

The Contentious Implementation of Social Programs: The Registration in the "Vaso de Leche" Program in Villa El Salvador, Lima, Peru (2002–2010)

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Abstract

This study analyzes factors that allow local officials to overcome design distortions generated during the process of registering beneficiaries of the "Vaso de Leche" Program in a context in which these beneficiaries are powerful social actors who have a capacity for collective action. This study was conducted between 2002 and 2010 in Villa El Salvador, a district of metropolitan Lima. Villa El Salvador municipal authorities selected beneficiaries without considering the target population as established by the official regulations. This variation from established norms is understood in this study as a "design distortion." Starting in 2004, this distortion was reduced with the introduction of a registry for the program that did follow official norms. In the literature, control mechanisms are highlighted as a key strategy for correcting design distortions. This study suggests an alternative focus: change also depends on the decisions of local officials to establish alliances with program target groups and concludes that such decisions are fundamental to understanding program implementation in contentious settings.

Keywords: Accountability, contentious politics, municipal government, participation, social programs, targeting.

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Acronyms

CGR	Office of the Comptroller General (Contraloría General de la República)
FEPOMUVES	Villa El Salvador Grassroots Women's Federation (Federación Popular de Mujeres de Villa El Salvador)
IECOS-UNI	Economic and Social Research Institute of the Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería (Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales de la Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería)
INEI	National Institute of Statistics and Information (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática)
MIDIS	Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (Ministerio de Desarrollo e Inclusión Social)
MUNIVES	Municipality of Villa El Salvador (Municipalidad de Villa El Salvador)
OCI	Internal Control Office (Oficina de Control Interno)
ODVL	District Organization of Villa El Salvador Vaso de Leche Committees (Organización Distrital de los Comités del Vaso de Leche de Villa El Salvador)
PVL	Vaso de Leche Program (Programa del Vaso de Leche)
RUBPVL	Central Registry of Vaso de Leche Program Beneficiaries (Registro Único de Beneficiarios del Programa del Vaso de Leche)
SISFOH	Household Targeting System (Sistema de Focalización de Hogares)
VL	Vaso de Leche

INTRODUCTION

How do officials implement beneficiary registry systems for social programs in contexts in which recipients are not those established by the official provisions? To answer that question, this article examines the implementation of the PVL in the district of Villa El Salvador in Lima between 2002 and 2010. The PVL dispenses milk and food supplements to vulnerable populations, giving priority to children under six years of age and to expectant and lactating mothers. The municipalities are responsible for implementation, which, by law, requires the active participation of beneficiaries. In Villa El Salvador, the beneficiaries belong to a significant organizational tradition; this, coupled with the participative design of the PVL, encourages the empowerment of beneficiaries who are organized into neighborhood committees and district centers.

In 2002, municipal officials attempted to implement a new beneficiary identification system. Registration had previously been impacted by serious distortions in the original design; the identification criteria as established by Peruvian legislation was not met and the registry was not up-to-date. Nonetheless, between 2002 and 2005, a series of events occurred that changed the status quo. In 2004, officials started to update the registry in conjunction with the committees to ensure that the requirements for delimiting the target population were respected. Finally, the municipality created an IT system to aid in this task.

What factors explain the correction of distortions in the implementation of this procedure? According to some of the literature, supervision of social programs is key. Indeed, the CGR inspected the PVL in Villa El Salvador and recommended the implementation of a new registration process, which influenced the preferences of the officials and the committees. However, the control mechanisms did not stop the social actors who would have been affected by any reduction in the number of products distributed from impeding registration, which they did through pickets and marches.

Although the importance of control mechanisms is acknowledged here, our argument is that the minimization of registry distortions cannot be explained without considering the strategies undertaken by officials for negotiating and forming alliances with the beneficiary organizations. In order to achieve their aim, the officials reached agreement with the committees on practices that did not necessarily comply with all of the controlling agency's stipulations, and subsequently negotiated the municipality's recognition of certain social organizations in exchange for stability in the registration process. The new registration system was thus the result of a gamble that paid off for the program implementers within a context that might be described as contentious.

This article is divided into three sections. The first section presents a theoretical discussion, highlighting the pertinence and limitations of control over officials and the contentious implementation context. The second section describes the events that occurred during implementation of the new PVL registry in Villa El Salvador, and analyzes these events in light of the theoretical discussion. Finally, the article concludes with some final considerations.

CONTROL AND CONTINGENCY IN THE REGISTRATION OF BENEFICIARIES

The implementation of identification systems

The implementation of a policy or program is "[the sequence]¹ after a policy mandate is agreed to, authorized and adopted" (Bardach 1977, 3); that is, it is officially approved and thus incorporated into the country's legal framework. To carry out implementation, the identification systems that correspond to social programs are legally required to target social spending on populations with given characteristics, with the aim of preventing the resources from being captured by sectors that are not in need of state assistance (Vásquez 2008).²

Social program beneficiary identification systems are the primary "technical" targeting instruments (Székely 1997: 2; Chacaltana 2001: 14). These include databases that contain information on beneficiaries, collected by means of personal or family interviews (Irrázaval 2004: 5-6).³ Beneficiaries are then registered for programs based on census information or demand mechanisms (Irrázaval 2004: 8).

The implementation of these systems incurs high costs that cover a number of components. These include administrative aspects, such as the signing of agreements with other institutions and social audits; technological aspects, such as training staff on use of the information system; and operating aspects, such as the completion of surveys and data verification and input (Vásquez y Franco 2008: 91).

Not all registration systems put these requirements in place, which frequently causes "distortions" during implementation. Without going into detail, it can be asserted that

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1. Though this is not explicit as a definition in the text, other authors (Wildavsky and Majone 1979) have assumed that Bardach used the phrase in this way in his analysis.
 2. Both the budgetary constraints of the 1980s and 1990s and the "prescriptions" issued by lending institutions led to an abandonment of universality and the implementation of "targeting," based on the argument that this would improve efficiency and social equity (Raczynski 1995; Parodi 2000).
 3. In Latin America, several countries have employed central beneficiary registration systems for a number of years; examples include Argentina (Pilquen), Brazil (Cadunico), Colombia (SIPO), Chile (Casen), and Mexico (SIS) (Vásquez and Franco 2008: 91). In Peru, the second government of Alan García implemented 50% of the SISFOH, which was intended to serve as the "information server for the design and implementation of all social programs" (Vásquez and Franco 2008: 91). In this same period, the application for the RUBPVL was designed.

most Peruvian social programs are subject to problems along the lines of the following when registries of recipients are established:

- Beneficiaries are registered without reference to poverty indicators (Alcázar 2007; Alcázar *et al.* 2003).
- Problems occur in the updating of the registry (Chacaltana 2001: 63).
- The registry's construction is determined by clientelistic considerations and "political manipulation" (Vásquez 2008: 93).
- Users can develop interests as stakeholders that prevent the benefits from reaching the extreme poor (Tanaka and Trivelli 2002; Alcázar 2007).

