



**Approaches
to SDG 17
Partnerships for
the Sustainable
Development
Goals (SDGs)**

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Approaches to SDG 17 Partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A Publication by the GUNi Group of Experts in SDGs and Higher Education

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Foreword



Dear colleagues,

The 2030 Agenda requires effective collaborations between all stakeholders in order to achieve the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Only through close collaboration can there be any possibility of finding global solutions to the world's current and future challenges.

Partnerships are included in the five dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, the so-called "5 P's": People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships. Partnerships englobe the whole Agenda and are called upon as the essential tool for its advancement and accomplishment.

This publication intends to offer a first approach to Sustainable Development Goal 17: "Partnerships for the Goals". It includes the perspectives and views of different networks, organisations, geographical regions and working cultures on what "partnership" means, and how work should be done to implement SDG 17. This collection of articles offers a glimpse at different ways to embark upon SDG 17 and the 2030 Agenda and provides examples and recommendations for higher education stakeholders, policymakers and international organisations and networks.

The construction of multi-stakeholder partnerships is no easy task. But much can be achieved by working on the obstacles and difficulties: sharing knowledge and culture, innovative ways of working and collaborating, attracting more resources, uniting efforts and mobilising expertise. The 2030 Agenda presents us with the opportunity to update a governance model in which all actors are called upon to play a crucial role, and where we all need to pool our efforts, our expertise and our resources together for a better future for humanity.

In response to the 2030 Agenda and to SDG 17, GUNi established a new strategic line around sustainable development. One of its main initiatives is the Group of Experts in SDGs and Higher Education, whose members are representatives of some of the most relevant networks and organisations of higher education and sustainable development. This document is its first publication, and on its pages you will find relevant examples, inspiration and recommendations for partnering for the goals.

Josep A. Planell
GUNi President



Introduction

Sharing and Building on Expertise for the Goals: GUNi's Group of Experts in SDGs and Higher Education

The world today is going through highly interdependent and complex social, economic, technological and ecological changes, which are the result of past and present trends. As Erik Assadourian states in *Rethinking Education on A Changing Planet*, “the defining quest for humanity today is how we will be able to provide fulfilling lives for 8–10 billion people even as Earth’s systems are declining rapidly”.¹

The increase in inequality and major asymmetries between regions and peoples, as well as the lack of global governance derived from the diffusion of power and the crisis of representation and legitimacy in many countries are important examples of the challenges that humanity is and will be facing in the years to come. Despite this, in recent decades new non-state actors have come onto the scene and are demanding a new role in governance. The 2030 Agenda is an excellent opportunity to review and re-distribute global governance and SDG 17 could be a key factor of this re-distribution.

In response to these transformations and threats, and to the increased stagnation of certain problems, the international community negotiated the Agenda for Sustainable Development and 17 goals to be reached by 2030. This was no easy process, and implied a set of parallel multi-actor and multi-sectoral negotiations. These negotiations and tensions are present in the Agenda, with certain contradictory goals that sometimes fail to go deep enough into the causes of certain problems. The 2030 Agenda is neither a list of magic solutions to the complex challenges that we are facing nor transformative per se, but it is a crucial opportunity that

we need to take advantage of. The Agenda should be viewed as an open process that calls for shared responsibilities, universality, engagement, discussion, analysis, testing and above all, collective action. The Agenda calls on all actors to delve into the causes of our problems and provide answers to the contexts and needs both locally and globally. SDG 17 has an essential role to play in this process.

The United Nations defines partnerships as “voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both State and non-State, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits”.²

Partnerships are common nowadays within the framework of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda, and come in many different formats, bringing together groups of different sizes, with small or large pools of resources, and can include local, regional and/or global actors. Some of these have become highly effective, and produce consistent results and accomplishments, while others lose their way amid bureaucracy and inefficiency.

“Multi-stakeholder partnerships pursue a shared vision, maintain a presumption in favour of joint problem-solving, promote a work ethos that exploits mutual self-interest, and adds value beyond that achievable by the principal alternatives” (GKP, 8).³

According to Darian Stibbe and Dave Prescott from the Partnering Initiative⁴, the following are some of the complementary resources that different sectors can bring to the table:

1. Assadourian, Erik, 2017. “Chapter 1. EarthEd: Rethinking Education on a Changing Planet” in *The WorldWatch Institute Earth Ed (State of the World) Rethinking Education on a Changing Planet*. Island Press, page 6. http://earthed.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/SOW17_chap1_EarthEd.pdf
2. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/224 (2015), “Towards global partnerships: a principle-based approach to enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners”, page 4. <https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/224>
3. Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP), 2003. *Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships Issue Paper*, page 8. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/2117.pdf>
4. Stibbe, Darian; Prescott, Dave. 2016. *An introduction to multi-stakeholder partnerships*. The Partnering Initiative, Oxford. <https://thepartneringinitiative.org/publications/research-papers/an-introduction-to-multi-stakeholder-partnerships/>

| NGOs and civil society | Business | Government / parliamentarians | International agencies / UN | Donors and foundations |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical knowledge / capacity • Access to and deep knowledge of communities • Legitimacy • Social capital • Passion and people-focus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A market-based/ commercial/ value creation approach • Power of the brand and access to customer base • Technical and process innovation • Power of the value chain • Infrastructure/ logistics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory framework (e.g. licenses for water etc.) • Integration with public systems • Long term planning • Capacity building • Provision of land and supporting infrastructure • Democratic legitimacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical support, knowledge and experience • Legitimacy and impartiality • Access to a global network • Political access | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding and support (in many cases foundations can be less risk adverse and support more experimental and innovative approaches, providing proof of concept that can be expanded by more traditional donors) |

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals - Revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals can only be achieved with the active participation of every government, agency, organization and citizen. The Agenda requires the establishment of effective and inclusive multi-actor partnerships between all stakeholders: governments, the private sector and civil society.

Sustainable Development Goal number 17 includes 19 targets divided into 5 general topics: finance, technology, capacity building, trade and systemic issues. Systemic issues are further divided into policy and institutional coherence, multi-stakeholder partnerships and data, monitoring and accountability.⁵

As presented by the United Nations, the following are the topics and targets that cover SDG 17:

Finance

- Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection.
- Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of ODA/GNI to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries.
- Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources.
- Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress.
- Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries.

5. United Nations. Sustainable Development Goals Website <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

Technology

- Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism.
- Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed.
- Fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries by 2017 and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology.

Capacity building

- Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.

Trade

- Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda.
- Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries share of global exports by 2020.
- Realize timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all least developed countries, consistent with World Trade Organization decisions, including by ensuring that preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries are transparent and simple, and contribute to facilitating market access.

Systemic issues

Policy and institutional coherence

- Enhance global macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and policy coherence.

- Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.
- Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

- Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries.
- Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.

