECLAC and founder of the UBI network in Mexico, there were no restrictions on participation in the network. He claims that everybody was welcome to participate and anybody could contribute to the diffusion of the policy proposal through many different activities. Araceli Damián (interview) confirms the existence of the network but states that, in practice, the network was not very active or
influential. Based on the findings of an extensive media and literature research, the following table presents a list of the main supporters of UBI in Mexico (Table 8.3).
Table 8.3 Supporters of universal basic income in Mexico

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pablo Yanes</td>
<td>Master’s in government from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)</td>
<td>Chief of research at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) subregional headquarters in Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julio Bolotvinik Kalinka</td>
<td>PhD in social sciences from the Centre for Research and Higher Studies (CIESAS)</td>
<td>Scholar from The College of Mexico (COLMEX) and former congressional representative (2003-2006) of the Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Araceli Damián González</td>
<td>PhD in urban economics from University of London</td>
<td>Scholar from COLMEX and former congressional representative (2015-2018) of the Regeneration Movement Party (MORENA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alejandro Luevano Pérez</td>
<td>Not found</td>
<td>Social activist and member of the MORENA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorge Castañeda Gutman</td>
<td>PhD in economic history from University of Paris</td>
<td>Former foreign minister during Vicente Fox’s government (2000-2003) and main adviser to presidential candidate Ricardo Anaya from the National Action Party (PAN; 2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo Anaya Cortés</td>
<td>PhD in social sciences from UNAM</td>
<td>Presidential candidate for the PAN in 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rogelio Huerta Quintanilla</td>
<td>PhD in economics from UNAM</td>
<td>Scholar from the UNAM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aníbal Gutiérrez Lara</td>
<td>Master’s in economics from UNAM</td>
<td>Scholar from the UNAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Scott Andretta</td>
<td>Master’s in economics from Oxford University</td>
<td>Scholar from the Centre for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE), *also considered part of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Degree and Institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patricia Mercado Castro</td>
<td>Bachelor’s in economics from UNAM</td>
<td>Former president of the Social Democratic Party (2005) and current senator from the Citizens Movement Party (MC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorge Álvarez Mánynez</td>
<td>Master’s in public administration from Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education (ITESM)</td>
<td>Current general secretary of the MC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martí Batres Guadarrama</td>
<td>Bachelor’s in law from Humanitas University</td>
<td>Former president of the MORENA (2012-2015) and current senator from the MORENA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Sánchez Jiménez</td>
<td>Studies in economics from UNAM</td>
<td>Former senator of the PRD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porfirio Muñoz Ledo</td>
<td>PhD in political science from University of Paris</td>
<td>Former president of the PRD (1993-1996) and current deputy from the MORENA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonzalo Hernández Licona</td>
<td>PhD in economics from Oxford University</td>
<td>Executive secretary of CONEVAL (2006-2019), *also considered part of the PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA (POP) policy community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salomón Chertorivski Woldenberg</td>
<td>Master’s in public policy from Harvard University</td>
<td>Former minister of health during Felipe Calderón government (2011-2012) and spokesperson for Alejandra Barrales (coalition between the PRD, the PAN, and the MC during the election for governor of Mexico City, 2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerardo Esquivel Hernández</td>
<td>PhD in economics from Harvard University</td>
<td>Scholar from COLMEX and current deputy Governor of Mexico’s Central Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecilia Soto González</td>
<td>Studies in physics from UNAM</td>
<td>Former presidential candidate from the Labour Party (1994) and former congressional representative (2015-2018) from the PRD</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel Zaid Giacoman</td>
<td>Bachelor’s in mechanical engineering from ITESM</td>
<td>Renowned poet, writer, and analyst</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elaborated by the author, with information from the media and Pablo Yanes (Interview).

The first notable aspect of the table above is that scholars such as John Scott and Gonzalo Hernández Licona were among the supporters of UBI, although they had been strong supporters of the CCTs in previous decades. Although this seems contradictory, the fact was that these actors believed that CCTs had been effective in the past and that it was necessary to build a new social protection scheme: “It is clear that this type of transfer is not designed as a tool of social protection to protect poor households from economic crisis. For example, PROGRESA, which is the best targeted programme with an extensive coverage, about 40% of the poor population reported not being part of the programme” (Scott, 2017: p.32-33). Even Gonzalo Hernández Licona publicly expressed his view that the existing social protection scheme needed to be changed: “I think basic income must be analysed to replace many inefficient programmes (...) I think it is a good idea to give social protection to the whole Mexican population” (quoted in Romo, 2015: Para. 3-5). Therefore, for John Scott and Gonzalo Hernández Licona, the need to build a broader social protection scheme coincided with the proposal from the UBI network, despite their interaction with the supporters of the UBI being minimal. However, despite how influential these two voices were in the POP policy community, the other members were not convinced by UBI. For example, when Santiago Levy was interviewed about this, he replied that it was not responsible to promote policies just because “they are trending”. Moreover, in a later media interview, he expressed that UBI would only work in certain developed countries such as Finland or Sweden, and Mexico had other priorities that should be addressed first (Fariza, 2018).

Similarly, Nora Lustig expressed her distrust of the idea, citing scarcity of resources: “A basic income, or any other universal mechanism, implies that the poor will receive less. If you can target those resources, your impact will be greater in reducing poverty. I would prefer to give money to the poor and try to improve the quality of public services” (Fariza, 2019). This position has been echoed by Jere Behrman and Paul Schultz (interviews), who argue that public
resources should be used efficiently; hence, targeting is the best mechanism. In addition, Daniel Hernández suggests the financial unsustainability of UBI:

It would be unthinkable to give everyone money. This is an issue of resources: there are not enough resources and you must try to be as effective as you can. This is the reason targeting is fundamental. If resources were unlimited, then yes, make programmes universal, but that is not the case (Hernández – Interview).

Therefore, while the UBI proposal found support amongst scholars such as John Scott and Gonzalo Hernández Licona, the rest of the POP policy community rejected the idea. The UBI proposal did not fit their “efficiency” criteria, meaning it did not generate the greatest possible impact using the smallest amount of resources. The POP policy community thus refused to engage with new ideas that could break their policy monopoly.

Furthermore, the POP policy community retained a strong influence and control over PROSPERA, owing to the technical assistance required by José Antonio Meade at the SEDESOL and the padlocks on the loans granted by the IADB (see subsection 8.2). Moreover, the human capital paradigm and CCTs were deeply institutionalised in the SEDESOL and the Ministry of Finance. For instance, when Ricardo Anaya, who was then the pre-candidate from the PAN for the presidency, formally presented the UBI proposal to the public in 2017, José Antonio Meade criticised him severely: “He lacks a deep understanding of public finance (…). I found his proposal profoundly irresponsible. It would involve reducing social benefits to the people who need them, and giving resources to people who do not require them” (Hiriart, 2017). Here, Enrique Peña Nieto’s government made clear its opposition to UBI.

While the POP policy community had a strong presence in the federal government, most UBI supporters were people with no ties to political power. Most were politicians (or former politicians) and scholars related to left parties, such as the PRD, the Citizens Movement (MC), the Labour Party, and the MORENA, which had never ruled in Mexico before (at least at the federal level). There were some exceptions, such as Jorge Castañeda, Salomón Chertorivski, and Ricardo Anaya, who occupied important positions during the governments of Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón. However, they had no relevance or influence during the PRI’s mandate.

Additionally, unlike the POP policy community, which had developed a strong sense of identity and cohesion based on homogenous values and ideas (see Chapter 6), the UBI network was very chaotic and internally divided. PAN and the MORENA fought to be recognised as the first and legitimate proponents of UBI. When the MORENA proposed a legal reform to include
a UBI in the local constitution of Mexico City, PAN blocked this (Suárez, 2017). Likewise, when Ricardo Anaya presented UBI as part of his electoral platform, according to Julio Boltvinik (interview), scholars and politicians linked with the MORENA withdrew their support for the policy. Thus, it became impossible for the network to build an effective coalition that could push UBI onto the governmental agenda. Jorge Álvarez Mánynez, UBI advocate and general secretary of MC, explains:

Instead of forming a platform, the different actors devoted themselves to criticising each other. It is a dishonest debate where private and political interests are mixed (Álvarez – Interview).

Similarly, Jorge Castañeda (interview), who was the main adviser to Ricardo Anaya during the electoral campaign of 2018, claims that attempting to form a platform in the context of the presidential election was “a very bad idea”. He states that, during elections, politicians and political parties naturally seek to differentiate themselves from one another, instead of working together. Therefore, the public did not take UBI proposal seriously because of the toxic political environment.

Ultimately, it was clear that the POP policy community was the dominant power, compared with the UBI network. First, they had more resources to influence policymakers in the federal government, including a strong relationship with the Ministry of Finance. Second, the POP policy community also had strong ties with international organisations that provided continuous funding and technical assistance to the programme (and to the SEDESOL). Finally, the strong unity between the members of the POP policy community allowed them to coordinate their political actions to preserve their policy monopoly. Their unity and common agreement were such important assets that they even trumped the individual efforts of John Scott and Gonzalo Hernández Licona – themselves members of the same policy community – when they attempted to advocate for UBI. In contrast, the UBI network lacked the resources to influence the government, and their internal divisions made it very difficult to mobilise the public in their favour.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter explained how Enrique Peña Nieto’s government’s initial distrust of Oportunidades led the SEDESOL to transform the programme into PROSPERA. This transformation represented a potential risk to CCT’s core design, as the new officials had their
own conception of the programme. However, the POP policy community managed to prevent any substantial modification to the programme. Although Enrique Peña Nieto’s government sought to transform PROSPERA into a social protection system, the redesign ended only in incremental changes that reinforced the existing components. The only real change was the creation of the “Productive component” (Componente productive), which had the goal of incentivising beneficiaries to enter the labour market. However, the government allocated no extra budget for this component and as a consequence, it had only a minor impact.

From a gradual change perspective, the transformation of Oportunidades into PROSPERA was a matter of power distribution. The new government had the power (and motivation) to modify the programme. However, the POP policy community supervised the redesign and, acting as informal veto players, prevented any major modifications. Although the government had the last word in the policymaking process, some actors have “extra-institutional” means of blocking change (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). The transformation could thus be considered an issue of “interpretation”, since the new officials conceived of Oportunidades as a welfare safety net. Therefore, the rationale behind the transformation was to improve the programme’s ability to accomplish its goals of reducing poverty and inequality.

Furthermore, the chapter compared the power of the POP policy community with that of the UBI network, which was the first group to attempt to challenge the CCT policy monopoly. While the POP policy community had a strong influence on the Mexican federal government, access to a wide range of resources, and strong unity, the UBI network had a lower degree of consensus, scarce resources, and no previous influence in the government. Thus, the UBI network was not able to form an effective coalition to challenge the CCTs. As suggested by Cairney (2019), friction can occur in a group if the members do not adhere to the same agenda, as this generates instability and lowers the chances of developing an institutional agreement. Moreover, since the UBI network members had very different systems of belief – in particular regarding the policy actions required to implement UBI – they were unable to build a common project.

This chapter has shown how the POP policy community used coordinated actions and strategic alliances with key institutional actors to ensure the continuation of the programme and the preservation of its core design. In the following chapter, I will discuss the arrival of AMLO to power and the end of the CCTs during his first year in government.
9. The end of PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA during the Andrés Manuel López Obrador government

9.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the end of POP during the government of AMLO (2018 to the present). During the first year of the new administration, it became clear that the POP policy community had little influence in the new government. As a result, the community lost much of the resources and mechanisms needed to protect their policy monopoly. AMLO not only promotes a different ideology – in favour of universal and non-conditional subsidies – he has also declared himself an enemy of “neoliberal technocrats”. The president distrusted the POP policy community and the institutions under their influence and sought to break the bonds between the POP policy community and the government.

This is significant because the discontinuation of POP shows that the endurance of the programme over two decades was because the policy community had sufficient power to frame a particular view of social policy. The arrival of AMLO to power represented a shift in the policy subsystem that changed the balance of power and broke the CCT policy monopoly. Moreover, it marked the arrival of new actors with different perspectives of social policy. Although these new actors are an informal network, rather than a policy community, they replaced the POP policy community as the group framing Mexico’s social policy. Members of this network were appointed to key positions in the SEDESOL and the CONEVAL, changing the previous structures with the intention of establishing a new social policy paradigm. This may prove that CCTs were able to continue for more than two decades primarily because of the action of the POP policy community.

