Challenges and Opportunities for Evaluation to Contribute to Agenda 2030

Prof. Rob D. van den Berg

President, IDEAS

5 April 2018

Overview

- Sustainable Development Goals: aspirational and reflecting experiences
- Sustainability: adaptable balance over time between social, economic and environmental systems
- Major challenge to integrate of social and environmental concerns in core economic thinking
- Interlinkages and trade-offs between the SDGs
- Paradigm wars on impact and rigorous evaluation: are they over?
- Issues of time, space and scale
- Challenge is to include sustainability perspective in evaluations
- Contribution should be to society, including fighting fake news

1 NO POVERTY
2 NO HUNGER
3 GOOD HEALTH
4 QUALITY EDUCATION
5 GENDER EQUALITY
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7 RENEWABLE ENERGY
8 GOOD JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
9 INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
010
011
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION
13 CLIMATE ACTION
14 LIFE BELOW WATER
15 LIFE ON LAND
16 PEACE AND JUSTICE
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development

ARGUMENT

The SDGs Should Stand for Senseless, Dreamy, Garbled

Play sports! Be in harmony with nature! And end all preventable deaths! Only the U.N. could have come up with a document so worthless.

BY WILLIAM EASTERLY | SEPTEMBER 28, 2015

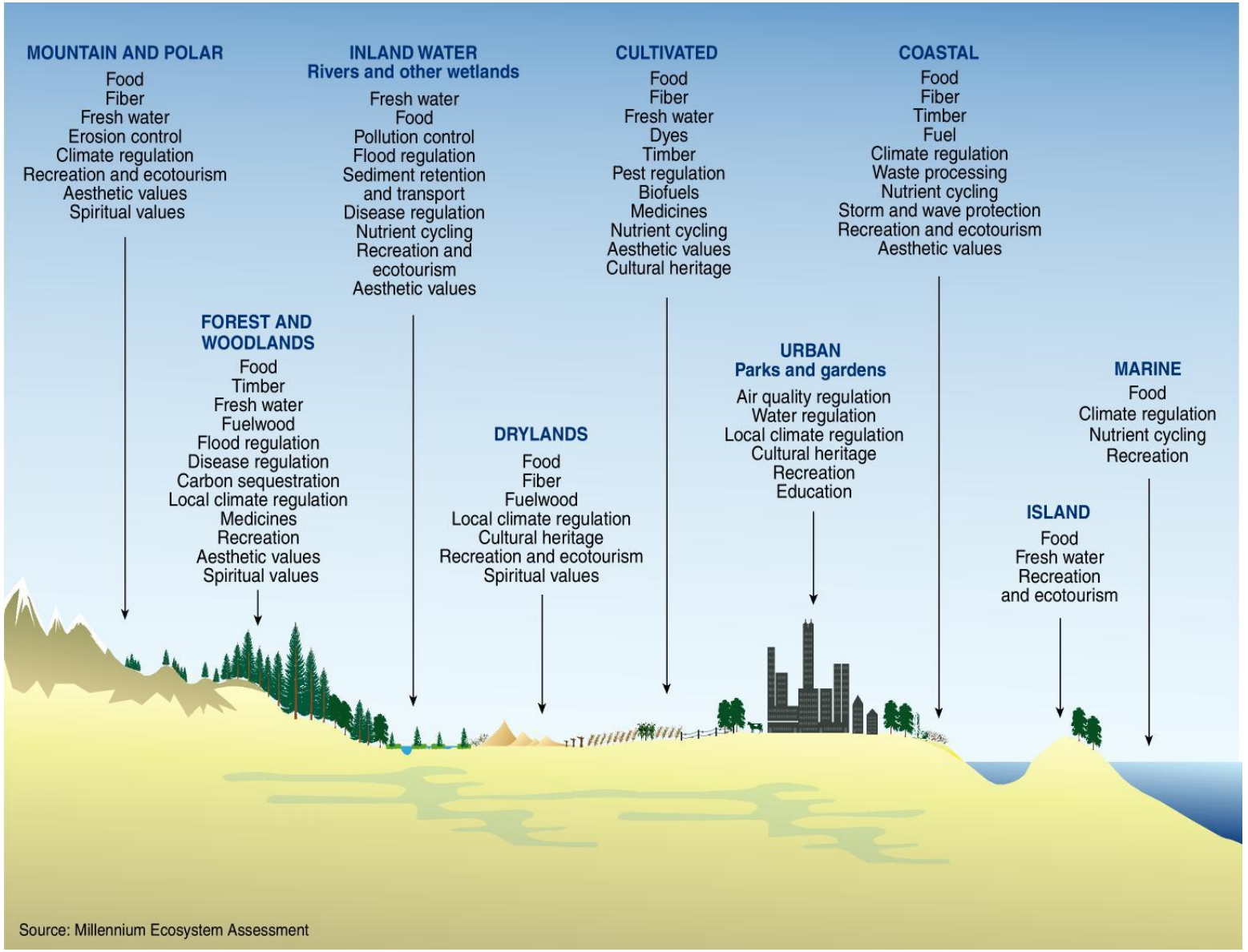
2015 marked a historic turning point. The sustainable development goals (SDGs) unanimously adopted by the United Nations last September provide an aspirational narrative and specific targets for human development: a world free from hunger, injustice and absolute poverty; a world with universal education, health and employment; a world with inclusive economic growth, based on transparency, dignity and equity.

