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Costs and benefits of (in)coherence:

Disaster Risk Reduction in the Post-2015-Agendas

Digital Publication

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Executive summary

While the need to strengthen disaster and climate change resilience is a core pillar of the different global frameworks that together make the Post-2015 Agendas, the coherent implementation and progress monitoring of resilience goals across the Agendas' main frameworks remains a challenge for policy and practice. A more coherent implementation is therefore increasingly being promoted across the Sendai Framework of Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement's Adaptation Goal, the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. However, little is known about the actual types and magnitudes of the costs of incoherence – or the potential benefits that some degree of incoherence might provide. To contribute to closing this knowledge gap, a study was carried out to assess the costs and the benefits of (not) implementing the different frameworks in a coherent way, with a specific focus on disaster risk reduction. The study draws on a comprehensive literature review followed by an in-depth empirical analysis of two case studies: Mexico and the Philippines.

The results of this study show that incoherence implies different types of costs, many of which are not typically on the agenda of policymakers. They also challenge the implicit notion that there are only upsides to policy coherence and downsides to incoherence. The interviews and focus group discussions with public servants in the two case study countries yield a rich typology of costs but also benefits of both coherence and incoherence – a typology more nuanced than what can be found in relevant literature thus far. However, costs and benefits differ in terms of scale and timeframe: While coherence may need to overcome some initial costs in order to access sustained benefits, incoherence occurs where short-term benefits trump long-term costs.

The study shows that transitioning to increased vertical and horizontal coherence among the Post-2015 Agendas cannot overlook some of the underlying drivers of incoherence. Key drivers of incoherence in Mexico and the Philippines are: 1) siloed approaches, where established sectors/thematic approaches make the development of integrated policies more difficult; 2) disconnects between planning and implementation as coherence in policies does not automatically result in coherence in implementation; 3) rigid hierarchical political structures and bureaucracy; 4) discontinuity and rupture due to frequent turnover of staff and politicians, resulting in disruptions of workflows and an overall inclination to short-termism and 5) disparities in available capacities and knowledge such as technical know-how or assessment capacities as well as siloed knowledge. These drivers act as hindrances to the achievement of coherent policy planning, implementation and reporting. Moreover, as they are ingrained in the political and organizational culture, they may lead to a lack of awareness regarding the importance of coherence, reducing efforts and commitments to pursue it.

The document provides key insights from comparing the literature review with the case studies, and outlines ways forward that emerge from the country cases themselves, but that may be applicable beyond the specificities of these. The conclusions and outlook provide critical reflection on realistic approaches to policy coherence given competing incentives and motivations and open up the debate to further advance this topic by identifying some existing policy and research gaps.

Introduction

The need to strengthen both disaster and climate resilience is starkly evident across the four main documents of the Post-2015 Agendas, namely the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015–2030, several goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs), the Paris Climate Agreement as well as the New Urban Agenda (NUA, Habitat III). Signatory countries to the Post-2015 Agendas documents have committed to plan, implement and report on the progress towards the goals and targets therein (Figure 1). An important question for the implementation progress will be whether and to which extent potential synergies between the different agendas are realized.

Despite the fact that coherence between the different frameworks of the Post-2015 Agendas is increasingly promoted, the reality is still different, raising questions about the factors hindering coherence. Different commitments and priorities at different administrative levels and between respective actors involved seem to pose a challenge to the alignment of policies and actions. Potentials for synergies are often underused, leading to overlaps and a lack of co-operation that result in different types of operative costs and risks triggering additional opportunity costs or even generating contradictory outcomes. Incomplete knowledge of the actual gains and losses of current practices and the potentialities of agenda coherence[1] is another likely factor preventing countries from translating their discursive commitments into full-fledged implementation. Overall, knowledge about the actual types and magnitudes of costs and benefits of (in)coherence as well as underlying drivers is still limited but highly relevant for supporting processes towards agenda coherence.
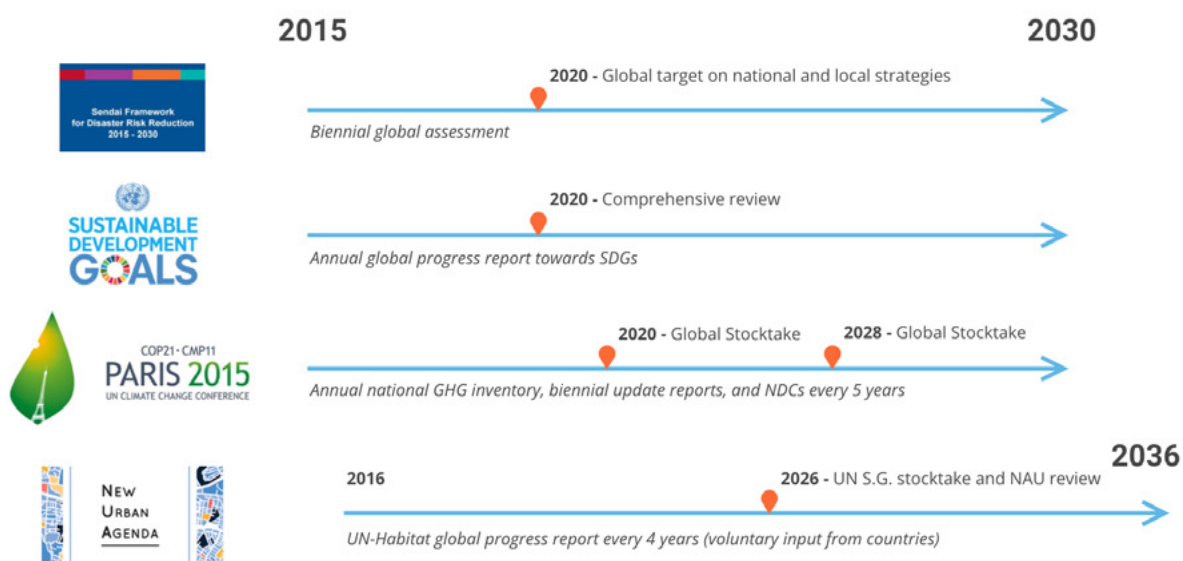
Figure 1: Post-2015 Agendas with reporting timeline and milestones

1   Agenda coherence: "This term stands for the appropriate, concerted approach of government actors on all levels and in all sectors for implementing the global post-2015 agendas in order to achieve their goals more effectively and more efficiently."
https://www.gidrm.net/en/glossary

This study looked into these questions not only from a global perspective but also through the lens of two dedicated case study contexts: Mexico and the Philippines. These two countries share a profile of high disaster risk and a high priority on disaster risk reduction within their policy landscapes. At the same time, the selected countries have quite different institutional set-ups for disaster risk management, each with its specific challenges for coherence.

The study concentrated on four key questions:

- What does the academic literature tell us about the costs and benefits of (in)coherence in the field of disaster risk reduction policy and action?

- What types of (in)coherence can be observed in countries with high disaster risk and political commitment for its reduction?

- What drivers reinforce (in)coherence and how does it manifest on the ground?

- What can be learned from these perspectives for the improvement of Post-2015 Agendas coherence?

*Video:
Dr. Simone Sandholz on the
COHERE country studies*

Methodology
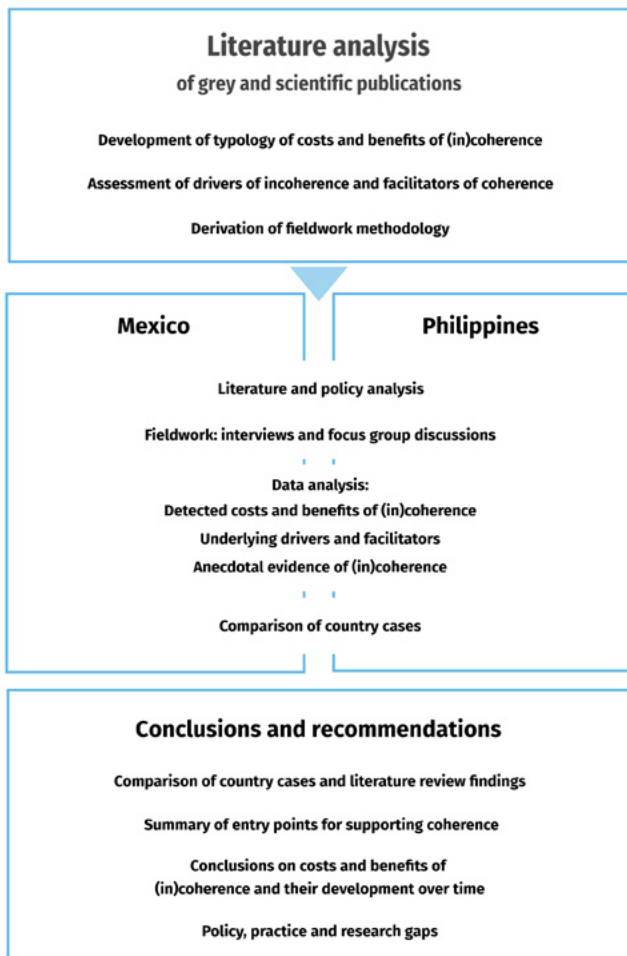
Figure 2: Research structure

A combination of deductive and inductive methods was used in order to gain a more robust understanding of coherence in the context of Post-2015 Agendas implementation. This approach was purposefully chosen to dive into the novel research field of agenda coherence where hardly any empirical studies or methodologies are available.

The study started with a systematic analysis of scientific literature on (in)coherence and an online as well as snowball sampling of grey literature to examine the state of knowledge and evidence regarding policy coherence in general. Scientific publications were assessed by a SCOPUS search using search terms (including policy, coherence, incoherence, disaster risk reduction, Sendai, New Urban Agenda, Sustainable Development Goal, Paris Agreement, Agenda 2015 and Agenda 2030, in different combinations). Overall 184 paper abstracts were obtained, of which 53 were found to be relevant and reviewed in depth. Together with 39 policy documents obtained in the web search they were analyzed in MAXQDA software regarding the methodology used, costs and benefits mentioned, case studies providing best or worst practice examples of (in)coherence, as well as underlying factors that contribute to, facilitate, complicate or hinder coherence.

The survey was complemented by more targeted reviews on the specific country cases, Mexico and the Philippines. The results together with feedback derived from discussion rounds with GIZ experts were the basis to develop the data collection methodology used in the field (see Figure 2).

Fieldwork was conducted in March 2019 at the national, state and municipal level in the form of expert interviews and focus group discussions with public servants of key

Table 1: Matrix guiding the assessment of coherence in disaster risk reduction during fieldwork

	Working areas of Agenda 2030		
	Policies/Planning	Implementation	Reporting/monitoring
Goals			
Are the goals and aims of the Agendas aligned considering the 3 working areas?			
Measures			
Are measures and actions of the Agendas aligned?			
Financial resources/budget spending			
Are funding and spending for the Agendas integrated?			
Staff & time			
Are staff and time resources allocated for the Agendas used in a coherent manner?			
Data and information			
Are information and data available, suitable and used in an integrated manner across the Agendas?			
Know-How			
Are methods, tools and guidelines available and used in an integrated manner across the Agendas?			
Other important aspects			
(please specify)			

Legend
y - yes
n - no
s - somewhat
? - do not know

institutions for the implementation of the agendas. In Mexico, additional interviews also included the views of local experts from academia or civil society to provide a more holistic overall picture. Seventeen interviews and focus groups were conducted in Mexico, involving the participation of 55 stakeholders. In the Philippines, five focus groups were held totalling 42 participants. As much as possible, fieldwork in Mexico and the Philippines followed the same approach, although practical considerations made researchers in one and the other country rely more on either focus groups or interviews. Subsequently extensive country reports were prepared before comparing key results and drawing overall conclusions in this synthesis report.

Interviews began with an actor mapping exercise using Venn diagrams to assess perceived overlaps between the SDGs, Sendai Framework, Paris Agreement, and the New Urban Agenda, as well as perceived responsibilities (results are available in the country reports [64, 65]). Afterwards, participants were shown a matrix discerning between working areas of the agendas (policy and planning, implementation, and reporting and monitoring), and potential levels of manifested (in)coherencies (goals, measures, budget spending, staff and time, data and information, know-how and any other aspect brought forward by the stakeholders) throughout these phases (see Table 1). Depending on context and time availability, participants were asked to either fill in the matrix or simply discuss their responses. The third phase consisted of more targeted prompting to elicit complementary anecdotal evidence in narrative form, or to expand on interesting issues previously mentioned. Most encounters were recorded prior to verbal consent of the participants, and meticulous notes were taken in every case.

The materials used for the activities, interview notes and partial recording transcripts served as primary data for the analysis of the country cases. Later, the emerging typology of costs and benefits as well as identified drivers were compared across country cases, and with the results of the literature review. Anecdote boxes, tables and graphics were used to synthesize and present results.

