

SDGs as a network of targets

David O'Connor

IUCN and WRI,

Former Chief, Policy and Analysis Branch,

Division for Sustainable Development

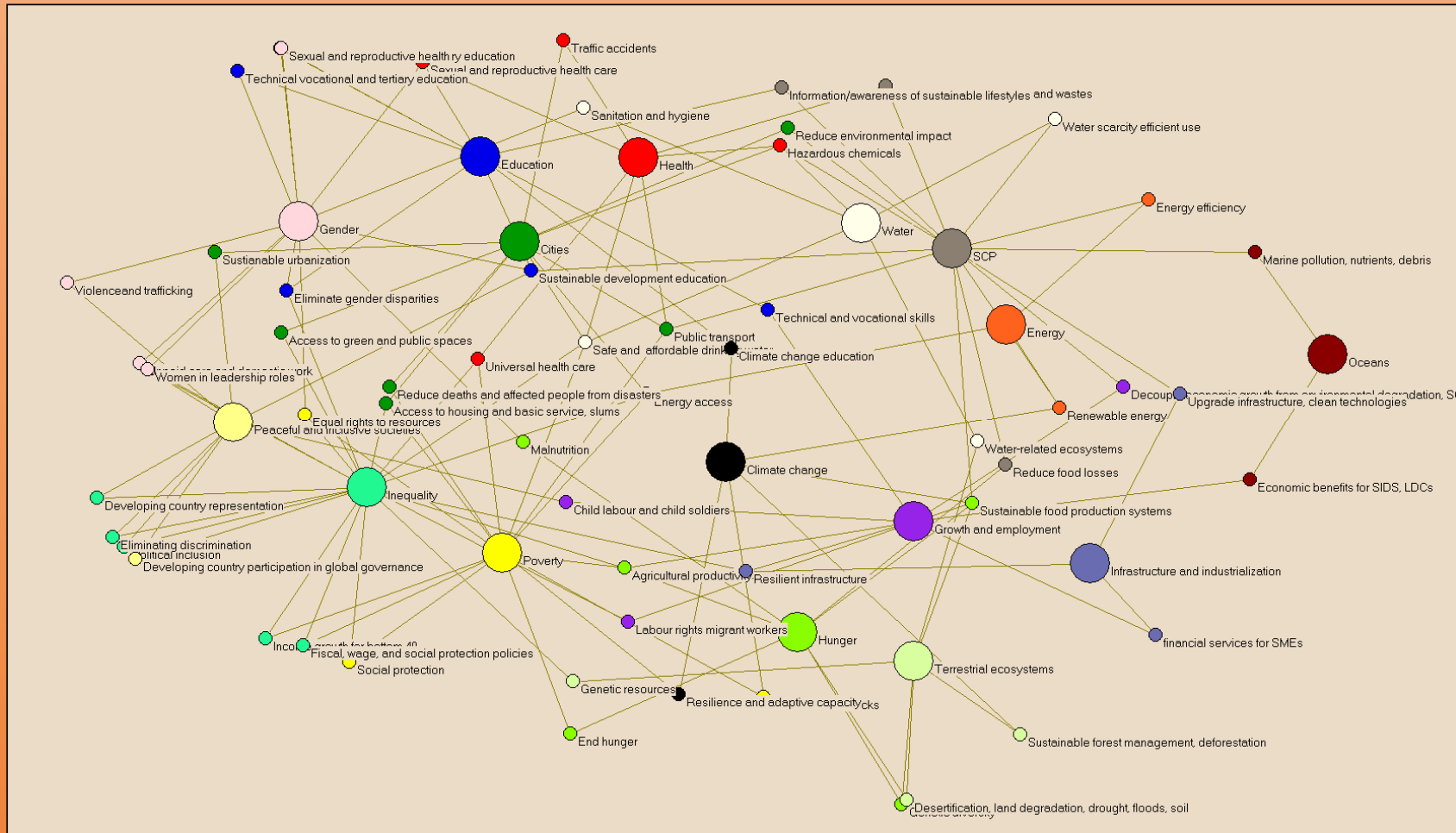
UN-DESA

Presentation to TIAS Webinar: Beyond SDG indicators

2030 Agenda: an integrated agenda

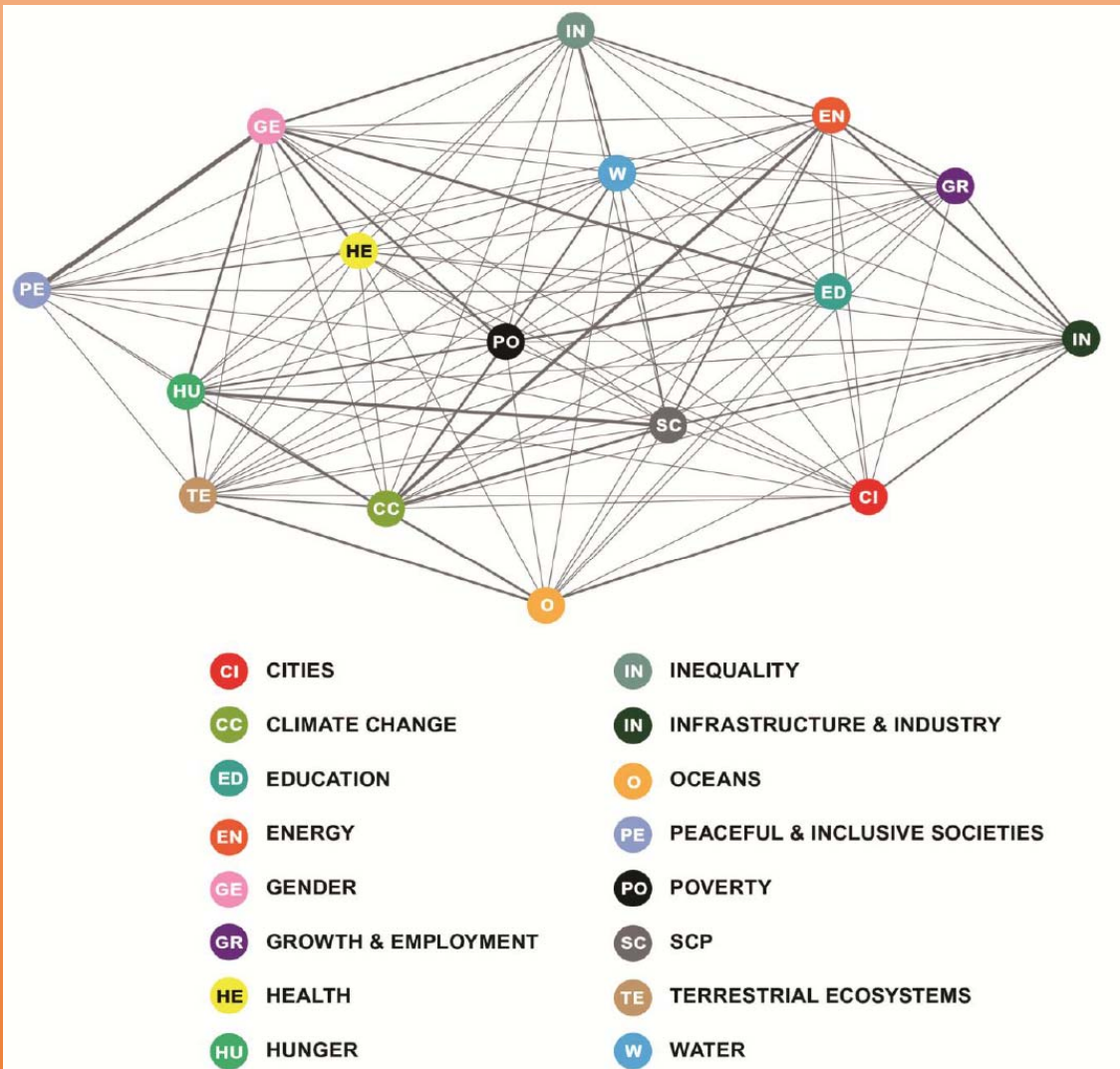
- why has the international community come around to appreciating integration?
 - Recognition that poverty eradication, social and economic development cannot be sustained with continued neglect of environment and threats like climate change, water scarcity
 - So, the social, economic, environmental dimensions of SD are inseparable
- understanding how SDGs are interlinked should make for better policies, more effective action
- *So, how are they interlinked?*

SDGs as an integrated system



Source: David Le Blanc, "Towards Integration at Last? The SDGs as a Network of Targets", Rio+20 Working Paper 4.