The 17 SDGs' call for "global citizenship and shared responsibility" and provide legitimacy for a new global social contract for a grand transformation toward a sustainable future. They fully acknowledge the scientific advances achieved during the last three decades that have established compelling evidence that otherwise, as the UN general assembly warned, "the survival of many societies, and of the biological support systems of the planet, is at risk." Humanity has pushed the Earth system and its global commons to their limits and the SDGs provide us with the long-needed paradigm shift towards realising the opportunity of a sustainable future for all.

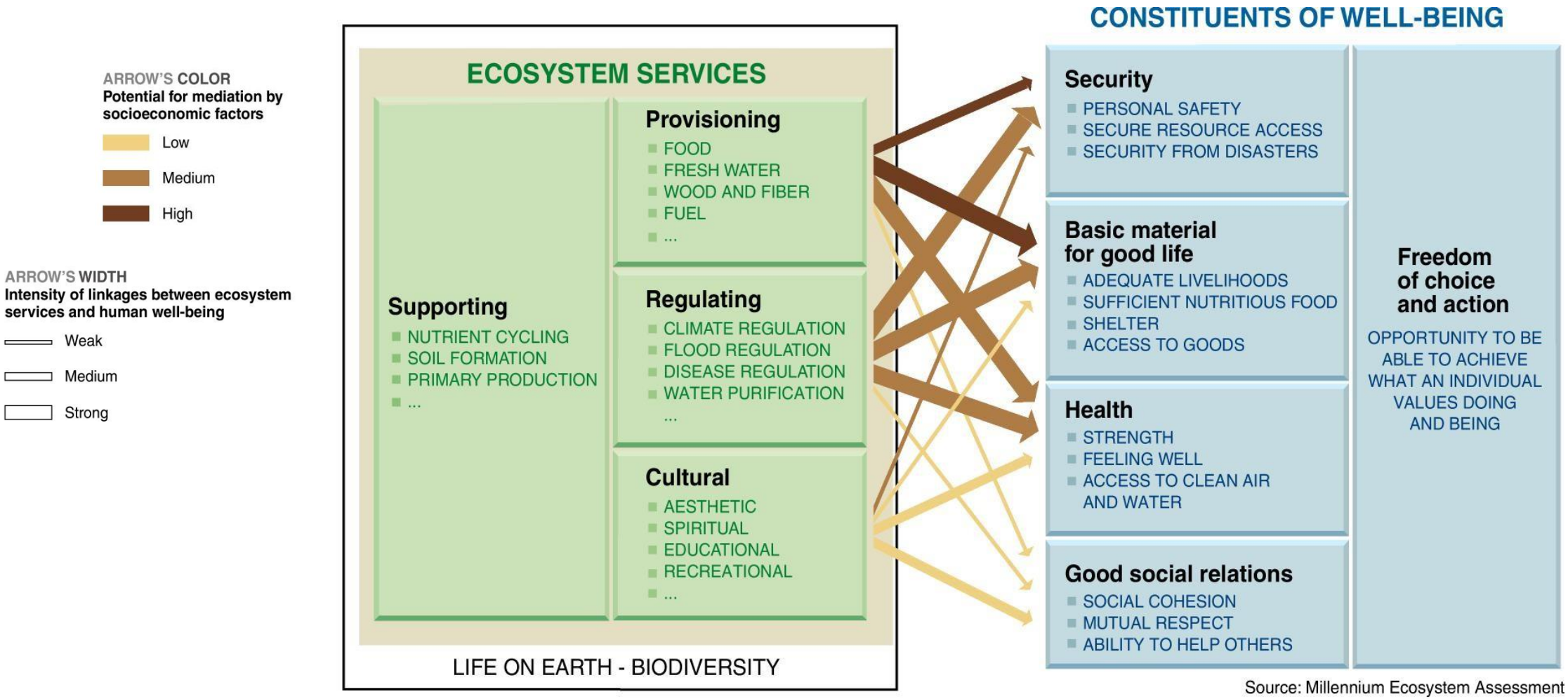
Source: The Guardian (accessed 31 March 2018). *Leave no SDG behind* https://goo.gl/L1WCoM