Data, monitoring and accountability

- By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.
- By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries.

GUNi's Group of Experts in SDGs and Higher Education

GUNi was created after UNESCO's World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE) in 1998 to give continuity to and facilitate the implementation of its main conclusions. The aim was to create a conceptual framework for higher education entailing:

- The participation of all partners in higher education, members of governments and all representatives of civil society, students and their families, teachers, researchers and workers.
- The definition of common social objectives aimed at the establishment of in-depth reforms that will improve the relevance of higher education and its links with society, and enable the creation of quality education, with access

for all on the basis of merit and ability, and without any kind of discrimination.

- The strengthening of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, within the framework of accountability.
- Finally, the participation of all in the establishment of a more just and equitable society.⁶

Higher education faces the challenge of creating and distributing socially relevant knowledge and of doing so in good time so as to play a proactive and committed role in the transformation and positive change of societies. Hence the need to reconsider what the social contribution of higher education should be. GUNi encourages higher education institutions to redefine their role, embrace this transformation process and strengthen their critical stance within society.

In the framework of the 2030 Agenda, GUNi has adopted a new strategic line of action around Sustainable Development with a focus on partnerships, knowledge and research. GUNi's project on SDGs is based on two main activities: the International Conference on SDGs and the Group of Experts in SDGs and Higher Education. Both activities go hand in hand. The first edition of the International Conference was held in Barcelona last September 2017 and involved the participation of more than 60 speakers from around the globe. The International Conference will be held every two years and the Group of Experts will play an active part in it. Through this project, GUNi hopes to demonstrate its commitment to the Agenda 2030 and reinforce the role of higher education institutions, partnerships, knowledge and research in the achievement of the goals.

The Group of Experts is composed of professionals from all regions of the world and from specific and general networks related to higher education and sustainable development. Its objective is to share and build upon knowledge in order to provide insights to help higher education institutions, students and policymakers to implement the SDGs. This will be done through a series of meetings, discussions, research on specific topics and publications with findings and recommendations, as well as through presentations at the biennial International Conference.

This publication is the Expert Group's first exercise on SDGs. It includes the perspectives and views of different networks, organisations, geographical regions and working cultures on what "partnership" means, and how SDG 17 should be implemented. This collection of articles offers an overview of the different ways to embark upon SDG 17 and the 2030 Agenda and provides examples and recommendations for higher education stakeholders, policy makers and international organisations and networks.

6. The World Conference on Higher Education: The Long Journey for a Utopia Becoming Reality (Paris, October 1998)
<http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/diaz-e.htm#15>

The image features a solid blue background. On the right side, there is a large, abstract graphic composed of numerous light blue, curved lines that sweep from the top towards the bottom, creating a sense of motion and depth. The lines are closely spaced and curve inward, resembling a stylized wave or a fan-like structure.

Articles

SDG 17 and a Subnational Cooperation Agency, the ACCD

Carme Gual

Director, *Agència Catalana de Cooperació al Desenvolupament (ACCD)*

Introduction

The Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation (ACCD)¹ has been working since 2003 as an instrument for the Generalitat de Catalunya (Catalan Government) in the field of cooperation for development. Created as a tool to help civil society to fulfill its drive for solidarity, its evolution has involved different phases and levels of political support. As a public structure, devoted mainly to offering financial support to local NGOs, it has developed its expertise as a donor, which means supporting the projects of others. The Master Plan, a four-year strategy, which must be approved by the Catalan Parliament, outlines the main lines of work and the priority themes and countries to follow. 2018 is the last year of the current Master Plan (2015-2018). The focus has been transformative: Gender approach based on Human Rights (GABHR). From such a perspective, the ACCD sparked a minor revolution, not only in the focus of its projects, but also within NGOs.

Gender approach based on Human Rights (GABHR) builds development as a shared responsibility for global challenges, entailing holistic joint crosscutting responses, with the aim to promote transformative and qualitative rights-based cooperation. This approach takes into consideration the structural causes of inequalities, especially with regard to gender. This vision is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development – and with the 17 SDG – assuming interdependence and transnationalization of the reality and the universality of the challenges to be tackled (diluting the frontiers between North and South) and consequently the international obligation to find possible answers.

One of the principal consequences of this holistic approach means dealing with some well-established areas of cooperation, namely Humanitarian Aid, Development and Education for Development (EfD).

Humanitarian crises – political or natural – are not built from scratch, so the answer is not only to care for victims in an emergency situation, but to evaluate risk factors and improve their capacity for prevention and preparedness, thereby helping to reduce their future vulnerability and improve their resilience. Similarly, neither development nor humanitarian action may be understood without analysis, comprehension, diffusion and exposure of the causes of inequalities and injustice, and fostering individual and collective efforts to transform them. In short, the three strategic lines share one single objective and must focus on the empowerment of actors to generate a greater capacity for resilience, protection and guarantee of legal enforceability and political protection of human rights and especially of women.

Our methodological approach focuses on addressing global issues and challenges with the potential to transform, tackling the structural roots of inequality and the violation of rights.

From here we build coherent and collaborative integral and intersectoral answers to promote changes in the uneven distribution of power, and where different actors recognize their shared responsibility for economic, social and environmental impacts, and the mutual benefit of exercising human rights. Therefore, the processes are as relevant as the results. In these integral actions, we prioritize work with the most vulnerable populations – women and young people. These collectives also have the greatest potential to transform.

1. <http://cooperaciocatalana.gencat.cat/ca/inici/>

ACCD's approach is to foster a natural evolution from being a traditional donor that supports projects and funds partnerships to become a facilitator of alliances. This has been a logical shift in the planning and implementation of projects that has come together with international acknowledgement of multi-faceted and complex global development challenges.

The international community embraced a new instrument in September 2015: the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and some 169 targets. SDG 17 –Partnerships for the Goals identifies actors for the implementation of the other 16. SDG 17 aims to reinforce the role of global partnerships in achieving sustainable development. It seeks to enhance multi-stakeholder collaboration, and bring funders together with governments, civil society, the private sector, the UN system and so many other actors to leverage the potential of collaboration in order to mobilize all available resources on every single level: global, regional, national, subnational and local.

From the point of view of a small cooperation agency, our key tags are decentralized and strategic.

Our subnational level structure gives us the opportunity to work in partnership with international organizations that are at the forefront of the solution of problems, without the political constraints faced by states, so we can primarily be devoted to creating the right conditions for citizens to improve their lives.

We explore each possibility to start on a small scale and manage the possibilities to escalate the model. In fact, it is rather like discovering the 'steam engine' of our time, which might shift the order of things. What do we include and what do we leave out? Our outside-in strategy provides a conscious decision to make processes, policies, people, systems and other changes to generate new common opportunities.