Control mechanisms

How can distortions in the implementation of beneficiary selection be overcome? Some of the literature stresses the importance of a framework of incentives for those responsible for the procedure (Cortázar 2007). In such cases, officials receive "bonuses" for implementation, and their interests are aligned through accountability "contracts" (Banco Mundial 2004; Cotlear 2005; Teisluc and Walker 2007).

The control mechanisms applied to officials require certain conditions in order to be effective. First, rules are required that clearly distinguish "good" implementations from "deviations." Operating practices must be implemented using designs that are based on specific regulations or else the control will be ineffective due to implementer discretion (Cotlear 2005; Banco Mundial 2004). Second, controls must separate the "formulator" (the designer) from the "supplier" (the implementer) so as to render the "contract" between the former and the latter visible, and to facilitate oversight of the task. Third, "carrot and stick" mechanisms of reward and punishment of officials are required so that their behavior can be brought into line with program stipulations (Banco Mundial 2004). Finally, one condition that precedes all others is the reach of the state (Soifer and Vom Hau 2008): in the absence of agencies responsible for controlling and sanctioning, the incentives for actors to obey the law will be highly precarious. Conversely, the presence of these agencies tends to increase obedience of the norms (Levitsky and Murillo 2004: 121).

In this approach, supervision and control over procedures would reduce distortions in beneficiary selection in two ways. On the one hand, the actions of state control offices would improve efficiency and transparency (Chacaltana 2001; Vásquez 2008; Vásquez and Franco 2008). As such, supervision and monitoring by the CGR is essential. On the other hand, the "social control" exercised by members of civil society is also regarded as a means of overseeing officials (Chacaltana 2001: 11; Irrarázaval 2004: 10); in this case the key actors would be the grassroots organizations.

Limits of institutional control

The above approach assumes that once the appropriate incentives are structured and the resources obtained, implementation follows design almost automatically (Majone and Wildavsky 1998: 265). However, implementation faces contingent challenges, even in situations where there is no clientelistic management of registries and the conditions for effective control exist. The distortions, in this regard, reflect a reality in which "implementation consists of going down a path that runs from the symbolic, highly flexible world of the decision-makers [...] to the more uncertain, resistant world of social realities that materializes as a lack of resources, power relations, value conflicts, resistances, retrenchment, and passiveness"⁴ (Martínez and Nogueira, 2007: 64).

As such, is it also necessary to pay heed to the specific circumstances of social program implementation, and especially to the ambiguity and uncertainty to which they are subject (Cortázar 2007; Martínez Nogueira 2007). First, the ambiguity of the procedure must be taken into account; this is comprised of the "lack of clarity or consistency in reality [the existence and significance of a situation], causality [the relationship between actions and effects or between the different dimensions of a situation], or intentionality [the intentions of the actors involved]" (March 1994: 178). During the beneficiary registration process, despite the "incentives" provided to actors to comply with legally mandated "targeting," this could be "misinterpreted" because the beneficiaries and the implementers tend to believe that the procedure should meet other criteria, such as universal care.

A second implementation contingency is uncertainty; that is, "imprecision in estimates of future consequences conditional on present actions [...] The idea is that there is a real world that is imperfectly understood" (March 1994: 178).

Coordination with other actors is difficult insofar as their real preferences are not known, and so the calculations made by officials lead to trade-offs of limited benefit or to conflict, above all with powerful actors. When uncertainty is high, distrust among the actors prevails, even when they are required to follow the same rules.

Social participation

For Martínez Nogueira, social participation – the "involvement of citizens in public affairs" (Tanaka 2001: 24)⁵ – is a source of ambiguity and uncertainty in implementation. Participation empowers social actors, allowing them to take part in decision-making and increasing their capacity to defend their interests and their interpretations of

4. Translation by *Apuntes*.

5. Translation by *Apuntes*.

program aims. On occasion, these interests and interpretations diverge from those of public officials.

Two elements shape the level of participation in social programs. First, the extent to which procedures are routinized delimits the participation of recipients of goods and services in a social program. In some programs that involve the disbursement of specific goods (cash or food), participation is limited through mechanisms established under the legal framework of the state and strategic decisions are left to government agencies (Martínez Nogueira 2007: 98). At the other extreme, programs that seek to develop the capabilities of the population serve to empower beneficiaries, leaving state operators to act as mere facilitators (Martínez Nogueira 2007: 98).

Second, the participation of beneficiaries is shaped by the social complexity of the context. While in small localities the social organizations that make the decisions for beneficiaries do indeed represent them, in urban districts – where the need for public goods is met to some extent – participation occurs through leaders who act as stakeholders, without a hierarchical relationship with the grassroots organizations (Tanaka 2001).

Thus, it is those programs that encourage beneficiary empowerment and capacities of other kinds in urban contexts that succeed in generating a great deal of autonomy in social actors. Beneficiaries can create their own discourse outside the authority of the state, which legitimizes actions that occur on the edge of the law. Furthermore, leaders can pursue interests that differ from program goals. In both situations the requirement for decisions to be made by beneficiaries constitutes a window of opportunity that gives social organizations the power of veto, allowing them – in the worst case scenario – to alter the course of the program.

Strategic interaction and contentious implementation

If social participation gives rise to ambiguity and uncertainty during implementation and limits the effect of control mechanisms, how can beneficiaries be identified?

Another mechanism for implementing the legal provisions, and which complements the control mechanisms, arises from the strategies used by the implementers to devise institutional arrangements. As well as attesting to program deficiencies, the circumstances of ambiguity, uncertainty, and possible conflict in policy implementation are common in those countries where there are weaknesses in the structures for establishing common interests during the formulation stage. This argument, put forward by Grindle (1980), holds that the political and social actors would have a "second chance" at the implementation stage through "political horse-trading."

