

SynLink SDGs

Research and Action Framework

for Synergistic Scientific and Institutional Linkages between the SDG Targets

Co- hosted by Keio GESL/ UNU-IAS / Earth System Governance/Future Earth SDG KAN

The Synlink SDGs workshop focuses on synergetic linkages between institutions, organizations and other actors that are based on (positive and negative) interactions between SDG targets. The workshop is the designing stage of a process of trans-disciplinary research and action with the ambition to apply the resulting framework to implementation of the SDGs at various levels of governance.

The creation of policies and behavioral change that allows us to attain the SDGs requires an understanding of scientific synergies and trade-offs between the goals and targets, and of social inter-linkages between them. Key issues for this process are the inter-linkages, coordination mechanisms and disconnections within and between the institutions, organizations and actors that govern the SDG implementation, as they manage interfaces between nature and society. We aim to identify synergistic linkages between the institutions for the better governing implementation of the SDGs.

Frameworks to understand the interlinkages of the SDG targets have been created, for instance through the work of Nilsson, Griggs and Visbeck[1]. They created seven types of interactions between targets from the most positive (scoring +3) to the most negative (-3). While reducing negative interaction sometimes requires political decision of choice, institutional mechanisms may also reduce the gap in some other cases. Thus, in order to address the full set of the SDGs, (research on) the natural and social systems has to be combined and integrated, and include a comprehensive description of the role and possibilities of institutions, because institutions are human interfaces operationalizing implementation of the SDGs. Understanding interactions between targets is one important step, but facilitating positive and reducing negative interactions in the implementation process is another. The latter involves policy and institutional challenges. The next question is, therefore, how to operationalize interactions in the implementation process, and create a better governance system for effective SDG implementation. Such a process requires transdisciplinary research involving practitioners/stakeholders working hand-in-hand with researchers and policy-makers from the early research designing stage to the outcome and implementation. This workshop will develop a framework for synergistic interlinkages for the SDGs implementation by for example, identifying interactions between targets and creating institutional mechanisms to facilitate synergistic implementation. This also includes the science-policy interface for better delivery of SDG implementation.

[1] Nilsson et al. 2016. Map the interactions between Sustainable Development Goals. Nature 534, 320-322

Attention has to be paid, also, to the fact that implementation at the global level has different institutional and political dynamics when compared with regional or national levels. Furthermore, national implementation challenges are different from one country to another. Diversity and universality for the framing requires discussion as well.

The scientific process will be driven by Future Earth SDGs Knowledge-Action Network and the Earth System Government project. One possible outcome of the process is to feed into the development of models, either those that back-cast from target socially and ecologically sustainable systems at some point in the future and describe routes to get there, or those that start at the present day and forecast pathways toward increased sustainability.

Objective

The purpose of the workshop is **to develop a research framework and methodology to better implement synergistic institutional inter-linkages that are important for attaining the SDGs**. The framework could be applied to further investigation in concrete issues and cases, such as sustainable fisheries in Asia, water shortage in the Middle East, decreasing the environmental impact of consumption in Europe or halving food waste at the global level, etc..

Key questions

The workshop aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the framework and steps to identify institutional gaps, considering positive and negative interactions between targets, and to narrow the gaps?
- What research is needed in order to formulate options to operationalize synergistic inter-linkages?
- How do we link up formal and informal institutions?
- What forms of science-policy interface are required for synergistic implementation of the SDGs?

Participants

approximately 50

The workshop will bring together internationally leading researchers, UN officials, delegates, national and local policymakers, and stakeholders. Emphasis will be put on gathering a crowd with diverse disciplinary, career and geographic backgrounds and that is gender balanced.