However, collaborative work is not as easy as it may seem. This emerging inclination towards partnership must struggle against historical habits of working in silos

and pointless competition. First, we must create the competences and the legal framework – on all administrative levels – for collaboration. Public administrations traditionally package services and responsibilities together in order to organize their workers hierarchically. At the ACCD, we strongly encourage the creation of multidisciplinary teams inside the Catalan Government in order to team up with our counterparts working on cooperation programs in other countries and generate dialogue with them. This approach raises important questions about the role of officers. For instance: should they have to 'offer' their expertise to public administrations in other countries? The answer should be yes, but difficulties arise when implementing these programs. ACCD is exploring strategies to develop agreements with different stakeholders, including NGOs, civil servants, universities and the third sector. This approach implies intense work on a strategy for policy coherence, which has begun in earnest with a thorough examination of all Catalan Government departments through the lenses of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, our Master Plan is already proposing reports and actions to promote the coherence of policies for sustainable development through the policies and actions of the Catalan Government.

With regard to partnerships, our Master Plan aims to concentrate geographically in order to provide an effective support policy to ensure durability and the maximum impact and ability to scale up development processes. Alliances and new instruments in countries in which we are permanently present are priorities for our new approach. In our direct cooperation, we create stable relationships with our counterpart authorities (regional and metropolitan levels are our natural partners), but we also search for bilateral alliances to contribute to a third country, such as with Flanders and Switzerland for common projects in Mozambique and Guatemala. Furthermore, we make a priority of improving our alliances with major multilateral development institutions – mostly from the UN system – to develop global initiatives through localized pilot projects, where we can add expert value and proximity, or contribute to multi-donor funds.

Moreover, we have two different but related roles to support our key actors from organized civil society: NGOs. On the one hand, ACCD must reinforce the social fabric with the provision of grants, through a call for human rights-based gender projects in some priority geographical areas. We also enhance capacities, not only on a conceptual level (GABHR), but also on an

operational and innovative level. We train organizations to improve their skills in the management and justification of projects and provide the expertise to adopt technology in order to improve results. Universities have a role to play in this area. Firstly, with existing NGOs from universities that present their projects to our calls for grants. However, also with a new tool that we created recently to boost collaboration between NGOs and universities: Grants for the preparation of collaborative R+D projects aimed at the calls for the European Horizon 2020 program, in which research groups in Catalonia and NGOs jointly participate.²

On the other hand, we are exploring long-term alliances with NGOs that have the experience and capacities to contribute to a common and agreed strategy. Our main target is to jointly implement a specific program in a country/region with a prioritized issue. In this kind of bilateral alliance, we encourage the inclusion of multiple actors to increase impact and efficiency. We are focusing on this type of approach, aligned with the 2030 Agenda, as multi-stakeholder partnerships are becoming increasingly important. As donors, we must acknowledge that collaboration takes place on all levels of intervention, which will mean a change for the design and budgeting of projects.

We are open to creating coordinated proposals between different levels of public administration in order to maximize impact and coherence. The exploration of new financial instruments implies not only a common approach and priorities, but also the adaptation of legislation to boost our capacity to fund partnerships. This is one of the big challenges that public administrations face, due to the legal and concurrent restraints that are more focused on formal procedures and financial control of projects, and less on the evaluation of their results. Our role as funders should be a smooth adaptation to a different logic for designing, planning and implementing our projects. Multi-scale and multi-stakeholder programs require more time to prepare, to create teams and to define each partner's role. This no small issue in a fast-changing world, what we call a VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) world, and it affects our priorities, the liability of our counterparts, our capacity to adapt projects, our budgets and so on.

There is a pressing need to create solid networks and resilient partnerships that are able to cope with changes. It also means constantly building goals, being open to flexible adaptation to new inputs and refocusing better in order to achieve the expected outcomes. Indicators need to become a common language, agreed on by all partners and monitored by all. Or are we only dreaming? Could this wish come true? Can we really be more flexible in an over-regulated administrative system?

The next step in this long-term trend is capacity-building through collaborative partnership. This implies time, effort and training in new skills, knowledge, instruments and so on, which also implies a part of the budget.

If we want to seriously implement SDG 17, we really must transform our management processes, from program design to the scaling phase.

We are implementing this new approach in some of our principal programs.

In Colombia, Guatemala and El Salvador we are strengthening a strategy around the preservation of memory and the prevention of the recurrence of violations of rights, the elimination of their after-effects and the restoration and reinforcement of confidence in institutions in working partnership with different organizations from those countries, as well as some European ones. Another example is our strategy to tackle violence against women in Mozambique, where after a long-term relationship with local, regional and national public administrations we have become a point of reference for NGOs and international organizations based in the country to address the issue. This is of major assistance when designing together through the lenses of the SDGs. A third key strategy is that devoted to migration and the economic issues in the Mediterranean area (Morocco and Tunisia).

Our adaptation to the field and our capacity for interaction with institutions, and also with civil society, in order to adapt our programs, is a considerable asset for our good reputation in the sector. It means that we are well-positioned to become a partner in big multi-level and multi-stakeholder programs. We have always needed to create synergies and collaborate to

2. http://cooperaciocatalana.gencat.cat/ca/agencia_catalana_de_cooperacio_al_desenvolupament/ajuts-i-subvencions/2018/convocatoria-de-recerca-i-innovacio/

accomplish our objectives. It is in our DNA, as a small subnational cooperation agency. There is a growing tendency for big international organizations to search for non-national institutional agencies as partners for their big programs, and it is becoming more and more evident that our approach gives them a real link to existing grassroots level institutional systems and civic organizations, which are our long-term partners that can provide hands-on support.

Based on the priorities established by the Master Plan, a more focused exercise is fostered each year, based on a cross-examination involving contextual analysis (structural causes that cause inequalities and violations of human rights and especially focused on women) and an analysis of the capacities and strengths of Catalan cooperation. In this sense, we started a diagnosis of cooperation on the different levels of public administration (local, metropolitan and provincial) to better prioritize the strengthening of long-term strategic alliances and to increase the impact and transformative actions of Catalan cooperation as highlighted by SDG 17. The Catalan cooperation is looking to work on the following areas in terms of the 2030 Agenda:

- Universal and collective, with emphasis on shared responsibilities and common challenges between North and South and the desire to strengthen mutual capacities that reverse the improvement of public policies in partner countries as well as in Catalonia.
- Participatory and multi-level, with emphasis on the addition and articulation of actors of a diverse nature and the promotion of triangular and N-S exchanges as well as the promotion of participation, presence and personal discourse in spaces of global incidence;
- Creative and innovative: Promoting the inclusion of new technologies in development; Promotion of interaction between the migrant/refugee population in Catalonia and the holders of the responsibilities, obligations and rights in their countries of origin; Increase the importance of sensitizing the citizens of Catalonia through multiple and varied formats to reach new audiences and all age groups.
- Coherent and coordinated: The coherence of policies is a key principle of the Catalan cooperation policy that aims to be projected as a mainstream policy for the whole of the Government's actions. The SDGs offer an ideal framework to advance the government's responsibility in all areas in order to meet sustainable development goals both inside and outside of its borders.