Bardach (1977) characterizes implementation as a power struggle between multiple actors. Thus, whoever controls the resources necessary for the process will also determine the course of the policy. These resources can be monetary or can take the form of citizen participation at a given stage of a program. The actors (stakeholders, populations, social movements, bureaucrats, or politicians) are nonetheless governed by rules, the most important being that the state actor is the most relevant, because, ultimately, it "should" implement the policy formulated since it has a legitimate monopoly on violence (Aguilar 2000).

There are two points worth retrieving from this perspective; first, the agency of the "implementers." These are middle-level officials with responsibility for execution in a given area, who maintain contact with both national superiors and program "clients" and opponents at a local level (Migdal 2004: 84–85). They also possess "considerable discretion in pursuing their tasks and, even when it is not defined as part of their formal duties, they may have a decided impact on individual allocation decisions" (Grindle 1980: 197).

Although these local officials obey the logic of supervision, they maintain room for discretion; that is, room to propose strategies (to "manage") which could help overcome the problems of ambiguity, uncertainty, and possible conflict during coordination with social organizations. The use of these strategies in this concrete way ultimately gives rise to contingent arrangements that might be successful, but might also end in spectacular failure (Cortázar 2007).

Second, implementation as interaction involves contentious politics. This refers to interactions in which the actors make claims based on a particular interest and through coordinated efforts. In this case, the government may be a subject, an ally, or an initiator of these claims (Tarrow and Tilly 2006: 4). As part of the struggle for resources, implementation would imply the use of collective action by social actors as a tactic to "divert" implementation towards their own interests, or as a weapon in the negotiating process. Officials, for their part, utilize a range of strategies, from their capacity for certifying new organizations and establishing new networks of trust, to full-on repression.⁶

In summary, this perspective identifies the use of contentious politics in program implementation, and the generation of institutional arrangements with other actors based on contentious strategies of officials.

6. For a review of the primary mechanisms of contentious politics applied to big processes, see McAdam *et al.* (2001).

PVL REGISTRATION IN VILLA EL SALVADOR BETWEEN 2002 AND 2010

Case explanation and methodology

As stated in the introduction, Villa El Salvador represents an extreme case of the implementation of a beneficiary identification system in a socially complex context.⁷ Here, the case study plays an interpretive role by limiting itself to the interpretation of consolidated models or theories, such as the approach to control and supervision, for illustrative purposes (Lijphart 1971: 692; Bennett and George 2005: 75). But the study is also heuristic in that it helps to explore new hypotheses that are associated with strategic interaction (Bennett and George 2005: 75).

To support our argument, we utilize the process-tracing methodological tool, which allows the case to be followed over time. This kind of analysis sets out the causal chain and the moments in which explanatory factors intervene (Bennett and George 2005: 212). Moreover, it discriminates between hypotheses on the basis of events, which are treated as pieces of evidence (Bennett and George 2005: 209; Munck 2004: 210). Events have been organized into a narrative which must show "coherence" based on the application of our theoretical approaches (Cortázar and Barzelay 2004); to this end, the events were reconstructed through ten in-depth interviews with officials and leaders of beneficiaries who were involved in the process. In addition, official documents were reviewed; these include memorandums and reports pertaining to both the MUNIVES and the CGR.

Background: the PVL in Peru

The PVL dispenses a ration of milk and a food supplement, generally oatmeal, to vulnerable children and adults.⁸ It is predominantly a local program, administered at most stages

7. In this article, the term "context" has a clear definition: "the relevant aspects of a setting (analytical, temporal, spatial, or institutional) in which a set of initial conditions leads (probabilistically) to an outcome of a defined scope and meaning via a specified causal mechanism or set of causal mechanisms" (Falleti and Lynch 2009: 1152). According to these authors the challenge lies in establishing the aspects that delimit the outcome of the mechanism used.

8. The legal framework of the PVL is comprised of Law N° 24059, "Law Creating Vaso de Leche" (Ley de creación del Vaso de Leche), and Law N° 27470, "Law Establishing Supplementary Norms for the Execution of the Vaso de Leche Program (Ley que establece normas complementarias para la ejecución del Programa del Vaso de Leche). In addition, during the authoritarian government of Alberto Fujimori, Law N° 26637, "Norms for the Administration of the Vaso de Leche Program" (Normas referidas a la administración del Programa del Vaso de Leche), was passed, which organized the program into districts (for further details see Suárez 2003). More recently Ministerial Resolution N° 245-2001-INEI and Ministerial Resolution N° 217-2006-INEI were promulgated, establishing the "Technical Norms for Registration and the Submission of the Registry of Beneficiaries to the National Institute of Statistics and Information" (INEI). Other important norms are the CGR directives (Directive N° 015-2013-CG/CRL and Directive N° 07-99-CG/SDE), which establish program controls.

by municipalities. However, it requires the involvement of beneficiaries to oversee and co-administrate its execution.

According to the provisions of the norms, the PVL is intended to benefit children aged six or below, expectant and lactating mothers, and, if there are still resources available after these needs are covered, children between seven and thirteen years of age, adults over 65, and individuals with tuberculosis (Alcázar *et al.* 2003: 34–35). The registry of beneficiaries must record this information, as well as the names of the VL committees, the number of beneficiaries per category, and the number of products distributed by each committee. This registration process may be conducted by the municipality or by the committee to which the beneficiaries belong. In some localities, registration is based on the census (Chacaltana 2001).

In practice these legal requirements are not complied with. The CGR identified twelve municipalities with difficulties in the execution of this phase, from a sample of sixty (CGR 2009). Seven of the nine municipalities surveyed by Alcázar *et al.* (2003) did not have access to information on recipients. There are other cases in which families and friends of committee members are privileged (Suárez 2003: 27; Alcázar *et al.* 2003: 41–42), and in some districts registries have been found to contain forged signatures (Tanaka 2001).

The extent to which these problems can be overcome is dependent on how effectively the supervisory bodies oversee municipalities.⁹ Both the implementation of expenditure and correct application of procedures are assessed by the CGR and the OCl. Nonetheless, very few municipalities have OCl and the CGR audits are only conducted in urban centers. In the study carried out by Alcázar *et al.* (2003) it was found that of all the municipalities supervised, most are located in Lima (60%), while the CGR only supervised 3% of the VL committees in Lima.