The selection of methodological tools did not intend to provide an exhaustive and objective analysis of policy coherence and incoherence in disaster risk management policy planning, implementation and reporting, but rather at collecting evidence about the manifestations and perceived advantages and disadvantages of (in)coherence based on participants' impressions from their day-to-day work. Participants were asked to speak not only from the perspective of their institutional roles, but as experienced witnesses of governmental efforts to implement the agendas. Findings, therefore, should be understood within their subjective value as a complement to the existing literature in the subject. Another consideration to bear in mind is that in some cases where different agencies and institutions were brought together to discuss perceived policy incoherencies, some participants may have been reluctant to fully share their opinion as it might have resulted in blaming or accusing participants representing other agencies/institutions. In general, the level of critical reflection and openness was higher during interviews and smaller groups.

Literature survey results

Both scientific and grey literature that discusses inter-linkages in the course of implementing the different Post-2015 Agendas documents is still scarce. Even fewer publications are available on coherencies and incoherencies in policy planning, implementation and progress reports of the agendas. The review of scientific and grey literature revealed hardly any available information on economic costs and benefits of (in)coherence. Most papers share an almost exclusive focus on qualitative policy analysis and assessments on a regional or country level. Only a few provide empirical or local case studies. Economic assessments or frameworks for doing such assessments are almost non-existent.

Policy documents generally concentrated on identifying the potential benefits of coherence and developing normative coherence frameworks or approaches, while scientific literature more often critically assessed the actual processes involved in policy alignment and related costs and benefits. Both bodies of literature either focused exclusively on vertical (in)coherence between different administrative levels (e.g. aligning EU with national policies), or on horizontal (in)coherence across different sectors (e.g. climate and energy), but seldom were the two perspectives analyzed jointly.

COHERENCE

Use of **synergies/co-benefits**, which contribute to multiple goals and minimize conflicts and inefficiencies [3, 13, 24, 51, 55, 61, 62]

Financial benefits: One joint fund for supporting different action [3, 55], minimizes further division of international resources by ensuring gains in one field do not reduce gains in another [3], identifies and addresses various potential cost types in early stages of policy making [6]

Facilitation of development, socio-economic growth and poverty alleviation [2, 13]

Common vision would spread farther than any one field could achieve on its own [3]

Coherence supports resilience to changing conditions [51]

Provides a better understanding among stakeholders [42]

Can counterbalance short-term political agendas [7]

INCOHERENCE

Can enable to guard a budget under pressure from being tapped into [25]

Reduces unforeseen transformation of problem due to major move in policies supposed to solve it [30]

Negative impacts of **ineffective policy design / implementation** [2, 10, 27, 61]

Isolated progress on one dimension/sector can impede/undermine progress on others/whole agendas [10, 13, 24]

Financial costs: Competition for resources [33], misallocation of resources [27], lack of buy-in and mixed signals for investment [27]

Conflicting agendas with competing visions and doctrines [10, 33]

Lack of stakeholder coordination [2, 27]

Reinforcement of political market imperfections [2]

Inefficiencies in monitoring [33]

Short-term development costs of coherence [2, 8]

Coherence in one area may undermine coherence elsewhere [30]

Would neither reduce the number of goals nor provide additional financing [3]

COSTS

Figure 3: Results of the literature survey on the costs and benefits of (in)coherence (multiple answers in bold)

The majority of relevant instances found in the review relate to the benefits of coherence and costs of incoherence, although these costs are rather descriptive and mostly not stated in economic terms. Some documents went beyond this assumed binary categorization between benefits of coherence and costs of incoherence by also identifying negative externalities of coherence, e.g. costs related to establishing coherence. Only a few benefits of incoherence were found in the literature.

Motivations for coherence and underlying drivers of incoherence

The literature survey revealed different underlying incentives to strive for coherence. The motivation mentioned most often for coherence-seeking is fostering and exploiting the synergies and co-benefits of coherence, while at the same time minimizing work duplications and contradictions, and to thus achieve development goals more easily [1–12, 13, 15]. This would, among other things, be beneficial to effectively address the Post-2015 Agendas in parts and as a whole [2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13-15] and to facilitate multi-sectoral or national governmental approaches, as isolated approaches have been found to be less effective given systemic interdependencies [7, 13, 16–20]. In contrast, increasing cooperation and coordination shows potential to spread benefits across actors at different scales [2, 7, 10, 14, 21], and to establish a positive vision of coherence as an enhancer of overall effectivity, credibility, resource efficiency and thus long-term gains [17, 22, 23]. Further motivations are related to development and international cooperation, including the potential of coherence for strengthening development, aid and policy effectiveness [6, 8, 24–26], and to ensure the mainstreaming of climate change (adaptation) into development [2, 7, 13, 27].

In addition to the motivation mentioned above, the survey also yielded a number of constraints for achieving coherence as well as factors that facilitate coherence (see Figure 4).
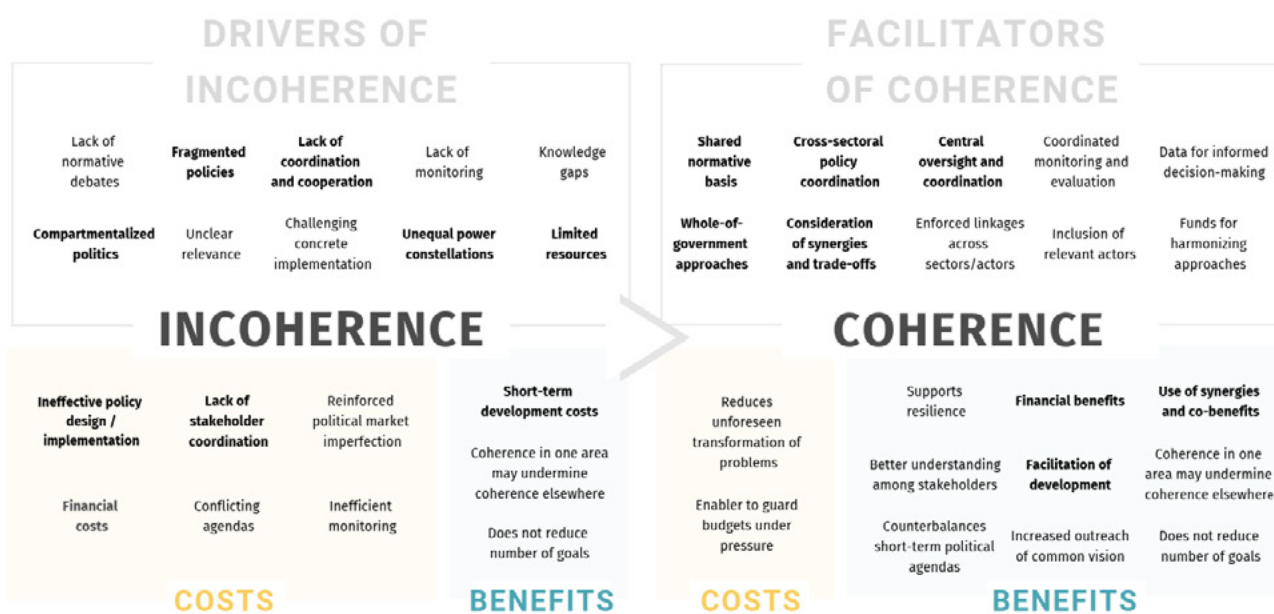

Figure 4: Underlying drivers of incoherence and their manifestations in costs and benefits as identified in the literature (bold: drivers/facilitators of coherence as mentioned in literature survey)

Key factors that facilitate coherence and drivers of incoherence were both first assessed in the literature and clustered into thematic groups (see Table 2). The key factors driving incoherence as mentioned in the literature are 1) compartmentalized politics [1, 2, 3, 4, 6–8, 10–12, 17, 20, 21, 23, 26, 28, 29, 30–35], 2) fragmented policies and separated policy processes [2, 7, 10, 14, 17, 21, 23, 26, 27, 30, 31, 36–39], 3) a lack of coordination and cooperation [1, 2, 6–8, 10, 17–19, 21, 27, 28, 30–35, 41, 42], 4) many actors with different knowledge, power, interests and values [3, 8, 17, 21, 27, 28, 30, 32, 34, 38, 42, 45] and 5) limited resources [2, 3, 7–9, 18, 27, 30, 32–34, 39, 46, 47].

In addition, key factors for achieving coherence were identified, namely 1) a shared normative basis [3, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 22, 24, 25, 28, 38, 41, 48–51], 2) a whole-of-government

approach with a shared vision [1, 3, 6–8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 23, 25–28, 30, 39, 42, 45, 52, 53], 3) cross-sectoral collaboration and exchange [3, 6, 8, 10, 16-17, 23, 27, 28, 30, 32, 35, 39, 42, 54], 4) the consideration of synergies and trade-offs across sectors and levels [8, 10, 13-15, 27, 35, 42, 48] and 5) central oversight and coordination [1, 3, 6–8, 10, 23, 26, 27, 31, 33, 37, 40, 44, 48, 52, 57].

Overall, politics, policy and coordination have the potential to either facilitate coherence or drive incoherence, depending on the approach. An additional key factor that facilitates coherence is an underlying normative basis agreed among the involved actors. In contrast, practical challenges like many actors and limited budgets drive incoherence.

Table 2: Results of the literature survey on drivers of incoherence and factors that benefit coherence
(bold: five key factors/constraints as mentioned in literature survey, sources: [1-4, 6-42, 44-54, 57])

	Drivers of incoherence	Facilitators of coherence
Normative aspects	Lack of normative debates: Biases and overall shortage of discourses	**Shared normative basis: Mutual line of argumentation, awareness of potential benefits of coherence of all actors**
Politics	Compartmentalized politics: Conflicting and mutually hindering objectives, subsystems with own logics, interests and constraints	**Whole-of-government approaches: Political commitment, integration mechanism considering impacts on other sectors, shared vision**
Policies	**Fragmented policies: short-term approaches, separation of policy processes, amorphous targets and tensions among policy areas**	Cross-sectoral policy coordination: Exchange among policy sectors, establishment of bodies in support of more coherent policy implementation
Planning	Unclear relevance: Need for clearly defined parameter and support to translate goals to appropriate targets and indicators	**Consideration of synergies and trade-offs: Assessment, identification, recognition and clear description of interlinkages across sectors and levels, creation of enabling setups**
Coordination	**Lack of coordination and cooperation across sectors and scales: Siloed power, competing priorities, systemic feedbacks, dependencies and conflicts between sectors**	**Central oversight and coordination: Alignment of goals, targets, methodologies and indicators, mechanisms and plans encouraging long-term planning and mainstreaming**
Implementation	Challenging ensurance of coherence: Lack of concrete measures and guidance, challenges due to links and dependencies among goals	Enforced linkages: Integrated implementation among and across sectors and actors, including assessments, capacity building, institutional structures
Monitoring/reporting	Lack in monitoring coherence: Absence of indicators, reporting formats, accountability	Coordinated monitoring and evaluation: Cross-sectoral, participatory & evidence-based
Actors	**Unequal power constellations: Multitude of actors with different knowledge, interests and values**	Inclusion of relevant actors: Stakeholder collaboration & integration across scales and disciplines
Data & knowledge	Knowledge gaps: Lack of data availability, research, and implementation of findings	Data for informed choices: Data available to all actors and data integration, incorporation of existing research
Financial resources	**Limited resources: Competition for funding, lack of incentives for collective action**	Funds for harmonizing approaches: Allowing for pooling of financial sources

Challenges of achieving and measuring coherence

The review shows that there are analytical and practical limitations in current abilities to design coherent policies and to assess their efficacy. Stemming from this theoretical and methodological dearth are also operational challenges.

Methodological challenges found in the literature review include the need for analytical concepts and approaches that bridge vertical and horizontal coherence [1, 19, 60] and related integrative systematic enquiries to address complex, dynamic and interrelated problems with respective stakeholders [8, 10, 19, 57]. Other methodological difficulties mentioned relate to measuring coherence such as the consideration of cross-sectoral impacts [1, 7] and the selection of time horizons [1]. Another particular challenge is to find the right metrics for measuring something abstract like policy coherence and the costs but also benefits associated with it. Particularly, it seems difficult to find metrics that work for both costs and benefits, with costs often quantified in monetary value and benefits often described in non-monetary qualitative terms [51].

To measure coherence, some documents suggest developing more integrated indicator sets that would contribute to different agendas and sectors [7, 10, 23], an issue that has been found challenging in cases where trade-offs and causality chains need to be taken into account [4]. A lack of cross-country comparable data [10] or empirical documentation of decisions and processes linked to policy coherence [8] can be a further hindrance, as well as a lack of or differences in resources on the ground [10, 23].

