



Gaps and challenges in promoting cross-ministerial collaboration

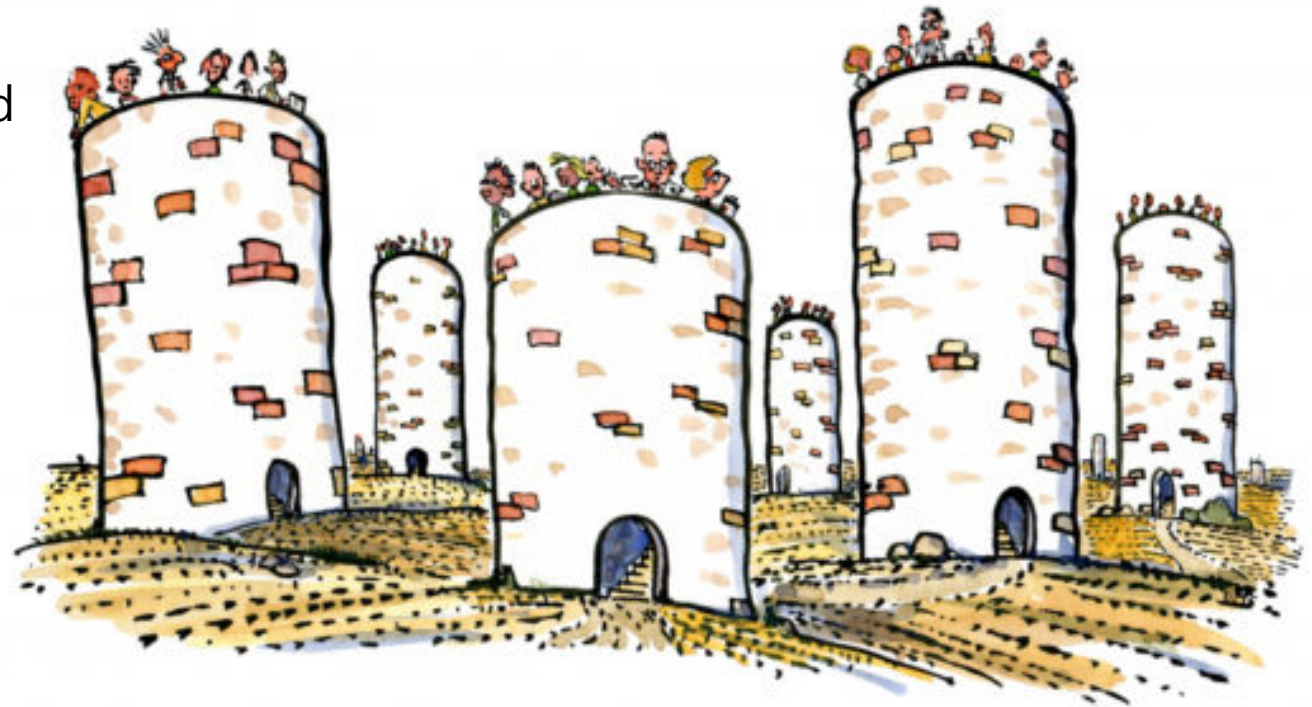
What are the most common challenges and gaps in cross-ministerial collaboration?

How can public institutions work together more effectively for a shared purpose while leveraging the strengths of each sector?

Louis Meuleman

*Member UN Committee of Experts
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Online Training Course on "Changing Mindsets and Strengthening Governance Capacities for Policy Coherence in the Arab region" - 2 February 2021





Challenges and gaps



- Working in “silos”: a main cause of ineffective cross-ministerial collaboration
- A silo = an isolated grouping, department, etc., that functions apart from others especially in a way seen as hindering communication and cooperation
- Three types of silos can be distinguished:

1. Political silos (macro level)

What is bad?

- Competition between political leaders/ ministers
- Legal right/duty of ministers to be the sole responsible

What is good?