These committees constitute an important form of social capital (Alcázar 2007). Their leaders, as well as those of other social organizations, oversee the program and are answerable for their activities to the grassroots. However, they have been accused of promoting personal interests (Tanaka 2001; Tanaka and Trivelli 2002); in addition, the hierarchal structure of these organization is fragmented, with a plurality of leaders. Finally, these organizations are autonomous. All of this makes decision-making in the PVL administration committee all the more vexatious.

9. It can also be conceded that the heterogeneity of the municipalities and their limitations in implementing current expenditures would also influence the prospects for proper execution of the registration process. This hypothesis has not been dealt with in this study, as no change in the capacity of MUNIVES has been detected in the relatively short time-frame covered herein.

In summary, the program has many deficiencies that translate into high levels of leakage (Alcázar 2007; Vásquez 2008, 2012). The implementation of beneficiary selection is subject to social and political obstacles as well as administrative ones. Finally, there is no functional organizational hierarchy between the actors responsible for the PVL; the municipalities answer to the CGR, while the organizations are accountable to their grassroots. Thus, there is "minimal supervision and training from the municipal to the community levels and little social control by grassroots organizations over municipal environments"¹⁰ (Suárez 2003: 20).

Brief narrative of the PVL beneficiary selection process in Villa El Salvador, 2002–2010

– Initial Situation

Up to 2002, the reality of the PVL in Villa El Salvador fitted the above description. In this locality, beneficiaries were neither attended nor registered in line with priorities, and "social cases" were incorporated into the program. In addition, some registries were found to be full of forged signatures and had not been updated for more than five years, which allowed for attention to individuals who did not correspond to the age requirements.

That year, attempts were made to implement a new registry, since the one in use dated from 1998. The corresponding procedure was supposed to have been coordinated by the MUNIVES¹¹ alongside the FEPOMUVES.¹² However, the latter organization opposed the update. In 1999, the then-mayor of the MUNIVES, Martín Pumar, attempted to initiate a new registration process as the registries in use were outdated. Meanwhile, the MUNIVES conducted a sample by projecting a decrease in the number of beneficiaries and, in consequence, in the quantity of milk to be distributed. The social organizations responded by staging a protest outside the municipal building. As a result both the mayor and the officials were forced to relent and modify the registries, and the registry purge was not carried out.

As far as the beneficiaries were concerned, the needs met through the PVL should not have been limited to women or children of a particular age. Furthermore, whenever beneficiaries did not collect the prepared milk, the committee president distributed the surplus among people in the neighborhood regarded as "social cases" rather than disposing of it, as stipulated by law.

10. Translation by *Apuntes*.

11. The PVL was introduced in 1984 during the United Left's (Izquierda Unida) control of the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima. The municipality purchased the goods, while the MUNIVES delivered them to VL centers and committees. More than in any other district, in Villa El Salvador, these social organizations supported food programs throughout the 1980s, the years of social emergency (Balbi 1990; Blondet 1991; Tuesta 2000).

12. At that time, the FEPOMUVES encompassed VL centers (made up in turn of VL committees), as well as community kitchens and other vehicles for female participation (Blondet 1991).

During registration, local leaders went door-to-door to urge those with no interest in participating in VL to sign up. Thus, there was no decrease in the number of food products allocated to the program, which meant that the surplus goods "could be handed out to other people in need of them." Committee and center leaders were "unfavorably regarded" by local members if a lower number of rations were assigned and less individuals were signed up. Moreover, the updating of the registry was tampered with, and the children of prominent leaders were not removed from it despite exceeding the age limit. These leaders were allowed to stay in their positions and to remain involved in the PLV organizational activities.

Up until 2002 the officials responsible for VL felt that these actions could be tolerated. After all, registration was founded on arrangements between MUNIVES officials and VL committees, backed by FEPOMUVES. In the words of one official: "The political relationship defers issues that end up being costly."

- The implementation of a new registration process

In mid-2002 the CGR audited the municipal administration of Martín Pumar; officials checked whether recommendations made in previous evaluations had been acted upon, inspected income and expense statements, and assessed the accomplishment of PVL objectives (CGR 2003a).

The auditors' fieldwork took three months, during which time they were critical of registration practices. First of all, beneficiaries were not attended in line with priorities; second, evidence was found of non-registered beneficiaries taking receipt of products; and, finally, it was confirmed once again that the MUNIVES had not updated the registry since 1998. Moreover, the intervals between census-based registration processes were too long. The CGR insisted that officials address these problems, and the results would be assessed in a subsequent audit.

Thereafter, municipal officials impressed the need to implement a new registration process upon the FEPOMUVES. Unlike in previous years, this time the social organizations were in agreement. Thus, the MUNIVES and the FEPOMUVES learned to coexist; officials recognized the work of the FEPOMUVES on the PVL, and the leaders accepted greater municipal participation in the program. On the other hand, the audits had found clear evidence of "wrongful practices" by social organizations. This meant that, as the individual then-responsible for the PVL at the municipality put it, "The FEPOMUVES had no arguments for refusing a registration process; there was fertile ground for negotiation, and that is where they yielded."

Thus, the officials agreed upon a rule of mutual agreement with officials: to respect the outcome of the registration process. Four points were established as part of this agreement:

- First, though the requirements for registration should not be a barrier to accreditation, they were nonetheless necessary. Beneficiaries were required to submit a photo document verifying identity, age, address, and other characteristics required by law. National identity documents, birth certificates, vaccination cards, and school report cards were all accepted.
- Second, leaders were able to accompany registration officials on neighborhood visits, but were not allowed under any circumstances to pressurize residents into registering.
- Third, during registration, the official, aided by the leader, would explain the rights and obligations that being a beneficiary entailed: on the one hand, receiving the product daily; and on the other, paying a weekly fee and preparing the food on certain occasions. The aim of both measures was to control the registration of individuals who were unlikely to be interested in receiving the product so as to avoid milk and oatmeal surpluses in the committees.
- Finally, in the short term, an "alternative register" was to be completed to register those who exceeded the permitted age and those who took receipt of milk without being registered. Thus, the former would be progressively removed when the registry was updated, and replaced with children residing in the area who were already receiving surplus items.

Though the CGR recommended that the local government carry out registration on its own account, without the participation of a social organization, from the point of view of the social organization this practice was "invisible," because extending municipal power without finding middle ground with the organization was not without a potential for conflict. Moreover, the organizational apparatus of the FEPOMUVES guaranteed the dissemination of agreements and their compliance by committees and coordination centers. For their part, the FEPOMUVES leaders accepted the presence of officials authorized by the municipality to conduct registration, despite the technical norm stipulating that it was the committee leaders who should assume responsibility for collecting information on beneficiaries. Nonetheless, neither of the two concessions were illegal.