One of the main challenges for implementing and operationalizing coherence is attribution, that is for instance the question if a certain lack or underperformance of policy implementation can be attributed without doubt to a lack of policy coherence [1, 7, 48]. Another challenge is the ambiguous characterization of coherence, which in literature is taken as an instrument, process or approach. Hence it is hard to operationalize and measure [1, 7, 30, 44, 48]. Literature also provided only limited guidance on (in) coherence in the context of climate and disaster risk. The question remains how to standardize as operative guidelines the interactions of different targets which are bound to be different depending on contexts [34], given that the evaluation is also a question of perspective, as some actions may appear incoherent in one perspective yet fit when viewed as part of an alternative one [30].

More systematic studies would be beneficial to establish coherence as a steering concept in sustainable development, since transformation needs to be based on coherent key objectives [24, 38]. Such transformation could be facilitated further by countries' willingness and understanding of coherence [4, 30, 38] as well as clearer definitions of what are so far rather vaguely formulated coherence goals [20, 38, 45]. On the conceptual side this would support moving beyond a still predominantly binary view that sees coherence as exclusively positive and incoherence as only negative [34, 38].

To deepen the understanding of costs and benefits related to both coherence and incoherence, as well as triggering factors, two field studies were carried out in Mexico and the Philippines.

Country case study

Mexico

Mexico has pioneered diverse policies and programs to align the Post-2015 Agendas, yet challenges remain daunting. In order to understand the context of policy (in)coherence in Mexico, a short look at its vertical and horizontal governance structure and how (in)coherence manifests in practice is important.

As will be expanded on later, the electoral calendar and ensuing administrative changes have a large influence on public policy, including in the implementation of the Post-2015 Agendas. Mexico is a federal republic with 31 states and the federal district of Mexico City. A new president is elected every six years, which generally entails the renewal of key ministerial positions as well as a considerable proportion of the federal government personnel. Since 2018, Andrés Manuel López Obrador has been leading a new government administration. Office tenure length of state governors and municipality mayors differs (six years for the former and two to four for the latter), which translates into a more frequent turnover of personnel at the ground level as compared to higher hierarchical levels. As will be expanded on later, the electoral calendar and ensuing administrative changes have a large influence on public policy, including in the implementation of the Post-2015 Agendas. The institutions charged as national focal points for the agendas are the Office of the Presidency (OPR) for the SDGs (OECD, 2018), The National System

Video:
Mar Moure on the
Mexico case study

of Civil Protection (SINAPROC) and the National Center for Disaster Prevention (CENAPRED)[2] for the Sendai Framework, the Ministry of Environment (SEMARNAT) and the National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change (INECC) for developing the strategic plans for the Paris Agreement commitments, and the Secretary of Agrarian, Land and Urban Development (SEDATU) for Habitat III (the New Urban Agenda)[3].

Mexico is an actively engaged actor in multilateral instances and had a high profile in the preparation and development of the Post-2015 Agendas. The country representatives have also publicly made a case for policy coherence. For instance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has highlighted its commitment to treating disaster risk reduction as an integral part of a macro strategy that seeks "coherence and consistency among the relevant processes in the areas of climate change, sustainable development, humanitarian affairs and international cooperation."[4]

2   https://www.preventionweb.net/english/countries/americas/mex/
      Accessed 29 April, 2019.

3   http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/preparatory-process/national-participation/mexi
      co/ Accessed 29 April, 2019.

4   https://mision.sre.gob.mx/oi/index.php/areas-tematicas/desastres Accessed 29 April, 2019.

At a domestic level, Mexico has also taken significant steps towards a more coherent approach for tackling the issues raised in the international agendas. In recent years, the Mexican government has created and modified laws, policies and guidelines in order to have a normative framework conducive to the inclusion of transversal goals. It has restructured some ministerial mandates, functions and organizational arrangements in the pursuit of improved cross-sectoral alignments. It has also promoted and made visible good practices that foster coherence, piloted promising projects and implemented other initiatives on a larger scale (e.g. ARISE partnership). However, despite the advancements made and the manifested will to improve, the challenges remain daunting. Certain aspects of the way the institutional system is organized, the prevalent political culture and deep-rooted vulnerabilities act not only to enable but also incentivize fragmentation. A series of catastrophic earthquakes in 2017 and hurricanes in 2018, as well as the arguably faulty following recovery and reconstruction processes, served as a reality check of the societal cost that patchwork policies and uncoordinated programs may entail.

Evidence of (in)coherence

The interviews conducted during the fieldwork yielded a rich ensemble of examples of how both coherence and incoherence manifest in the daily work of public servants. Examples of incoherence were both rich and specific (see selected examples in Boxes 1 and 2 in the anecdotal evidence section), describing cases of failing and contradictory interventions stemming from contradictory priorities or lack of coordination; cases of duplication of efforts and inefficient use of resources; illustrations of a reactive, patchwork approach that leaves risks unaddressed and may even create new risks; problems linked to fragmented information and non-transparent data; suboptimal reporting (internationally); and also cases of corruption, legal battles and social discontent that could be partly traced back to incoherencies. In comparison, examples of the benefits of incoherence were less numerous or concrete, and had to do with increased specialization of institutional functions, clear (institutional) mandates, differentiated priorities and informality. The examples given about coherence were succinct and often hypothetical, possibly because this is an ongoing process that is too recent to gain a certain perspective, and perhaps because some of the benefits are perceived as being implicitly understood. Benefits of coherence were related to the optimization of budget efficiency and human resources, to increased transparency, outreach and uptake of information, capacities and competitiveness, and to innovative projects to tackle complex problems (see example in Box 3 in the anecdotal evidence section). On the other hand, examples of the downside of kicking-off a coherence-seeking process were linked to the time, workload and money required to develop structures, plans, information and capacities for coherence (as well as the related opportunity cost), to challenges of seeking agreement, to lobbying, to creating a common technical and non-technical narrative and to political costs (see example in Box 4 in the anecdotal evidence section).

A common thread throughout the interviews was the uncertainty brought about by a new presidency under a different political party, as people expect a reconfiguration of priorities within the administration. Informants stated doubts about the continuation of previously negotiated plans, ongoing programs and alliances, whenever current political interests do not align. In 2018 López Obrador ran on a platform of fostering social and economic development for the most marginalized groups as a basis for shared prosperity. Due to this focus, the SDGs have gained relevance: They have been included in the most recent amendment to the Law of Planning (2018), and the "leave no one behind" banner appears as a guiding principle for the National Development Plan (NDP) 2019–2024. The president has also favored devolving faculties to the states and municipalities, a clear break from the centralized authority the federation has historically exerted. In this process, land-use planning has become a priority tool, indirectly raising the profile of urban planning and the role of the New Urban Agenda. In contrast, climate change and environmental risks – which were given much more political support in previous presidencies – figure only in passing in the NDP.
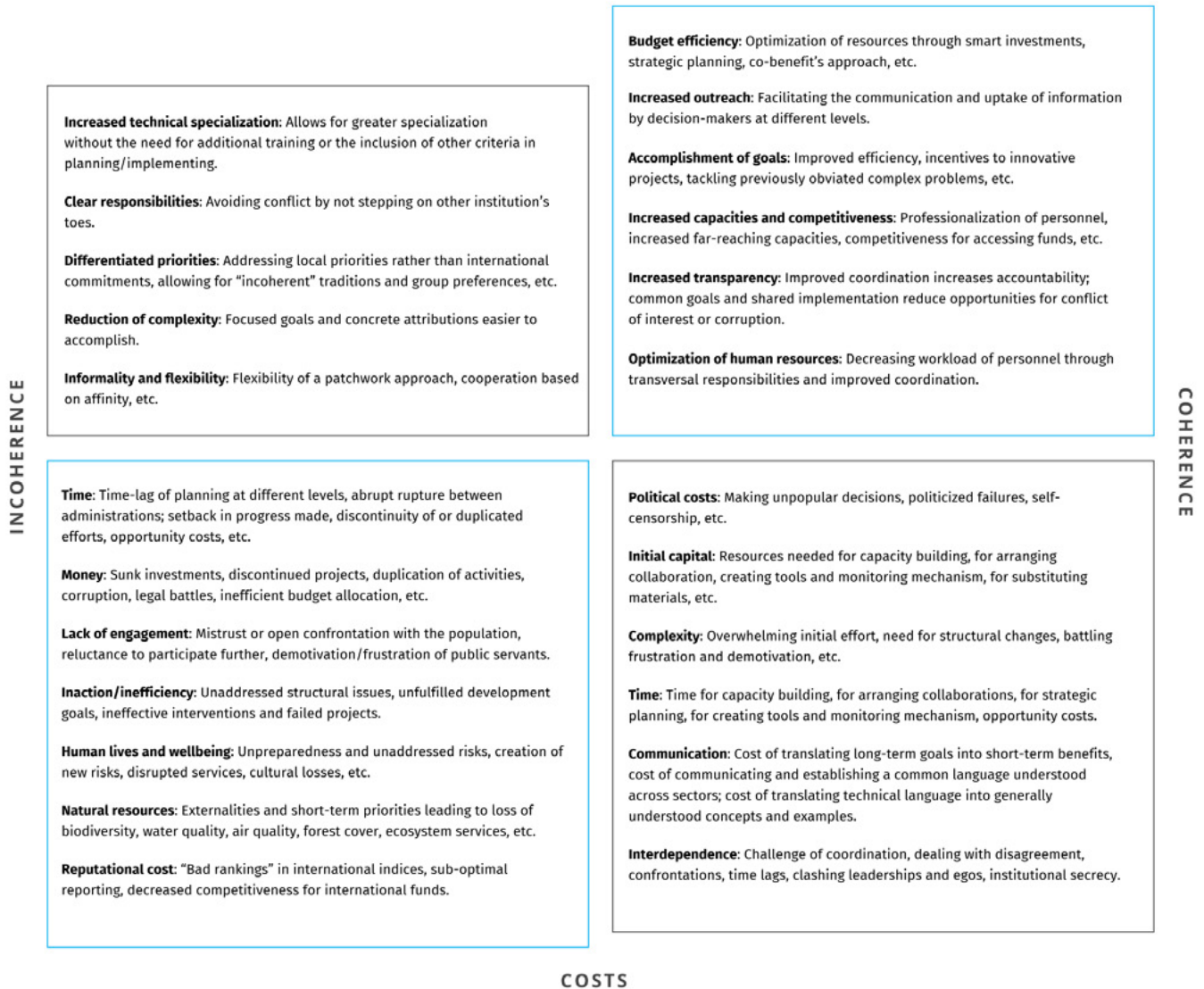
BENEFITS

INCOHERENCE

COHERENCE

Increased technical specialization: Allows for greater specialization without the need for additional training or the inclusion of other criteria in planning/implementing.

Clear responsibilities: Avoiding conflict by not stepping on other institution's toes.

Differentiated priorities: Addressing local priorities rather than international commitments, allowing for "incoherent" traditions and group preferences, etc.

Reduction of complexity: Focused goals and concrete attributions easier to accomplish.

Informality and flexibility: Flexibility of a patchwork approach, cooperation based on affinity, etc.

Budget efficiency: Optimization of resources through smart investments, strategic planning, co-benefit's approach, etc.

Increased outreach: Facilitating the communication and uptake of information by decision-makers at different levels.

Accomplishment of goals: Improved efficiency, incentives to innovative projects, tackling previously obviated complex problems, etc.

Increased capacities and competitiveness: Professionalization of personnel, increased far-reaching capacities, competitiveness for accessing funds, etc.

Increased transparency: Improved coordination increases accountability; common goals and shared implementation reduce opportunities for conflict of interest or corruption.

Optimization of human resources: Decreasing workload of personnel through transversal responsibilities and improved coordination.

Time: Time-lag of planning at different levels, abrupt rupture between administrations; setback in progress made, discontinuity of or duplicated efforts, opportunity costs, etc.

Money: Sunk investments, discontinued projects, duplication of activities, corruption, legal battles, inefficient budget allocation, etc.

Lack of engagement: Mistrust or open confrontation with the population, reluctance to participate further, demotivation/frustration of public servants.

Inaction/inefficiency: Unaddressed structural issues, unfulfilled development goals, ineffective interventions and failed projects.

Human lives and wellbeing: Unpreparedness and unaddressed risks, creation of new risks, disrupted services, cultural losses, etc.

Natural resources: Externalities and short-term priorities leading to loss of biodiversity, water quality, air quality, forest cover, ecosystem services, etc.

Reputational cost: "Bad rankings" in international indices, sub-optimal reporting, decreased competitiveness for international funds.

Political costs: Making unpopular decisions, politicized failures, self-censorship, etc.