To pinpoint priority issues, the Gender and Human Rights Approach to which Catalonia has committed in the current Master Plan contains many elements included in the 2030 Agenda: Strengthening capacities of the holders of rights, obligations and responsibilities; and giving power to rights holders. People and organizations must accept the meanings of horizontal, democratic and participatory power. Accountability. Focus on processes, 'how' principles of human rights must be materialized is as important as the final objective. We explore processes that seek to transform and which require long-lasting and solid alliances; the actions focus on excluded groups in situations of vulnerability, with the aim to increase their capacity to deal with challenges; participation must be guaranteed in all processes and especially at the key decision-making moments; promotion of multi-actor strategic alliances and co-responsibility of all actors and society as a whole, especially of men, for transformation. This methodology demands capacity-building not only regarding the human rights being defended, but also regarding the community in order to share the expected transformation.

However, we need to maximize results, and replicate, share and disseminate knowledge. In this sense, we are planning debates on some key questions, in order to sharpen our cooperation policy towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. These debates will help us to construct our next Master Plan (2019-2022). To do so, we are designing a participatory process in which different stakeholders can add their own expertise, knowledge and viewpoints: The third sector, universities, professional organizations, private sector representatives and the media will be discussing with NGOs and counterparts ways to reinforce and revitalize Cooperation for Development over the next 15 years. Different mindsets and visions must collaborate to achieve unexpected new common perspectives and solutions.

Thus, the management of knowledge and capacity-building are key instruments for improving the results of our programs. That is why we collaborate with universities both in Catalonia and from some of our counterpart countries, to generate research, analysis and knowledge, to spread the fundamentals of our work, to create a consensus about the methodology, to encourage new collaborative processes to be generated as a result of this mobilization of knowledge and to further encourage innovative practices.

SDG 17 for us means the generation of methodologies and replicability, and we need universities for that. In addition, when we talk about capacity-building and multi-stakeholder partnerships, we also require higher education for dissemination and research, but it needs to take on board the SDGs and a new systemic approach, and to create incubators around the world in order to escalate the impacts after prototyping certain tools and solutions.

We consider funding to be another fundamental aspect of SDG 17, which mentions the need to generate internal resources and mobilize them from different sources, but with the continued relevance of the 0.7% of resources of the underdeveloped countries in the ODA. Mr. Thomas Gass, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs³, in his statement in Seoul, at *the 11th ODA International Conference: The role of ODA in the era of the SDGs*, describes what kind of role the ODA can continue to play in fulfilling the SDGs. We are placing special emphasis on a few of these, such as implementing support programs for the training of public institutions in these countries, above all in the areas of public administration, and the mobilization of internal resources and data management, among others, thereby generating internal coherence between actions relating to the different development agendas or contributing to transparency and maximum responsibility in the management of funds, as well as proper accountability.

We are undoubtedly facing a paradigm shift in terms of systemic transformation, which will not be easy, and which will generate strong resistance from existing interests. The traditional institutional figures must substantially change their behaviour, because for them it will mean a loss of influence, and they will need to compromise if this is really about making global strategic alliances. This is no small issue and should be addressed on all levels.

Regarding our area of activity, this process involves repositioning development cooperation and humanitarian aid on a global level. There are new, and very effective and efficient models for development whose capacity for response is being demonstrated on a daily basis.

On the other hand, we cannot forget that in the light of growing evidence, the SDGs are being established as a common reference for all areas of society, both public and private; we must accept them as an opportunity to redesign the mechanisms and the tools that we work with, and to turn

cooperation into a coherent, consistent and direct public policy instrument.

With the increased presence of technology in all areas, and with the challenge of incorporating it in cooperation (organizations in the sector are aware of the need to comprehensively address this issue), we are compelled to collaborate with sectors that already have the technological knowledge that we need to carry out programs and actions for change.

We need adaptability, flexible action tools and to interrelate between policies and sectors. Mainstreaming and thinking outside of the box allow us to innovate and use new tools to confront global challenges.

For this, we need the support of universities and the private sector. There should also be a focus on other factors, such as age, for there is a clear divide with regard to younger generations (priorities, habits, ways of socializing and participating, etc.) that must be considered and brought into the equation. It is also worth reiterating the growing significance of sub-national levels and decentralized cooperation in implementing proposals in all areas. Proximity is a value that large donors are beginning to positively appreciate.

Finally, the importance of coherent public policies, which must go hand in hand with solidarity, sustainability and the pursuit of justice and peace, plays a role in the need to permeate all government action on values in development cooperation. Furthermore, the clear connection between what is happening in the 'south' and what is happening in the 'north', in terms of common social phenomena, such as repeated violence or common problems that must be resolved together, require in-depth thought about a new way to share the world.

3. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/statements/asg/mr-gass/2017/09/11th-seoul-oda-intl-conf.html>

European University Association (EUA) – Universities as Partners for Sustainable Development

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Introduction

Universities are cooperative institutions by nature. They operate nationally as well as internationally through research cooperation and facilitating student mobility, while also playing a big role in their regional context. Due to the massification of higher education, they have also become very large institutions that have their own strategic approach to dealing with regional and national partners.

In recent decades, European universities have grown due to the rise in student numbers and their economic importance in the knowledge society. At present, an average of 49% of all young people in the OECD are expected to graduate from tertiary education at least once in their lifetime.¹ This figure alone makes universities a key economic and social partner in a national context; this is where a very large part of the workforce will be educated. Likewise, public and private spending on university research has been on an upward trend, as the discourse of the knowledge economy has pervaded political thinking globally.² As institutions, universities are often the biggest employer in their region, and their economic contribution as a sector is considerable; one study put the gross value added of European research universities at 400 billion euros.³

All this means that there is a much bigger expectation for universities activities to have an impact on society, both in terms of education and research, and for them to become important partners for business and government.

On the global level, universities have traditionally been places of international discussion. Knowledge knows no boundaries in the sense that research discussions ideally derive their legitimacy from evidence and rigorous method, and not from where it is geographically produced. The global nature of research has been accentuated in recent years by the complexity of problems and the very practical issue of sharing increasingly sophisticated and expensive infrastructures, like the iconic Large Hadron Collider in Geneva, Switzerland. The increased internationalisation is clearly visible in publication patterns, where international co-publications doubled between 1996 and 2015.⁴ At the same time, internationalisation in terms of growing numbers of mobile students have risen rapidly, going from two million to almost five million students between 2001 and 2016.⁵

The consequence is that universities have a much more important international role than before, both in terms of building bridges as well as being global players in their own right.