Ecosystem Services

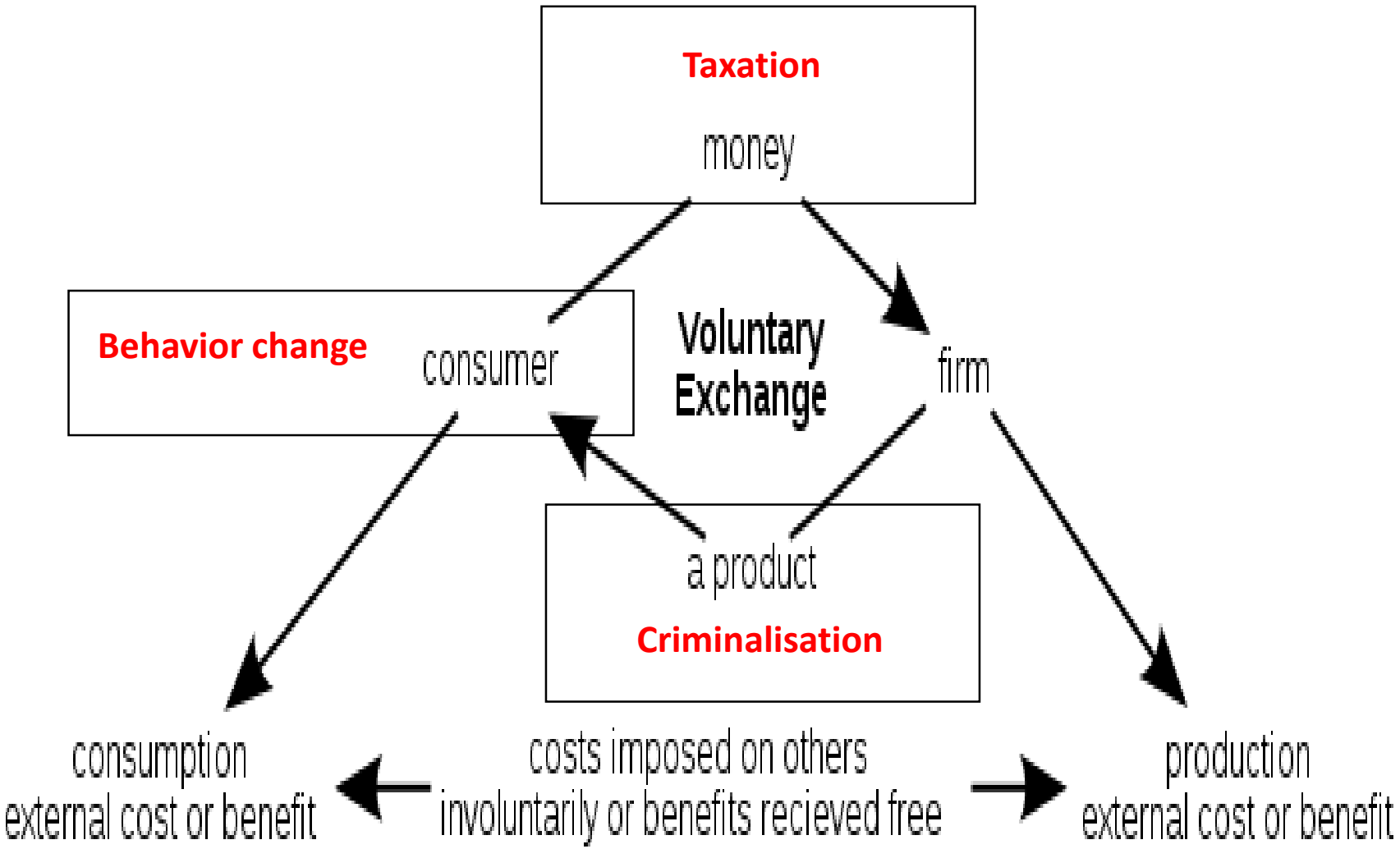
Everyone in the world depends on nature and ecosystem services to provide the conditions for a decent, healthy, and secure life