9.2 The presidential election of 2018 and the termination of PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA

The elections of 2018 put into debate three social policy proposals. The PRI candidate, José Antonio Meade, was in favour of continuing PROSPERA. He even committed to increasing the amount of money for each family and extending the coverage by another two million families (El Universal, 2018). In contrast, Ricardo Anaya from the PAN-PRD-MC coalition proposed replacing social programmes with UBI (as discussed in Chapter 8). Finally, AMLO
from the MORENA, who had previously competed in the elections of 2006 and 2012, was in favour of unconditional and universal subsidy programmes (similar to those from the populist period during 1970s). AMLO was also extremely critical of CCTs, and he made this clear from the beginning of his electoral campaign. For example, in the book he published while he was a candidate, AMLO states, “The social programmes from Salinas, Zedillo, Fox, Calderón, and Peña Nieto’s governments – *Solidaridad, PROGRESA, Oportunidades* and *PROSPERA* – have been merely palliative and are perverse mechanisms of electoral control and manipulation (…) we should put aside the neoliberal hypocrisy: the State must intervene to reduce social inequalities (…) our proposal consists of establishing an egalitarian and fraternal Welfare State to guarantee the poor, the weak and the marginalised find protection in the face of economic uncertainty, social inequalities and other crises” (López, 2017: 180 – 185). AMLO took a very clear stance on CCTs. When the communication department of the CONEVAL sent him a questionnaire regarding his social policy proposals, he again expressed his distrust of this policy: “We (MORENA) believe that social policy based on targeted and conditional transfers is no longer useful, because rather than stopping the growth of extreme poverty, the number of people in precarious conditions is almost the same as 25 years ago” (CONEVAL, 2018).

In 2018, AMLO and the MORENA achieved an overwhelming victory, winning not only the presidency but also the majority of the seats in both chambers of Congress. This put the POP policy community on a state of alert, as the new president was a self-declared “enemy of the technocrats”, referring to them as corrupt policymakers without a sense of solidarity. AMLO has had a long career as a politician and activist linked to left movements. He was member of the PRI during the 1970s, but he resigned after being accused of promoting socialism in poor communities (García, 2007). He eventually joined the PRD, becoming its president during the 1990s and mayor of Mexico City in 2000. In 2012, he founded his own party, establishing himself as its president, leader, and presidential candidate in 2018. At this time, he was clear about his social policy ideas, specifically concerning the role of the state in reducing social inequality. According to Carlos Rojas, AMLO’s preference for this kind of policy is partially because, in his youth, he worked with poor people in the indigenous regions, developing a strong sense of community:

> I worked there and (Andrés Manuel) López Obrador did as well. We were part of a generation of public servants who were attracted to the social issues of the country. After

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79 In previous elections, he competed as the candidate of the Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD). In 2014, he created his own party (MORENA).
graduating from university, we decided to go to live in indigenous regions and work with the National Indigenous Institute, or COPLAMAR (the National Coordination Plan for Undeveloped and Marginalized Zones; Rojas – Interview).

As AMLO conceived of social policy differently to his predecessors, his arrival in power was a threat to the continuation of POP. The profile of the new minister of the SEDESOL appointed by AMLO was completely different to that of her predecessors. María Luisa Albores González was an engineer, specialising in communitarian development, with a long history of working with poor indigenous communities in the south of Mexico. The new government even changed the name of the SEDESOL to “Ministry of Welfare” (Secretaría de Bienestar). Although the president offered no explanation for the renaming, one theory is that AMLO considered Salinas a personal enemy due to his neoliberal ideology, and given that Carlos Salinas had created the SEDESOL in the 1990s, the renaming was a symbolic action to create a distance between the new administration and the previous “neoliberal” governments. In addition, as mentioned before, AMLO was an advocate for non-conditioned general subsidies aimed at the poor, without discrimination between the extreme poor and the general poor (López, 2017). Another interesting aspect of AMLO’s ideology is the emotional component behind his beliefs. The new president has always emphasised that social inequality is the main obstacle to achieving happiness, thus the struggle against poverty needed a new focus (Ibid).

Daniel Hernández Franco claims there was much uncertainty and it was impossible to know what AMLO’s government was going to do with POP:

If you ask me what will happen with POP in December (of 2018), I would not know what to answer. It is not clear what the policy design of this government is, and many of its visions are ideologically opposed to the design of POP. It is worth remembering that nothing is forever (Hernández – Interview).

Likewise, Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo (interview) confirms there was a lot of uncertainty about the continuation of CCTs. This uncertainty may have been why the POP policy community attempted to lobby in favour of the programme. Paulina Rodríguez expressed this:

During the transition period, some international organisations are very active and they will try to lobby in favour of the programme (Rodríguez – Interview).

80 The enmity between the two is well-documented in the media and persists to this day.
Luis Alberto Moreno, president of the IADB, claims that Santiago Levy was heavily involved at the start of the new government: “We asked Santiago Levy to return from his holidays and he is now working really closely with President López Obrador” (quoted in González and Morales, 2019: Para. 1). It could be assumed that Levy used this opportunity to lobby in favour of CCTs, as he was the designer of this type of programme in the first place (see Chapter 6). Furthermore, the representative of the IADB office in Mexico publicly defended PROSPERA after AMLO’s victory, arguing that CCTs were essential for many people living in extreme poverty: “I think these programmes cannot be discontinued since they are necessary, especially in this part (the south) of the country. If the programmes continue to be essential, then the best thing to do is to improve them and see how to make them more efficient to reach the poor” (Tomás Bermúdez quoted in Santos, 2018: Para. 5).

The initial pressure from these actors and the media apparently made AMLO reconsider his decision to terminate PROSPERA. Having begun his term, the president then stated that he had decided to continue the programme: “We are going to continue PROSPERA. Do you remember when they (the opposition) said that if we won we were going to abolish it? We are not going to make any social programme disappear. On the contrary, there will be more support and more social programmes” (AMLO in Galván, 2018). Even the new minister of education, Esteban Moctezuma, stated that PROSPERA was going to be improved and that new components were going to be added (Méndez, 2018). However, despite these initial public statements, once the new government had officially commenced, the Ministry of Finance released the document “Programming and Budget Manual 2019” (Manual de Programación y Presupuesto 2019), which stated that no budget would be allocated to the health components of PROSPERA.

According to Zoe Robledo, director of the IMSS, the decision to remove the health components would not affect the beneficiaries of the programme because they were already enrolled in “Popular insurance scheme” (Seguro Popular), an alternative health system (Urrutia, et al. 2019a).

In 2019, AMLO announced the formal discontinuation of PROSPERA, citing corruption: “I can prove to you, and I make a commitment to show you how much money was allocated to PROSPERA to benefit people but did not arrive. We made a census, we went from home to home, and we documented how that money stayed in the hands of the intermediaries” (López, 2019). I must point out that the census mentioned here was not a formal census: rather,

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81 It was not possible to access the agenda of the IADB to identify the specific projects that Levy worked on during the initial phase of the government.
members of the MORENA conducted the census without a proper methodology and the results have never been made publicly available.\textsuperscript{82} Thus, there was no reliable way of proving that \textit{PROSPERA} was indeed corrupt. This caused opposition parties to accuse the president of making decisions without objectivity or proper evidence. In May 2019, the government officially replaced \textit{PROSPERA} with the “National Programme of Benito Juárez Welfare Scholarships” (\textit{Programa Nacional de Becas para el Bienestar Benito Juárez}), a radical change that meant the official discontinuation of POP, as the core of the programme had been dismantled.

\textbf{9.3 Differences between \textit{PROSPERA} and \textit{Becas para el Bienestar Benito Juárez}}

The operational rules of the new programme meant the removal of targeting mechanisms, with the programme no longer targeting individuals but rather considering entire communities to be in poverty. In addition, scholarship cash is linked exclusively to education and no longer covers health or nutrition needs. However, the government retained the conditionality related to school attendance. According to the Operational Rules of \textit{Becas para el Bienestar Benito Juárez}, the objective was no longer to overcome poverty or to provide a safety net, but to promote education amongst people living in conditions of poverty and vulnerability (see Table 9.1).

\textsuperscript{82} There is no official information about this survey.
Table 9.1 Differences between PROSPERA and Becas para el Bienestar Benito Juárez

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROSPERA</th>
<th>“Benito Juárez Welfare Scholarships”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programme coordinated by the Ministry of Social Development</td>
<td>Programme coordinated and operated exclusively by the Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(SEDESOL), with participation from other ministries (health,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education, labour, economy, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective is to coordinate social policy and offer productive</td>
<td>Objective is to reduce school dropout rates by offering scholarships to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alternatives to people in extreme poverty through co-responsibility actions</td>
<td>people of poor communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four components: education, health, nutrition, and productive/</td>
<td>Exclusively focused on education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>financial inclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted according to household income</td>
<td>Entire communities selected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elaborated by the author, based on the operational rules of PROSPERA and the Benito Juárez Welfare Scholarships (Becas para el Bienestar Benito Juárez)

The discontinuation of PROSPERA was severely criticised by the POP policy community, who made their disapproval public by various means. For example, Iliana Yaschine accused the new government of ignoring scientific evidence: “Unfortunately, the decision made regarding social policy makes no sense. The decision to cancel PROSPERA and the arguments used for that purpose do not show that evidence was taken into account for the analysis (…) the decision to eliminate PROSPERA and the way it was eliminated are more examples of the government’s disdain for evidence and scientific and academic knowledge” (Yaschine, 2019: Para. 10). Likewise, Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo argued that the programme should not be terminated: “Improving POP required providing a complete package of actions related to youth development, preventive health measurement, guarantee educational quality, and increased level of transfers, as well as the eradication of corruption and clienteles. In a few words, the programme needed to be improved, not eliminated” (Gómez, 2019: Para. 12). Many columnists published articles in the main newspapers defending POP by citing previous works from Susan Parker, Petra Todd, Paul Gertler, and so on. However, the POP policy community resorting to
the media when the decision to terminate POP had already been taken may suggest that they did not have the resources within the new government to revert AMLO’s decision.

Supporters of the new government defended the discontinuation of POP, arguing that this represented the start of a new social policy paradigm. As stated by one of the leaders of the MORENA, Bertha Luján:

Social policy is no longer conceived as a palliative to cure the wounds caused by neoliberalism. The Fourth Transformation (4T)83 represents a change in the economic model that seeks equality, equity, and justice (…) PROSPERA or Oportunidades were programmes created in the 1980s and only reached a fraction of the population. It was created as a programme to gain legitimacy (…) It was presented by media as a “great project”, but it was fake solidarity from the neoliberal regime (Luján – Interview).

Additionally, Luján is sure that a different network of scholars guided the president, marking a departure from the POP policy community:

Our president can count on the support of national and international renowned scholars, who have been involved for many years in the elaboration of our party’s principles and other basic documents, plus many other specific proposals according to their speciality. Most of these people are part of MORENA’s National Advisory Council, which are Elena Poniatowska, Armando Bartra, Pedro Miguel, Enrique Semo, Héctor Díaz Polanco, Rafael Barajas “El Fisgón”, Víctor Flores Olea, Lorenzo Meyer, Paco Ignacio Taibo II, Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, Martí Batres, Claudia Sheinbaum (current governor of Mexico City), Laura Esquivel, José María Pérez Gay, Pedro Salmerón, Bertha Maldonado, and Beatriz Gutiérrez Muller (AMLO’s wife), amongst others. Likewise, the current members of his cabinet are part of this group – such as Jesús Ramírez Cuevas, Genaro Villamil, and Gerardo Esquivel (Luján – Interview).

It is well-known that the aforementioned scholars and policymakers share a left-wing ideology in favour of the intervention of the state in the economy. However, as claimed by Ruiz (2019), this network embedded in the MORENA does not represent a homogenous left, but a conglomerate of different currents, such as Marxism, communism, (left-wing) nationalism, anarchism, and others. Therefore, there may be a diversity of views regarding different policy issues. For instance, Armando Bartra is a self-declared socialist. Enrique Semo was part of the

83 AMLO’s government refers to itself as the “Fourth Transformation”. Historically, the first transformation was the war of independence from Spain in 1810; the second was the civil war, from 1858 to 1861; and the third was the Revolution in 1910.
Mexican Communist Party for many years. Rafael Barajas and Paco Ignacio Taibo II are radical social activists and journalists from the left. Porfirio Muñoz Ledo and Víctor Flores Olea were part of the PRI during the populist periods of Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970-1976) and José López Portillo (1976-1982), the first was president of the PRI and the latter a senior officer. Gerardo Esquivel (current deputy governor of Mexico’s central bank) is strongly linked to the social-democratic movement in Mexico. Nevertheless, there is a common agreement that neoliberalism – understood as a political ideology that promotes the free market, decentralisation, and the reduction of the size of the state – has generated precarious conditions for the majority of the citizens and served only to benefit the economic elites (Ibid). Similarly, they share a negative perspective of what AMLO has called the “neoliberal period” (1982 to 2018): “The neoliberal period in Mexico was a synonym of corruption” (López, 2020). Likewise, many of the individuals named above are members of the MORENA. This is important because, according to the party’s “Declaration of Principles” and “Programme of Action”, they agreed to fight against the “neoliberal regime” and promote a new development model based on social rights (fair salaries, universal credits, and universal basic services for health, education, public housing, etc.).