Initial capital: Resources needed for capacity building, for arranging collaboration, creating tools and monitoring mechanism, for substituting materials, etc.

Complexity: Overwhelming initial effort, need for structural changes, battling frustration and demotivation, etc.

Time: Time for capacity building, for arranging collaborations, for strategic planning, for creating tools and monitoring mechanism, opportunity costs.

Communication: Cost of translating long-term goals into short-term benefits, cost of communicating and establishing a common language understood across sectors; cost of translating technical language into generally understood concepts and examples.

Interdependence: Challenge of coordination, dealing with disagreement, confrontations, time lags, clashing leaderships and egos, institutional secrecy.

COSTS

Figure 5: Manifestations of the costs and benefits of (in)coherence synthesized from the Mexico fieldwork

It is probably in part due to this juncture of anxieties and hopes of starting a new administration that the typology of final costs and benefits resulting from the analysis of anecdotal evidence for the case of Mexico (Table 2) is broader and richer than that derived from the review of scientific and grey literature conducted during the desktop phase of the project (see chapter 2). In particular, the number of distinct **costs of coherence reflect the challenges of public servants in striving for coherence, which has hitherto been underestimated in the literature**. There were examples pertaining to basically all categories at the different levels of government, only changing the stress on drivers (e.g. municipalities emphasized the limited technical capacities they had,

the limited time to implement, and a dearth of baseline data and records due to disruptive transitions). Nevertheless, the costs of incoherence together with the benefits of coherence seem to outweigh the advantages of the continuity of incoherent practices, especially when considering a medium- to long-term perspective.

Overall, the anecdotal evidence derived from the perception of public servants covers a number of practical issues (e.g. translating goals into non-technical language, dealing with multiple stakeholders), besides mentioning more abstract questions (overwhelming complexity, risk of reputational loss). Indeed, the majority of concrete examples provided by participants of the study spoke of the

inefficient use of time, funding and human resources, and the impact this has on society. Additionally, the anecdotal evidence provides multiple examples of the psychological and behavioral elements at play both in perpetuating the status quo and in attempting change, e.g. reputational and political costs, demotivation of personnel and mistrust. Interestingly, although the interviewed stakeholders emphasized the role of discontinuity and rupture in exacerbating incoherencies, none of them stated that increased coherence could somehow guarantee long-term resilience in the face of changing conditions. It is likely that rupture is perceived as a structural problem tied to the political and normative configuration of the country, and thus beyond the areas of opportunity provided by an increase of coherence among the agendas. Similarly, whereas stakeholders were keen to mention budgetary issues linked to incoherence and even mentioned budget optimization as a benefit of coherence (mostly understood as avoiding duplication of efforts, reducing corruption and making smart investments), no stakeholder explicitly ventured the possibility of having joint funds with other institutions.

Anecdotal evidence

The four boxes below are examples of the anecdotal evidence collected in the field. These cases illustrate some of the most concrete examples provided by stakeholders in a condensed format. Only sentences in quotation marks are verbatim. The choice of cases also considers the proportionate distribution of examples of costs and of benefits of (in)coherence in the dataset, where costs of incoherence are more abundant.

Multiple spatial planning tools that contradict each other

Cost of incoherence	The new administration (2018–2024) has identified the need for creating a comprehensive baseline of how the territory looks in the present through nation-wide land-use zoning for future planning (*ordenamientos territoriales*) and made it a flagship of the government. However, this is only one of a series of spatial tools used to organize the territory of Mexico – tools which have so far been disconnected. There is an ecological spatial planning tool (*ordenamientos ecológicos*), which characterizes the territory based on ecosystem variables (e.g. connectivity, vegetation, etc.), and the Atlases of Risk, which divide the territory according to natural and man-made risk factors. There have been efforts to pair the land-zoning plan to the ecological plans, while including climate change scenarios and prospective risk assessments. However, "for administrative reasons" the initiative of a combined tool did not go through. Presently, the outcomes of these land-planning tools are often contradictory, which prompts the ultimate decision makers (the municipalities) to ignore the results and act according to their own criteria, "which has some cities in a disastrous state." To illustrate, interviewees mentioned the case where in the same land unit the federal government had implemented programs where some beneficiaries were given stimulus for deforesting (e.g. to start new cropping systems) while at the same time others – if not even the same beneficiaries – received stimulus for forest conservation. This contradiction existed despite the fact that the ministries responsible for each program sat together on cross-sectoral committees.
Costs	Faulty planning, conflicting interventions, suboptimal use of resources, loss in public credibility
Related agendas	Sustainable Development Goals, New Urban Agenda, Paris Agreements, Sendai Framework

Box 1: Anecdotal evidence for costs of incoherence in Mexico

Urban development that generates risks: lack of vertical coherence

Cost of incoherence	In an effort to boost the economic development of an impoverished region of the state of Oaxaca through the improvement of road-carrying capacity and connectivity, the main road connecting Tehuantepec to Salina Cruz was expanded from two to four lanes. Before this work was done, the houses along the road were at the same level as the road. However, after the road was expanded – which required much land filling – the houses were close to two metres below the level of the road. After this "development intervention," the whole neighbourhood suffered severe flooding during the next rainy season, as there were no channels to drain the water that became trapped against the road sides. Management of inter-city roads (federal roads) is the mandate of the Ministry of Communication and Transport, while the city sewage system and related services are responsibilities of the local governments. The lack of communication and coordinated action between local and national institutions created a new risk for a previously unexposed sector of the population.
Costs	Losses and damage from creation of new risks, patchwork expenses, inter-institutional confrontation
Related agendas	Sustainable Development Goals, Sendai Framework

Box 2: Anecdotal evidence for costs of incoherence in Mexico

Oversight and transparency: improving coordination of building procedures

Benefits of coherence	All new urban constructions require an approving expert opinion. Until recently, the expert opinion in Mexico City could be delivered by any of three institutions (Civil Protection, Mexico City's Secretaries of Environment (SEDEMA) and Urban Development and Housing (SEDUVI)), each of which considers quite different parameters given their sectoral expertise. In the past, developers were able to apply to multiple institutions for an expert opinion and "cherry-pick" the one most favorable to their plans. However, the government has addressed this loophole by creating a new one-stop-shop system ("*Sistema de ventanilla única*") to make expert opinions on urbanism plans coordinated and binding, improving the transparency of the process and strengthening disaster risk reduction criteria within building codes.
Benefits	Institutional coordination, improved oversight and increased transparency, contribution to urban development, risk reduction and sustainable development goals
Related agendas	Sendai Framework, New Urban Agenda, Sustainable Development Goals

Box 3: Anecdotal evidence for benefits of coherence in Mexico

Lost in translation: the organizational hurdles of building coherence

Cost of coherence	Coherence brings along the need for time and specialized personnel to be able to translate the general objectives of the agendas into concrete operational measures. Administrative and technical procedures to incorporate innovations in established agency operations are extremely tedious, costly and time-intensive. Generally, tasks related to ensuring coherence across agendas have not been seen as part of the normal responsibilities of regular staff, so it has been mostly dealt with by hiring external consultants. Besides the costs of consultancy fees, the short and punctual intervention of consultants is not enough to make procedural changes, so the knowledge produced and recommended practices are often discontinued after the person leaves or the consultancy is over. However, assigning extra responsibilities to currently thinly stretched resources might be counterproductive. Some informants were concerned about the opportunity cost of doing otherwise: Building up a structure of coherence and a common narrative for the public will take time while the clock for implementing and reporting keeps ticking. Investing in coherence entails the diversion of personnel, time and effort that could be used for implementation.
Costs	Opportunity costs, capacity-building, time and money
Related agendas	Sustainable Development Goals, New Urban Agenda, Paris Agreements, Sendai Framework

Box 4: Anecdotal evidence for costs of coherence in Mexico

Underlying drivers of incoherence found in the case of Mexico

The factors driving incoherence most recurrently cited by participants to this study are categorized below.

1. Temporal mismatches: A fundamental hindrance to the alignment of governmental action stems from the different time spans for holding office (six years for the president and most key ministerial positions, four years for the state governments and two or three years for municipalities). Although the onsets of some state and local administrations coincide with the beginning of a new presidency, this is by no means always the case. Regarding institutional cooperation, this translates into mismatched stages of the personnel's learning curve, and the need to regularly renew contacts and counterparts in other agencies.

2. Discontinuity and rupture: In general and to different degrees, every administration turnover in the recent history of Mexico has been a major disruption to governmental activities. To date, there are no governmental plans or national programs that carry over six years, the length of

the presidential mandate[5]. This means that there has been no unified chronogram of action to guide the implementation of the international agendas from the year they were signed and that three different presidential administrations will have governed the country in the period from 2015 to 2030, each of which has the legal capacity to redefine priorities and discontinue previously implemented actions. Furthermore, there has been a trend towards a six-year (presidential term length) oscillation in the visibility of the agenda topics, as the positioning of one or the other agenda at the forefront of the government discourse responds to the need to differentiate each administration from their predecessors and to prioritize "political commitments." The culture of rupture rather than transition is even more accentuated at the local level, where often there is virtually no relay of functions but a complete start over from scratch.

3. A heavy bureaucracy with strict hierarchies: Strict hierarchies and heavy bureaucratic processes inhibit de-

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5   The planning law (Ley de Planeación) was reformed in 2018 to consider provisions towards the achievements of the SDGs targets for 2030 [67], although the amendment is formulated as a non-mandatory act.

centralized collaborations and innovative practices. While staff are encouraged to be proactive and think innovatively, in reality there are few incentives to work beyond the achievement of mandated tasks, despite apparent full disposition at medium – more technical — ranks to collaborate with other agencies. However, because hierarchies are very rigid, it is key to harness the will of top functionaries. The lack of flexibility of administrative requirements is also a source of discouragement to local decentralized initiatives.

4. Siloed approaches with budgetary rigidity: Working in silos is appealing because 1) it helps institutions reduce complex problems into manageable targeted tasks and 2) it mitigates the fear of deviating from one's clear core mandates and stepping on some other agency's toes. This phenomenon is reinforced by the strict labelling of budget expenses, which effectively inhibits investing resources in non-core institutional themes, and makes it virtually impossible to pool funds with other agencies for joint wider scope projects/programs.

5. Disconnection between planning and implementation: The difficulty to achieve full-fledged implementation of coherent programs is perceived to be linked to a disconnection between high-level circles and the local realities, as there seems to be very scarce communication between those who design policies and plans and those who are bound to execute them. As the plans and policies are translated from the federal level to the local, they are stripped of the link to overarching or transversal goals and take on a narrower technical perspective meant for operation, or favor local goals over national – and international – priorities.

6. Knowledge and capacity disparities: There is a great disparity in quantity and quality between the information produced by different states. Because technical capacities to conduct such assessments are lacking at the local and even state levels, only the wealthier or best-positioned states or municipalities can afford to contract consultancy firms.
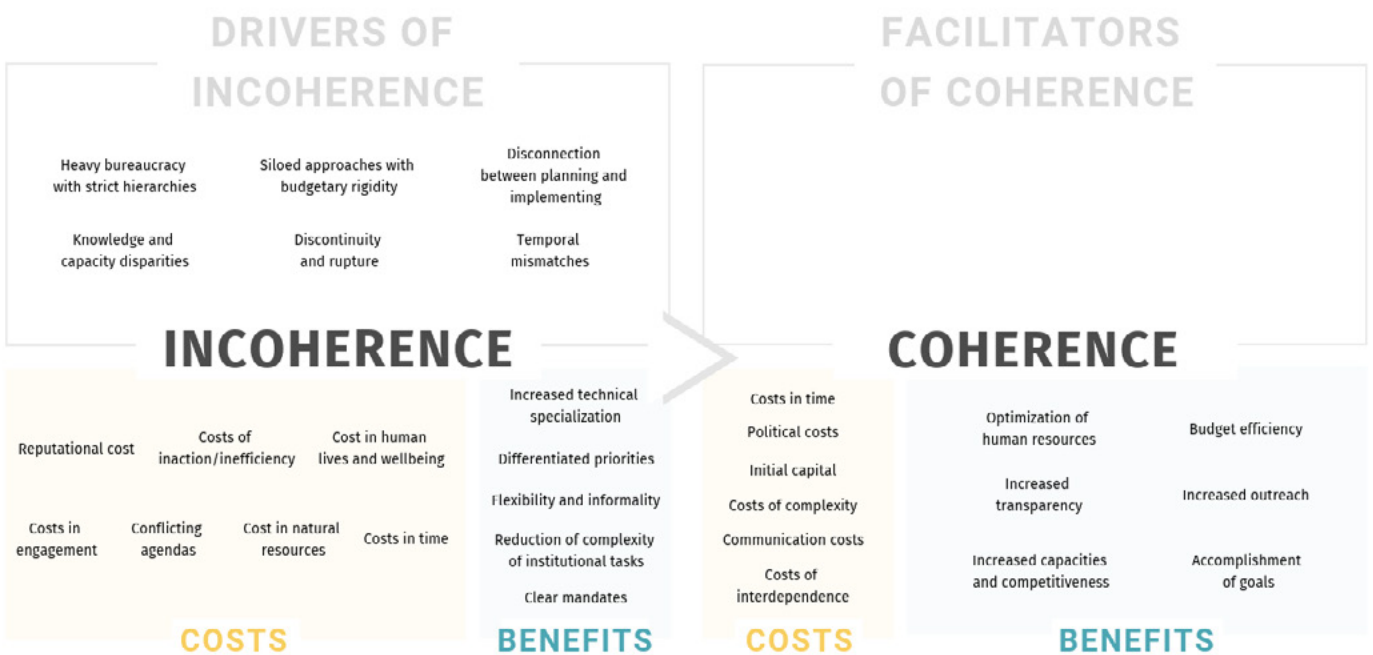