The registration process was postponed due to the municipal elections. It was not considered politically convenient to carry out a registration process during an election campaign, which became more intensive in August 2002. Both the officials and the mayor, Martín Pumar, who was standing for reelection, feared that they might be suspected of using the registry to leverage political support.

In reality, the electoral campaign was an opportune moment for shedding light on agreements between candidates and arrangements with leaders (chiefly center coordinators), and how these even went over the heads of the FEPOMUVES when support networks were formed as part of campaign strategies. Historically the FEPOMUVES had always supported a particular candidate, but in 2002 its leaders decided that the organization would remain neutral.

Martin Pumar was defeated by Jaime Zea, who ran for the Unidad Nacional party. Pumar had no further interest in completing the new registry before leaving office, and it was left to the promoter Javier Bernaola to assume the task. For Bernaola, this was crucial to the furtherance of his civil service career; failure to comply with the CGR recommendations would bring political and administrative problems, and given that the new administration would take office in four months, an unfinished task could be used to discredit the previous municipal government and, thus, his work as an official.

The registration process was scheduled to begin in August, one month after the CGR inspection. The necessary resources had been found and the registration officials were trained. It was also decided that the municipal officials and the FEPOMUVES leaders would supervise the registration process. Dissemination activities, such as the placement of posters in the streets corresponding to each committee, were carried out to inform beneficiaries of registration dates and requirements. Importantly, this was done with FEPOMUVES' consent.

It was decided that registration would be carried out in late November and throughout December, Martin Pumar's final month in office. The process took place on Saturdays and Sundays, with twenty promoters sweeping the district. Those who were to be registered as beneficiaries were asked to show identity documents, and if individuals were not at home, the official would return up to three times, accompanied by the local committee leader.

- Intra-organizational conflict and the emergence of new social actors

Halfway through the registration process, most of the FEPOMUVES leadership and some centers unexpectedly repudiated it, expressing opposition to the reduction in the number of rations. For Javier Bernaola, there was something else behind this decision: an "under the table" deal between Jaime Zea and the leaders. "There are documents and public assembly minutes where it is stipulated that Zea, alongside FEPOMUVES leaders, brought down [the centers and committees] in order to make a commitment to the women involved in Vaso de Leche",¹³ stated Bernaola. According to this version of events, Zea respected the current leadership of the PVL FEPOMUVES in return for the new mayor carrying out

13. Interview with Javier Bernaola.

the registration process; the intent was for both parties to "look good" in the eyes of the supervisory bodies and to discredit the previous administration.

At that time, the new leaders elected as coordinators of the sectorial centers sought to form their own district organization, independent of the FEPOMUVES. These leaders, including Silvia Pareja, coordinator of center 10, as well as many others who had recently emerged, backed registration out of "respect for the commitment agreed upon by a majority" and, through these actions, sought to legitimize their social endeavors and to draw attention to the FEPOMUVES leadership circle. Soon, conflict broke out. In some centers, radio broadcasts and leaflets were used to express opposition to registration, while at center 2 leaders were forced to protect the registration official from harassment by the other group. Halfway through the process, it was extrapolated that there would be a 30% reduction in the number of beneficiaries, though this was not a trend that applied to all centers.

Once he assumed office, Jaime Zea refused to recognize both the registration process and the FEPOMUVES as a representative of the VL committees. The argument of the new mayor was that, by law, the committees were required to form an organization of their own.¹⁴ In addition, he had no interest in seeing the FEPOMUVES maintaining control of VL. "The organization was experienced and respected, which made it immune to manipulation."¹⁵ The leaders of the FEPOMUVES regarded this as an act of retaliation for not having supported Zea in the last elections; for instance, one leader claimed that the organization was smeared through the publication of leaflets accusing it of embezzlement. Finally, according to Javier Bernaola, Zea sought to manage the new district organization by placing allies or co-optees in leadership positions.

In response to all this, the FEPOMUVES leadership resigned itself to the loss of the VL centers because it had no choice; the municipality would not distribute the products unless a dedicated PVL organization was established.¹⁶ Moreover, many "coordinators" wished to move away from the FEPOMUVES. Eight of the fourteen sectorial centers then rallied around the leadership of Silvia Pareja and in February 2003, the leadership of the District Organization of El Salvador Vaso de Leche Committees (ODVL) was elected from a single list.

However, the ODVL was still not officially recognized by the MUNIVES and, in 2003, the administration of Jaime Zea took the PVL with a minority of delegates, led by Vilma León.

14. As note above, the FEPOMUVES also included community kitchens and other women's organizations.

15. Interview with Jaime Zea.

16. The new administration nullified the agreement between the MUNIVES and the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima, which meant that the district council would be responsible for purchasing processes from that point on.

Of this group, three social representatives came from the administration committee put in place at the start of that year;¹⁷ thereafter, the viability of resuming the activities and procedures left unfinished by the previous administration was studied. It should be pointed out that through his actions, the mayor had something of a monopoly over decisions related to the PVL.

It was decided that a new registration process would be opened up by the new actors. Meanwhile, the registered committees from the new squatter settlements organized a march, and Javier Bernaola denounced the situation - which was being tolerated by Zea's officials - to the CGR.

That year, resources were distributed based on the outdated 1998 registries. Nonetheless, pressure from the CGR and the new beneficiaries forced the administration into updating the information; the mayor was also aware of the political capital that opposition councilors would make of any failure to follow through on the proposals.

According to the municipal officials, a more efficient and less costly registration process would require the implementation of a database to systematize beneficiary inclusion in the PVL registry. In this way, the information collected could be processed much more quickly and changes to beneficiary information could be recorded. For the director of human development at the MUNIVES, Julio Injante, this was a necessary condition for compliance with the provisions of the official norms. When some leaders expressed opposition, Injante's response was to issue threats of possible CGR sanctions. Any attempts by leaders at obstructing registration would stand as evidence of aiding and abetting criminal acts, as well as non-compliance with the provisions of the norms.