SDGs as integrated network



Source: elaborated in GSDR 2015 based on ICSU report.

Two questions

- 1) how does one deal with such interlinkages in analytical terms?
- 2) how does one deal with them in the context of policy making?

With respect to 1), a few observations:

- One way is through integrated assessments, including forward-looking scenario models.
 - Chapter 2 of UN's Global Sustainable Development Report 2015 looks at how well current assessments, scenarios models cover the 17 goals individually
 - Also at how well they capture linkages (across the 3 dimensions of SD, across goals/sectors)



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1 NO POVERTY

2 ZERO HUNGER

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

5 GENDER EQUALITY

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

13 CLIMATE ACTION

14 LIFE BELOW WATER

15 LIFE ON LAND

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS


SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Key findings

- Assessments covering goals 1 to 9 are relatively weak in their coverage of goals 10 to 16; but the reverse is not true.
- Scenario models have strong coverage of climate change, energy and economic growth, but rather weak coverage of education, inequalities, including gender inequalities, and oceans
- Many models look at trade-offs (and less often synergies) between the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development;
- ... but they are weaker in capturing linkages from the economic and environmental dimensions to the social dimension, with the latter focusing mostly on employment.

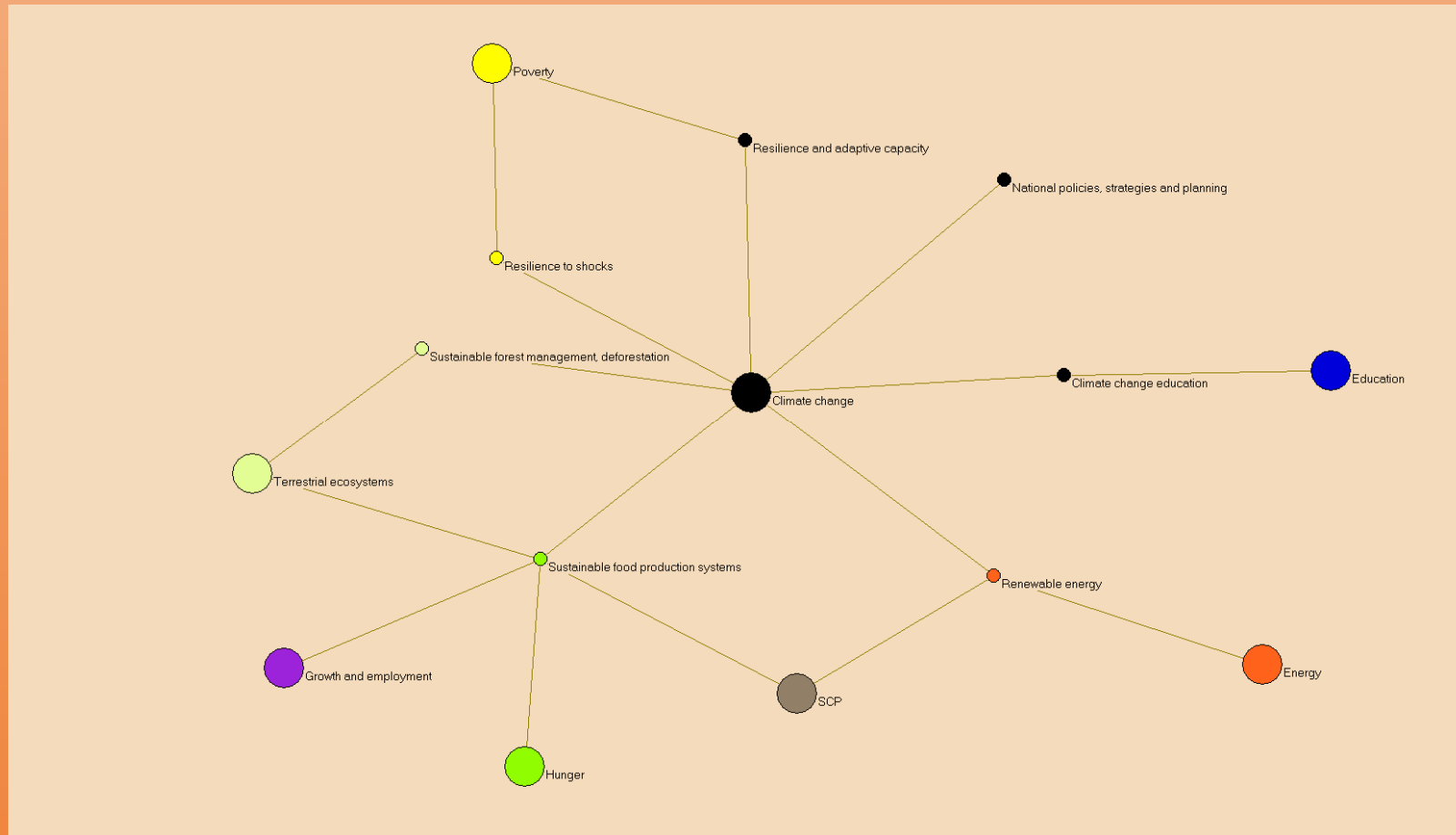
What goals and targets alone don't tell us:

- Whether level of ambition in one area is high enough to achieve related goal(s): e.g., energy-climate, water-agriculture, climate-poverty eradication
- Feasibility of achieving goals and targets– what it will take, in resources, in policies, in actions
- Integrated assessment and scenario modelling can shed light on both these questions.
 - Important work ahead for TIAS and the modelling, assessment community

How to treat integration in policy making?

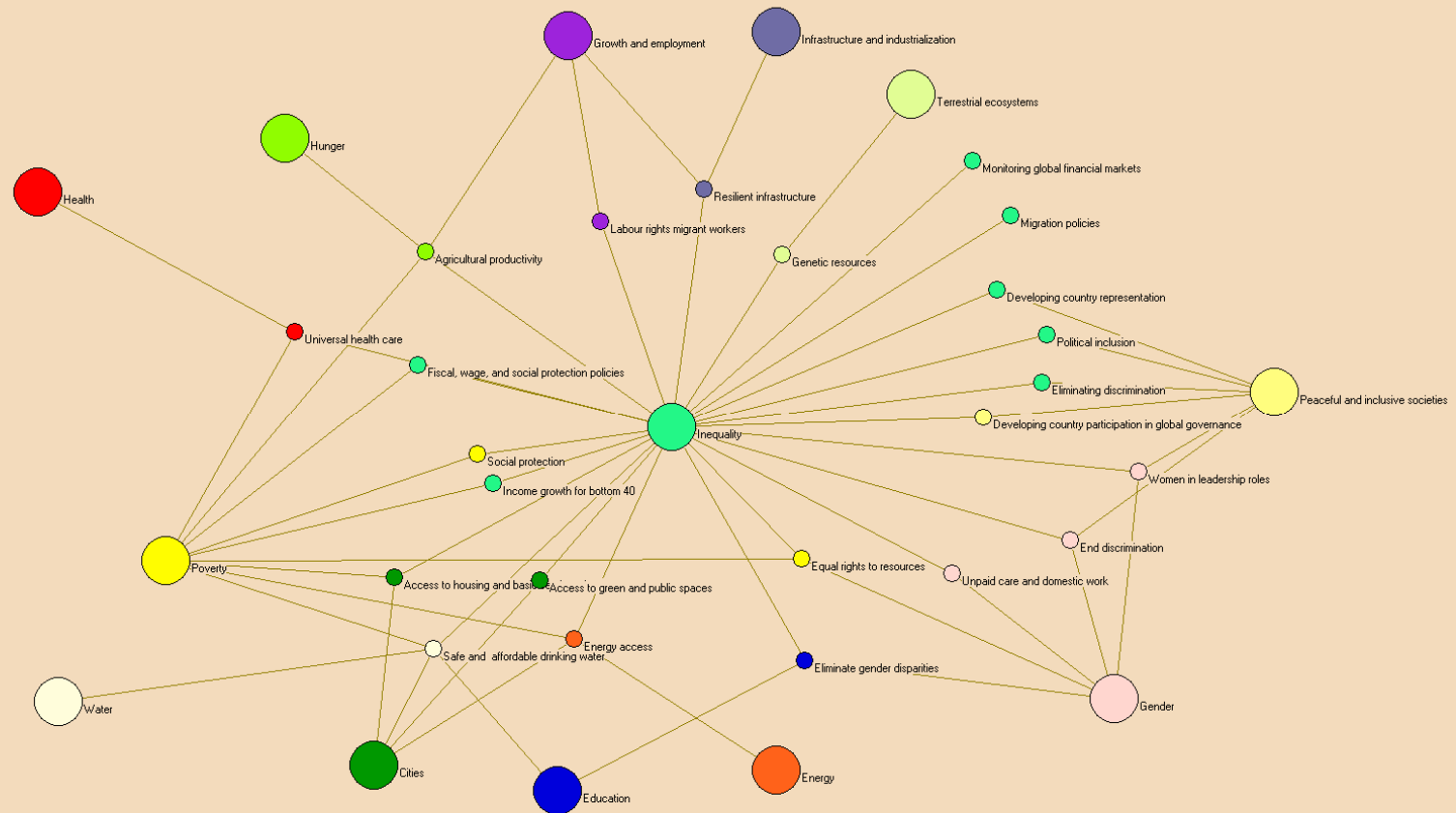
- Step 1: start from the primary goal defining Ministerial, institutional responsibility
- ... place goal at center of network map, then look at the links to other goals
 - The following slide looks at links from goal 13, climate change ...
- Next two slides do the same for *Reducing Inequalities* and *Advancing SCP*
 - It so happens that these two goals are most frequently linked to others through various targets
 - In effect, they crosscut many if not all the other goals.
- So, almost regardless of your goal of primary concern, it will be important to consider it through the lenses of SCP and reducing inequalities