The European University Association (EUA) has been following these trends since its beginning in 2001. Bringing together 840 universities and national university associations (rectors' conferences) from 47 countries, EUA has been in a position to observe these developments first hand as well as to shape the discussion about universities as partners. The university sector in Europe

1. OECD (2017), Education at a Glance 2017, OECD, p. 64

2. OECD (2016), OECD Science, Technology and Innovation Outlook 2016, OECD, p. 130 – Figure 3.2

3. BiGGAR Economics (2017), Economic Contribution of the LERU Universities, LERU, p. 1

4. OECD (2015), OECD Science, Technology, and Industry Scoreboard 2015, OECD, p. 66

5. UNESCO Institute for Statistics Database, <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

only recently began to use the language and concepts of the Sustainable Development Goals to describe their societal mission, but it has always been deeply involved in sustainable development through its activities in education and research. Given the broad mission of universities, they practically cover all the goals in their activities, but do not necessarily link them or observe the trade-offs and synergies between them. Goal 17, Partnerships, is different as it is a facilitating goal. Universities use partnerships explicitly to achieve their societal mission on many levels, from social inclusion in their regional setting to solving major global challenges, and they are well aware of the power of partnerships to reach these goals.

For the following, it is helpful to distinguish between the partnership roles of universities (and therefore the work of EUA) as socio-economic or civil society partners on one hand, and as global partners on the other.

Universities and EUA as a Civil Society Partner for Sustainable Development

When looking at the SDGs in a European context, the UN indicators for achieving them sometimes need to be adjusted and amended. This is particularly the case for Goals 16 (strong institutions) and 17. Where the targets of Goal 16 are largely, and given the context understandably, focussed on well-working state institutions, Europe as a continent of developed, pluralistic societies would need to include institutions beyond the state, or institutions in the grey area between state and civil society, such as universities. European universities are large institutions with varying levels of autonomy and strategic capacity but financed through the state and subject to a specific legal framework. They need to be able to work under these unique conditions as a part of a society that draws its strength from the pluralistic interplay between different actors. In other words, there is a strong connection between Goal 16 and the ability for universities to achieve Goal 17.

EUA has dedicated much work to the issue of university autonomy. In 2011, it published its first comparative report on university autonomy in Europe, a scorecard comprising 16 countries. This was then updated in 2017.⁶ The study

used a methodology that took the concept of autonomy away from debates about academic freedom and focused squarely on the relationship between universities as institutions and the state. It identified major dimensions of autonomy in terms of finance, staffing, organisation and academic autonomy (the latter notably about control of programmes and admission of students) with the underlying assumption that universities were more able to fulfil their role in society if they had the capacity to articulate and implement strategies in the long term, instead of being dependent on political or bureaucratic requirements that limited their ability to respond to and lead societal change.

The issue of university autonomy is important in the context of the SDGs as it underlines how the relation between Goal 16 and 17 is important for pluralistic societies. If Targets 17.16 and 17.17 for multi-stakeholder and civil society partnerships are to have any meaning, the stakeholders must each have the capacity, and hence autonomy, to act as a partner. Institutions like universities play a major role as partners in achieving the SDGs when they can actively shape the way that they make this contribution. As a first step, universities need the organisational autonomy to make sustainable development a strategic priority for the institution, meaning that their leadership is not imposed from the outside and that they can – if necessary – reform their academic structures, for instance by making them more interdisciplinary. Universities must also be able to make investments in infrastructure and staff in order to implement their sustainability strategy, which requires financial and staffing autonomy. Lastly, bringing sustainable development into learning and teaching requires universities to have the academic autonomy to set up adequate study programmes. A multidisciplinary doctoral programme in sustainability with placements in NGOs would, for instance, be difficult in systems where all programmes require accreditation from discipline-based academic bodies.

A strong institution makes a strong partner.

Specifically, universities can and do use this autonomy to leverage their main missions for sustainable development. This is obvious where research and education (Goals 9 and 4) play an important role in providing knowledge that will help to achieve other goals:

6. Estermann, Thomas, Terhi Nokkala & Monika Steinell (2011), *University Autonomy in Europe II*, EUA, Bennetot Pruvot, Enora & Thomas Estermann (2017), *University Autonomy in Europe III. The Scorecard*, EUA – see also <http://www.university-autonomy.eu/>

marine research for underwater life and zero hunger, for example, by looking at ways to further both issues by combining social sciences and natural sciences to prevent over-fishing. Or energy, where EUA has been particularly active. The Uni-SET (2014-2017) project specifically looked at how universities are meeting the energy challenge by underlining the need for a multidisciplinary approach and linking research and education in energy in order to create the right expertise for the energy workforce of tomorrow. The results of the project showed the strategic importance of energy research for many universities and how the actual projects were often conducted with industry partners.⁷ In SDG terms, the project linked goals 4, 9, 7, and 17, showing how education and research conducted in cooperation between universities and the private sector helps to move towards clean energy.

In pluralistic, complex societies like European ones, civil society has a strong role to play in achieving the SDGs, beyond Target 17.17 and its focus on public-private partnerships. Self-regulation of particular sectors is equally important. For the university sector, self-regulation has proven highly efficient in areas related to providing quality education for all. The best example is probably the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. This document is part of the inter-governmental European Higher Education Area (EHEA), where it serves as the common guide for quality assurance across the continent. However, it was not drafted by governments, but by universities (represented by EUA) of applied science, lecturers, students, quality assurance agencies and business.⁸ This partnership and their common promotion of the document have made it one of the most solid cornerstones of the EHEA, offering a common basis for delivering quality higher education.

Likewise, as doctoral education became a part of the Bologna Process in 2003, the university sector began a process of self-regulation in order to contribute to the reforms. By 2005, the universities had proposed the Salzburg Principles for Doctoral Education, which were

taken up by the Ministerial Meeting of 2005 in Bergen and put into the Communiqué from the meeting.⁹ The spirit of the Salzburg Principles was further developed in the Salzburg II Recommendations, which were drafted in a consultative process by more than 150 universities between 2009 and 2010.¹⁰ Many of the points of this document can be found in the national legislation made at the beginning of the decade, for example by direct mention in the Spanish Royal Decree of 2011.¹¹ In countries with no direct legislation, like the UK and Germany, the principles were largely taken up by the sector itself and implemented within institutions.

The point of these two examples is the connection between strong institutions working in partnership in order to achieve goals. Although the examples are not directly related to the SDGs, as they happened before the Agenda 2030 had been articulated, the purposes of the partnerships were applicable to the goals of ensuring quality education and increasing research capacity.

Universities as a Global Partner

Globally, the university sector is characterised by a need for openness to collaborate and spread ideas and knowledge, while individual universities at the same time compete for limited resources, particularly for students and researchers. In this context, EUA sees its role as promoting global dialogue, often building bridges between regions where no-one else acts as a facilitator. Partly for this reason, the bulk of EUA's work has been related to capacity building partnerships across the globe. There is particularly strong dialogue with North America as well, but this has been based on common meetings and exchange rather than actual projects.

