# The sustainable development goals as a network of targets

## Description

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Towards integration at last? The sustainable development goals as a network of targets

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ABSTRACT â??In 2014, UN Member States proposed a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as reference goals for the international development community for the period 2015-2030. The proposed goals and targets can be seen as a network, in which links among goals exist through targets that refer to multiple goals. Using network analysis techniques, we show that some thematic areas covered by the SDGs are well connected among one another. Other parts of the network have weaker connections with the rest of the system. The SDGs as a whole are a more integrated system than the MDGs were, which may facilitate policy integration across sectors. However, many of the links among goals that have been documented in biophysical, economic and social dimensions are not explicitly reflected in the SDGs. Beyond the added visibility that the SDGs provide to links among thematic areas, attempts at policy integration across various areas will have to be based on studies of the biophysical, social and economic systems.â?•

Rick Davies Comment: This is an example of something I would like to see many more examples of (what are in effect, almost): network Theories of Change, in place of overly simplified hierarchical models which typically have few if any feedback loops (aka cyclic graphs) Request: Could the author making the underlying data set publicly available, so other people can do their own network analyses? I know the data set could be reconstructed from existing sources on the SDGs, butâ?¦it could save a lot of unnecessary work. Also, the paper should provide a footnote explanation of the layout algorithm used to generate the network diagrams

Some simple improvements that could be made to the existing network diagrams:

- Vary node size by their centrality (number of immediate connections they have with other nodes)
- Represent Target nodes as squares and goal nodes as circles, not all as circles

What is now needed is a two mode network diagram showing what agencies (perhaps UN for a start) are prioritizing which SDGs.  This will help focus minds on where coordination needs are greatest, i.e. between which specific agencies re which specific goals. Here is an example of this kind of network diagram from Ghana, showing which different government agencies prioritised which Governance objectives in the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, more than a decade ago. (Blue nodes â?? government agencies, red nodes = GPRS governance objectives, thicker lines = higher priority). The existence of SDG targets as well as goal could make an updated version of this kind of exercise even more useful.

Ghana

Postscript: 16 April 2016. See also [this online network diagram of the SDGs](#) and targets, unfortunately lacking any text commentary. Basically eye candy only

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