Goal 13: Climate change: links



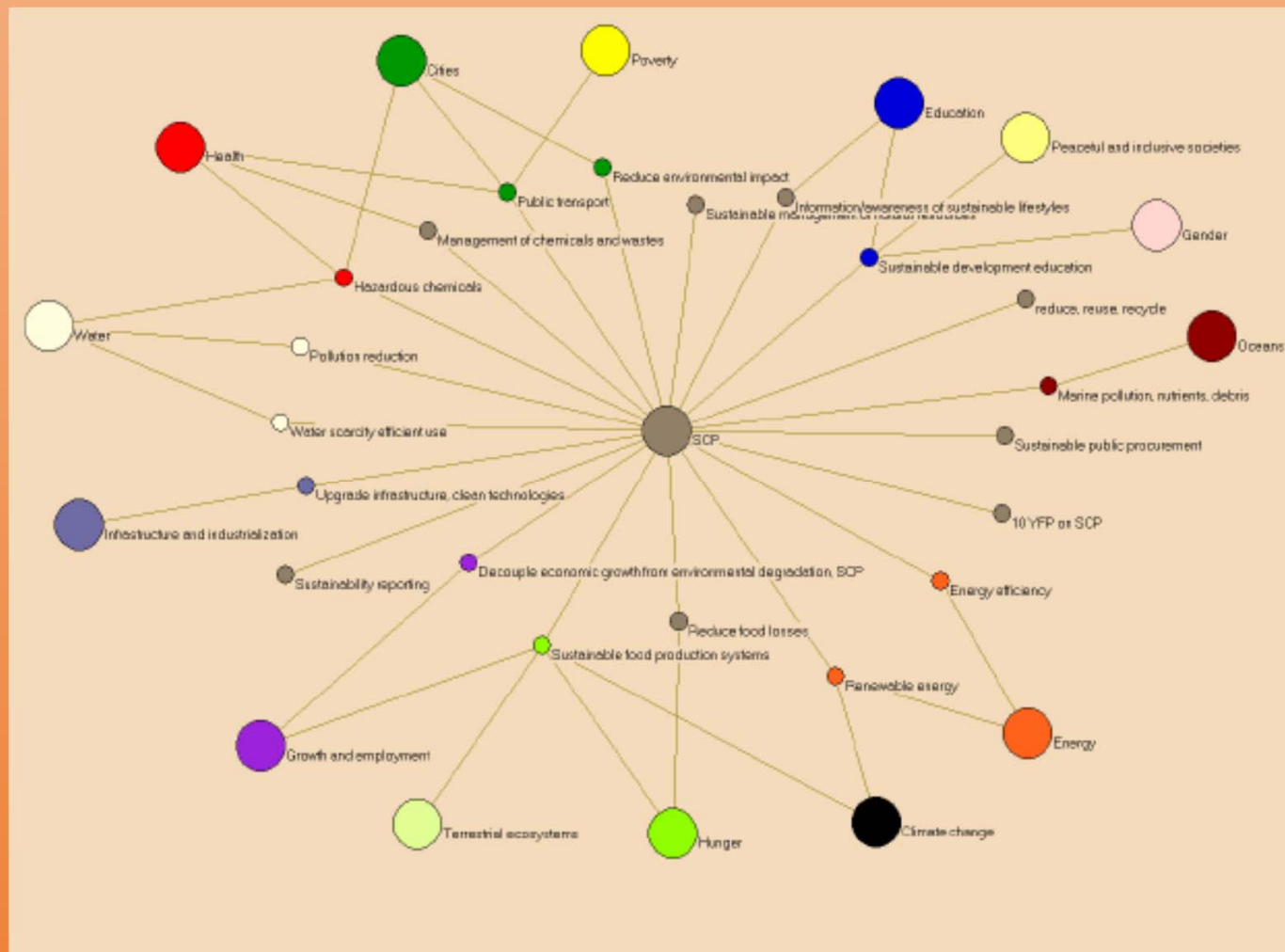
Source: adapted from David Le Blanc, "Towards Integration at Last? The SDGs as a Network of Targets", Rio+20 Working Paper 4.

Goal 10: Inequality: links to others



Source: Idem.

Goal 12: SCP: links to others



Source: Idem.

How to treat integration in policy making (cont'd)?

- Step 2: based on scientific knowledge and evidence, analyze the interlinkages between goals and targets in terms of:
 - *Direction* of causation (unidirectional or reciprocal causality?)
 - The *strength* of a given linkage (how important to consider?)
 - *Sign* of relationship (+ or -), i.e., trade-off or synergy?