- The new local alliance

While attempts were made to reach an agreement, the ODVL organized marches to demand their recognition by the municipality. In turn, that organization refused to recognize the group led by Vilma León, accusing it of "selling out to the mayor." Silvia Pareja alleges that "municipal officials attempted to approach me and convince me to join their organization [though their condition was] 'but not with you at the head! My response was that I wasn't going to sell out for a plate of lentils. We were prepared to fight to the end.'"¹⁸

17. The administration committee would be the deliberative entity in replacement of the aforementioned somewhat informal relationship between the municipality and the FEPOMUVES. This committee was initially made up of the mayor, Jaime Zea (as president); the Human Development director, Julio Injante (as the individual in charge of the VL); and the Ministry of Health representative, as well as representatives of social organizations in the district.

18. Interview with Silvia Pareja.

By now the situation was tense. To add to the marches and pickets, the mayor was repudiated by followers of Pereha during PVL activities. This placed the entire program implementation process at risk, as it was not known whether the products could be distributed and many centers did not wish to receive them out of protest over "arbitrariness and interference by the mayor." For its part, the ODVL refused to recognize the representatives of the administration committee and did not back any decision reached by that body.

During a Mother's Day ceremony on May 12, 2004, the mayor publicly acknowledged Vilma León as president of the district PVL. For the leaders and the mothers present who supported Silvia Pareja, this gesture was provocative almost to the point of insult, and angry protests broke out in the middle of the ceremony. "We almost came to blows", recalls Pareja.

After this, the ODVL leadership called for another demonstration. The mayor attempted to preempt this by seeking out a meeting with Silvia Pareja, which culminated in agreement upon a "non-aggression pact" by both parties: first, the municipality extended official recognition to the ODVL, made up of eight centers; second, the municipality passed an ordinance that guaranteed the presence of ODVL representatives and its president on the administration committee, to the exclusion of Vilma León and her leaders; and third, the municipality agreed with the ODVL to respect certain procedures in the administration of the PVL, in terms of everyday arrangements between the leadership and officials in the implementation of the registration process.

"You don't mess with me, I won't mess with you." In the words of Silvia Pareja, this was the condition for joint administration of the program. Thus, Pareja and the ODVL retained their autonomy and recognition as the only official district VL committee spokespersons despite the protestations of another six centers, including those close to Vilma León. For the municipality, this agreement ensured a stable alliance for the implementation of practices that had been planned in advance, such as registration. There was no further conflict with Silvia Pareja's group on the issue of PVL administration.

- Implementation of the second registration process

By June 2004, products were still distributed based on the 1998 registry, which contained 120,417 beneficiaries. The PVL was executed through eight centers that were affiliated with the ODVL, while another seven remained independent despite being "represented" on the administration committee. In practice, the municipality excluded these independent centers from co-administration, despite their being former allies. This reduced their status to collecting milk and oatmeal and coordinating their subsequent distribution.

The municipal officials submitted the revised registration proposal - which was drawn up by the IECOS-UNI - to the new administration committee. Silvia Pareja initially accepted

the registration and updating of beneficiaries, and so the municipality and the district organization agreed to purge the registry jointly, with the municipality to assume the costs. This was a negotiated middle ground; "they had completed the registration beforehand. We started off with the idea of doing it ourselves. The way out was to carry out the registration together," recalls Zea. Both the leaders and the officials were trained in information collection, database consolidation, and processing activities. The registration process was completed in the first half of 2005, and the number of beneficiaries was brought down to 90,379 people.

- **Stabilization of beneficiary selection**

Towards the end of 2005, the coordinating centers that were not included in the district organization opted to disown the registration completed that year, demanding that they be placed in charge of the process, and calling for changes in the representation of beneficiaries on the administration committee led by Pareja.

Around five thousand people picketed the municipal building in late November 2005, and the leaders of the centers, Vilma León among them, succeeded in opening talks with Julio Injante. Injante argued that coordination could only be conducted with the recognized social organization led by Pareja, insisting that that group was legitimized by the inclusion of the majority of committees and the backing of the mayor. The protesting leaders were thus unable to proceed with their demands.

In April 2006, a new registry was completed, which further reduced the number of beneficiaries to 77,456 people. From that point onward, the registry was updated in the second half of each year. In 2007 the OCI, which had been created only months previously, raised a number of objections. These were duly addressed.

- **Final thoughts**

In the second half of the last decade, the Peruvian government introduced a series of institutional measures, among which was the obligation of municipalities to send the RUBPVL application to the Ministry of the Economy and Finances in order to systematize national information.¹⁹ Moreover, registration was encouraged through results-based management programs.²⁰ The MUNIVES has met this target on a regular basis, and up to 2010, no further substantial changes were made to the registry of beneficiaries.

19. At present, the registry is the responsibility of the MIDIS (Comunicué 02-2013-DGGU).

20. The submission of the RUBPVL is one of the sub-targets of the Incentives Plan for Improving the Municipal Management and Modernization of the Ministry of the Economy and Finances (Plan de Incentivos para la Mejora de la Gestión y Modernización Municipal del Ministerio de Economía y Finanzas).

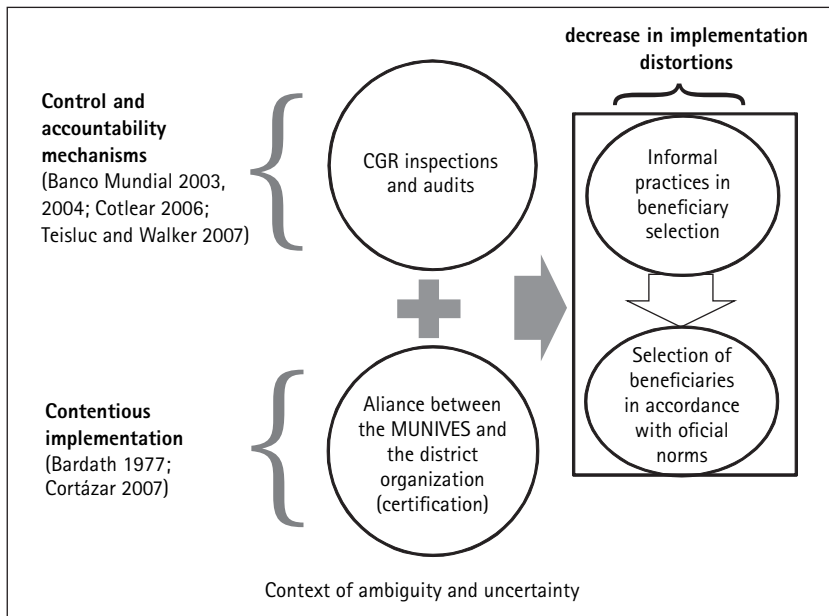
As was to be expected, the change in the municipal government in 2011 altered the relationship between state and social actors, and thus affected the registration process. The situation of 2002 repeated itself, and instability in the municipal government – the elected mayor Santagio Mozo was ousted from office during the first year of his term, to be replaced by his deputy, Guido Iñigo Peralta – had an impact on relations with leaders. The new mayor refused to recognize Silvia Pareja as president and proceeded to coordinate with other centers. Though no leaders opted to ignore the official norms, reaching consensus on the registration process was difficult in practice. Time will tell what kind of balance can now be struck.