In 2006, the association adopted "An International Agenda for EUA", basing its activities on the goal to "Promote dialogue, exchange and cooperation with partners based on the principle of equal partnership, and considered as

7. EUA/UNI-SET (2017), Energy Research and Education at European Universities, EUA

8. The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) from 2015 were made by: The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
European Students' Union (ESU)
European University Association (EUA)
European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)
Education International (EI)
BUSINESSEUROPE
European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)

9. Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bergen, 19-20 May 2005 http://media.ehea.info/file/2005_Bergen/52/0/2005_Bergen_Communique_english_580520.pdf

10. EUA (2010), Salzburg II Recommendations. European universities' achievements since 2005 in implementing the Salzburg Principles, EUA

11. Real Decreto 99/2011, de 28 de enero, por el que se regulan las enseñanzas oficiales de doctorado http://www.aneca.es/content/download/13037/161582/file/rd_99_2011.pdf

an opportunity for mutual learning for the benefit of all".¹² While the original idea was to use the model from cooperation with North America through rounds of dialogues between the leaders (the Transatlantic Dialogues¹³), much of the work in the following years was done through externally funded projects co-financed by the European Union. As these projects were more targeted than leadership dialogues, they came closer to what would later be described in SDG Target 17.6 as multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries.

The EUA-led project *Access to Success: Fostering Trust and Exchange between Europe and Africa (2008-2010)* is a particularly good example of such a multi-stakeholder partnership. The project brought together the European and African University Association with the European Students' Union, the Flemish Organisation for University Development Cooperation, the Norwegian Rectors' Conference, and the European Access Network, an organisation dedicated to making higher education more accessible. The project combined the leadership dialogue developed through EUA's North Atlantic cooperation, but then opened up to a wide range of stakeholders, from university staff to donor organisations and regional agencies. Apart from the contacts and the sharing during the project, the partners published a White Paper¹⁴, which is still highly relevant in the context of sustainable development.

One of the main points of the White Paper is the role of knowledge creation and retention of experts in meeting development challenges. As this was before the SDGs, they were not explicitly mentioned, but it is striking how easy it is to 'retrofit' the philosophy of sustainable development to the project's outcomes. This is clear for access to education as well as for the call for more investments in research and innovation in Africa. Moreover, the White Paper continuously underlines the importance of equal partnerships between different world regions, and argues for integration of development in

internationalisation strategies, bringing the traditionally separate 'academic' and 'development' agendas together.¹⁵ In the global university sector, this is still an ambitious goal, as many universities – particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world – are dependent on fees from overseas students, and the strong competition in research favours alliances between already strong institutions.

Related to the latter point, EUA used its work on doctoral education to address equal, global partnerships in research. Here, the CODOC project (Cooperation on Doctoral Education between Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe, 2010-2012) brought together umbrella organisations from four continents: the Inter-American Organization for Higher Education for South America, the Southern African Regional Universities Association, the ASEAN University network, and EUA, as well as the University of Bonn and Karolinska Institutet. The project argued for doctoral education as a vital part of capacity building and pointed to clear global trends of convergence in the growth of the number of doctoral graduates, the common global language of innovation, and the growing focus on cooperation.¹⁶ The project also showed how cooperation in doctoral education between research-intensive universities and universities' building capacity could make the less research-active partner attain a critical mass, enabling it to conduct doctoral education on its own. One of the main points related to this type of capacity building was indeed the partnership approach: collaborations should not just focus on mobility of doctoral candidates and exposure to good research environments abroad, but also include a wider exchange and common development of know-how and good practice.¹⁷ This message was particularly pertinent in the early 2010s, when high commodity prices allowed emerging countries like Brazil and Chile to invest in research and innovation, leading to a more multi-polar global research landscape.

The CODOC project had an important by-product in the Global Strategic Forum for Doctoral Education, convened by EUA's Council for Doctoral Education. The forum consisted of bi-annual meetings gathering university leaders from all continents, including developing and emerging countries, to a common discussion on

12. An International Agenda for EUA, <http://eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/international-agenda.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

13. Global Policy Dialogue <http://eua.be/policyrepresentation/internationalisation-of-he-and-research/global-policy-dialogue>

14. EUA e.a. (2010), *Africa-Europe Higher Education Cooperation for Development: Meeting Regional and Global Challenges*, EUA http://eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/Africa-Europe_Higher_Education_Cooperation_White_Paper_EN_FR.pdf?sfvrsn=0

15. Ibid. P. 12

16. Jørgensen, Thomas Ekman (2012), *CODOC - Cooperation on Doctoral Education between Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe*, EUA, p. 34 http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/EUA_CODOC_web.pdf?sfvrsn=0

17. Ibid. p. 28

challenges in training future researchers. The forum held in 2013, hosted by the Dublin Institute of Technology, produced a statement laying out the Principles for the Global Research Community.¹⁸ The statement underlined how research tended to be concentrated in a small number of highly research-intensive hubs and institutions around the world and that this tendency needed to be counterbalanced with priorities for global inclusion and access to knowledge. At the time, global collaborations and partnerships were seen as essential for providing access; today, it would also be appropriate to mention open access to research data and results. However, the main concern regarding the concentration of research among the high-capacity players in the field remain and could well be addressed through the framework of the SDGs, looking at synergies between investments in innovation under Goal 7 and the partnership approach of Goal 17.

In recent years, EUA has focused more intensively on the European neighbourhood. There are several reasons for this: among those, the about 150 EUA members in the countries to the east of the EU, and also need to work closer with the countries to the South. As relations between the EU and its neighbours have become increasingly tense due to the war in Ukraine, the aftermath of the Arab Spring, political developments in Turkey, and the refugee crisis in 2015,

EUA has found it necessary to emphasise the potential of higher education and research for soft diplomacy.

It is important to retain semi-formal links between countries, for instance through the common agenda for higher education reform and through the people-to-people contacts created through mobile students and researchers. These activities are mainly aimed at strengthening institutions, but in the bigger picture (and consciously so) they are working for peace in the region.

The SPHERE project (Support and Promotion for Higher Education Reform Experts), gathers higher education experts in National Erasmus Offices from the European Neighbourhood and beyond, from Morocco to Uzbekistan, to build capacity in their systems.¹⁹ It is a place where people from very diverse countries can meet and exchange ideas about reforming higher education systems, having access to study visits to universities in the EU and expert Technical Assistance Missions to their own countries. From about 100 members at the beginning of this network, it now gathers almost 250 persons. It is an extremely activity-heavy project, with a very intensive programme of seminars, study visits, and technical assistance missions leading to numerous expert publications and studies.²⁰ The result is a geographically widespread community that stretches across political and military conflicts.