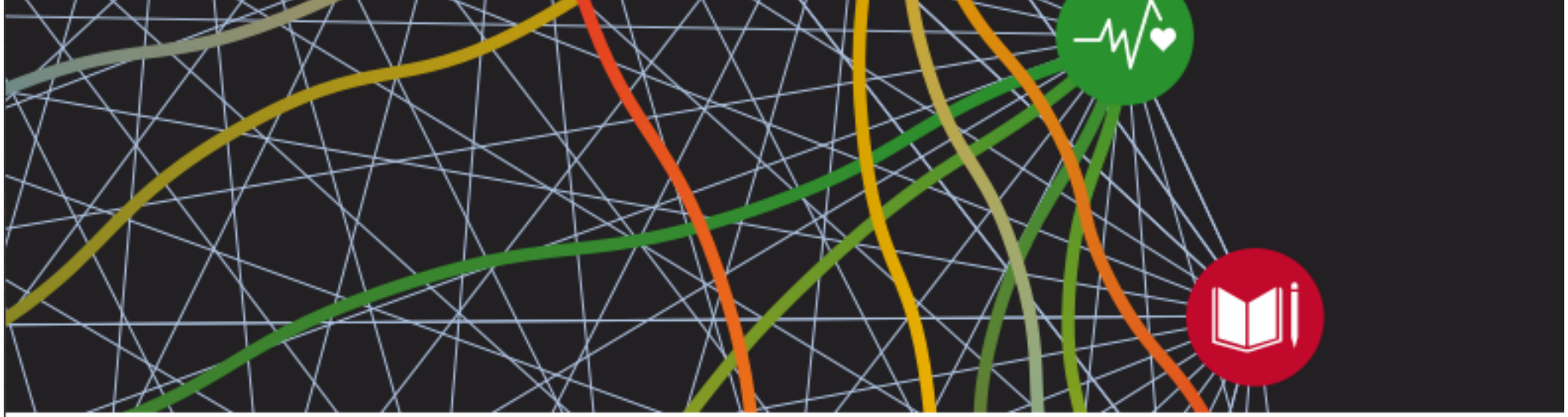
Focus: Consequences of Ecosystem Change for Human Well-being



