

SDG Synergies: a tool to support decision making in implementing the 2030 Agenda

Dr. Therese Bennich

Research Fellow, Stockholm Environment Institute

An aerial photograph of a modern campus. A dark river flows through the center, bordered by lush green trees and landscaped walkways. To the right, a modern building with a grey facade and large windows is visible. The foreground shows a paved plaza with a geometric pattern. The overall scene is bright and green, suggesting a sustainable and modern environment.

Vision

A sustainable, prosperous future for all

Mission

To support decision-making and induce change towards sustainable development around the world by providing integrative knowledge that **bridges science, policy and practice** in the fields of environment and development

SEI Stockholm
Environment
Institute

Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)

8 centers
+300 researchers



- | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------|------------|--------------|---------------------|
| 1989 | 1992 | 2002 | 2004 | 2008 | 2018 |
| 1 SEI Headquarters | 4 SEI Tallinn | 5 SEI Oxford | 6 SEI Asia | 7 SEI Africa | 8 SEI Latin America |
| 2 SEI York | | | | | |
| 3 SEI US | | | | | |

The implementation challenge

- The 2030 Agenda is meant to be treated as an **integrated and indivisible** whole. This poses challenges to implementation:

SDG interlinkages are context-specific (geography, governance, and technology) - limited data on interlinkages at local/national levels

Governments have limited resources and need to prioritize among this indivisible whole

Public administrations are often not organized to deal with cross-cutting issues

- Need for **methods and tools** to capture trade-offs and synergies and create more robust, effective, and resource-efficient strategies for implementation



The SDG Synergies method: A process and a tool

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SDG Synergies

Making effective policy often means balancing sets of highly connected but very diverse targets. Striking the right balance can unlock synergies that bring multiple targets closer. The wrong one can see momentum lost, and progress on one target pushing others out of reach.

SDG Synergies is a practical tool for understanding how groups of policy areas and targets interact, using systems thinking. Designed by researchers at Stockholm Environment Institute originally to support governments in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, SDG Synergies

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Central questions

- How to prioritize?
- How to organize collaboration?

SDG Synergies

- SDG Synergies helps the user **record, visualize, and analyze** how multiple **policy objectives interact**
- Based on a **participatory discussion and scoring process**
- Develops a **matrix of cross-impact interactions** between all the objectives being considered: this **reveals how progress on one objective affects progress on other objectives, and vice versa**

Process

Step 1. Contextualize

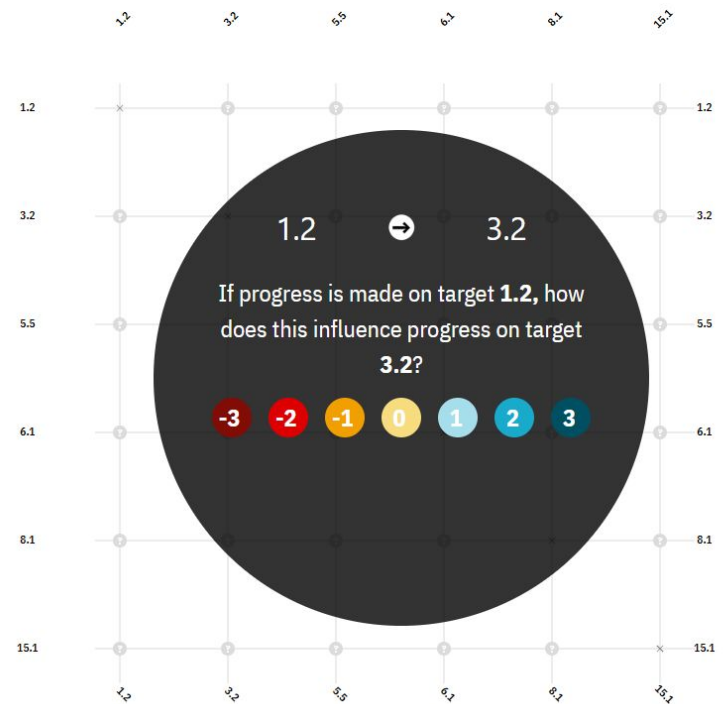
- Select targets
- Identify actors

Step 2. Score interactions

- Cross-impact matrix
- Guiding question
- Interaction scale
- Explanation and certainty