However, there seems to be an enormous contradiction in AMLO’s government’s ideology. Many of the actions undertaken by the government during its early years were entirely opposed to the values preached by these individuals. For example, in his first year, AMLO promoted a severe austerity policy that ended many social programmes and reduced the size of the state. Moreover, the president endorsed strategic alliances with religious and conservative groups, economic elites, and the army (Bartra, 2021). For this reason, many analysts consider him a right-wing populist who only uses a left-wing flag for its convenience. Therefore, it may not be sufficient to assume that he terminated POP only because it was “neoliberal”. To speculate on the other reasons for the termination, I note that general, non-targeted subsidies are more popular than the alternative and could thus help to build a broader electoral base for the MORENA. Similarly, I could argue that, since CCTs were created by technocrats and the president is their self-declared enemy, this was mere retaliation. Alternatively, the president may actually believe that POP was corrupt. Unfortunately, I do not have the necessary information to determine the exact reasons for his decision.

84 Regarding this issue, many international outlets such as The New York Times, The Guardian, Le Monde, and others have included AMLO in lists of right-wing populist leaders.
9.4 The renewal of the CONEVAL

From the start of his government, AMLO expressed distrust of the CONEVAL and repeatedly threatened to dissolve the institution (Expansión Política, 2019). According to the president, the CONEVAL was an expensive institution that had done little to fight poverty. This caused major protests, as it was widely considered one of the most prestigious institutions in the country. AMLO withdrew his threat after influential members of his own party such as Mario Delgado (current leader of the MORENA in Congress) opposed the idea. Nevertheless, AMLO removed Gonzalo Hernández Licona from the CONEVAL, initially arguing that this was due to Licona’s opposition to his austerity policies, but later revealing that it was due to ideological differences: “he has a background that is not compatible with this government. The way he thinks is close to the neoliberal ideology (...) he comes from the school of neoliberalism (...) a policy agenda that resulted in a complete failure for this country. This is why we have decided to abandon that policy” (AMLO in NotimexTV, 2019). AMLO named José Nabor Cruz the new executive secretary of the CONEVAL. According to the president, he was chosen on the recommendation of María Luisa Albores (Ministry of Welfare), and no further reasons were given (Urrutia et al. 2019b). Arguably, Cruz’s appointment was because his personal views were better aligned with the new government’s ideology (at least from a discursive perspective because, as discussed earlier, AMLO’s ideology is contradictory). Opposition parties accused the president of appointing the executive secretary for reasons of his ideological closeness, rather than competence.

In February 2020, half of the members of the CONEVAL council were newly elected. Unsurprisingly, the three new members were not members of the POP policy community. Armando Bartra Verges is a philosopher and professor from the “Metropolitan Autonomous University” (UAM), widely known for his socialist ideas. Claudia Vanessa Maldonado Trujillo is a researcher from the CIDE; she was one of the external staff evaluators of Oportunidades in 2008 and was extremely critical of the programme. Likewise, Guillermo Cejudo Ramírez is a renowned researcher from the CIDE who shared ideas regarding social policy with the government that can be gauged from his motivation letter for the council nomination: “Recently

85 Although contradictory – considering he was in favour of a more active role of the state in the economy – AMLO implemented an aggressive austerity policy that reduced the budget of many public institutions.
86 When he was interviewed by local media in Mexico, José Nabor Cruz stated that he was a follower of left-wing economists such as Joseph Stiglitz, Thomas Piketty, and Branko Milanović (Milenio, 2019).
87 The external evaluations of Oportunidades in 2008 pointed out severe deficiencies in the programme (see Chapter 7).
the government has made important changes to social policy: reducing the number of social programmes but widening their scope (and) putting great efforts into universal cash transfers. Ultimately, a new perspective on human rights within social policy was promoted by presidential mandate. It is necessary to adapt to these changes but maintain methodological rigor. To adapt means to transition from only assisting with specific social needs to a complete social rights agenda” (CONEVAL, 2020b).
Table 9.2 Elected members of the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL) academic council 2020-2024

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Counsellor</th>
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<th>Counsellor</th>
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</table>
| María del Rosario Cárdenas Elizalde | - PhD in population studies from Harvard University  
- Researcher at the Metropolitan Autonomous University (UAM)  
- No specific relationship with PROGRESA/Oportunidades found before entering CONEVAL | She continued to the next period | |
| Salomón Nahmad Sitton | - PhD in anthropology from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)  
- Researcher at the Centre for Research and Higher Studies (CIESAS)  
- Qualitative researcher for PROGRESA/Oportunidades | He continued to the next period | |

88 Reasons for this extension are specified in the previous chapter.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Education and Experience</th>
<th></th>
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| John Scott Andretta              | - Master’s in economics from Oxford University  
- Researcher at the Centre for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE)  
- External consultant for PROGRESA/Oportunidades | He continued to the next period |
| Fernando Alberto Cortés Cáceres   | - PhD in social sciences from CIESAS  
- Researcher at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO)/ The College of Mexico (COLMEX)  
- Served as external consultant for PROGRESA | Claudia Vanessa Maldonado Trujillo - PhD in political science from Notre Dame  
- Researcher at CIDE  
- Served as external evaluator of Oportunidades |
| Agustín Escobar Latapí           | - PhD in sociology from University of Manchester  
- Researcher at CIESAS  
- In charge of the official qualitative evaluation of PROGRESA/Oportunidades from 1999 to 2008 | Armando Bartra Verges - Bachelor’s in philosophy from UNAM  
- Researcher at the UAM  
- No specific relationship with PROGRESA – Oportunidades – PROSPERA (POP) found before entering CONEVAL |
Finally, it is noted that some people related to the POP policy community such as Iliana Yaschine, Susan Parker, and Gerardo Ordóñez-Barba also made themselves available for the selection but were not chosen. Although the CNDS (the commission that select the CONEVAL members, see Chapter 7) did not give reasons for the rejections of these scholars, it could be that they were identified as being close to Gonzalo Hernández Licona. It is important to remember that Gonzalo Hernández Licona had previously played a decisive role in the selection of the academic counsellors of the CONEVAL (see Chapter 8). Since these people were part of the POP policy community – and the president had a negative view of POP – it seems reasonable to assume that this contributed to their exclusion. Moreover, since the MORENA won a majority in 2018 – both in Congress and in many states and municipalities – and the CNDS is comprised of members of the cabinet, legislative institutions, states, and municipalities, it can be assumed that the CNDS would not choose people who held values opposite to those of AMLO’s government. However, the POP policy community’s loss of its monopoly did not represent its extinction. A media review revealed that (at least until 2020) members such as Santiago Levy, Susan Parker, Rodolfo de la Torre, Nora Lustig, and Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo continued to advocate for CCTs. Many have maintained active and coordinated participation in academic spaces and international organisations. Some others – albeit on a more individual basis – have become active critics of AMLO’s government, which is the case for Gonzalo Hernández Licona and Miguel Székely.
9.5 Conclusion

It can be argued that AMLO’s government marked a critical juncture that generated instability within the policy subsystem. AMLO is an active supporter of non-conditioned subsidies who has been critical of POP and CCTs in general. Moreover, he is a harsh critic of technocrats and distrusts many of the policies implemented during the country’s “neoliberal period”. What is more, his tremendous victory gave him control over Congress and many states and municipalities, as well as a broad public support that legitimises many of his actions, even those that are highly controversial. Although the POP policy community has attempted to preserve its monopoly by activating lobbying mechanisms, it is clear that they lack the resources required to influence AMLO’s government.

AMLO ultimately replaced POP with a new scholarship programme, called, “Becas para el Bienestar Benito Juárez”, which dismantled the core of the CCTs. The new programme removed the health and nutrition components (basic elements for human capital generation); and, instead of targeting households, the government selects entire communities to receive the subsidy. The Ministry of Education now administrates the programme, having replaced the SEDESOL. However, the constituency of the new programme is essentially that of POP, as the previous beneficiaries of POP were automatically transferred to the new programme.

A new group of left-wing scholars has been invited to participate in government, replacing the previous framing of the social policy. As PET suggests, when a policy community loses the power to maintain the agenda, they also lose their capacity to preserve their policy monopoly (True et al., 2007). It is clear that AMLO’s aim was to deinstitutionalise the POP policy community and transfer its policy monopoly from the SEDESOL and the CONEVAL. Therefore, while the officials of the newly named “Ministry of Welfare” and the selected members of the CONEVAL have different perspectives on social policy, neither has links to the POP policy community.

Overall, this chapter has described the termination of POP to show that the CCTs’ institutional endurance was primarily due to the action of the POP policy community. Neither the large “scale” of POP (in terms of coverage and budget) nor its positive evaluations were sufficient by themselves to protect the CCTs. When this community no longer had the influence in government needed to frame social policy, the programme ended abruptly, despite the numerous reinforcing elements described in previous chapters.
In the following chapter, I will address POP’s endurance using the selected theoretical framework for analysis.
10. Analysis of POP’s institutional endurance from a theoretical perspective

10.1 Introduction

This chapter revisits the findings presented in the empirical chapter under the light of institutional gradual change and punctuated equilibrium theory. The reason for choosing these neo-institutionalist approaches was because, in combination, they provide a better understanding of the actions of the policy communities that sought to frame government agenda, the intra-institutional dynamics, and the specific circumstances that allowed achieving and maintaining stability within the policy subsystem. For instance, I analysed how the POP policy community was able to influence government by forming a selective group with shared values and beliefs that institutionalised CCTs within Mexican institutions and how the policy community restricted the agenda by excluding other actors from key policymaking processes (as discussed in chapters 6, 7 and 8). Similarly, I addressed the use of evidence as an effective strategy to preserving CCTs and compared the POP policy community to UBI advocates to evidence the power of the former over other groups within the policy subsystem.

An exploration of the elements of gradual change such as the balance of power within institutional actors and the compliance with and interpretation of rules, allowed me to detect the institutional endogenous factors that prompted the slow evolution of the programme from PROGRESA to PROSPERA. Likewise, I addressed other factors such as POP’s bureaucracy, international loans and policymakers’ ideas that became important self-reinforcing elements, which promoted long-term institutional inertia. Finally, I analysed the conditions that made no longer possible the continuation of CCTs during AMLO’s government. Specifically, how the policy community behind the programme lost its policy monopoly, therefore, its capacity to influence the agenda of the government and how new actors with different ideas regarding social policy influenced the end of POP. The main objective of this chapter is to connect public policy theory on change and stability with the empirical evidence presented in previous chapters, to explain the long-term endurance of POP.

10.2 Analysis of the creation of PROGRESA – Oportunidades - PROSPERA

I consider necessary to address the creation of POP because a starting point must be established in order to understand the programme’s incremental process. Likewise, I believe this would
provide a “greater picture” of the programme. For this purpose, I decided to analyse the creation of PROGRESA using some elements of punctuated equilibrium since the programme represents a break with the previous paradigm based on general and non-conditioned subsidies which occurred during a major critical juncture (see chapter 5). Therefore, the creation of PROGRESA fits the basic premises of this analytical model. Moreover, its approach on policy communities allows for a better understanding of the dynamics behind the implementation of CCTs. Furthermore, PET is helpful to understand not only the origin of POP but also the transition from its initial implementation towards its more stable stages during the following years.