Source: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

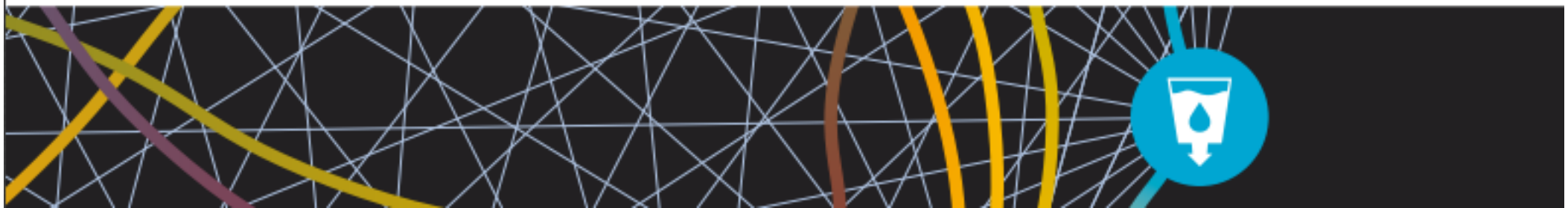


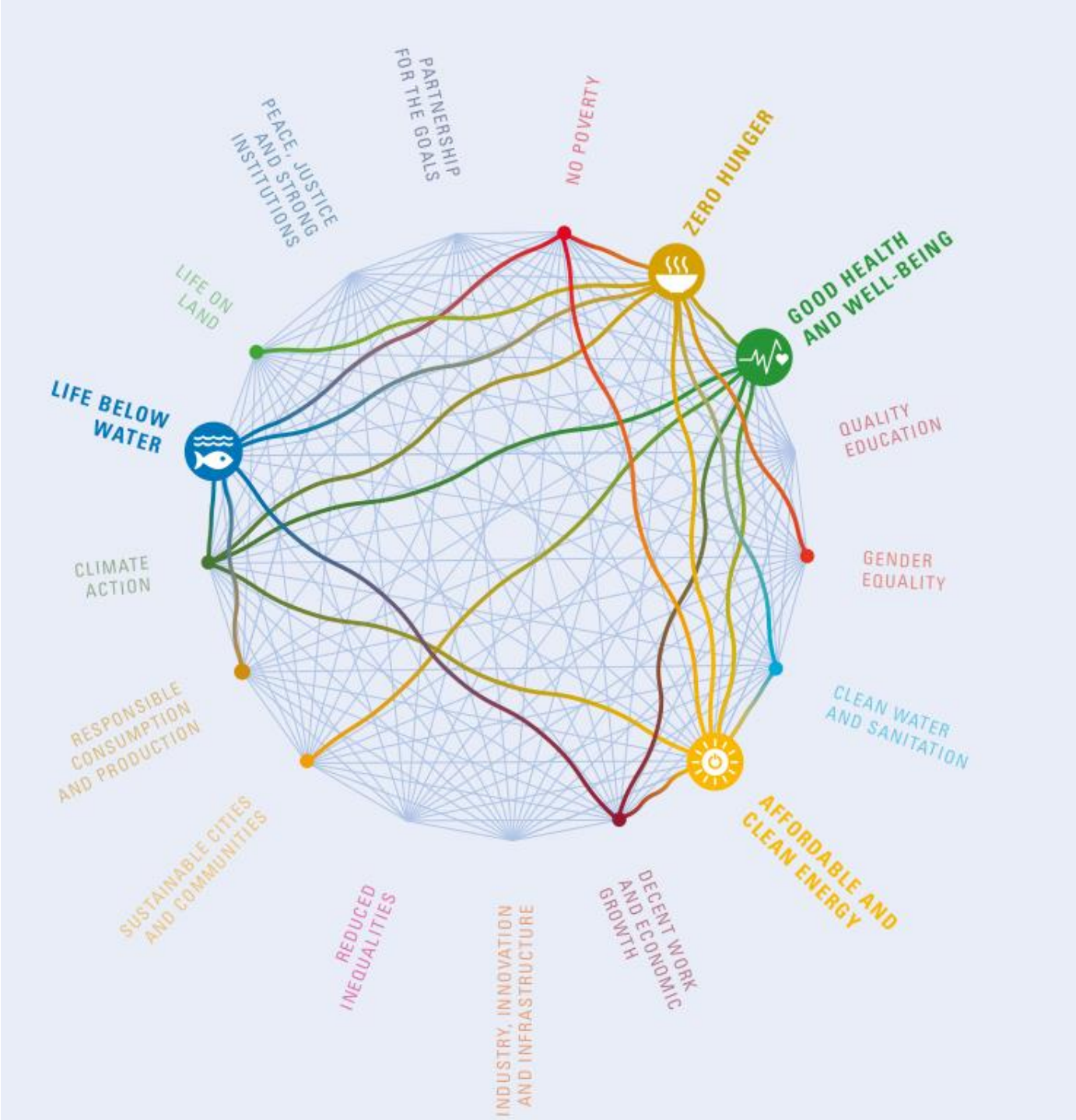
Source: Wikipedia



A GUIDE TO SDG INTERACTIONS: FROM SCIENCE TO IMPLEMENTATION

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE




NO POVERTY