Figure 6: Underlying drivers of incoherence and their manifestations in costs and benefits in Mexico

Findings

The results of the Mexico case study show that the achievement of the direct and indirect benefits of coherent practices requires much more than the alignment of goals and priorities at a policy level. Trying to implement and maintain coherence without consideration of the underlying drivers of incoherence is almost certainly doomed and risks increasing "policy fatigue." Rather than seeing coherence as an add-on, the process requires concrete steps to enable the reshaping of institutional arrangements, each of which is subdivided into smaller tasks. So for instance to facilitate times and spaces for cross-sectoral collaboration, smaller steps mentioned by the informants include establishing memoranda of understanding (MoUs), creating shared positions for personnel that work as cross-sectoral bridges, or scheduling regular meetings in an ad hoc space. Of course some of these measures presuppose physical vicinity between the institutions, so it is no wonder that some of the best examples of collaboration happen at the same geographic level (e.g. between the civil protection agency of Mexico City and federal government institutions). Other necessary steps for enabling coherence that were mentioned are modifying budget allocation criteria and labelling to incentivize the pooling of resources, joint projects and smart investments despite longer return periods; creating medium- and long-term road maps and setting up structures that smoothen the relay of administrations; building technical capacities at all levels and promoting peer-learning and exchanges to avoid over-specialization and silos; providing incentives for self-driven, autonomous work and innovative thinking in order to boost the motivation of personnel; improving the transparency and access to all relevant data; and systematically cataloguing available methodologies, best practices and the identification of knowledge gaps. Very importantly, it also requires taking up to speed the feedback loop of political engagement and raising public awareness about the goals and co-benefits of the coherent implementation of the agendas (and the costs of an incoherent approach) in order for this to become a matter of public concern that can reinforce the accountability of political commitments.

It is clear that coherence, in this context, will not be achieved effortlessly. Business-as-usual topped with cosmetic alignments is the path of least resistance. However, efforts for coherence need to aim at structural changes as well as at addressing the practicalities of political and behavioral inertia. Fortunately, the fieldwork conducted for this study made clear that the current times present a favorable juncture for transformative change, and that despite having a critically realistic view of the costs involved in a strive for coherence, public servants – at least in mid-ranks — are willing in the worst case and motivated at best to make a change. Moreover, at different locations stakeholders underlined the important supportive role of international organizations and funds in their efforts for coherence. Not only do these organizations bring attention to international commitments and contribute to the production of knowledge and to capacity-building, but in certain cases the funds they facilitate are the only way to bypass the rigidity of allocated budgets in order to tap beyond their core mandated functions. While this external assistance is crucial for reinforcing or transitioning into solid and capable working structures, some stakeholders raised the issue that long-lasting and sustainable coherence requires taking ownership of a number of tasks that are currently being facilitated by external institutions.

Country case study

Philippines

In response to the increasing exposure and vulnerability to climate change and disaster risk the Philippines introduced a number of legal documents.

In 2009 and 2010, respectively, the Philippines developed and introduced the Climate Change Act and the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act. As a sound legal basis, these acts initiated the mainstreaming of aspects of disaster risk management and climate change adaptation across policy planning and implementation, culminating in the establishment of a sophisticated and complex multi-level, cross-sectoral policy framework with oversight institutions such as the Climate Change Commission (CCC) for managing climate change and disaster risk even before the Post-2015 Agendas came into being. The developed structures allowed for a prompt mainstreaming and alignment of Post-2015 Agendas goals in existing plans such as the national long-term development agenda AmBisyon Natin 2040 as well as in the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017–2022. Following a hierarchical process from national to lowest administrative level, plans and goals are translated to the regional, provincial and municipal level where they are finally planned and implemented through local policies and programmes. Hence, mainstreamed and aligned Post-2015 Agendas goals are well reflected in policy plans across different levels in the Philippines. Due

Video Mia Wannewitz on the Philippines case study

to the Local Government Code of 1991, policy planning, implementation and accountability is significantly decentralized, giving local government units (LGUs) considerable autonomy and responsibility. Not only are the cross-cutting agenda goals themselves challenging, requiring a multitude of actors and sectors to adopt and implement the framework in strong cooperation and coordination, but this challenge is also reinforced with respect to coherence by the high level of autonomy of the LGUs. While efforts have been made to advance policy coherence since the beginning of the integration of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) policies, such as the establishment of oversight institutions like the CCC and the Cabinet Cluster on Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation and Disaster Risk Reduction (CCCCAM-DRR) or the reduction of the burden of policy planning through the rationalized planning system, some challenges and untapped potentials remain unaddressed.

Evidence of (in)coherence

The focus group discussions conducted from the local to the national administrative level with governmental staff in the Philippines yielded insightful anecdotal evidence for manifestations of incoherence and related costs and benefits (Figure 7). Despite the research set-up inhibiting mutual blaming of participants from different ministries or agencies, self-critical reflection and the sharing of personal perspectives allowed incoherencies at different levels to be identified, including their respective implications. These implications were, however, always discussed together with drivers of incoherence. Examples of costs of incoherence mostly focused on the inefficient use of time, staff and money due to a lack of exchange, collaboration and coordination between various actors horizontally as well as vertically, causing redundancies and overlaps, especially in data collection and management (see Box 5). Moreover, negative implications for the natural environment as well as human well-being were brought up in relation to conflicting policy plans and priorities. Another major concern of all participants was the loss of capacities and know-how due to incoherencies in capacity-building and human resource management, which they strongly linked to reduced performance and output quality as well as the engagement of staff and politicians.

While mostly neglected in the scientific and grey literature, participants also shared benefits of incoherence, which mostly stem from redundant structures. The securing of funding from different sources and repeated training were mentioned as well as the opportunity to have more exchange between staff sitting in the same council meetings. Despite their existence, the benefits of incoherence cannot outweigh its costs. Also, they are mostly linked to other problems such as the diversion of funding or gaps in capacity-building in overlooked communities.
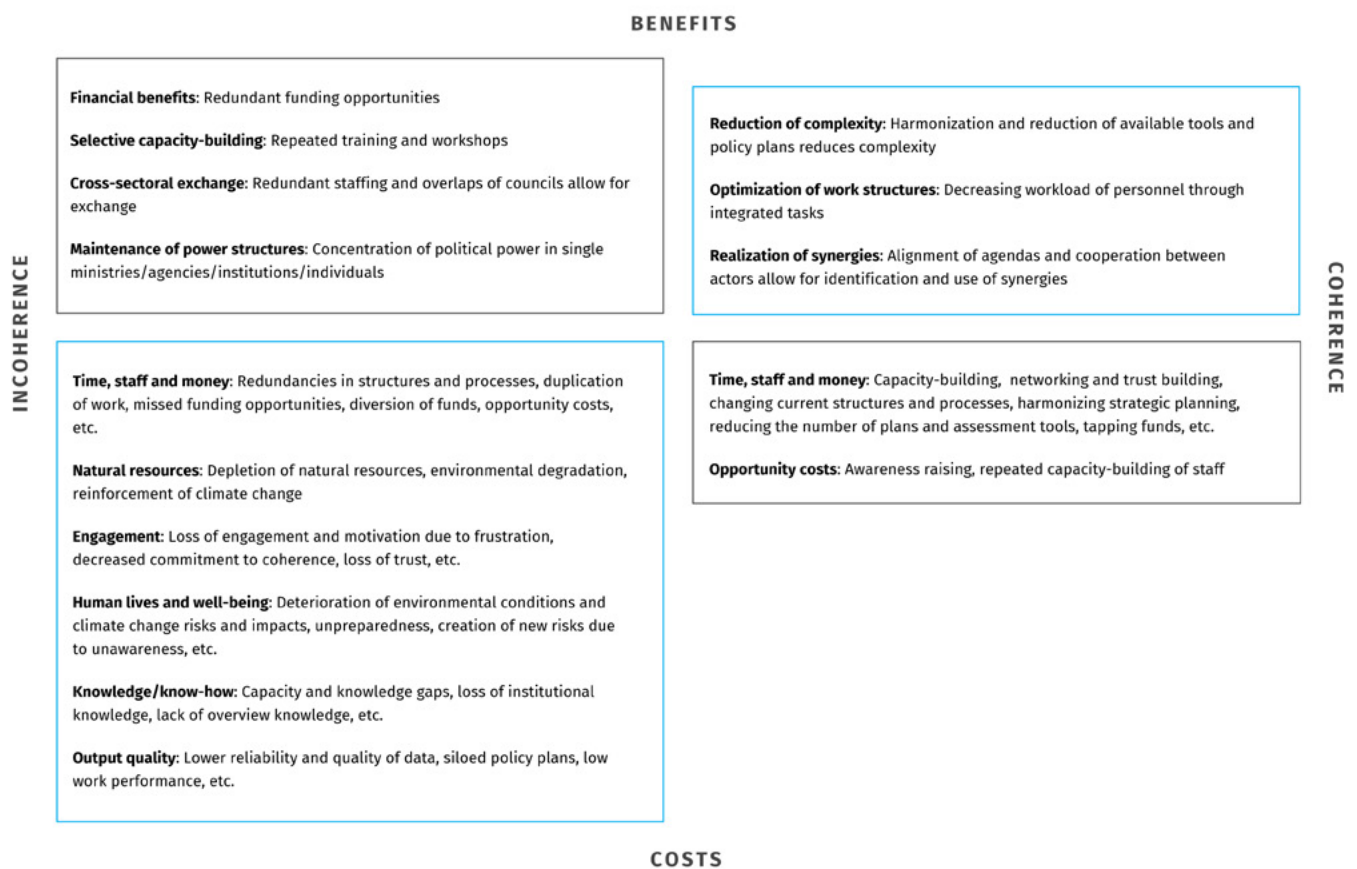
BENEFITS

INCOHERENCE

Financial benefits: Redundant funding opportunities

Selective capacity-building: Repeated training and workshops

Cross-sectoral exchange: Redundant staffing and overlaps of councils allow for exchange

Maintenance of power structures: Concentration of political power in single ministries/agencies/institutions/individuals

COHERENCE

Reduction of complexity: Harmonization and reduction of available tools and policy plans reduces complexity

Optimization of work structures: Decreasing workload of personnel through integrated tasks

Realization of synergies: Alignment of agendas and cooperation between actors allow for identification and use of synergies

Time, staff and money: Redundancies in structures and processes, duplication of work, missed funding opportunities, diversion of funds, opportunity costs, etc.

Natural resources: Depletion of natural resources, environmental degradation, reinforcement of climate change

Engagement: Loss of engagement and motivation due to frustration, decreased commitment to coherence, loss of trust, etc.

Human lives and well-being: Deterioration of environmental conditions and climate change risks and impacts, unpreparedness, creation of new risks due to unawareness, etc.

Knowledge/know-how: Capacity and knowledge gaps, loss of institutional knowledge, lack of overview knowledge, etc.

Output quality: Lower reliability and quality of data, siloed policy plans, low work performance, etc.

Time, staff and money: Capacity-building, networking and trust building, changing current structures and processes, harmonizing strategic planning, reducing the number of plans and assessment tools, tapping funds, etc.

Opportunity costs: Awareness raising, repeated capacity-building of staff

COSTS

Figure 7: Manifestations of the costs and benefits of (in)coherence found in the Philippines

Interestingly, the benefits of coherence were barely brought up. The importance of policy coherence and its positive implications seemed to be clear or were being advocated as an unquestionable priority. Benefits were mostly mentioned related to visions of overcoming incoherence by addressing its drivers (see 3.2.3). For instance, by reducing and harmonizing the overburden of plans and assessment tools, complexity could be reduced, work structures could be optimized and potential co-benefits identified and used. At the same time, participants also linked these visions of more coherence to costs as addressing the drivers would require time, staff and money and may result in opportunity costs.