This is possible as higher education is generally seen as the area where connections between countries can be retained, even at times of great strain or outright war.

EUA has sought to gather global data on the role of higher education in people-to-people contacts between the EU and the countries around the Union in an infographic.²¹ The document shows the structures for higher education that link the EU with neighbouring countries, mainly the Erasmus+ Programme and the Horizon 2020 Programme for education and research respectively, but also the European Higher Education Area. One of the main points of the infographic is the capacity of higher education to provide people-to-people contacts on a very large scale: Using UNESCO data, the infographic showed that about 260,000 students were coming either (and mostly) from the neighbouring countries to study in the EU or were EU students studying in neighbouring countries. In terms of EUA activities, 2100 participants from these countries took part in EUA events over five years.

Another example is the Arab-Euro Conference on Higher Education, which has been organised on an annual basis since 2013.²² These conferences were held in the spirit of providing a general space for inter-regional dialogue, but also addressed common issues, for example building

18. Statement from the EUA-CDE Global Strategic Forum on Doctoral Education, http://www.eua.be/Libraries/cdewebsite/FinalGlobal_Strategic_Forum_2013_statement.pdf?sfvrsn=0

19. <http://supportthere.org/>

20. European Commission (2017) HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM EXPERTS. Activity Report 2016 http://supportthere.org/sites/default/files/here_activity_report_2016.pdf

21. <http://eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/universities-and-the-european-neighbourhood.pdf>

22. <http://www.ub.edu/aeche/>

research capacity and training new researchers or managing university partnerships. These conferences would typically attract between 150 and 200 participants from university leadership positions, not only contributing to individual contacts between Arab and European universities, but also deepening the institutional ties and the common understanding of higher education and the role of universities.

Summary and Outlook

Universities are large, complex organisations. When relating university activities to the SDGs, it is certainly tempting to re-label the multitude of activities of researchers and students as relevant to individual SDGs. One point of this chapter has been to show that it is useful for there to be more in-depth reflection about the role that universities – and university associations and networks like EUA – have in the interconnections between the goals. This is particularly evident when viewing universities as a socio-economic partner that can potentially contribute to all the goals through its activities in education and research. However, as a socio-economic partner, universities themselves benefit from Goals 16 and 17, especially if Goal 16 is broadened to include strong civil society institutions in order to build the partnerships that Goal 17 is aimed at.

As a global partner, research and higher education traditionally have a diplomatic use, and there is a very strong sense of belonging to an international sector within universities. For this reason, Goal 17 comes naturally. However, the competition for resources and the tendency to particularly concentrate research capacity also has the effect of excluding large parts of the world's universities from the partnerships. This is where organisations and networks like GUNi are necessary to counter the trends and argue for broad and inclusive partnerships, as only these will lead to meaningful achievement of the Goals.

In order to sum these points up in recommendations:

1. Strong institutions make strong partners: civil society institutions and organisations need to have autonomy in order to work efficiently towards achieving the goals;
2. Self-regulation, setting goals and guidelines for the sector is an important part of a strong civil society;
3. Equal global partnerships are important, and universities can work towards this through their great capacity to build people-to-people communities. However, we must be willing to address the large global imbalances in research and education in order to achieve this fully.

SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals: A View from Inside Africa's Higher Education Institutions

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Introduction: The SDGs, History, Visions, Principles and Guiding Framework

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)¹ were a significant and effective method of global mobilisation to achieve a set of critical environmental, economic and social priorities worldwide. Developing countries made some progress towards achieving the goals, and international synergies were designed to sustain the momentum. For this reason, global leaders, led by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, adopted a new set of 17 goals in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These were born out of the Rio +20 Conference² in paragraph 283 of the Future We Want³ outcome document, designed to serve as the groundwork for Agenda 2030. The 17 SDGs were carefully thought out to reflect economic, social and ecological dimensions and their interconnections. Each goal includes specific targets, progress indicators and criteria for review. The goals are universal and incorporate critical areas that were not effectively covered by the MDGs, such as climate change.

A significant issue that is recognised by the SDGs, unlike the MDGs before, is the important role of higher education and institutions of higher education in the propagation of the post-2015 development agenda. The SDGs show that higher education underscores efforts to advance social, environmental and economic development at

all levels and in all spheres. Instead of being restricted to narrow definitions of the sector's role as defined in a particular goal or target, institutions of higher education cut across thematic areas through the knowledge and graduates they produce. Given that each SDG has specific targets, and progress indicators that are crucial for outlining the impact of the renewed framework, there is a clear requirement for the specific skills and expertise that universities can provide in pursuit of the SDGs as well as monitoring and measuring progress with their indicators (The Association of Commonwealth Universities, 2015).

Goal 17 in particular addresses the need to create effective ways to facilitate and accelerate development by establishing and revitalizing global partnerships. The targets of this goal cover five thematic areas: finance, technology, capacity building, trade, and systematic issues. These functions can be championed by institutions of higher education, as expressed by Piyushi Kotecha, the CEO of the Southern Africa Regional Universities Association, who said that it is far too simplistic to limit the functions of universities to research, teaching and service, and that "higher education in developing nations should take on the mantle of responsibility for growth and development." This concept is underscored by Kofi Annan's assertion that African countries should develop universities that are dynamic and responsive to socio-

1. The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty rates to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions.
2. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - or Rio+20 - took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 20-22 June 2012. It resulted in a focused political outcome document which contains clear and practical measures for implementing sustainable development.

3. Paragraph 283 of the declaration sums up the message: "We recognise that the planet Earth and its ecosystems are our home and that Mother Earth is a common expression in a number of countries and regions and we note that some countries recognise the rights of nature in the context of the promotion of sustainable development. We are convinced that in order to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environment needs of present and future generations, it is necessary to promote harmony with nature"

economic agendas, giving priority to innovation, entrepreneurship and competitiveness. (Cloete & Maansen, 2015).

Partnerships provide platforms for universities to aspire to and aim for more than they could through secluded efforts. Through alliances, universities can map the needs of their communities with their capacities and critical offerings, identify growth areas to start to build on and contribute to a system-wide approach to realising all of the SDGs in an existing multi-sector partnership or develop new friendships. Through capacity building, universities build a stronger workforce and better economies, enhancing the growth environment.

Institutions of higher learning are the engines that supply talent which fuels development.

SDG 17 and Higher Education in Africa: Linkages within African Institutions of Higher Education – with Government, Industry and Communities

Citing the power of effective partnerships in higher education institutions, Kofi Annan said that “partnerships between universities and the private sector can overcome the inconsistencies between the needs of African employers and the skills and abilities of its young graduates” (World Bank, 2015).