But what about other theories explaining the creation of PROGRESA? It is true that other approaches from new institutionalism may be used to understand certain aspects of the origin of POP. For example, Multiple Stream Framework could be used to explain how Mexican policy makers inserted CCTs into government agenda using a “window of opportunity” such as the macro-economic crisis of the mid 1990s and other political junctures. Likewise, as stated by Medrano (2011), an ideational approach may offer insight into the ideas within the policy subsystem that promoted the implementation of CCTs. Nevertheless, I consider these approaches only relevant for analysing the creation of the programme as a specific stage at a determined time, which is not the purpose of this research. My objective is to explain the creation of the programme, but to do so as part of a greater long-term policy process with the aim of seeing the creation of the programme as the beginning of a prolonged period of time characterised by relative stability and incremental gradual change. Hence, I believe punctuated equilibrium to be more appropriate to analyse the creation of PROGRESA (and eventually its endurance, in complementation with a gradual change approach) because it incorporates path dependence while taking into consideration the ideas, interests and motivations within institutions, thus making the analysis of change and stability more comprehensive (True et al. 2007).

The creation of PROGRESA was strongly influenced by the macro-economic crisis and endogenous political dynamics at the beginning of the government of Ernesto Zedillo. First, as stated by Santiago Levy (see chapter 5), resources needed to be used efficiently as the crisis negatively impacted tax revenue. Moreover, during this time general poverty (measured as the people with incomes not allowing them access to fundamental goods and services such as housing, transport, or clothing) grew by 52% in 1996 (from 52.4% of the total population to 69% - see figure 1.1 in chapter 1) (Baldacci et al. 2002). In addition, as suggested by Carlos...
Rojas (see chapter 5), the hostility between Presidents Zedillo and Salinas may have been another factor that promoted a new perspective on social policy.

As discussed in chapter 2, critical junctures brake stability within policy subsystems, thus, promoting profound change in institutions. The aforementioned economic and political factors generated instability that drew focus to the existing policy policies. When an issue rises to the public agenda, “existing policies can either be reinforced or questioned” (True et al. 2007: p. 156). In this case, the technocratic group of policymakers associated with President Zedillo, who promoted change in the status quo, used evidence from the Technical Committee of PRONASOL to back up their views of the programme being insufficient to protect poor families after the crisis (see chapters 5 and 6). The above is known as a “paradigm challenging approach”, meaning that evidence is used to problematize established frameworks (Nutley, Walter & Davies, 2007). As suggested by Daniel Hernández (interview), President Zedillo had a strong technocratic profile and believed that policy action should be guided by evidence. Therefore, it is likely that the unfavourable feedback from the evaluations carried out to PRONASOL at the beginning of Zedillo’s administration may have also influenced the decision of shifting social policy.

Furthermore, according to PET, policy entrepreneurs tend to promote new ways of framing policy issues during periods of instability (True et al. 2007). As discussed in chapter 6, Santiago Levy and José Gómez de León promoted CCTs at the beginning of Zedillo’s term, presenting evidence of a pilot program conducted in southern Mexico that concluded that they were a better alternative to unconditioned and untargeted subsidies (see chapter 6). This could be considered an attempt from these policymakers to influence government’s agenda. In particular, considering Zedillo’s stance that government ought to be driven only by evidence. Moreover, according to PET, the ability to frame a policy issue strongly depends on the policy community’s power to dominate the policy subsystem (True et al. 2007). Policy communities, understood as closed groups with shared interests and values that form institutional agreements (see broader explanation in chapter 2), may have the chance to impose a dominant perspective regarding a policy issue when they restrict participation of other actors and insulate the agenda (Jordan and Cairney, 2013). As seen in chapter 6, the exclusion of Carlos Rojas, who was a major critic of CCTs (but also a powerful actor since he was minister of SEDESOL) helped Santiago Levy and José Gómez de León to frame social policy.
When the initial policy community composed of Ernesto Zedillo’s technocrats finally had the capacity of monopolising the social policy agenda of the government, they were able to create *PROGRESA*. In accordance with PET, dominant actors seek to create new institutional structures to replace previously dominant agencies, thus generating a new power distribution (Ibid). Therefore, *PROGRESA* and its new bureaucratic structure (the National Coordination) constitutes the institutional settlement of the policy monopoly of CCTs which replaced PRONASOL and its unconditioned and untargeted subsidies paradigm. However, the creation of *PROGRESA* did not end instability by default. Equilibrium is achieved when government widely accepts the framing of the social policy (Ibid). Despite Zedillo’s government endorsing CCTs, there was still much uncertainty whether the programme would survive the political transition of 2000, since *PROGRESA* was created during the last years of the administration. As discussed in chapter 6, the programme faced a real risk of discontinuation during the administration of Vicente Fox. The group of Zedillo’s technocrats had to adopt different strategies to convince President Vicente Fox and his new officials that CCTs were the most effective social policy to address poverty and that, as a consequence thereof, *PROGRESA* had to be continued. Once the government of Vicente Fox fully accepted CCTs, the policy subsystem achieved stability, which I discuss more broadly in the next section.

10.3 Analysis of *PROGRESA* – *Oportunidades* - *PROSPERA* policy community

As discussed in chapter 2, policy communities characterise by having a small and closed number of participants that have a high degree of consensus, expertise, consultations and strong relationships among them (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992; Jordan and Maloney, 1997). That was the case of the policy community of POP, which was formed by a closed group of experts with similar backgrounds advocating for CCTs. The high level of consultations among its members is tangible when reviewing the theoretical foundations of *PROSPERA*, which are based on previous works from IFPRI, Santiago Levy, José Gómez de León, Jere Behrman, Susan Parker, Lawrence Haddad, and others (Behrman, 2008; Lustig, 2014). Similarly, the strong relationships among the members can be observed in their professional trajectories. For instance, many of the external consultants were later invited to participate as advisors either in the programme, SEDESOL, or CONEVAL. Likewise, after leaving office in government some of the policy makers involved in POP were invited to participate in international organisations that had connections with the same group of individuals, such as Santiago Levy and Evelyn
Rodríguez, who later worked for the IADB. Equally, Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo and María Concepción Steta later became part of the World Bank, and some of the IFPRI evaluators later became part of the IADB or the World Bank (see chapter 6).

When the policy community expanded further to include a new generation of scholars during the government of Vicente Fox, once again the existing members limited the membership to individuals with similar backgrounds that supported CCTs. This is important because, according to McPherson and Raab (1988), the selection of participants with similar characteristics facilitates socialisation, and socialisation allows the creation of an “institutional agreement” that strengthens the relationships of its members. Since all members of the policy community believed that targeted and conditioned programmes were effective in generating human capital, they therefore “agreed” on focusing their efforts on promoting and defending CCTs to ensure their continuity. This institutional agreement not only explains why only certain experts were invited to participate in the programme, but also why other individuals were rejected. For instance, even though Julio Boltvinik was encouraged to participate within the administration of Vicente Fox, since he had a critical stance about CCTs, the policy community marginalised him and other scholars with similar views to prevent their participation in the programme, the SEDESOL, and the Technical Committee for the Evaluation of Poverty (TCEP; later the CONEVAL).

Another way that the POP policy community achieved insulating themselves and defining the policy issue on their terms was by framing poverty as a technical and complex issue. As stated by Cairney (2019), insulation is possible when policies are broken down to such a level of specialisation that only a few actors have the capabilities to be involved. Since the targeting mechanism of POP was considered highly complex and required advanced knowledge on statistical methods, it prevented the participation of external actors that lacked these technical skills. This, according to Cobb & Elders (1972), was a strategy to “privatise” certain policy issues. As outlined in chapter 6, the participants of the first external evaluation of PROGRESA were individuals with high levels of specialisation in quantitative research. Although later other individuals with qualitative research expertise were considered, the policy issue (poverty) continued being framed as a technical matter, thus not only limiting the actors involved in POP, but also limiting the public’s interest by making the issue less attractive to them.

Another feature of this policy community was its ability to do “venue shopping”, which refers to the act of looking for supporters in different audiences (Baumgartner and Jones, 2009).
Although the Mexican policymaking tradition dictates that the president has the last word regarding decision-making, Bolfívar (2013) claims that after the victory of Vicente Fox there was a genuine attempt to democratise public decision-making (see chapter 3). Therefore, the POP policy community used this political juncture to gain as many supporters as they could. As mentioned by Daniel Hernández (interview), when PROGRESA faced the possibility of being terminated by the new government of Vicente Fox in 2000, the POP policy community adopted various strategies with key political actors to lobby in favour of the programme. Daniel Hernández sought support from the congressional representatives of the PRI and the PAN, while Nora Lustig met with the newly appointed minister of SEDESOL, and Santiago Levy and the American experts engaged with President Fox (see chapter 6). All of them had the ambition of convincing the new government that PROGRESA was an effective programme to combat poverty.

Using the evaluation carried out by IFPRI during the last year of Ernesto Zedillo’s government, the POP policy community was able to lobby in favour of the programme. This can be categorised as “direct use of evidence”, meaning that evidence is used intentionally to attract the attention of different stakeholders such as politicians and civil servants, international organisations, and the general public, among others, to persuade them about a particular issue or topic (Nutley, Walter & Davies, 2007). Moreover, the credibility of the people who conducted the evaluation was also an important factor when venue shopping. The prestige of the researchers can be, in some cases, even more important than the quality of the research (Court and Young, 2006; Hemsley-Brown and Sharp, 2003). As seen in chapter 6, some of the members of the POP policy community were considered among the best economists and experts on social development worldwide. This reputation was favourable in seeking support from different audiences. Likewise, the members of the POP policy community had strong links with international organisations such as the World Bank and the IADB, who promoted the programme as an example to be replicated in the so-called Global South. This allowed POP to gain international advocates disseminating the idea of CCTs (Osorio, 2014; 2017).

The insulation of the policy community from other individuals with different views was not only essential to establish but to preserve the policy monopoly. The members of the POP policy community not only had influence over the programme, but also within the institutions operating the programme, and the institutions evaluating it. The most evident case was the selection of the academic counsellors of the CONEVAL, which were former evaluators of PROGRESA and Oportunidades. Likewise, the appointment of Gonzalo Hernández Licona as
executive secretary of the CONEVAL, who previously worked as the director of evaluation of the SEDESOL and who gave control of CONEVAL to the POP policy community, thus keeping their influence within government. The POP policy community made sure to frame the issue of poverty in a manner that CCTs would be presented as the best social policy solution. For example, the interpretation given to the study “What do the poor say?” (See chapter 6), reinforced the idea that the poor preferred co-responsibility and targeted programmes. Moreover, many of the evaluations of the programme were presented in a way that reinforced CCTs. As discussed in chapter 7, the POP policy community pressured the evaluators to give positive feedback to the programme. If by some reason the evidence produced by the examiners questioned the effectiveness of POP, then the results were presented in a way that did not generate instability. For instance, by nuancing the deficiencies of the programme in the executive summaries of the evaluations and focusing mainly in the positive aspects of POP.

The above may be part of what Parkhurst (2017) calls “issue bias” which refers to how evidence is framed and interpreted marginalising or excluding other policy-relevant concerns. As the author suggests: “The fact that a choice of evidence can influence decisions is not necessarily a problem in and of itself (…) Yet, it is important to recognise whether particular pieces (or uses) of evidence work to shift policy priority to one set of values over another (…) issue bias can be seen as problematic if it obscures or undermines the explicit consideration of the multiple sets of values that are important to the public” (Ibid: p. 43). Therefore, the way many studies of POP presented their outcomes made major problem, such as the intervention did not translate into better learning or that poor were not successfully inserted into the labour market, go unnoticed. Moreover, as discussed in chapter 7, some of the studies conducted by the SEDESOL had the clear intention of protecting the programme, as stated by Salvador Escobedo (interview). This represents a “mobilisation bias”, the promotion of particular norms of evidence to endorse political positions (Ibid). This was possible because the monopoly of the POP policy community was institutionalised in the evaluation bodies. Thus, the members of the POP community were in charge either of designing the evaluations, of carrying out the evaluations, or of reviewing the evaluations. This is problematic because, as suggested by Freyermuth (interview), many of the researchers involved developed an attachment to the programme. In these situations, some preventative measures such as disclosure or recusal need to be taken in order to avoid potential biases (Resnik, 2007; Elliot, 2008). However, this was not the case for POP.
While it is true that many of these researchers were experts on their respective fields, as stated by the CONEVAL, their objectivity can be questioned because the evidence produced sought to confirm existing beliefs and expectations about CCTs. In accordance with Koen and Kukucka (2018), “confirmation biases” in evidence are a product of a “positive testing strategy”: researchers’ tendency to test their beliefs with the hope of getting feedback that reinforces those beliefs. Consequently, it can be noted that some of the evaluations of POP had confirmation bias. Although evidence itself may not tell the policymakers exactly what to do, it can suggest the desired path (David, 2012). Hence, the evidence provided by SEDESOL and CONEVAL definitely played a role not only in framing the policy problem but also in endorsing the continuation of CCTs.