All in all, types of costs of incoherence identified in the Philippines mostly stem from incoherent approaches and structures at the national level that, due to the hierarchical system, have severe implications at the local level. Anecdotal evidence shows that a lack of capacities, know-how and funding as well as an overburden of work, especially with regard to data collection and plan development, are the most prevalent costs observed at the local level that in turn drive incoherencies. Interestingly, local staff showed honest motivation to overcome incoherencies in the interest of efficiency and sustainability, but the rigid hierarchical structures inhibit improvements without the support of local leaders and higher administrative levels. Hence, the costs of establishing coherence in the Philippines are mostly related to advocacy for coherence as well as changing structures and processes – aspects that demand highest commitment and willingness to change from all stakeholders. While at the national level this commitment is proclaimed, solutions such as the establishment of cross-sectoral councils and oversight institutions have not resulted in meaningful improvements yet. It remains uncertain whether the current administration is ready for the challenging transformational change needed to advance coherence and harvest its benefits.

Anecdotal evidence

The box below describes a case linked to both costs of incoherence and benefits of coherence that came up in the focus group discussions. It was selected as it illustrates that one action can have multiple effects.

Addressing redundant data collection processes

Cost of incoherence and benefits of coherence	The field study revealed that data collection and management for monitoring and reporting progress on the Post-2015 Agendas shows major symptoms of incoherence linked to significant costs. At the national level, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) has the mandate for monitoring and reporting progress for the different documents of the Post-2015 Agendas. It gathers all data for reporting from the lead ministries responsible for the respective documents as well as other important ministries such as the Department for Agriculture (DA), the Department for Environment and National Resources (DENR) and the Department for Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), some of which maintain their own data repositories. Each of the line ministries that holds the key responsibility for one of the agendas approaches LGUs (local government units, the local administrative level) with their individual data request forms, instead of developing one integrated form for collecting data for a harmonized set of indicators from LGUs. Furthermore, the required data has to be collected with different assessment tools, depending on the preferences of the agencies. In addition, the data the national level requests is of limited use for the provinces and LGUs themselves as they are not congruent with the data they need for developing required policy plans at their administrative levels. This causes multiple problems/costs. First of all, it leads to an increased workload and financial burden for LGUs as they have to be trained in using different assessment tools to collect sometimes similar data. Secondly, as the data is of little use for developing the required local plans, which are the basis for receiving funding from the government, the incentive to accurately collect data is very low. Thirdly, there is a lot of confusion about which assessment tools and forms to use when, and often the respective capacities regarding their application are lacking due to a lack of funding. In consequence, data collection is often spotty or does not fulfil the quality requirements of the PSA. This in turn impels the PSA to conduct its own assessments at the local scale, which represents a duplication of work. Lastly, the siloed approaches to data collection cause redundancies in data storage at the national level, which is a major concern in the face of data consistency, accessibility and storage capacity. The incoherence at the national level (separated data requests) hence translates into highly incoherent structures at lower administrative levels, which they (provinces, LGUs, barangays[6]) are not able to change by themselves. At the provincial level however, there are initiatives to act upon this incoherence at the national level by compiling the different data requests from the agencies and their own data needs in one request form that they distribute to LGUs for data collection. Once the data is collected, the compiled form is sent back to all national agencies that requested data, which facilitates the reporting for LGUs and provinces. Another improvement in reporting is the introduction of and advocacy for the so-called Compendium of Climate and Disaster Risk Assessment (CDRA) tool, as a decision support toolkit for planning processes in the Philippines. While before there was a unique CDRA for each specific plan, the Compendium developed by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and other national government agencies represents an integrated version that allows data and information for all planning processes to be collected and assessed. It is currently being introduced to all state and non-state stakeholders and will help overcome the confusion regarding what tool to use in any given situation and reduces the planning burden of LGUs as well as the need for capacity-building.
Costs	Time, staff and money, engagement and motivation, output quality
Benefits	Reduction of complexity, optimization of work structures, realization of synergies

Box 5: Anecdotal evidence for cost of incoherence and benefits of coherence in the Philippines

6   Smallest administrative unit in the Philippines

Underlying drivers of incoherence found in the case of the Philippines

To date, the Philippines has made major efforts to reduce policy incoherence, acknowledging it to be an inherent risk for effectively managing DRR and CCA. Even though the country has succeeded in addressing some root causes and drivers of incoherence, others persist. The fieldwork revealed some of the remaining drivers of incoherence. Although not exhaustive and building on interviewees' perspectives, they can provide valuable insights into the root causes of incoherencies. Most recurrently cited by participants to this study are categorized below.

1. Excessive number of acts, laws and sectoral plans: In the Philippines' legislation, there is a large number of national acts and laws that redundantly cover disaster risk management aspects that are not necessarily linked to each other or referred to. An overburden of regulations can also be observed in local planning processes, as LGUs are asked to develop a set of 35 sectoral plans with most of them coming with their individual planning guidelines and assessment tools. Both aspects represent major strains on the capacities of LGUs as well as high risks for incoherent policy planning, implementation and reporting., this translates into mismatched stages of the personnel's learning curve, and the need to regularly renew contacts and counterparts in other agencies.

2. Siloed approaches: The clear-cut attribution of key responsibilities between the line ministries for the different plans that reflect the Post-2015 Agendas goals leads to siloed approaches, especially at the national level. While it facilitates the assignment of responsibilities and work, it inhibits exchange, cooperation and coordination, putting coherent planning, implementation and reporting at risk.

3. Vertical processes and disconnects: In the Philippines, the hierarchical structure of policy planning facilitates the diffusion of incoherencies from national down to lower administrative levels. In a system in which every plan at the lower administrative level builds on higher level/ national plans, horizontal incoherencies in policies and work structures at the national level easily translate down the system. The symptoms of this become predominantly visible at the local level. Moreover, the hierarchical structure reaches its limits as national institutions do not have counterparts for each plan at each administrative level.

4. High autonomy of LGUs: The high level of autonomy of LGUs, which is legally backed by the Local Government Code of 1991, represents on the one hand a valuable tool to localize international policies, increasing their impact on the ground, but on the other hand complicates policy coordination and hence puts horizontal policy coherence at the LGU scale at risk.

5. Short-term working contracts: Limited and often short-term working contracts of governmental agency staff leads to a frequent turnover of staff. This represents a two-fold driver of incoherence in the Philippines. First, it leads to the loss of institutional knowledge and requires constant capacity-building (including regarding agenda coherence) and second, it increases the risk of degrading trust between stakeholders, despite it being essential for establishing coherence.

6. Short-term legislative terms: Prevalent short legislative terms of politicians represent a major threat to policy coherence for several reasons. With politicians wanting to secure another term, they push for visible results implementing quick responses and solutions. This makes long-term planning very difficult. This becomes most evident at the LGU level, where decision power is mostly held by one person, the Local Chief Executive (LCE).

7. Unequal access to Post-2015 Agendas funding: The budgets Philippine LGUs can spend on Post-2015 Agendas implementation are linked to their locally generated revenue (internal revenue allotment), which differs tremendously depending on the characteristics and capacities of the LGUs. The lower their internal revenue allotment, the less budget an LGU has at its disposal for agenda implementation and the lower the potentials (capacities, staff, time) of the LGUs for developing the highly technical sectoral plans. These plans, however, would be a precondition for receiving further funding for disaster risk management and for tapping into bigger funds such as the Green Climate Fund. The diversion of disaster risk management budgets for other purposes also remains a driver of incoherence.

8. Non-harmonized capacity-building: There is a multitude of guides for the different assessment and planning tools, with some of them showing overlaps and/or incon-

sistencies. Capacity-building and training on their use are mostly not integrated and hence fail to give an overarching overview of the landscape of tools. Instead they work in a siloed approach on one specific topic or tool, leaving the LGUs overwhelmed. The same holds true for funds and how to access them. Moreover, training is not provided to all communities and LGUs by the same actor. Instead, there is a patchy, non-systematic pattern of training provided by different actors to different communities and LGUs.

9. Influence of international actors: International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and governmental organizations (GOs) often have particular interests that do not necessarily align with national or local plans. Also, they might have specific financial interests, undermining local policies and programs or duplicating existing efforts instead of covering so far uncovered topics or areas, driving and reinforcing incoherence. Moreover, INGOs and NGOs do not necessarily consider local planning cycles, which drives uncertainty and incoherence in national financial planning of Annual Investment Plans and long-term plans.

10. Lack of awareness and knowledge of agendas and low interest: Especially at the local level, there is a lack of awareness regarding the importance of coherence in Agen-

da planning and implementation. Being at the forefront of implementation, the Local Chief Executive and his or her level of awareness and commitment to the Agenda 2030 and policy coherence hence becomes a crucial factor for coherence. LGU autonomy reinforces the issue.

11. Politicization of mainstreaming and implementation: Many of the goals of the Post-2015 Agendas are topics of public interest, which is why their achievement becomes very political. While they require long-term policies and plans, politicians' pursuit of immediately visible results to secure their next term holds the risk of only superficially pursuing climate change and development goals to polish up their image, using acquired funds for other purposes, which represents a major threat to policy coherence.

12. Inconsistency in enforcement of policy plans: Goals of the Post-2015 Agendas have to be enforced with equal commitments to achieve coherent and sustainable implementation. Due to LGU autonomy, strong decision-making power of LCEs and different priorities at the local level some goals/plans are enforced strictly and with strong commitment, while others are not, creating an imbalance which drives incoherence in implementation with a multitude of related negative outcomes.
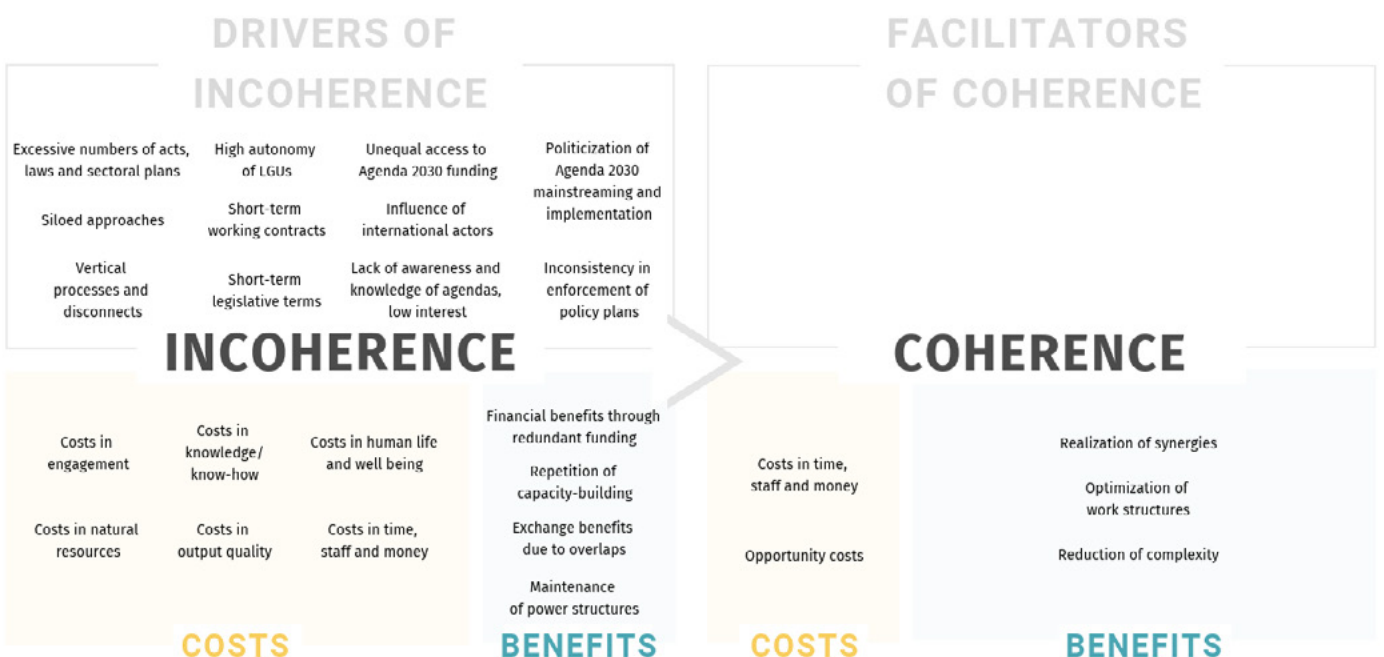

Figure 8: Underlying drivers of incoherence and their manifestations in costs and benefits in the Philippines

Findings

The study showed that policy coherence is not a new topic in the Philippines as quite some effort has been put into improving it since the beginning of the integration of DRR and CCA into development planning in 2009. However, while on paper many plans and structures, at least at the national level, are already integrated and aligned, reality on the ground often looks different. Not only do many LGUs lag behind in the integration processes but there are also symptoms of incoherence stemming from different sources, predominantly at the local level. There is a strong commitment to overcoming identified incoherencies, advancing efficiency and sustainability in Post-2015 Agendas implementation, but often this is prevented by day-to-day business. Overall, discussions were strongly linked to the costs and underlying drivers of incoherence, showcasing participants' awareness of the fact that an exclusive view on the manifestations of coherence and incoherence of the global documents without considering (pre-existing) national circumstances is insufficient and would only foster cosmetic coherence without realizing sustainable benefits. Participants' points of view regarding how to address the identified drivers of incoherence provided potential entry points for advancing coherence in a meaningful way across administrative levels. Suggestions included the reduction and harmonization of plans and laws as well as a reassessment of their coherence, an assessment of esta-

blished but as yet unused institutions and approaches, the restructuring of workflows and processes such as the one for data collection and management, the simplification and restructuring of budget planning and attribution for Post-2015 Agendas implementation and reporting as well as an increase in a more systematic provision of capacity-building and awareness-raising. While they may sound promising, all entry points are linked to massive structural changes of current policy planning, responsibilities and processes in implementation and reporting at various levels. Accordingly, preconditions would be a very strong commitment and openness to change of ministries, institutions and individuals at all levels as well as the availability of significant resources in time, staff and money.