- Political silos reflect the different values of political parties in a democratic system



Minister of Finance

Minister of Environment

Minister of Agriculture

Minister of Economics

Challenges and gaps



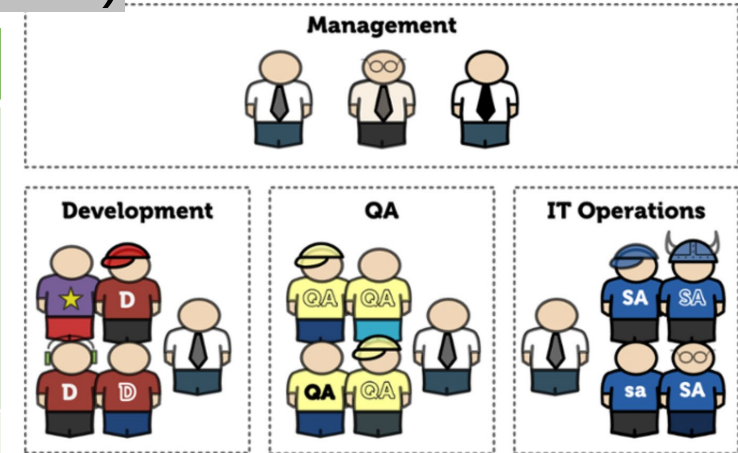
2. Institutional/organisational silos (meso level)

What is bad?

- Lack of trust between the silos
- Contacts/communication between silos may be prohibited or must go via hierarchy

What is good?

- Institutional silos provide structure, focus, protection against other departments; clarity, responsibility, transparency, accountability



3. Mental silos (micro level)

What is bad?

- Lack of: common goals, joint responsibility, interest in other colleagues
- Not taking responsibility beyond the own job description
- Let 'monkey' (task) jump from your shoulder to another

What is good?

- Mental silos provide identification ('this is who we are'); a 'safe' work environment, a 'home base' protected from external interventions





Challenges and gaps



Conclusion

Silos create risks for the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda / SDGs:



Silos hamper effective public administration and governance, and achieving policy coherence – but they also have benefits

Drivers of siloism?

- The **nr 1. driver of siloism** is the belief that a **hierarchical structure** with detailed division of tasks is the ideal organisation form
- In many countries, **hierarchy** is the main societal organisation principle, in others this is combined with **empath/trust**, in others it is combined with **competition/efficiency**
- **Different organisation principles work different in different countries**

Towards solutions?



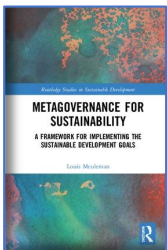
➤ **Context matters! There is no one-size-fits-all solution**

Feature	Hierarchical governance	Network governance	Market governance
18. Addressing organizational silos	Keep silos for structure	Teach silos to dance	Break down the silos

Silos are good!

Silos need connected

Flatten the organisation: we don't need silos



One of "Fifty shades of governance" in '[Metagovernance for Sustainability](#)' (2018)





Towards solutions?



Institutional/organisational silos

- **Matrix organisation:** more flexibility while structure remains
- **Merging departments** helps – but not always
- If institutional silos are a strength, then don't break them down but **“teach the silos to dance”**



Mental silos

- **Political** and **institutional** silos can be resistant to change if not top-down
- Changing a **silos mentality** may be easier:
 - **Communication and collaboration skills** can be learned, e.g. The *Harvard Mutual Gains Approach (MGA)* to negotiation
 - All can take part and make a difference
 - Start anytime, informally, bottom-up
 - *'Bureaucracy hackers'* and *'Boundary spanners'* can play a role



Towards solutions?



Institutional arrangements for cross-ministerial SDG collaboration

Examples:


1. **Whole-of-government & whole-of-society** approach (e.g. Finland)
2. **Centre of government leadership** (= PM lead)
3. **Make all ministries member** of horizontal coordination
4. Include the Ministry for **quality of public administration** and relations with subnational governments
5. Multi-level governance: develop **“real-time” multilevel collaboration**



Further reading: Niestroy et al. (2019, 2020): Country comparison EU and CEI. On multi-level governance: Meuleman (2019)





 **United Nations** | Department of Economic and Social Affairs


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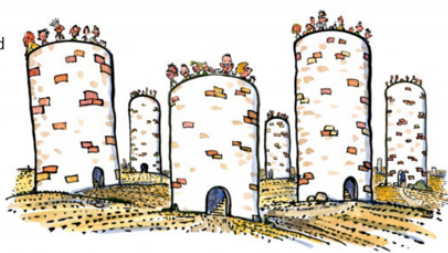
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2 February 2021

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Thank you for your attention

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