Once the POP policy community established its policy monopoly, they worked to keep the policy problem out of the public’s focus. An external event allowed to achieve this goal, which was the declaration of the “war against drug trafficking” during the government of Felipe Calderón. As discussed in chapter 7, due to the spiral of violence generated by drug cartels, the issue of poverty became less relevant for the government. Furthermore, since evidence from the CONEVAL and the SEDESOL suggested that CCTs were effective in combating poverty, the attention of the government moved to other issues such as crime and public safety, or economic recovery after the international financial crisis in 2008. As suggested by Jones and Baumgartner (2005), considering the wide range of themes policymakers must address, they prioritise those issues that require urgent actions or that attract more attention within the public, and issues considered under control are not a major priority on the agenda. Moreover, when a policy community successfully establishes a policy monopoly, policymakers become unreceptive to new information (True et al. 2007). Thus, it is not surprising that the external evaluations of 2008, which showed severe deficiencies of the programme, did not attract the attention of government. What is more, POP’s policy community confronted the results of these evaluations by conducting new studies that suggested that deeper actions were not required, just small adjustments to improve POP’s impact. Then, the action of the POP policy community translated into a series of recommendations that guided the programme’s incremental changes.

Finally, the continuation of POP is also related to the fact that the POP policy community did not face real competition from any other group that challenged its policy monopoly. The only organized group that tried to challenge CCTs was the UBI network (as discussed in chapter 8). However, this group lacked internal cohesion, resources and influence to be able to compete against the POP policy community. Therefore, the capacity of the UBI network to seek support
from broader audiences was limited. For this reason, POP could remain insulated from other actors and the social policy agenda stayed in “equilibrium”. Although the purpose of this research is not to explain the dynamics of the UBI network, for the sake of understanding why this group failed to compete against the policy community of POP a brief analysis thereof will be presented next.

As mentioned in the beginning of this section, an essential element to achieving stability within a policy community is that all members of the group share a common understanding of a policy issue and have consensual relationships. This was not the case for the UBI network. Although the supporters of UBI initially held a similar belief that a new antipoverty policy should be implemented in Mexico and that a UBI was a good option to that end, they also had strong disagreements over how to implement it. While some supporters believed that a tax reform was needed to get the budgetary resources to fund the UBI, others proposed abolishing existing social programmes and redirecting those resources to fund it. This is a major disagreement because both promoting a tax reform and abolishing previous social programmes are very sensitive actions which would have caused greatly different reactions within Mexico’s public.

Although the advocates of UBI shared a deep core belief (of changing social policy), they had diverse views regarding the “policy core”, understood as opposing fundamental positions on the basic strategies for achieving core values (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Raising taxes was not desirable for the advocates linked to the PAN, such as Ricardo Anaya or Jorge Castañeda, while replacing other social programmes to fund UBI was not acceptable for supporters affiliated with the MORENA, such as Julio Boltvinik or Araceli Damián. Furthermore, as discussed in chapter 8, many of the UBI supporters were also political opponents. Since they were engaged in opposing electoral campaigns, they necessarily had to differentiate themselves from one another to obtain electoral support. As expressed by Jorge Castañeda, promoting UBI during the electoral campaigns created more differences between the supporters rather than a common platform. According to Béland (2005), political actors frame policy alternatives in a way that seeks to increase their popular support, so, it is not a surprise that the MORENA and the PAN fought to be recognized as the true authors of this social policy. These differences not only prevented them from forming a coalition but also created public distrust of to this proposal. Therefore, the UBI advocates did not have the base to form an effective coalition to challenge CCTs. As claimed by De Wispelaere (2016), weak political support, but especially the persistent political division, are often the main problems in building an effective coalition in favour of UBI: “where political division is rife and persistent,
building a grand coalition that combines the support of opposing ideological factions is a risky strategy with considerable political costs attached” (Ibid: p. 137).

10.4 Analysis of gradual change in PROGRESA – Oportunidades - PROSPERA

From a gradual change perspective, the POP policy community was an agent that promoted minor changes with the aim of preserving the institution. As suggested by Mahoney and Thelen (2010), some agents within institutions can push for change without being dissidents or opponents. As discussed in chapter 6 and 7, many of the incremental changes within POP, though considered “Christmas baubles”, intended to prevent modifications to the core of CCTs while reinforcing existing components. As stated by John Scott (interview) these changes “were a necessary evil”. In accordance with Thelen (2004), formal institutions “do not survive long stretches of time by standing still” (ibid: p. 293). Thus, gradual change within POP became essential for the programme’s endurance. Streeck and Thelen (2005) refer to this as “reproduction by adaptation”, which endorse institutional continuity. According to Guardiancich (2011) when changes fail to produce a displacement of the previous structures, survival and return is the complementary outcome as it “entails the survival of the old logic of action, despite an abrupt process of change” (Ibid: p. 981). The transformation of PROGRESA into Oportunidades and later into PROSPERA evidently did not remove the original structure of the programme as these subsequent transformations ended up reinforcing its original structure. In fact, the transformations of POP reinforced the work of the National Coordination by increasing the scope of the programme and the number of ministries involved. Therefore, instead of producing change leading to discontinuity, the transformations only reinforced the existing institutional arrangements. Consequently, the changes within structures were redundant and the outcomes marginal (Ibid).

According to Mahoney and Thelen, gradual change within institutions is also linked to an issue of compliance. Codes within institutions can be ambiguous and subject to interpretation, thus, compliance “carries its own dynamic of potential change” (Ibid: p. 10). The POP policy community maintained a policy monopoly that institutionalised CCTs; however, the programme was flexible enough to allow each government to add their own “mark”. Despite the consensus that the core of CCTs should not be modified, there was an openness in the interpretation of secondary aspects of POP. As a result, subsequent governments contested some of the rules set by the initial policy community of PROGRESA. For instance, the element added by Vicente Fox “Support for the elderly” (Apoyo a adultos mayores) was later removed
by Felipe Calderón (see chapter 7). Similarly, Enrique Peña Nieto removed “Youth with Oportunidades” (Jóvenes con Oportunidades) during the transformation to PROSPERA (see chapter 8). Compliance with the rules was limited to preserving the original design of CCTs, leaving space for changes to the “surface” of the programme. In addition, some changes can be considered an issue of “interpretation” (which is different from compliance). For example, when Rosario Robles visualised POP not as a human capital building intervention but as a safety net, the main objective of the programme changed (see chapter 8). Therefore, the transformation of Oportunidades to PROSPERA responded to a different interpretation of POP by the government of Enrique Peña Nieto. As corroborated by Mahoney and Thelen (Ibid), different interpretations within institutions led to a change over time.

Gradual changes also occurred due to the asymmetric power distribution between the SEDESOL officials and the POP policy community. Government’s officials were able to add new elements to the programme despite some (minor) reluctances of the POP policy community because they had the last word in the decision-making process. This occurred during the transition from PROGRESA to Oportunidades, in which Josefina Vázquez’s officials imposed their views to give PROGRESA a human development perspective, not dissimilar to the incremental changes during the government of Felipe Calderón. As mentioned by Salvador Escobedo (interview), changes in the programme were possible because Ernesto Cordero had a strong influence over the Ministry of Finance and a special relationship with President Calderón (see chapter 7). As stated by Mahoney and Thelen (Ibid), the mobilisation of resources, which is part of the balance of power, is key to promoting change. Therefore, it is clear that Ernesto Cordero, as the “chosen one” of Felipe Calderón, was capable of implementing incremental changes within Oportunidades. Similarly, officials of Enrique Peña Nieto government had the power and resources to transform Oportunidades into PROSPERA after the return to power of the PRI in 2012 (see chapter 8).

Although some governments had the power and motivations to transform the programme, the POP policy community played an essential role in avoiding major changes. The policy community was present in all redesign processes since the creation of PROGRESA and supervised political actors’ compliance with preserving intact CCTs’ core design. Despite the asymmetry of power between actors, the POP policy community had enough influence within the policy subsystem to put pressure on the officials of SEDESOL. As discussed in chapter 6 to 8, some members of the policy community were also part of the SEDESOL and the CONEVAL, and some others were embedded in international organisations such as the IADB.
and World Bank. Thus, they were able to act as “informal veto actors” and to prevent major modifications to the core of the programme. As suggested by Mahoney and Thelen (Ibid), some actors may have had “extrainstitutional” means of blocking change. For example, the obligations imposed through the loans of the IADB established that future changes within POP had to first be approved by the experts of the bank in order to protect the original design of CCTs. Similarly, the evaluations of the CONEVAL were designed to endorse CCTs, and any modification to the core design of POP would have resulted in a negative feedback in the evaluation of the programme.

Despite the mentioned power asymmetry, the SEDESOL officials worked alongside the POP policy community given their similar objectives. As suggested by Palier (2005), groups within institutions, regardless of their differences, can built agreements towards specific goals. Thus, the POP policy community legitimised changes, no matter the political motivations of the governments, since they did not contradict the core design of CCTs. As outlined in chapters 6 to 8, while some of the changes during the governments of Vicente Fox, Felipe Calderón and Enrique Peña Nieto had a strong political motivation they never intended to modify the core design of the programme. In most cases, the changes only tried to adapt the programme to political junctures. For instances, the beginning of the PAN administration in the early 2000’s (transformation of PROGRESA into Oportunidades to disassociate from the PRI), the “legitimisation crisis” during Felipe Calderón’s government (second phase of incremental changes), or the return of the PRI to power (transformation of Oportunidades into PROSPERA to disassociate from the PAN). Considering the above, gradual change contributed the continuity of the programme by adaptation. As suggested by Thelen (2004), “institutional arrangements often turn out to be incredibly resilient in the face of huge exogenous shocks” (Ibid: p. 292).

10.5 Self-reinforcing elements in PROGRESA – Oportunidades - PROSPERA

In accordance with Pierson’s path dependence view (1993; 2000), certain elements within institutions can become self-reinforcing elements (positive feedbacks), meaning that a chosen path generates increasing returns, so the cost of switching paths is too high and it is therefore better to go further. Using Pierson’s increasing returns perspective to complement gradual institutional change analysis is not contradictory. As claimed by Thelen (2004), gradual change perspective is useful to better understand the inner dynamics of institutional endurance;
However, self-reinforcing elements are still relevant to understand the logic of institutional reproduction; thereby both perspectives should be studied together (Ibid). In addition, the use of the mentioned approach is necessary since it “is a critical concept for those who seek to understand the sources of political stability and change” (Pierson, 2000: p. 260). In that vein, the incremental changes in POP, which made the programme broader in terms of the number of actions and components involved, were important self-reinforcing elements. In particular, the increase in budget and coverage were two elements that brought political returns (in form of partisan support) to the governments of the PRI and the PAN, thereby, preventing its discontinuation, as suggested by Daniel Hernández, Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo and John Scott (interviews). The assumption that abolishing POP would be utterly unpopular in terms of public approval also shows a path dependence process in policymaking. This is because, as stated by Greener (2017), the learned assumptions about the past make policymakers act with caution in their decisions. The fact that millions of families were part of POP had a strong political appeal. The incremental changes reinforced the programme by considerably increasing its constituency as well as its political relevance. Therefore, the effect of subsequently transforming the programme became one of the causes of its institutional endurance.

Another increasing return of the programme was its bureaucracy. As seen in chapter 6, when the government created PROGRESA it also created a completely new structure to operate it. Rodriguez (interview) asserts that the National Coordination within SEDESOL became a highly specialised body accumulating knowledge and expertise - an important mass of bureaucrats, many of which worked in POP since its creation in 1997 (cases are mentioned in chapter 7). So, despite POP’s transformations, there never really was a dramatic change to the bureaucratic structure of the National Coordination. Abolishing POP and creating a new programme would have meant the loss of the accumulated knowledge of these bureaucrats. The cost thereof would have been too high considering that a new programme would have required a new bureaucracy, and consequently, a long learning curve. Therefore, the bureaucracy of POP can be regarded as a factor aiding the continuation of the programme. Nevertheless, as this is only an assumption since this research did not focus on this aspect of the programme, further investigations would be required to determine the exact role of the bureaucracy in POP.