CASE ANALYSIS

How are we to understand the correction of distortions in the implementation of beneficiary selection in Villa El Salvador? Graph 1 synthesizes the explanation of this case.

Graph 1

The process of change in the registration of PVL beneficiaries in Villa El Salvador



Informal practices and the effects of supervision

The correction of distortions in the identification of beneficiaries required changes to many informal practices. Given that registration was universal, prioritizing a particular group based on the criteria established in the norms was contrary to how many leaders acted and to

how beneficiaries saw the role of the PVL. As far as the latter were concerned, the meeting of needs through the PVL should not be limited to women or children of a particular age.

The leaders also had received incentives to avoid reductions in the number of beneficiaries. As has been pointed out, decreases in the number of rations assigned were not well received by beneficiaries, thus many leaders sought to maintain their legitimacy without showing evidence of too much arbitrariness in the preparation of the registry. Moreover, those who updated beneficiary information ended up being removed from the program.

The operating practices of the PVL are legally overseen by the Peruvian government through supervisory agencies, and by municipal supervisors at the local level; the latter, however, were not effective. The PVL is set apart by the fact that the supervised agents – that is, the MUNIVES program officials in charge of registration – shared responsibilities with leaders of the beneficiaries themselves, who are supervised but not responsible for their actions. What consequences did the supervisory actions in Villa El Salvador have on informal practices? The narrative shows that oversight of beneficiary selection was both strengthened and effective between 2002 and 2005.

This period was marked by the following conditions that are conducive to effective supervision:

- First, the legislation was relatively unequivocal, in that Law N° 27470 stipulates census-based registration, the profile of the target population, and the requirements for updating. Thus, on an official level at least, the implementation of the registration process was not discretionary. To this end, the supervisors had recourse to official norms with which to compare "real" registration practices.
- Second, despite the proximity of the mayor as a local "formulator" to the officials in charge, with the law stipulating that both parties are answerable for offenses, the controls applied to the bureaucrats did not fail. The separation of the "formulator" from the "supplier" was manifested through the supervision of the CGR as an autonomous agency in 2003. In the context of a scant distinction between local "formulators" and municipal "suppliers," independent audits emerged as a means of guaranteeing the effectiveness of oversight (Banco Mundial 2004: 106).
- Third, MUNIVES suppliers were subject to administrative and criminal penalties from the CGR if they did not comply with the recommendations or observations set out in previous assessments.
- Fourth and finally, Villa El Salvador is located in Lima, the province with the highest population density in Peru (PNUD 2010), and the supervisory agencies were closer to the area under inspection.

Scrupulous MUNIVES officials preferred to avoid administrative sanctions and the repercussions that these would have for their bureaucratic careers. Moreover, failure to implement the recommendations of the CGR, which in beneficiary selection included effective compliance with the norms, posed risks to their interests. In 2003, during Zea's administration, other actors – such as the newly registered squatter settlements and officials from the previous local governments – put pressure on the municipality on the basis of the CGR report published that year. Tolerating the implementation of new registration processes for too long would have exacted a heavy political toll.

The narrative also shows that the control mechanisms were more compelling than the pressure exerted by the social organizations, which complained out of fear of manipulation or a reduction in their budget. The influence applied by the leaders on residents who did not wish to register would never have been criticized by officials if they had not founded their arguments on the findings published in the 2003 CGR report (2003a). Moreover, without the CGR recommendations, the officials would have kept the outdated registry. In this context, the 2002 inspection was a breaking point for the informal practices applied until that year. Nonetheless, the system of incentives and CGR oversight were not enough to reduce the gap – elucidated in the narrative – in the implementation of changes. At the end of 2002 and throughout the entire year that followed, there were delays and deadlocks in the registration process. As a result, the CGR's recommendations were not followed through despite the threat of sanctions and the attempts by public actors to avoid them. Thus, the solution to these problems did not stem from increases in the severity of the penalty nor in official warnings from the CGR to the MUNIVES.

Ambiguity and uncertainty in the registration process

Why did the process descend into conflict between organizations despite CGR pressure on those responsible for the program? At the start of the last decade, the state promoted greater uniformity in procedures for social programs. In contrast to the 1980s and 1990s when the emphasis was on beneficiary participation, the state appeared to be playing its role (Tanaka 2010). In the case of the PVL, this was expressed through the approval of new norms and in the increase in supervisory activities by the CGR. In Villa El Salvador, the inspections sought to specify the functions of social actors in the registration process and to reduce their level of autonomy with respect to the program, in exchange for imposing the law and encouraging greater responsibility by the municipality. Nonetheless, these changes met with resistance in the high-participation context inherited from the previous stage of program execution.

The social organization maintained "prerogatives" in the execution of procedures, which included the selection of beneficiaries. The VL committees felt that the beneficiaries should

not be restricted to those provided for by law and that the program should also include adult beneficiaries, known as "social cases." This attitude had its roots in the previous stage when the social organizations had greater influence over the registration process, which, as seen in the narrative, translated into the application of informal practices.

These circumstances gave rise to an ambiguous interpretation of the scope of the program. Vaso de Leche was conceived of as a universal program, and quite apart from targeting, calls were even made for the state to increase its investment in the program. Of course, the program's multiple objectives, which range from empowering the grassroots to tackling child malnutrition, add to its ambiguity.

Subsequently, when the municipality sought to apply the registration process, it was obliged to coordinate with the social organizations. Thus, another challenge emerged for high-interaction social programs; in Villa El Salvador the municipal and social actors expressed uncertainty over the new execution procedures, and, above all, over the practicability of joint execution of the registration process. This was because joint execution might affect their interests. In the registration process carried out during the term of Martín Pumar, the municipality feared that pressure from the leaders would disrupt door-to-door information collection, which would lead to the failure of the process and thus to sanctions from the supervisory body. In turn, the FEPOMUVES and later the district organization feared that the municipality would manipulate the grassroots organizations during registration, resulting in the loss of the control and autonomy that they required.