Identifying a relevant *nexus* for analysis

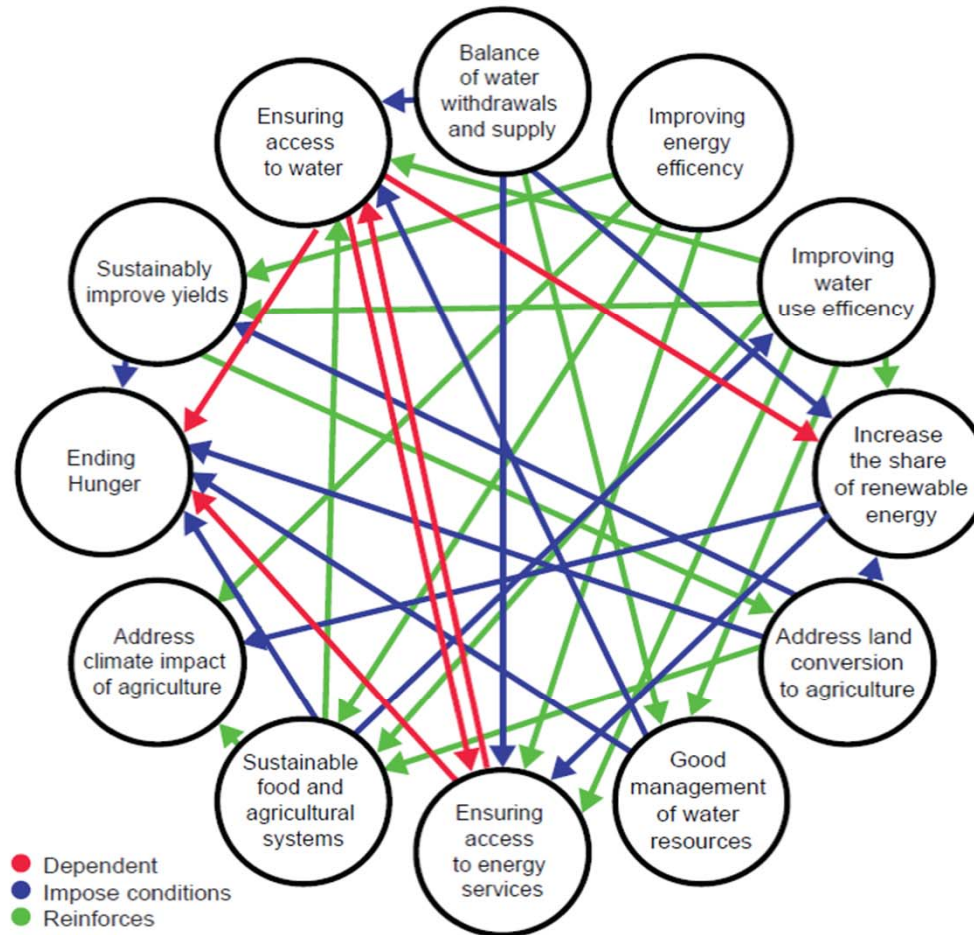
- Looking at interactions among 17 goals, 169 targets and x indicators simultaneously is a hugely ambitious – and data intensive – undertaking.
- For a particular policy purpose, useful to specify a sub-system for closer analysis where the components are strongly interdependent.
- Suppose the government is examining how biofuels can help meet a national renewable energy target aligned with global SDG target 7.2
- A nexus approach could focus on interdependencies among energy (biofuels included), water, food, and climate change
- An integrated assessment model can capture interactions between biofuels expansion, water use, land use, and food production, all subject to climate change impacts

Interdependencies between targets in a nexus: SEI typology

- Achieving one target is dependent on another – water access dependent on energy availability, and vice versa
- One target imposes conditions on another – sustainable management of water resources conditions how access to water is provided
- Progress on one target reinforces progress on another – improving water use efficiency facilitates providing access to water

Weiss, N. *et al.* (2014), Cross-sectoral integration in the Sustainable Development Goals: a nexus approach, SEI Discussion Brief.

Figure 6: Food-energy-water nexus: interlinkages among targets



Source: Weitz *et al.* (2014).

What do these linkages mean for strategic planning?

- need for seeing the big picture up front ... the interrelationships that matter
 - the ones that make the job of reaching multiple goals easier (co-benefits)
 - and those that make the job more challenging (conflicts, trade-offs)
- need to examine goals from multiple perspectives:
 - How does gender equality figure if my primary focus is education, or health?
 - How does the Ministry responsible for water need to cooperate with the Energy Ministry to make progress simultaneously towards both goals – SDG6 and SDG7?
- broad ownership of whole agenda: interdependencies are deeply understood
 - What we do on growth affects our poverty, inequality, SCP goals, and
 - Climate change action is closely interrelated with all these goals.

What do goals as system mean for how policy makers do their work?

- Need to be informed by consistent assessments, scenario models that:
 - reflect cross-sectoral, multidimensional interdependencies
 - provide at least order-of-magnitude estimates of synergies and trade-offs
 - are internally consistent in terms of resource demands and allocations
- Need to plan jointly, to see where coordinated actions across ministries/agencies can be more effective than isolated actions
- Need to coordinate policy development to achieve coherence among policies targeted at different objectives, e.g.
 - agriculture, trade and poverty eradication;
 - growth, energy and climate change;
 - health, food and nutrition, education, and SCP.