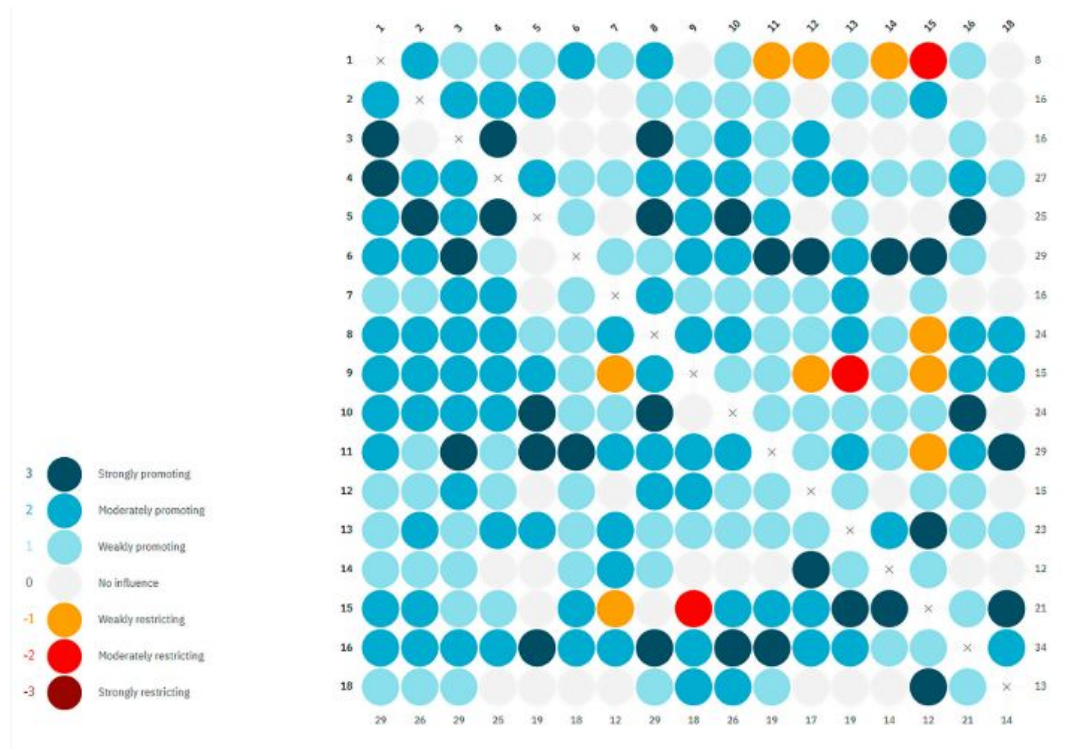
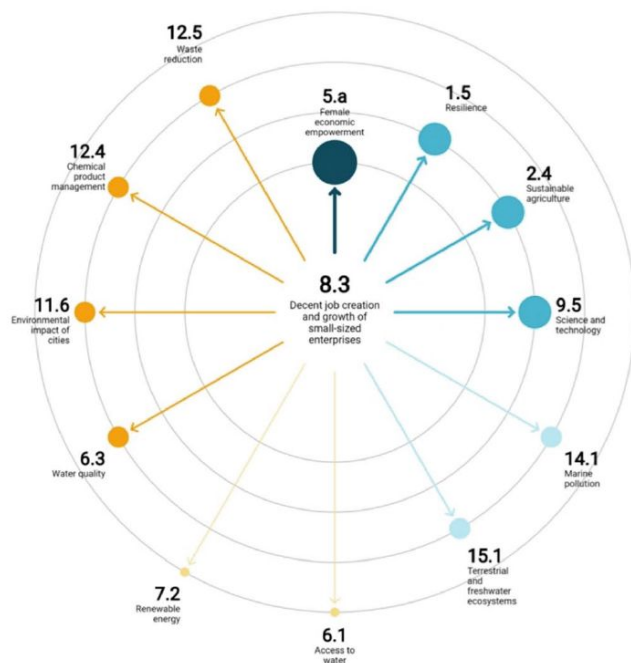
Scoring of target interactions



Process

Step 3. Analysis

- Cross-impact analysis
- Network analysis



SDG Synergies Use Cases



Photo credit: Getty / yimwow

Mexico (2022)



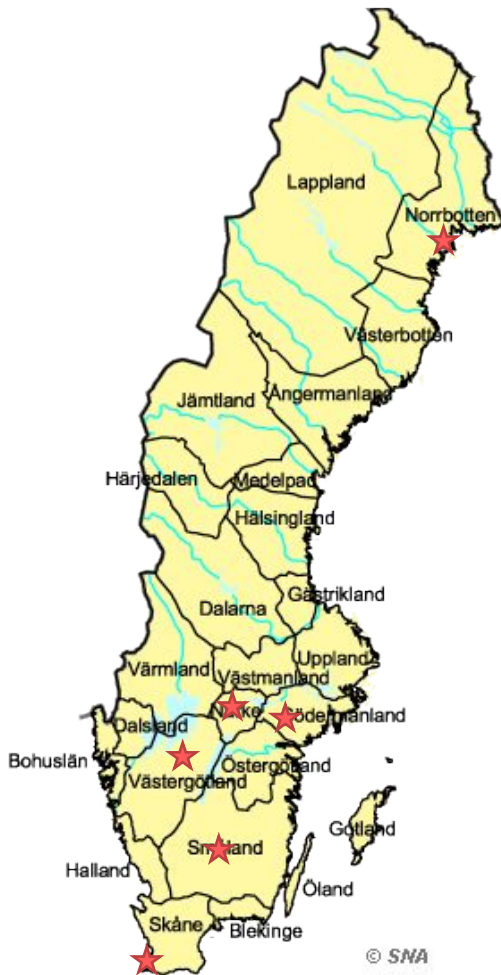
Objectives: Analyze interactions between water management and climate change policies at three scales – the city, state, and national levels

Facilitate stakeholder participation in long-term policy planning

Outcome: The use of scenario analysis and the SDG Synergies tool informed the Climate Change Plan for the State considering relevant geographical scales

The analysis integrates knowledge of local, regional, and national

Sweden (2021-2022)



Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs
– aim to increase systems thinking
in SDG implementation and
reporting

Local scale (six municipalities) –
methods support for SDG
implementation

Outcomes:

Analysis informed the Swedish VNR
2021

Increasing interest in systems
approaches at the municipal level

Outcomes and reflections

- A structured process for facilitating systems thinking in decision-making
- Stakeholder collaboration over different sectors
- Helps overcome data gaps and can guide further data collection
- Transparent, flexible, and easy-to-understand process
- Prioritization of goals and/or targets, results sometimes unexpected
- Importance of the contextualisation and actor selection steps
- Use the tool as decision-support in combination with complementary analytical approaches

THANK YOU!

Contact: therese.bennich@sei.org

<https://www.sdgsynergies.org/>