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REDUCED INEQUALITIES
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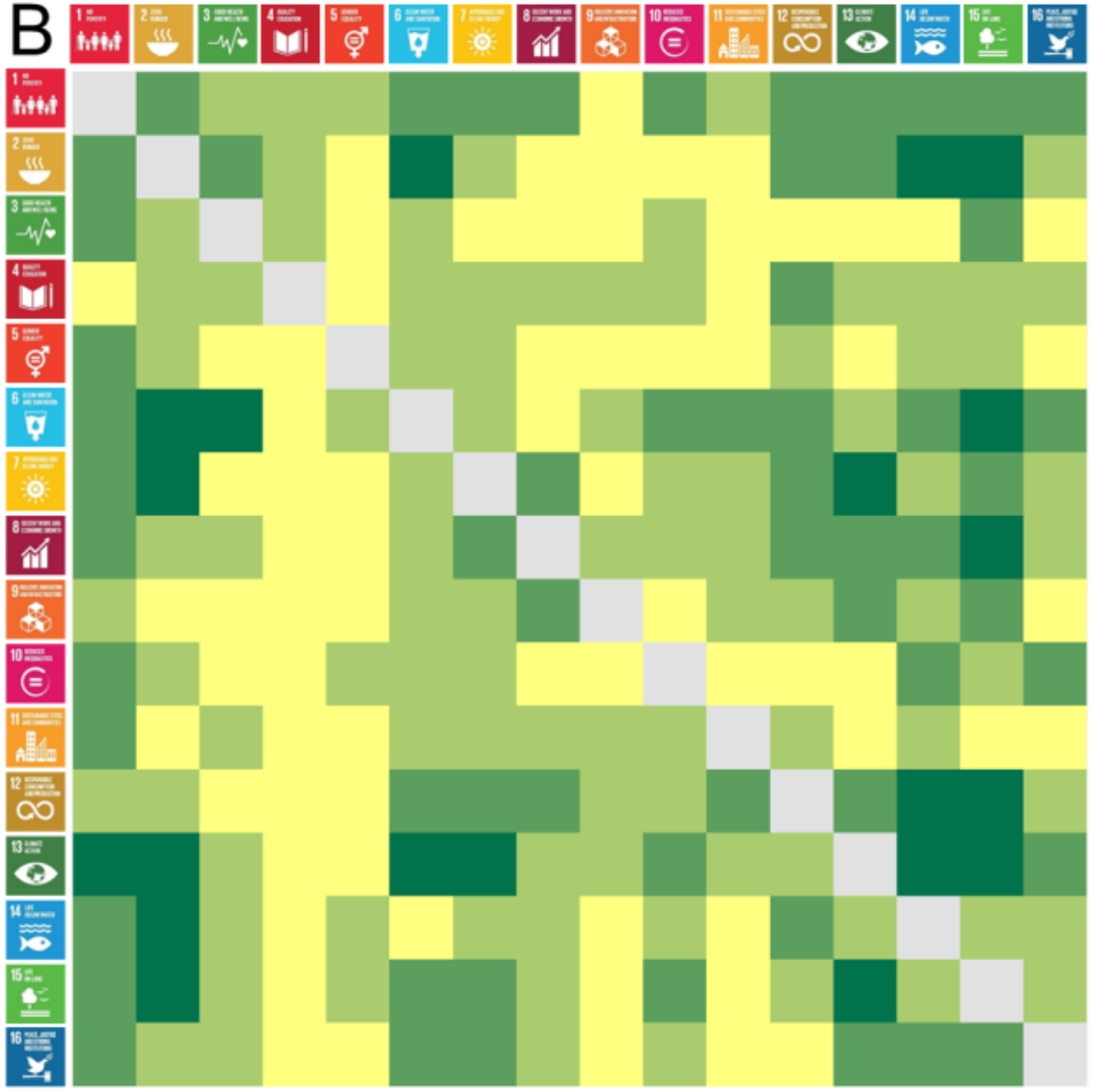
RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
CLIMATE ACTION
LIFE BELOW WATER
LIFE ON LAND
PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS

Global Goals Mapping: The Environment-human Landscape

A contribution towards the Natural Environment Research Council, The Rockefeller Foundation and Economic and Social Research Council initiative, Towards a Sustainable Earth: Environment-human Systems and the UN Global Goals

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX | UN environment WCMC

A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The Impact Paradigm wars…

- Global Development Centre: Evaluation Gap report (2006)
  - Plea for RCTs as golden standard for development evaluation
  - Recognition that much in development cannot be evaluated through RCTs
- Policy makers discovered RCTs and increasingly demand them
  - Office of the budget of the White House: all programs must create evidence through RCTs
  - UK: government directive that all governmental programmes must have RCTs
- In development a shift seemed to take place towards more holistic integrated approaches, as exemplified in the Sustainable Development Goals
- Yet the World Development Report 2015 of the World Bank focuses almost exclusively on behavioral economics and experimentalism

The knowledge about the response surface over P/P/P acquired through RCTs ....

...can be ger consequenti		r fold egate process econd order.
...leads to fe		ted by low entation not
...either is in and/or chan authorize ac		al traction on
... is of suffic action		over super
...is of suffici "amortized"		vidence is in
...is superior		

William Easterly
@bill_easterly

Follow

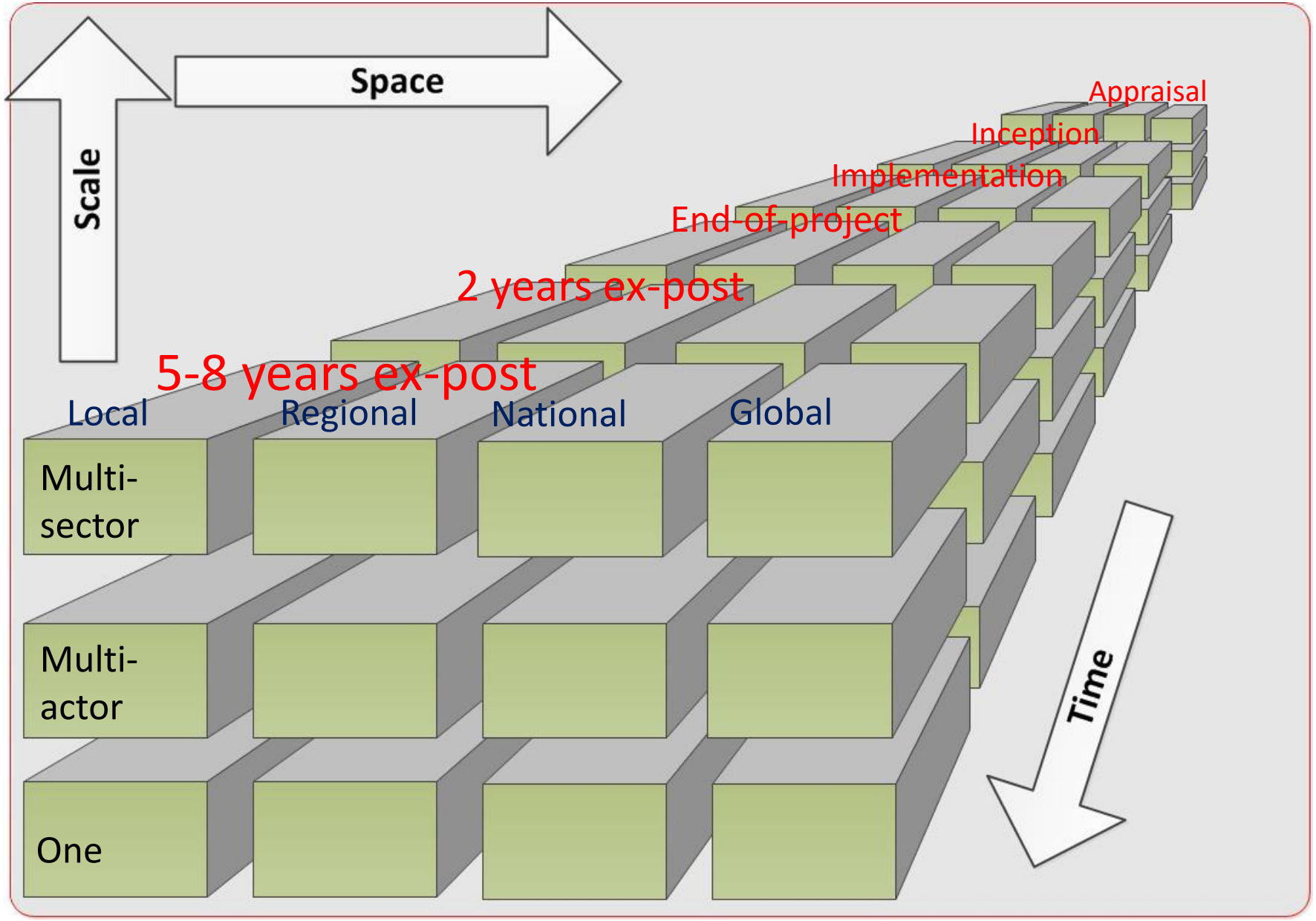
NYU DRI Presentation by Lant Pritchett: "The Debate about RCTs in Development is over. We won. They lost."