Ambiguity and, to a greater extent, uncertainty can lead to conflict and thus to the termination of processes: in this case, the implementation of a registration process for a social program. This is true above all in cases such as Villa El Salvador, where the pyramid participation structure also feeds into the implementation of changes. But despite this structure, in which the grassroots organizations were grouped into broader-based organizations, in recent years neither the FEPOMUVES nor the ODVL necessarily represented the interests of the committees or the centers. Moreover, new, alternative leaderships and organizations that seek to take part in decision-making have emerged.

The narrative accounts for how complex interests among leaders - especially the coordinators of each center, who act as brokers - precipitated disputes within the FEPOMUVES. In addition, the plurality of social organizations; that is, the absence of a cohesive hierarchical structure, made coordination more difficult and increased uncertainty over who participated in decision-making in the district. Therefore, protest actions materialized at the start of Pumar's term in office and at the midway point of Zea's, and registration stalled amid clashes between actors that did not necessarily oppose the measure.

As we saw in the narrative, the process ground to a halt amid these problems as well as in-fighting by social organizations and clashes between these organizations and the municipality. As much as the officials pushed the registration process, they were dissuaded from acting by the prospect of thousands of demonstrators gathering outside their centers.

The "certifications"

How is the resumption of the process to be understood? How was registration eventually completed in accordance with the norms? The agency of the implementers in contexts of high social implementation should be stressed. In Villa El Salvador, the local administrators were the most interested in proceeding with the registration process. On certain occasions, the elected authorities became involved in the process; Martín Pumar did so initially and continued until the following election, while Jaime Zea carried on for one year after taking office, to the extent that they were responsible for the PVL to the CGR.

However, the implementers were encouraged to call on the participation of program beneficiaries, who themselves "belong" to leaders. In this regard, they needed to develop strategies to guarantee the "possession" of these resources, and to ensure the design provisions were applied in practice. What were these strategies?

The narrative suggests the use of "certification" as a mechanism adopted by local authorities to guarantee the support of social organizations. Certification is a mechanism of contentious politics. Thus, to comply with the CGR recommendations, the MUNIVES implementers established pacts with certain sections of the social organizations, prioritizing them at the expense of other groups. To begin with, Martín Pumar's administration had a direct relationship with FEPOMUVES, an organization that was already well-known, and attempted joint implementation of the registration process. However, the weakness and the decline of that social organization, the emergence of new leaders, and the outbreak of internal conflict disrupted the process at the same time as the relationship between Pumar's officials and FEPOMUVES leaders deteriorated.

The situation for Jaime Zea's administration was a little more advantageous. Given the infeasibility of setting the registration process in motion on their own account, the municipal officials "certified" the social organizations led by Silvia Pareja. In this way, they were recognized by the municipality as the only official representatives of the grassroots committees and as exclusive participants in decision-making processes. In return, the leaders guaranteed that the implementers would obtain "permission" for retaining beneficiary participation, which was indispensable for initiating the registration process.

In both relationships, during both Pumar and Zea's terms, the implementers reached agreements with social organizations by finding middle ground between the supervisory bodies' demands and the interests of these local power-brokers. At this point, the ambiguity of the norms allowed for the formation of pacts on the implementation of the registration process. The norms did not stipulate, for instance, the presence of a leader during registration, which gave the municipality scope to negotiate the characteristics of the operations. On the other hand, mutual distrust would not have been overcome without these pacts. Although coordinations between the municipality and the "certified" organizations were protracted at the beginning, processes of trial and error allowed the impasse to be overcome insofar as greater rapprochement between both actors developed. Finally, without alliances between the leaders, the "informal" resistance to registration practices in each committee would not have been surmounted.

Nonetheless, this coordination strategy, which privileged one sector of social organizations on the basis of agreements and exchanges, also had perverse consequences for the PVL implementation process. On the one hand, though opposition to social organizations was "demobilized" by guaranteeing a degree of local governability, the agreements "delegitimized" the other organizations which at that time were not recognized by the municipality. This was the case with the other group of centers led by Vilma León, which were excluded from decision-making. On the other hand, suspicions arose out of the lack of transparency in the relationships between social organizations and the municipality. In both periods the actors involved in the program and which were not party to these pacts, claimed that there was collusion in the execution of other PVL processes, such as product selection, as well as relationships in which leaders and officials watched one another's backs.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Villa El Salvador was one of the first cases in which distortions in beneficiary selection were corrected in a complex social context, though it is far from the only one. From the beginning of the last decade, there was an increase in the number of municipalities that implemented suitable registry systems.²¹ It is possible that positive inducements, such as results-based management - which has been put in place within the past five years - have helped to improve the quality of procedures in the PVL (Vásquez et al. 2010).

Though this correlation between institutional change and improvements in implementation contradicts the argument set out here, the contentious aspect of implementation

21. See, for example, the evolution of beneficiary selection in the CGR macro reports (2002, 2011).

remains. The implementation of the RUBPVL was a product of the negotiation in 2008 between the President of the Council of Ministers, Jorge del Castillo, and a number of VL leaders in exchange for a budget reduction. This agreement was made after a series of marches through the streets of Lima. Furthermore, media interest prompted by the leakage of funds has diminished the principle of universal provision, setting it against spending on the poorest. Finally, the distortions persist; the targeting requirements are not complied with at the distribution stages, where the social organizations still enjoy considerable autonomy.

This case, rather than disdaining control mechanisms, serves to contextualize them. Thus, in the face of empowered beneficiaries, the strategies utilized by previously incentivized actors are exposed. As pointed out by Falletti and Lynch (2009: 1161), the context influences the result of the mechanism. In this sense there are no unique formulas for the implementation of social programs (Martínez Nogueira 2007).

As we have attempted to show in this study on the PVL in Villa El Salvador, enforcing the design in the implementation stage entails complex factors. These extend beyond state capacity, which condenses and encloses too many attributes. That said, understanding this implementation exclusively from a public management perspective provides us with an explanation of the successes and failures stemming from the mixed bag that is "political will," without employing theoretical instruments that enable analysis of the negotiations and strategies pursued by officials and politicians with respect to other actors. Implementation is thus not a strictly administrative operation.

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