Another self-reinforcing element that influenced the continuation of POP were the loans made by the international organisations, which in many cases served as “padlocks” (see chapter 6). According to Pierson (2000), actors create large obstacles (even if initially not deliberately so)
to avoid institutional change which, combined with self-reinforcing elements, promoted path dependence. As discussed in chapter 8, one specification made by the IADB in the contract with the Mexican government was to be able to participate in future adjustments and evaluations of the programme. As asserted by Sen (1983), loans from international organisations can be considered instruments of control used by international capital to promote and keep specific models of development embedded in the capitalist system. Considering that the IADB and the World Bank were convinced of the importance of the human capital approach, it is likely that loans were actively used to endorse CCTs in Mexico.

Moreover, Teichman (2007) and Babb and Kentikelenis (2018) state that the actions of international financial organisations are more influential when they find the support from domestic actors (e.g. policymakers, governments, and other stakeholders). As noted in section 10.3, some of the members of the POP policy community were also part of the IADB and World Bank (Santiago Levy being the most prominent case), and it is likely they were not only aware of the contractual obligations of the loans, but they were active promoters of those obligations. As suggested by Rogelio Gómez Hermosillo (interview), failing to fulfilling the contracts would have ended in penalties so that the government would have no incentives to end the programme. Therefore, the loans aided CCT advocates in creating a barrier to prevent institutional change which could also have promoted substantial modifications to Mexico’s social policy. Thus, loans represented not only padlocks but also self-reinforcing elements; abolishing the programme or implementing major changes would have meant failing the contracts, therefore, the best way to avoid financial penalties was by continuing POP, and by expanding the programme the government could access to new loans.

Ideas should be considered a relevant factor that favoured self-reinforcing elements in POP. As suggested by Pierson (2000), ideas incentivise positive feedback: “those who operate in a social context of high complexity and opacity are heavily biased in the way they filter information into existing ‘mental maps’ (…) Social interpretations of complex environments like politics are subject to positive feedback (…) The need to employ mental maps induces increasing returns” (Ibid: p. 260). Similarly, Cairney (2016) states that policymaking is not an entirely rational process, and often decisions made by policymakers are based on their personal preferences and values. This is why the subsequent government of the PAN and the PRI accepted the programme without much problem. As suggested by John Scott and Vicente Fox (interviews) the ideological closeness between governments facilitated the continuation of POP. When reviewing the PAN’s “Doctrine of Principles” and the PRI’s “Programme of
Actions”, both parties explicitly endorsed the idea of “activating the poor” (co-responsibility) and the human capital paradigm\textsuperscript{89}. Then, the shared ideas and beliefs that POP was the right path to address poverty favoured those self-reinforcing elements; switching social policy would have contradicted their own beliefs.

In addition, the above may be also the reason why evidence had such a high value to government, since it was reinforcing their own beliefs. As suggested by Cairney (Ibid), policymakers tend to adapt their core beliefs to their interpretation of reality, including evidence. Thus, facts and values are difficult to separate when evaluating policies. Regardless of some evidence showing deficiencies and limitations of POP (see chapter 7), the interpretation of the governments, which was highly influenced by the mentioned ideas, focused on validating the programme.

Considering all the above, it may be concluded that the scale of the programme, its bureaucracy, the loans from international organisations, and policymakers’ shared ideas were elements that contributed to the long-term stability of POP (see Figure 10.1).

\textsuperscript{89} The referred documents can be found in both parties’ websites.
10.6 Analysis of the termination of PROGRESA – Oportunidades - PROSPERA

Considering that POP was in operation for over two decades, it is extremely important to understand how this policy was terminated. Although rational perspectives could be useful in explaining certain aspects of the termination of public policies (see chapter 2), the traditional policy process model may be insufficient to fully understand the termination of POP. According to this model, implemented policies are evaluated, and this feedback produces outputs that policymakers then take into consideration to either keep, change or terminate policies. However, as stated by Lomas and Brown (2009), this model is an ideal representation of the policy process, and can be unrealistic to describe the real process behind public policy. Most of the evaluations conducted by the SEDESOL and the CONEVAL gave favourable feedback to the programme, therefore, according to this model of analysis, POP should then have continued during AMLO’s government. However, this was not the case; the new president decided to dismantle POP during his first months in power, replacing it with a new scholarship programme.

A better explanation of the end of CCTs in Mexico is provided by new institutionalism because takes into consideration the interrelation between institutions and individuals, considering variables such as the formal and informal rules and codes, interests, emotions, motivations and
other behaviours that influence the policymaking process (see chapter 2). In particular, punctuated equilibrium offers a better analytical framework because it emphasises how institutions are highly context susceptible organisations, which influence individuals and policy decisions. To understand the end of POP is necessary to understand the interrelation between institutions and actors, and the determined context in which they interact; PET provides the theoretical elements for that purpose. Moreover, PET is more helpful than other theories in explaining the outcome after a severe juncture because it focuses on the dynamics of the policy communities and other groups within the policy subsystem that seeks to use that context to reinforce or challenge existing institutional arrangements.

Punctuated equilibrium suggests that punctuation periods generated by either endogenous or exogenous shocks are the main sources of change (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). The arrival to power of AMLO, an anti-establishment populist leader who, besides being a self-declared enemy of neoliberal technocrats, also has different perspectives on social policy, undoubtedly represented a shock that broke the stability of the policy subsystem. I argue that this particular context contributed to the institutional end of POP. As discussed in chapter 8, AMLO, who was a supporter of non-targeted and unconditional subsidies, came to power with an overwhelming majority in Congress and a high representation of his party on a state level. This gave much more power to the new president than his predecessors had. Despite Mexico’s political transition to democracy in the 2000 signifying the end of the era of the “all mighty presidency” (see chapter 3), AMLO’s victory in 2018 seemed to re-establish some elements of the old “presidencialismo”90. AMLO commenced his government with no real counter-balances (Congress became a de facto extension of his will); he became the political actor controlling the policymaking process. AMLO’s victory reconfigured the political system, giving him the opportunity to shift social policy without much opposition from previous structures. It is possible that, in other circumstances, it would have been more difficult for him to abolish POP, which is why AMLO’s arrival in power could be considered a critical juncture.

Even though it would be tempting to assume that the end of CCTs was only due to AMLO’s left-wing ideology, I disagree with this for two reasons. First, because despite his ideological closeness with the left, AMLO has also promoted policies such as austerity or the refusal to increase taxation, which are normally identified as right-wing policies. Second, because CCTs (and the human capital paradigm in general) are not necessarily a right wing policy. Many

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90 Power concentrated in the Executive without real counterbalances.
countries in Latin America with left wing populist leaders such as Lula da Silva in Brazil or Rafael Correa in Ecuador have, in the past, implemented CCTs. While it is true that AMLO’s perspective of CCTs was not favourable, I consider the mentioned circumstances of political reconfiguration and power concentration subjacent elements that favoured the termination of POP. Likewise, another specific circumstance that made the termination of POP possible was AMLO’s particular way of policymaking. As pointed out by some members of the POP policy community (see chapter 9), AMLO did not value the evidence presented by the CONEVAL in the same way as his predecessors, mainly due to his personal distrust to the institution and some of its members.

The reason for AMLO choosing to discontinue POP and seeking a new institutional arrangement, is related to the dynamics of the policy communities. As pointed out in chapter 9, the new president had an extremely negative perspective of the “neoliberal period”, including the way in which governments addressed poverty during that time. It is, therefore, logical to assume that AMLO’s distrust made it impossible for the POP policy community exercise any type of influence over his government since they were linked to previous administrations, thus losing control over their policy monopoly. The POP policy community could not restrict the agenda anymore, so new actors got involved in the public debate, thereby changing the balance of power. As suggested by Jones and Baumgartner (2005), when policymakers focus their attention on an issue they believe could be solved better through a different alternative, it opens the door for the involvement of new actors in the decision-making process. In this vein, Bertha Luján suggests (interview) that a different network of advisors influences AMLO. Although this network is not a united group, they share their disapproval of POP and their belief in implementing new interventions to address poverty and inequality. Therefore, it is assumable that this network influenced and prompted AMLO’s decision to discontinue CCTs.

AMLO was capable of disabling POP’s institutional barriers (see previous section) thanks to the broad public support. AMLO’s popularity gave him enough credibility to overcome any possible negative effects to his image that could have caused the termination of the programme (he won the presidential election with over 53% of the vote91). Thus, it was possible for the new government to abolish POP despite the programme’s scale, which in the past was a major barrier preventing its termination. According to Hall (1993), paradigm shifts are an issue of authority over policy; therefore, AMLO’s popularity and electoral backup allowed him to

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91 The highest result for a presidential candidate since the election of 1982.
undertake a substantial shift within Mexico’s social policy. Likewise, as suggested by Behn (1978), political leadership is key to performing policy terminations. As mentioned before, AMLO was in full control of the policymaking process, therefore he had no major problem to abolish POP. In addition, Mexico’s precedents suggest that presidents who concentrate power tend to break the continuity of policies due to a lack of counterbalances preventing change (Lehoucq et al. 2011).

Figure 10.2 Termination of POP

Finally, another relevant action from the government of AMLO was the “deinstitutionalization” of the policy community and their policy monopoly within Mexican institutions. For example, the person appointed in the SEDESOL was someone close to AMLO and aligned with his views on social policy. Likewise, the new counsellors selected to be part of the CONEVAL were not linked to the policy community and had more critical stances on POP (as discussed in chapter 9). Similarly, the removal of Gonzalo Hernández Licona as the executive secretary of the CONEVAL ended the control of the policy community of POP over social policy evaluation. It is noted that the POP policy community tried to fight back to preserve its policy monopoly by lobbying in favour of the programme during the transition period with some members trying to be elected as new members of the academic council of the CONEVAL. Likewise, they published many articles in favour of CCTs in different newspapers.
Nevertheless, their actions were ineffective because they were not able of exercise influence on the government anymore. As suggested by Cairney (2019), policy communities will be able to influence policymaking only if policymakers accept their policy monopoly in the first place, which was not the case as AMLO distrusted them due to having been part of “neoliberal” governments in the past.

10.7 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to revisit the empirical findings of the research using a gradual change approach and punctuated equilibrium theory. As discussed in the chapter, the POP policy community had a major role in the continuation of POP. The coordinated actions of this community were key to preventing the abolition of the programme during potential situations that represented a real threat to the survival of CCTs. The formation of a policy community, which was embedded within Mexican institutions, helped to institutionalise and eventually protect their policy monopoly. Moreover, the exclusion of other actors with differing views regarding social policy allowed them to frame the government’s agenda. Their use of evidence was also a relevant element in legitimising their policy monopoly and keeping control over the issue of poverty. The capacity of the POP policy community to exercise influence over government is evident when compared against other groups such as the UBI advocates, who failed to compete against this policy community due to the asymmetry in accessing institutional resources and mobilising the public in their favour.

Furthermore, the endurance of POP is also related to the inner institutional dynamics of the programme and the actors within it. Although the POP policy community had a strong influence on the policymaking of the programme, it had to deal with issues such as the balance of power as well as the compliance with and interpretation of the rules from other actors. The mentioned elements triggered gradual change; however, this change did not displace previous institutional structures thereby promoting long-term durability. Similarly, some self-reinforcing elements within the programme such as the big “scale”, the loans that acted as institutional barriers, and the policymakers’ ideas and beliefs played an important role in the continuation of CCTs.

Regarding the termination of the programme, the arrival in power of AMLO can be considered a critical juncture that broke institutional stability and presented new circumstances that ultimately gave government the conditions to abolish POP. The reconfiguration of the political
system by concentrating power in the executive and the broad legitimisation by the public are two main context variables that help explain how the new government could proceed with the extinction of POP. Likewise, the instability within the policy subsystem can be attributed to AMLO’s personal way of policymaking and to the negative perception of previous social policy interventions implemented during “neoliberal governments”. As discussed in the chapter, these conditions show why the POP policy community was unable of keep their influence over government. In addition, AMLO’s belief that poverty could be addressed in a different way opened the doors to a new network of advisors promoting the government’s decision to discontinue the programme.