NYU DRI Presentation by Lant Pritchett (Harvard)
On February 21, 2018, New York University Development Research Institute (NYU DRI) hosted Lant Pritchett, Professor of the Practice of International Developm...
youtube.com

6:50 am - 7 Mar 2018

20 Retweets **30** Likes

20 30


Space
Scale
Appraisal
Inception
Implementation
End-of-project
2 years ex-post
5-8 years ex-post
Local
Regional
National
Global
Multi-sector
Multi-actor
One
Time

Causal impact analysis for evaluations

	One inter-vention	Multiple inter-ventions	Enabling environ-ment	Market change	Market transform-ation	Climate change
Local						
National						
Regional						
Global						
Ecosystem (overlap with other rows)						

RCTs

Quasi-experimental and QCA

Social Network analysis

Delphi

Modelling of data and experimentation (quasi- and natural)

Source: Rob D. van den Berg (2017). Mainstreaming Impact Evidence in Climate Change and Sustainable Development. In: J.I. Uitto, J. Puri and Rob D. van den Berg. *Evaluating Climate Change Action for Sustainable Development*. Cham, Springer Open, 13-34

Challenges & Contributions (1)

- In a time of fake news, social media fights and populist political movements, interest in evaluative evidence seems lower than ever before
  - Nick Cohen in the Guardian (17/3/2018): “It’s time to fight back” (https://goo.gl/ps1Hux)
- Statisticians have a mandate to gather data on the SDGs – and Agenda 2030 contains a mandate for evaluation as well: use it!
- ”Leave no-one behind” is often seen as the prime focus of the SDGs – often perceived as a socio-economic issue without attention to the environment
- Use the scientific frameworks for interlinkages and trade-offs between the SDGs to better understand the sustainability context

Challenges & Contributions (2)

- Aim for a higher learning loop than requested
  - One learning loop: evaluate what happened
  - Two learning loops: evaluate what happened and whether it was the right thing to do
  - Three learning loops: evaluate what happened and whether it was the right thing to do, or whether something else would have been better
- Keep the relationship between independence, credibility and usefulness in mind
  - Independence is needed for credibility of findings
  - Credible findings are needed for the utility of the evaluation
- Sustainability is not a permanent situation: it is an adaptive system of balancing the social, economic and environmental systems

Thank you!
Grazie!

Prof Rob D. van den Berg

President, IDEAS

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