

Integrated approaches to SDG implementation – what does it really mean?

Convener:

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The 2030 Agenda, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, is a new development agenda for people, the planet and prosperity. It identifies universal peace, and the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions as indispensable requirements for sustainable development, and partnerships as crucial to mobilize resources and ensure commitment to the Agenda. In addition to the “traditional” development parameters, it also brings in things like land and ocean ecosystems, sustainable consumption and production, infrastructure development, and innovation. Through its 17 SDGs, the Agenda calls for a transformation of development in all countries.

The agenda puts strong emphasis on coherence and an integrated approach to implementation – ambitiously connecting the holistic and complex view on development to means and mechanisms of implementation. This is arguably a new feature in the global development discourse, and a step change requiring a rethinking of development planning away from the still-siloed perspective that dominated the Millennium Development Goals process up to 2015. However, explicit attempts at grasping and making sense of such integration are only starting to emerge, and methods and concepts have suffered from ambiguity and lack of nuance. There is no agreement about what an integrated approach implies, and even less about how to effectively apply it in policy and planning. While calls for “integrated solutions” and “multistakeholder participation” can be found across policy and planning documents across most national governments, UN organizations and other bodies tasked with the implementation of the SDGs, what this actually entails, and how it could practically be carried out, is far from clear.

The panel addresses this knowledge gap and looks at emerging practice and methods from research as well as policy and practice. The session will be introduced by a framing presentation about ways to assess SDG interactions. It will also present a statistical approach to mapping SDG interactions globally. We welcome additional contributions to the session addressing novel methods, approaches, or cases from lower-income countries where integrated approaches to SDG follow-up, policy and practice have been developed or tested. We particularly encourage contributions from lower income countries.