This chapter provides a broad picture of how in the last decades Mexico’s social policymaking has been heavily influenced by a policy community, which may be the reason why, unlike other public programmes, it survived throughout four different governments and two major political transitions. Similarly, it is relevant because it shows that this policy community was able to adapt to different political junctures and threats, but only until certain point. In the end, context determines how influential policy communities can be. Mexico’s circumstances from 1997 to 2018 were favourable for the POP policy community to exercise influence in government’s agenda, however, once these circumstances drastically changed, or better said, once the equilibrium was broken, the mentioned policy community was no longer in position to preserve CCTs.
11. Final conclusions

POP was Mexico’s main antipoverty program for over two decades, and during that time, it was one of the most evaluated policy programmes in the world. Although there was widespread discussion of its effectiveness in tackling poverty, studies regarding the policy influences that shaped the programme and ensured its long-term endurance are sparse. Thus, this research aimed to offer an explanation for POP’s endurance by exploring those elements that influenced its policymaking. This topic is relevant due to the discrepancy between poverty levels remaining almost the same even after 30 years, with none of the last four federal administrations seeking to shift the social policy. In addition, the topic is relevant because Mexican policymaking tradition normally dictates the discontinuation of policies – especially social policies – every six years.

Since the purpose of the research was to understand the endurance of POP, I decided to focus the analysis on the policy community behind the programme. This examination of the dynamics of this policy community – populated by the policymakers, officials, and bureaucrats who played key roles in influencing the programme’s policymaking – provided an in-depth panorama of the decisions that guided POP and the strategies adopted that kept CCTs as the main social policy against poverty. Although the actions of the policy community were accompanied by other elements and circumstances that influenced the long-term durability of POP, the empirical evidence suggests that the monopoly created by this policy community heavily influenced the government’s decisions.

The analysis of the research employed a gradual change approach and punctuated equilibrium theory. I chose these two new institutionalism approaches for their emphasis on explaining the institutional factors that promote change and stability. The gradual change approach helped to focus on the inner dynamics of institutions, such as the balance of power between actors and the rules of compliance and interpretation that shaped the programme. In addition, punctuated equilibrium theory offered a basis on which to understand the action of the policy community behind POP and the circumstances in which they were able to establish and preserve CCTs. In combination, both approaches promoted the development of a better understanding of the elements that prompted POP’s endurance.

Conducting the research represented a major challenge, considering the nature of the topic and that most of the interviewees belonged to the policy elite. Fortunately, the political timing
(the political transition of 2018) enabled access to many actors involved in POP. Although some of the desired actors could not be contacted, the sample of people interviewed or who agreed to complete a questionnaire is not only representative of the policy community and its opponents, it also gives a general picture of the politics of Mexico’s social policy, as POP policymaking was concentrated in a small circle of people. Furthermore, since no other study was found that included interviews with elite actors involved in POP to better illuminate its policymaking process, this dissertation aimed to be the first extensive investigation to address this issue from the perspective of the leading policymakers.

I want to emphasise that the research presented in this thesis never had the objective of assessing CCTs or promoting any other specific social intervention. Although my initial stances on POP are disclosed in Chapter 4, I feel it necessary to reaffirm that I conducted the research in the most neutral way possible, exclusively aiming to understand the policymaking processes and the political factors that gave POP its long-term durability. My intention was never to endorse an ideological or political position, but rather to present a case that reflected how social policy has been made in Mexico in recent decades.

The research suggests that CCTs were raised to the government agenda by the actions of a small but closed community of technocrats who backed the idea and used the political and economic circumstances of the mid-1990s to promote a shift in Mexico’s social policy. The above led to the creation of PROGRESA, the first CCT programme implemented in the last years of the government of Ernesto Zedillo. To prevent its termination after the political transition of 2000, the initial community of technocrats formed a policy community populated by experts who adopted various strategies – such as loans, lobbying, and the generation of evidence – to convince the government of Vicente Fox that PROGRESA was an effective means of addressing poverty. Furthermore, this policy community expanded and worked under the logic of institutionalising CCTs, thus influencing key processes of social policymaking. Although the government of Vicente Fox had strong political motivations to transform the programme, the POP policy community was sufficiently influential to ensure that the transformation to Oportunidades meant only an incremental adjustment.

Under the government of Felipe Calderón, the POP policy community played an essential role, providing positive feedback on the programme that allowed them to keep the government agenda framed, thus avoiding instability. The policy community again guided the incremental changes to keep intact the core design of the CCTs by adapting the programme to the political
needs of the government. The incremental changes that occurred under the governments of Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón would enable the programme to achieve an important “scale”, in political and budgetary terms, prompting self-reinforcing elements that contributed to the institutional endurance of POP.

Furthermore, the POP policy community played an important role in the redesign of Oportunidades into PROSPERA under the government of Enrique Peña Nieto. Despite the officials of the new government initially having negative views of Oportunidades, the POP policy community managed to prevent major modifications to the programme. Although Enrique Peña Nieto’s government gave PROSPERA a different sense, the transformation once again represented only an incremental adaptation. In addition, the POP policy community showed its influence over government by effectively defending their policy monopoly against the actions of the UBI advocates who promoted a shift in social policy.

From 1997 to 2018, the POP policy community was the most influential actor responsible for the continuation of CCTs. The combination of the actions of the policy community and inner institutional factors produced increasing returns for the programme, promoting stability in the policy subsystem. However, the victory of AMLO in 2018 represented a critical juncture that broke the aforementioned stability. The circumstances in which the new president arrived in power represented a major reconfiguration of the Mexican political system, with the president enjoying concentrated power with no counterbalances (at least at the beginning of his government). The president’s negative view of the previous “neoliberal” governments inspired him to shift social policy. Moreover, AMLO’s distrust of the POP policy community opened the door to a new network of experts with different ideas on how to address poverty. The overwhelming public support for the president after the election granted him the conditions to proceed with the termination of POP. Despite attempts by the POP policy community to protect CCTs, they could not exercise influence over the government of AMLO and thus lost their policy monopoly.

All the above suggests that Mexico’s social policy was heavily shaped by a policy community with the capacity to establish a policy monopoly. This explains why POP was able to survive for so long with relative stability, despite Mexico’s tradition of discontinuing existing policies with every new government. Consequently, social policy only shifted when the predominant policy community in the subsystem lost their monopoly and were replaced by a new group. This is important for understanding social policymaking in Mexico, a topic that has been
insufficiently addressed and which remains widely misunderstood. In addition, the research provides a better perspective of the politics of CCTs, showing that a policy idea requires more than just evidence to survive; it requires political action to overcome those conditions that may block its development.

From a broader perspective, the Mexican case may also be useful for the study of Latin American social policymaking. The literature suggests that after the success of PROGRESA in Mexico and Bolsa Familia in Brazil, CCTs were implemented in many countries of the region through a process of policy diffusion. However, the continuation of many CCTs programmes in the region remains unstudied. Bolsa Familia in Brazil has survived various periods of political instability (e.g., the destitution of Dilma Rousseff, Michel Temer’s austerity policy, and the populist government of Jair Bolsonaro), but the literature regarding its institutional endurance is sparse. Similar to Brazil are other cases such as Bolivia’s “Juansito Pinto”, which has been in operation since 2006; Ecuador’s “Bono de Desarrollo Humano” since 2003; and Paraguay’s “Tekopora” since 2005. While it is true that each country has its own historical development and policymaking traditions, the case of POP may serve to guide research on stability and gradual change in the region.

This research may be also useful for understanding epistemic transnational communities. As discussed in this dissertation, many members of the POP policy community were also associated with broader international communities. The interaction between domestic policymakers and international actors had a strong influence on the policymaking of the programme. Therefore, it is likely that these same relationships were replicated in other Latin American countries to maintain influence over certain agendas. The bonds between international and domestic communities could explain other institutional dynamics within the region, beyond the social policy realm. Although many authors have studied these transnational communities in Latin America, this research is valuable because it offers a clear picture of how these transnational communities are created and how they exercise influence on domestic policymaking.

In addition, research into the endurance of CCTs provides better understanding of the evolution of Mexican politics. POP evolved alongside the Mexican political system after the democratic transition of the 2000. Consequently, some of the programme’s policymaking processes were not subjected exclusively to the will of the president, as in the past, but required negotiation and agreement with other political and non-political actors. Although the federal government
still had predominance over the policy process, it is important to note that all governments (until 2018) sought legitimation by consulting with various actors on many of the social policy decisions. Likewise, each government attempted to add their own mark and to adapt the programme to their own political needs. The above could be representative of the paradigm change (discussed in Chapter 3) in Mexico’s policymaking – from a “central planning” paradigm to new dynamics of pluralism and electoral competition after 2000. Moreover, the conditions that led to the termination of POP and the manner in which it was terminated may indicate an involution within the Mexican political system, with the president centralising power and monopolising policymaking.