Despite the willingness and commitment to policy coherence, the case study finds that the preconditions for further advancing coherence in the Philippines go beyond current efforts. An even stronger political focus on policy coherence, reflected among others in increased funding and willingness to change at all levels, would pave the way for gradually changing current structures, processes and responsibilities. To lower initial reluctance and the fear of failing, orientation towards "good-enough coherence" may represent a promising approach.

Synthesis: comparing results from case studies and the literature review

Comparison against results of literature review

When comparing the results from both country cases against the costs and benefits identified in the literature review, we see some stark differences. While scientific literature tends to focus on the macro level (e.g. reinforcement of political market imperfections), the anecdotal evidence derived from the perception of public servants also covers a number of practical issues such as clashing leadership or dealing with disagreement, particularly at the local level. Moreover, anecdotal evidence also provides multiple examples of the psychological and behavioral elements at play both in perpetuating the status quo and in attempting change, a dimension mostly lacking in the literature. Examples include reputational and political costs, demotivation of personnel and mistrust.

Perplexingly, although the role of discontinuity and rupture in exacerbating incoherencies was emphasized in both country cases, the belief that coherence promotes to some degree long-term stability in the face of high (disruptive) turnover – as suggested in the literature review – was not explicitly mentioned. It is likely that rupture is perceived as a structural problem tied to the political and normative configuration of the respective country, and thus beyond the areas of opportunity provi-

ded by an increase of coherence among the agendas.

Methodological concerns were raised both in the literature review and in the case studies, although more weight was given in the former to issues of measurability, whereas concerns from the fieldwork were mostly linked to simplifying existing tools and monitoring and reporting channels. Finally, stakeholders from both countries were eager to draw attention to underlying drivers of incoherence (e.g. heavy bureaucracies, disruptive relay of administration), while a few of these aspects (imbalanced constellations of power, conflicting interests) are reflected in the literature. Despite significant differences regarding country context, governance structures and political culture between the two case study countries, the analysis revealed important commonalities. Most overlaps of stakeholders' opinions relate to the factors that drive existing incoherencies (Fig 9.) and to the derived costs. Benefits, however, seem to be interpreted very differently in one country and the other, so there is very little overlap related to benefits of incoherence exclusively. Visualized in the figure below, these drivers and costs/benefits provide a first basis to start further research into context-independent factors, which may be relevant in other countries.
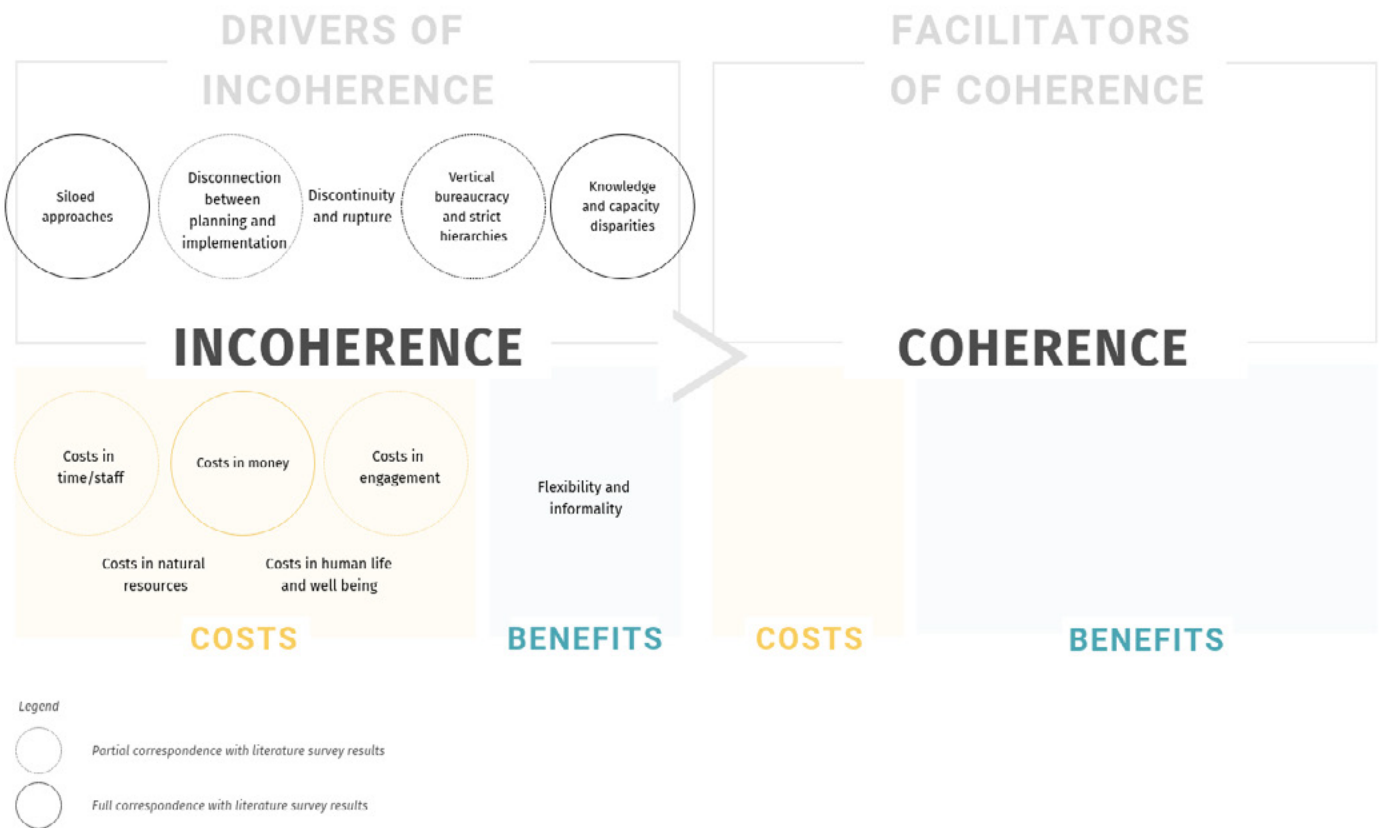
DRIVERS OF
INCOHERENCE

FACILITATORS
OF COHERENCE

Siloed approaches

Disconnection between planning and implementation

Discontinuity and rupture

Vertical bureaucracy and strict hierarchies

Knowledge and capacity disparities

INCOHERENCE

COHERENCE

Costs in time/staff

Costs in money

Costs in engagement

Flexibility and informality

Costs in natural resources

Costs in human life and well being

COSTS

BENEFITS

COSTS

BENEFITS

Legend

◯ Partial correspondence with literature survey results

◯ Full correspondence with literature survey results

Figure 9: Synthesis of drivers of incoherence and their manifestations in costs and benefits found in both country studies, compared with the literature review

The boundaries of the identified common drivers of incoherence are not clear-cut, as these are co-existent, mutually reinforcing, interconnected processes. Interestingly, these drivers may result in negatively (costs) and positively (benefits) perceived outcomes at various levels. The list below further explains the common drivers of incoherence in Mexico and the Philippines.

1. Siloed approach: While often being linked to rather positively perceived factors such as clear mandates, fields of work and responsibility, sectoral and thematic silos make the development of integrated policies more difficult and hence lead to incoherence, especially at the horizontal level.

2. Disconnect between planning and implementation: Coherence in policies does not automatically result in coherence in implementation. Realities on the ground can diverge significantly from the conditions assumed in plans

and policies, and thus render them inoperable despite being (theoretically) perfectly coherent. Further, plans and policies tend to be highly technical and complex, hindering or complicating implementation at the local level where capacities and technical skills are often lacking.

3. Excessive bureaucracy: Rigid hierarchical political structures are often linked to top-down approaches with a strong dominance of national level priorities. Besides neglecting local priorities, there is an inherent risk of the diffusion of incoherence from the national level through the system. Such strong hierarchical structures also tend to inhibit collaboration and cooperation across levels. All mentioned effects are reinforced when the hierarchy is embedded in highly bureaucratic structures and work streams.

4. Discontinuity and rupture: Short-term contracts and administrative terms lead to frequent turnover of staff and

politicians, resulting in disruptions of workflows, an over-all inclination to short-termism and a loss of institutional knowledge. Political priorities and commitments often change with a new leadership, which inhibits long-term planning at all levels.

5. Knowledge and capacity disparities: Differences in available capacities and knowledge such as technical know-how or assessment capacities as well as siloed knowledge hinder the achievement of coherent policy planning, implementation and reporting at all levels. Moreover, they may lead to a lack of awareness regarding the importance of coherence, reducing efforts and commitments to pursue it.

Current approaches of coherence-building in the case studies

The core results have illustrated through the lenses of public servants in different institutions and at different levels the challenges and rewards of pursuing an (in)coherent approach in relation to the topics of the international agendas. Despite providing a number of examples of the advantages of continuing working in a fragmented way and of the initial costs of seeking coherence, nobody denied the fact that coherence is the most desired state. Fortunately, the fieldwork also yielded a number of ongoing efforts that constitute potential entry points for coherence. The list below synthesizes the most important ones in relation to the structural drivers, barriers or windows of opportunity that they address.

1. Building on past experiences and ongoing efforts: Both Mexico and the Philippines have a history of grand initiatives for coherence. Much knowledge can be drawn from past experiences; for instance, since 2009 the Philippines has had an integrated policy framework for DRR and CCA. Similarly, Mexico has just recently streamlined the SDGs into the National Development Plan, while opening up the opportunity to link DRR and CCA through a co-benefits approach. Existing management structures, programs and tools can also be repurposed to satisfy cross-sectoral initiatives. In Mexico, several stakeholders alluded to the opportunity to combine the ecological planning tool and elements of the Risk Atlases in the ongoing national initiative for land-use zoning. In the Philippines, an enhanced uptake of the existing community-based management system has the potential to simplify and harmonize local financial planning and data management. Taking up on previously developed frameworks and adapting existing structures may reduce some of the initial costs (in time, money and personnel) of steering towards coherence.

2. Simplifying policy structures, governance/work structures and processes: Several examples from the anecdotal evidence pointed at a need for simplification. Currently 35 different sectoral plans need to be developed at the local level in the Philippines despite much overlap among them. Similarly, the current budget planning system is both disconnected (currently, development and sectoral planning are separated from financial planning) and overly complex, issues that have led to rising advocacy for coherence. The rationalized planning system is a promising approach to reduce the number of plans and harmonize budget planning at the local level. In Mexico, the motto of the new federal administration is "doing more with less" in an effort for public austerity. There is uncertainty as to whether this new paradigm will increase efficiency – as claimed – or make institutions fall back on fulfilling only core responsibilities (a scenario of increased incoherence among agendas) and in fact increase the competition for resources, thereby incentivizing incoherence as responsibilities become a major currency. However, hope was expressed that austerity may foster creativity and innovative ways of collaboration with other sectors, as the usual strict vertical bureaucratic structures may be readjusted.

3. Changing institutional habits in order to change paradigms: Striving for coherence implies a will to align and integrate processes, resulting in increased complexity. A strong political will is thus required to implement coherent approaches as it would require diverting from individual actors' business-as-usual approaches. Efforts have to be taken to overcome established roles, routines and related institutional arrangements. Luckily, the fieldwork showed that actors at all levels are, from their

niches, pushing existing boundaries and bypassing long-standing obstacles. For example, in order to tackle some of the disruptive effects of the permanent problem of the high turnover of personnel at the local level, officials in Oaxaca have opted to open up workshops and training to the whole community rather than only to elected officials, with the goal of creating a pool of trained people who may continue efforts after the end of the current administration. Other examples show increased decentralization and innovative collaboration schemes with civil society, the private sector and international peers (city-to-city collaborations).

4. Capitalizing on the "easier" victories to increase momentum: Low-hanging fruits differ between the countries, but they are important entry points for change towards more coherence in both contexts. Mexico as a nation was shocked by the devastation in the wake of the recent earthquakes and hurricanes. There is the hope that the present peak in risk awareness and prevalent sentiment that the response and reconstruction process could have been handled better can turn the tide to favoring prevention – and levelling the allocated funds for such activities – over reaction. Capitalizing on a surge in the visibility of such topics comes at a critical time given that it coincides with a new administration, and hence the opportunity to influence a full body of upcoming policy and programmes, and of tackling more structural drivers. In the Philippines, the establishment of cross-sectoral councils was meant to facilitate exchange between ministries and other governmental actors, but the councils' work suffers from major thematic redundancies. Merging councils and establishing cross-council exchange represents an easy approach to fostering cooperation and coordination between actors, especially at the national level.

Conclusions on costs and benefits of (in)coherence

By analyzing and integrating the current state of knowledge in the literature with empirical insights from two case studies, the study helped identify the range of different incoherencies in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring in the fields of disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and overall development planning. The research further allowed the drivers of incoherence and key costs created by it, as well as its fewer and more short-lived benefits, to be identified and structured. While some of the identified costs and benefits are unique to a country based on their different experiences, there are also important commonalities. Overall, five key conclusions can be drawn (Box 6):

Key conclusions

1. **Policy formulation and implementation** for disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and overall development is still often happening in an **incoherent and siloed manner** despite the fact that coherent approaches have been postulated for years.

2. This incoherence implies different types of costs, many of which are not currently on the agenda of policymakers.

3. But in many respects incoherence does not emerge randomly or accidentally; rather, distinct **drivers of incoherence** are at play which need to be understood in order to enable coherence-building.

4. In some respects, **incoherence even brings benefits** to policy processes and outcomes, particularly in the short term. Finding substitutes for these benefits is an essential ingredient to coherence-building.

5. Despite initial benefits of incoherence in many policy processes, **the long-term costs of incoherence are far higher**, making the case for coherence-building but also highlighting the difficulties of taking the first steps in this direction.

Box 6: Five key conclusions of the COHERE study

Although coherence and incoherence both entail institutional costs in terms of time, staff and money, the manifestations are strikingly different. The costs of coherence identified by stakeholders mostly arise from the need to divert staff, money and time in order to develop structures for joint collaboration, planning and communication when aligning tools, policies and/or programs. However, these costs are implicitly perceived as being initial investments linked to reorganization purposes. On the other hand, time, staff and financial costs related to incoherence are generally linked to duplication of work, inefficiency and

contradictory interventions, such as redundancies in data collection. Costs of incoherence are therefore not bound to a point in time, but are sustained or increased (in relative terms) over time. Beyond the direct costs of incoherence, which can at least partly be measured despite methodological challenges, indirect costs occur. These cannot easily be translated into economic terms, but they are likely to have long-term negative consequences and trigger institutional costs. Figure 10 synthesizes the different costs and benefits of (in)coherence into an overarching typology.
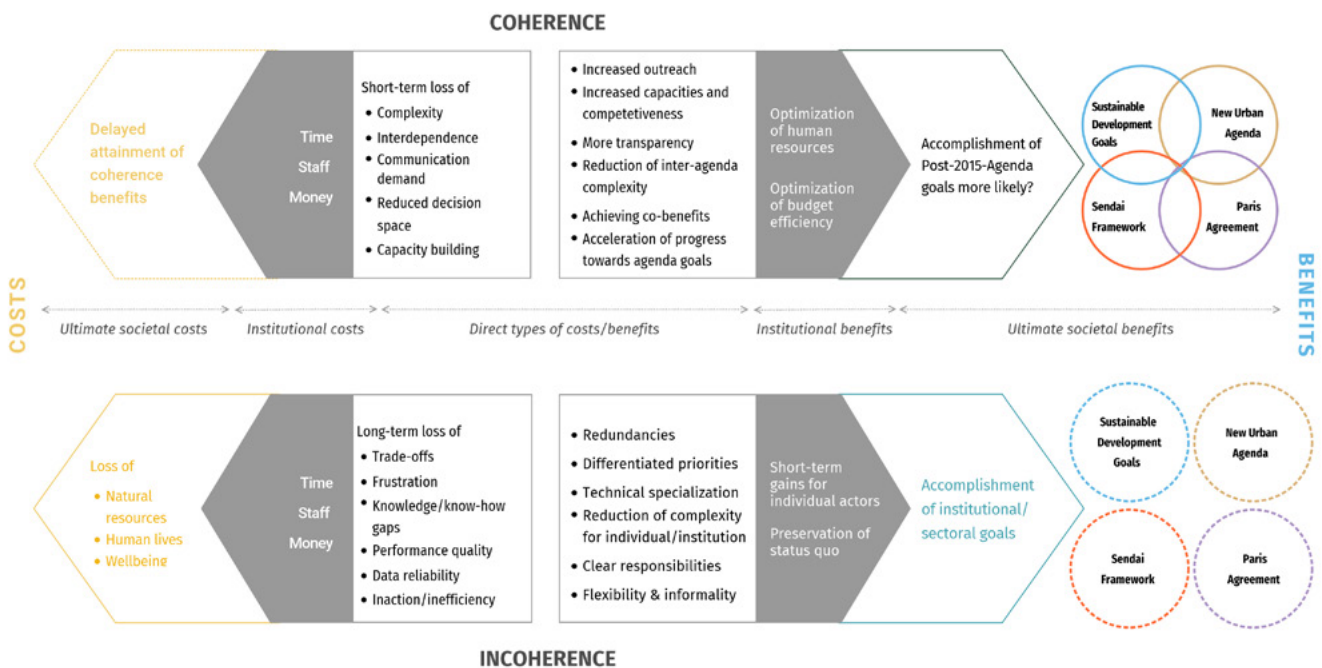
Figure 10: Typology of the costs and benefits of (in)coherence derived from the country studies

In terms of timing of costs, none of the stakeholders involved in the study expressed the belief that incoherence could lead to an overall reduction of costs over a long timeframe, while it was assumed – both explicitly and implicitly – that coherence would (see Figure 11). Conversely, positive effects of coherence are very likely to accrue over time. In addition, in both countries a high potential for a chain reaction of incoherencies was found, with one incoherent action triggering others. With respect to disaster risk reduction, in both country cases incoherent approaches to the agendas can not only leave some risks unaddressed, but also create new risks, while trying to achieve other goals.

The empirical observations clearly hint at a trend – given the continuation of incoherence – where sectoral goals are partially fulfilled, but goals of the Post-2015 Agendas are not fully achieved due to mutually hindering sectoral- or scale-led processes and intrinsic inefficiency. The discrepancy between agendas enforced by different agencies within the UN system and implementing power on a national scale can easily result in a mismatch with the local scale responsible for implementation and data collection for reporting.

More evidence of the benefits of coherence and best practices for its establishment will support the transformation process towards coherent agenda implementation. Due to the relative recency of the Post-2015 Agendas and the long process to translate them into domestic policy – let alone implementing them – it is still too early to pass judgement on the success of the process. However, given the time horizons of commitments, it is clear that this process will require transdisciplinary collaboration to broaden the scope – and the stakes – of the current approach to policy coherence, which allows for an action research approach striving for transformation rather than gradual change. Both the Philippines and Mexico highlight that implementing coherent action is not only beneficial but it is indispensable to achieving the Post-2015 Agendas goals.
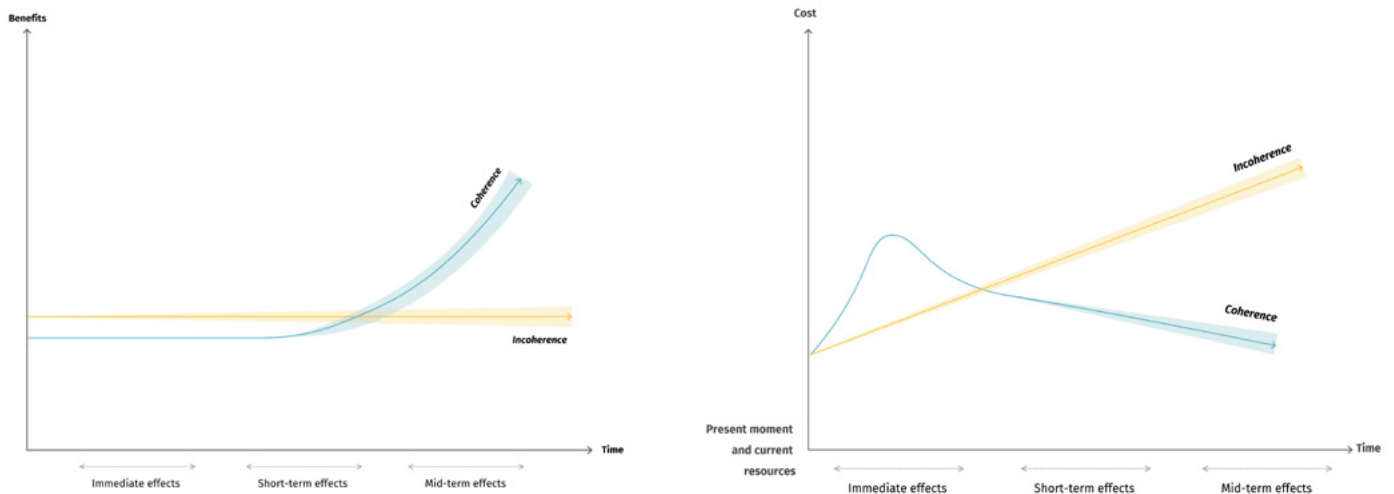

Figure 11: Schematic representation of the costs and benefits of (in)coherence over time

Outlook and ways forward

In the course of the field studies – and in comparison to the preceding literature analysis – different gaps in research and policy were detected:

Policy and practice gaps

- More emphasis should be put on lowering the burden on the local level where the threads come together, resulting in high workload due to reporting duties to multiple agendas, with mostly divergent deadlines and formats. These duties add to existing burdens at municipality level, such as short-term administrations forcing the following one to start from zero, with limited handover of data, material, records, etc., and very limited technical capacity, requiring steep learning curves.

- The successful coherent integration of the post-2015 Agendas requires more than policy coherence; it needs to also address all the underlying drivers that thwart cross-sectoral and cross-scale collaboration. Because these aspects are not likely to be resolved in the immediate future, results have shown that "good-enough coherence" should be prioritized over full coherence in order to fulfil Agenda commitments. However, this still needs an operationalization of what exactly is good-enough coherence and how it can be achieved in particular contexts and timeframes, and how by focusing on post-2015 Agendas goals we can backtrack on some of the drivers of incoherence. Moreover, there is a need for realistic assessment of irreducible incoherencies and trade-offs at different stages of the coherence transition; for instance, related to underlying drivers in political culture, laws and normative configurations, capacities and resources, etc.

Outlook and ways forward

Research needs

- Economic studies are needed to establish empirical evidence on the particular costs and benefits of (in)coherence fields, including changes over time.

- As the agendas were only implemented a few years ago, longitudinal studies on agenda implementation and costs of coherence-building over time are lacking. In addition, there is a lack of comparable longitudinal studies in the implementation of other frameworks, thus pointing at a wider need to diversify methodological approaches for such studies.

- Particular challenges of agenda implementation on different scales differ in terms of responsibilities and number of actors, to name just two. Further research is needed to guide policy development for vertical coherence and translation into horizontal agenda coherence on the respective scale, with a particular focus on the local scale, where fewer actors have to directly deal with more issues from the agendas in parallel.

- Non-tangible costs such as frustration/demotivation, cost of seeking agreement, etc. are real deterrents to efficient and collaborative organizations, although vastly downplayed in literature. More research is needed to explore the most effective and least personnel-taxing approaches to coherence transition. For example, should transitioning efforts to policy coherence provide temporary support task forces to facilitate new working arrangements rather than piling more tasks and responsibilities on to existing personnel?

Facilitating a coherent implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Climate Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda is a new and challenging task. Collective efforts of policymakers, administrative practitioners and scientists will help to address it in the future. The knowledge created in this study will help to guide this process.

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