I would also like to suggest some future lines of investigation in relation to social policy in Mexico and Latin America. It would be interesting to know whether the termination of POP will have any impact on the continuation of the other CCT programmes that remain so far unquestioned. Similarly, it would be of great interest to investigate if the causes of POP’s stability and institutional endurance have the same effect on other CCT programmes. Further research about other policy communities and networks is also required. For instance, the UBI network discussed in Chapter 8 is largely absent from the Mexican literature, despite its relevance in recent years. Therefore, it is important to study this and other communities in Latin America and the policy actions that have attempted to influence the agendas of the governments. In addition, I believe it is important to follow-up the specific political dynamics that influence social programmes in Latin America. While in Mexico the populist government of AMLO abolished POP, in Brazil Jair Bolsonaro’s populist government endorsed *Bolsa Familia*. In this vein, it would be useful to consider the future of anti-poverty programmes – for example, under the new governments of Pedro Castillo (radical left), Guillermo Lasso (moderate right), and Luis Arce (moderate left) in Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia, respectively, or after the 2021 elections in Honduras and Nicaragua.
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### Table 4.1 People that could not be contacted for an interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Reason for Not Interviewing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlos Salinas de Gortari</td>
<td>President of Mexico 1988 - 1994</td>
<td>Contacted but argued no space in the agenda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León</td>
<td>President of Mexico 1994 - 2000</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felipe Calderón Hinojosa</td>
<td>President of Mexico 2006 - 2012</td>
<td>Contacted but argued no space in the agenda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josefina Vázquez Mota</td>
<td>Minister of social development and Education (under the presidency of</td>
<td>Initial accepted but later argued no space in the agenda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernesto Cordero Arroyo</td>
<td>Minister of social development and Finance (under the presidency of</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Felipe Calderón)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heriberto Félix Guerra</td>
<td>Minister of social development (under the presidency of Felipe</td>
<td>Contacted but refused to give an interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Calderón)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Videgaray Caso</td>
<td>Minister of finance and foreign affairs (under the presidency of</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enrique Peña Nieto)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Antonio Meade Kuribeña</td>
<td>Minister of finance, foreign affairs, and social development (under</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the presidencies of Felipe Calderón and Enrique Peña Nieto)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>María Luisa Albores González</td>
<td>Minister of social development (under the presidency of Andrés</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manuel López Obrador)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel Székely Pardo</td>
<td>Deputy minister of social development and education (under the</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>presidencies of Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberto Gil Zuarth</td>
<td>Personal secretary of President Felipe Calderón</td>
<td>Initially accepted but later communication was lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodolfo Tuiran Gutiérrez</td>
<td>Deputy minister of social development and education (under the</td>
<td>Died during the course of the investigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>presidencies of Vicente Fox, Felipe Calderón and Enrique Peña Nieto)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Carlos Lastiri Quirós</td>
<td>Deputy minister of social development (under the presidency of</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enrique Peña Nieto)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javier May Rodríguez</td>
<td>Deputy minister of social development (under the presidency of</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andrés Manuel López Obrador)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula Angélica Hernández Olmos</td>
<td>National Coordinator of <em>PROSPERA</em> 2012 – 2018</td>
<td>Initially accepted but later communication was lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nohemi Leticia Animas Vargas</td>
<td>National Coordinator of <em>Becas para el Bienestar Benito Juárez</em> 2018 - 2021</td>
<td>Died during the course of the investigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Gertler</td>
<td>External consultant of <em>PROGRESA</em> and advisor of <em>Oportunidades</em></td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Wendy Parker</td>
<td>Assistant of José Gómez de León (first director of <em>PROGRESA</em>) and advisor of <em>Oportunidades</em></td>
<td>Initially accepted but later argued no space in the agenda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iliana Yaschine Arroyo</td>
<td>Head of evaluation of <em>Oportunidades</em> 2002 – 2006</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mónica Orozco Corona</td>
<td>Director of planning and evaluation of <em>Oportunidades</em> 1997 – 2003</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graciela Teruel Belismelis</td>
<td>Member of CONEVAL 2006 - 2019</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Angel Rivera Dommarco</td>
<td>Member of CONEVAL 2006 - 2010</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Félix Acosta Díaz</td>
<td>Member of CONEVAL 2006 - 2010</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fernando Alberto Cortes Cáceres</td>
<td>Member of CONEVAL 2006 - 2019</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agustín Escobar Latapi</td>
<td>Member of CONEVAL 2006 - 2019</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonzalo Hernández Licona</td>
<td>Executive secretary of CONEVAL 2006 – 2019</td>
<td>Did not reply to the emails or phone calls.</td>
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</table>
Table 6.1 People involved in PROGRESA’s first evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emmanuel Skoufias</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (University of Minnesota)</td>
<td>Research Leader / Senior Research Fellow at IFPRI</td>
<td>IFPRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Adato</td>
<td>PhD in Development Sociology (Cornell University)</td>
<td>Research Fellow at IFPRI</td>
<td>IFPRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Coady</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (LSE)</td>
<td>Research Fellow at IFPRI</td>
<td>IFPRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudhansu Handa</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (University of Toronto)</td>
<td>Research Fellow at IFPRI</td>
<td>IFPRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hoddinott</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (University of Oxford)</td>
<td>Senior Research Fellow at IFPRI</td>
<td>IFPRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Maluccio</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (Yale University)</td>
<td>Post-doctoral Fellow at IFPRI</td>
<td>IFPRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnes Quisumbing</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (University of the Philippines)</td>
<td>Senior Research Fellow at IFPRI</td>
<td>IFPRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie Ruel</td>
<td>PhD in International Nutrition (Cornell University)</td>
<td>Research Fellow at IFPRI</td>
<td>IFPRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Davis</td>
<td>PhD in Agricultural Economics (UC Berkeley)</td>
<td>Post-doctoral Fellow at IFPRI</td>
<td>IFPRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graciela Teruel</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (UCLA)</td>
<td>Consultant at IFPRI</td>
<td>IFPRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jere Behrman</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (MIT)</td>
<td>External Consultant</td>
<td>University of Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Schultz</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (MIT)</td>
<td>External Consultant</td>
<td>Yale University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Gertler</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (University of Wisconsin, Madison)</td>
<td>External Consultant</td>
<td>UC Berkeley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie McClaffery</td>
<td>Master in Public Policy and Public Administration (University of Virginia)</td>
<td>Head of Policy, Advocacy and Communications</td>
<td>IFPRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Parker</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (Yale University)</td>
<td>Chief Economic Advisor to Director, PROGRESA / Research Associate</td>
<td>PROGRESA / IFPRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petra Todd</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (University of Chicago)</td>
<td>External Consultant</td>
<td>University of Pennsylvania</td>
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Elaborated by the author based on Behrman (2007)
Table 6.2 Members of the Technical Committee for the Evaluation of Poverty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Hernández Franco</td>
<td>Master in Public Health (Emory University)</td>
<td>National Coordinator of PROGRESA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrique Hernández Laos</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (East Anglia University)</td>
<td>Researcher at UAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernando Cortés Cáceres</td>
<td>PhD in Social Science (CIESAS)</td>
<td>Researcher at COLMEX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerardo Leyva Parra</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (Cornell University)</td>
<td>Official at INEGI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graciela Teruel Belismelis</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (UCLA)</td>
<td>Researcher at UIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Scott Andretta</td>
<td>Master in Economics (University of Oxford)</td>
<td>Researcher at CIDE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Luis Ávila Martínez</td>
<td>Master in Economics (UNAM)</td>
<td>Researcher at UNAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Felipe López Calva</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (Cornell University)</td>
<td>Researcher at COLMEX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Rubalcava Peñafiel</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (UCLA)</td>
<td>Researcher at CIDE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel Székely Pardo</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (University of Oxford)</td>
<td>Deputy Minister of Social Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mónica Orozco Corona</td>
<td>Master in Statistics (University of Chicago)</td>
<td>Director of planning and evaluation at SEDESOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberto Villareal Gonda</td>
<td>PhD in Economics (MIT)</td>
<td>Advisor for the economic and social cabinets in the Presidential Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodolfo de la Torre</td>
<td>Master in Economics (University of Oxford)</td>
<td>Researcher at CIDE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elaborated by the author with information from Czarnecki (2013), CONEVAL, INEGI, UNAM, CIDE, CIESAS, UAM and UIA.
Table 7.1 SEDESOL’s representatives in the states 2007 - 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Local representatives of SEDESOL</th>
<th>Relationship with PAN</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aguascalientes</td>
<td>Pedro Vargas de la Mora</td>
<td>Affiliated member of PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baja California</td>
<td>Héctor Jiménez Márquez / Gustavo Ley Ruiz</td>
<td>President of the Directive Committee of PAN in Baja California / Local deputy Ministry of Interior in Baja California and Affiliated member of PAN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baja California Sur</td>
<td>Félix Fernández González</td>
<td>Member of the Directive Committee of PAN in Baja California Sur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campeche</td>
<td>Mario Alberto Avila Lizarraga / Jorge Luis Lavalle Maury</td>
<td>Not found / Senator from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coahuila</td>
<td>José Ángel Rodríguez Calvillo / Luis Fernando Salazar Fernández</td>
<td>Local congressman from PAN / Senator from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colima</td>
<td>Diluvina Sandoval Mendoza / Esmeralda Cárdenas Sánchez</td>
<td>Local coordinator of the presidential electoral campaign of Felipe Calderon in Colima / Federal congressman from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiapas</td>
<td>Francisco Rojas Toledo / María del Socorro Zavaleta Cruz</td>
<td>Councillor of the Directive Committee of PAN in Chiapas / Member of the Directive Committee of PAN in the state of Chiapas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Arturo Fuentes Vélez</td>
<td>Councillor of the Directive Committee of PAN in Chihuahua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distrito Federal</td>
<td>Marco Antonio Jasso Zaranda</td>
<td>Former aspiring candidate for local Congress from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durango</td>
<td>Félix Cháidez Saucedo</td>
<td>Member of the National Council of PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estado de México</td>
<td>Gustavo Arturo Vicencio Acevedo</td>
<td>Federal congressman from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Role</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guanajuato</td>
<td>Jorge Carlos Obregón Serrano</td>
<td>Federal congressman from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guerrero</td>
<td>José Ignacio Ortiz Ureña / Luz Antonio González Justo</td>
<td>President of the Municipal Directive Committee of PAN in the city of Taxco / Former aspiring candidate for Federal Congress from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidalgo</td>
<td>Carlos Nicolás Villegas / José Ángel Rodríguez Calvillo</td>
<td>Federal Congressman from PAN / Federal Congressman from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalisco</td>
<td>Felipe de Jesús Vicencio Álvarez</td>
<td>Senator from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michoacán</td>
<td>Luis Mejía Guzmán / José Justino Arriaga Silva</td>
<td>Senator and Federal Congressman from PAN / Mayor of the city of Salamanca (from PAN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morelos</td>
<td>Jacob Oswaldo Castañeda Barrera</td>
<td>Member of the Municipal council of Cuernavaca (from PAN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nayarit</td>
<td>Rita María Esquivel Reyes</td>
<td>Senator from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuevo León</td>
<td>Margarita Alicia Arellanes Cervantes / Yolanda Villereal Elizondo</td>
<td>Mayor of the city of Monterrey (from PAN) / Former aspiring candidate for Federal Congress from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oaxaca</td>
<td>Ernesto Guillermo Altamirano / Huberto Aldaz Hernández</td>
<td>Former aspiring candidate for Senate from PAN / Former aspiring for Senate from PAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Puebla</td>
<td>René Lezama Aradillas</td>
<td>Federal Congressman from PAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Querétaro</td>
<td>Gerardo Adolfo Pérez Retana</td>
<td>Mayor of the city of Querétaro (from PAN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quintana Roo</td>
<td>Mercedes Hernández Rojas</td>
<td>Federal Congresswoman from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Luis Potosí</td>
<td>Jorge Viramontes Aldana</td>
<td>Affiliated member of PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinaloa</td>
<td>Zenén Aarón Xóchihua Enciso</td>
<td>Local Congressman from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
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<td>Position</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonora</td>
<td>Gustavo Adolfo de Unanue Galla</td>
<td>Local Congressman from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabasco</td>
<td>Dora María Scherer Palomeque</td>
<td>Local Congresswoman from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamaulipas</td>
<td>María Lucía Irene Alzaga Madaría</td>
<td>Local Congresswoman from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tlaxcala</td>
<td>Leonor Romero Sevilla</td>
<td>Former aspiring candidate for Federal Congress from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veracruz</td>
<td>Alma Lamadrid Rodríguez / Abel Ignacio Cuevas Melo</td>
<td>Not found / Federal Congressman from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yucatán</td>
<td>Fernando José Medina Gamboa</td>
<td>Affiliated member of PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zacatecas</td>
<td>José Ramón Medina Padilla</td>
<td>Federal Congressman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Zapata (2014)
## Table 7.2 Local coordinators of Oportunidades 2007 – 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Coordinator of Oportunidades</th>
<th>Relationship with PAN</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aguascalientes</td>
<td>Luis Gabriel Mones</td>
<td>Former aspiring candidate for local Congress from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baja California</td>
<td>Rosana Cordelia Suarez</td>
<td>Affiliated member of PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baja California Sur</td>
<td>Pablo Ojeda Meza</td>
<td>Federal Congressman from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campeche</td>
<td>Javier Ortega Vila</td>
<td>Federal Congressman from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coahuila</td>
<td>Fernando Salazar Fernández / Alfredo Herminio Hernández</td>
<td>Senator from PAN / Affiliated member of PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colima</td>
<td>Esmeralda Cárdenas Sánchez / Yazmín Salazar de la Mora</td>
<td>Federal Congresswoman from PAN / Not found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiapas</td>
<td>Sergio Edgar Cortázar</td>
<td>General secretary of the Directive Committee of PAN in Chiapas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Jorge Abelardo Bermúdez Allande</td>
<td>Representative of PAN in Chihuahua to the local electoral authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distrito Federal</td>
<td>María Nancy González Gómez / Cesar Iván Rodríguez Sánchez</td>
<td>Former aspiring candidate for Federal Congress from PAN / Member of the Directive Committee of PAN in Distrito Federal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durango</td>
<td>Roberto Benítez Hernández Andrade / Sergio Martín Tejeda González</td>
<td>Councilor of the Directive Committee of PAN in Durango / Not found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estado de México</td>
<td>Javier Paz Zarza</td>
<td>Local Congressman from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guanajuato</td>
<td>Dionisio Santibañez Ochoa</td>
<td>Not found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Name and Affiliation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guerrero</td>
<td>Uriel Hernández Galeana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidalgo</td>
<td>Rafael Sánchez Andrade / Javier Machuca Vargas  / Not found / Affiliated member of PAN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalisco</td>
<td>Ruperto Núñez Solís</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michoacán</td>
<td>José Justino Arriaga Silva / Laura González Martínez  / Federal Congressman from PAN / Local Congresswoman from PAN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morelos</td>
<td>Jacob Oswaldo Castañeda Barrera / Abel Salgado Martínez  / Affiliated member of PAN / Affiliated member of PAN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nayarit</td>
<td>Nicandro Villagrana</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Nuevo León</td>
<td>Hilda Maribel Acosta Leal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oaxaca</td>
<td>Eduardo Evaristo Vivanco Santiago</td>
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<tr>
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<td>José Luis Galeazzi Berra</td>
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<td>Octavio Pastor Nieto de la torre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quintana Roo</td>
<td>Gerardo Martínez García</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Luis Potosí</td>
<td>Juan Gabriel Badillo Alvizu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinaloa</td>
<td>Cruz Eduardo Angulo Castro</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonora</td>
<td>Luis Felipe Romero López</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabasco</td>
<td>Gonzalo Zentella de Dios</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estado</td>
<td>Nombre del Candidato</td>
<td>Descripción</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamaulipas</td>
<td>César Guerra Montalvo</td>
<td>Former aspiring candidate for local Congress from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tlaxcala</td>
<td>Ricardo Sánchez Cervantes</td>
<td>Husband of the former aspiring candidate for governor of Tlaxcala from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veracruz</td>
<td>Sergio Cándido Barraza Pak</td>
<td>Former aspiring candidate for local Counsellor of PAN in Veracruz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yucatán</td>
<td>Juan Manuel Valencia Heredia</td>
<td>Local Congressman from PAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zacatecas</td>
<td>Xochitl Meseguer Lemus / Martin Games Rivas</td>
<td>Not found / President of the Directive Committee of PAN in Zacatecas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Zapata (2014)