Partnerships between universities and players in industry in Africa face various difficulties. A study conducted by Creso M Sa, for the African Association of Universities, identified some of these to be cultural differences between academia and the business sector. The study also cited a lack of confidence in the ability of universities to contribute meaningfully to economic development, which was exacerbated by weak investments in research infrastructures and the pervasiveness of poor governance. There was also a lack of strong leadership to champion university-industry linkages. Meanwhile, industry was unable to effectively partner with universities due to limited financial capacity, mainly because of the size and nature of the African economies (Sa, Not Dated). These arguments are reiterated by Gasper Mpehongwa (Mpehongwa, 2016) in a study of the challenges and prospects of academia-industry-government linkages in

Tanzania, which highlights the country’s “factor-driven economy”⁴ as a significant hindrance, as well as the lack of strong academia leading to an insufficient number of qualified staff and strong leadership.

Be that as it may, there have been some successful partnerships between African universities and industry, including the Corporate Graduate Link (CoGL) at the University of Zambia. This is a partnership between universities in Germany and Zambia, Chambers of Commerce from both countries, and mining companies in Zambia, which aims to bridge the gap between university graduates’ qualifications and the needs of industry. This collaboration seeks to enhance curricula, align research with industry needs and the government’s developmental agenda and policy, and identify opportunities to build networks with communities and build research centres. Another notable partnership is that of Kenya’s Kenyatta University with Equity Bank established in 2008, which has opened up opportunities for community service for students across the country. As the students interact with communities, they benefit from the social connections and awareness of social issues and are therefore better placed to address community needs (Sa, Not Dated).

Strategic partnerships with development support agencies are also a vital part of the equation. Claudia Costin, Senior Director for Education at the World Bank Group, pointed out that “the World Bank allocates about a fifth of its education budget for Sub-Saharan Africa, approximately \$600 million, to higher education,” during a high-level panel on investment in African higher education (World Bank, 2015).

There is need to enhance partnerships between universities, governments, development agencies and civil society with the aim of furthering sustainable development. In this respect, we can include the Annual Civic Camps (“Camps Citoyens”) at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (UCAD), Senegal. This partnership is not designed to address the requirements of industry but seeks to improve the lives of communities across Senegal through strategic alliances designed to promote sustainable development. Through the program, students are sent to rural areas across the country to help communities in matters of health, reforestation, alphabetization, and basic ICT (Sa, Not Dated).

4. According to World Economic Forum (2010), a factor driven economy is the lowest stage of economic development where basic conditions such as low-cost labour and unprocessed natural resources are the dominant basis of competitive advantage and exports.

How can African Universities Collaborate with Other Networks?

It is firmly established that universities and institutions of higher education play a central role in driving Africa's economic agenda. Through multiple and overlapping interactions, their position in society as anchor institutions for development cannot be disputed. Therefore, African universities need to be proactive in establishing and enhancing working partnerships with other networks. Partnerships shape universities to the demands of the 21st century as labyrinths of competence and solutions to social and economic challenges and drivers of development. (Edmonson, Valigra, Kenward & Belfield, 2012). African universities can establish, take leadership of and model partnerships at three different levels, namely primary level, medium level and high-level, with multiple stakeholders in pursuit of the sustainable development goals and, in particular, goal 17.

At the primary level, institutions of higher learning can transfer intellectual properties (such as patents) to businesses or development agencies and form social relationships through joint conferences, social networks and so on.

At the medium or mobility level, universities can engage in the development and commercial exploitation of technologies through academic inventors participating in spin-off companies or companies partly owned by universities. At this level, universities can also engage in the training of external employees by offering post-graduate training in industry, secondments of university faculty staff to firms, governments and organizations and extending internship programs.

At the higher, relationship level, universities can establish inter-organizational research partnerships to pursue collaborative research and development via research consortia and joint ventures. They can also offer research services by receiving and executing research contracts on behalf of various organizations. This type of relationship can be advanced further whereby universities can transform laboratories and equipment (their infrastructure) into shared facilities that act as invention incubators and technology development hubs (Guimon, 2013).

Collaborations with universities have been on the rise, albeit at the nascent stages. There is already heightened activity among researchers in Africa and other parts

of the world. University World News highlighted findings from a paper authored by Professor Anastassios Pouris of the University of Pretoria and Professor Yuh-Shan Ho of Asia University published by *Scientometrics* (DOI 10.1007/s11192-013-1156-8) which revealed three key aspects of these linkages. First, there were higher collaboration patterns in Africa than in other continents. Second, papers published by African scholars in collaboration with international partners rose sharply by 66 percent over a five-year period. Third, these collaborations were mainly driven by foreign funding and focused on research in the fields of medicine and natural resources (Dell, 2014). The findings have drawn mixed reactions because, although collaborations have been on the rise, the African developmental agenda as captured in the SDGs may not necessarily be their driving force.

Professor Pouris and Professor Yuh-Shan also note that unlike other regions of the world where research focuses on developing high technology industries, African research was dominated by the fields of medicine and natural resources. They point out that it would be better to diverge from such costly fields and focus on wealth-creating areas that require less investment and are easier to diffuse in the economy and society. In other words, focus on more relevant research (Dell, 2014). However, 'health creation' research is as critical in the African region as 'wealth creation' research.

The above findings by Professor Pouris and Professor Yuh-Shan also bring into question how African universities choose their priorities. According to Jose Guimon, in a World Bank policy briefing paper, priorities for both universities and other institutions vary at different stages of development. Due to the developmental needs facing Africa, its universities will often set up linkages with industry that are informal and prioritize areas such as securing internships and recruitment of graduates. However, a different paradigm beyond teaching, research and entrepreneurship is the 'developmental university', which sets up linkages not necessarily to commercialise or for profiteering but prioritizes the broader objective of contributing to social and economic development as captured in SDG 17. (Guimon, 2013) The creation of the 'developmental university' is not a new concept. There have been widespread calls for the 'revitalization of African universities' after four decades of political turmoil and funding challenges (from the late 1950's to the end of the 1990's), which led to such revitalization being equated with enhancing their relevance. However, most of the

initiatives that came out of this were skewed towards major donor-driven events (Cloete & Maansen).

For African universities to become relevant to the development agenda, they must shift their priorities away from attending to donor's demands and towards meeting the needs of their communities.

Narend Bajinath and Genevieve James (Narend & James, 2015) assert that African knowledge, given appropriate incentive, can be a powerful stimulus for development. If prioritized by African universities, it can provide alternative perspectives which resonate with the continent's aspirations, interests, and development agenda. The priority areas of include research and innovation to fuel the sustainable development agenda; intensification of efforts to review and revitalize indigenous knowledge and innovation systems; advocacy for higher budgetary allocations to indigenous knowledge research; nurturing of confident scholars with a critical understanding of their context, and the creation of innovative solutions for the preservation, promotion, development and nurturing of African cultures (Narend & James, 2015). These priority areas were almost echoed by Goolam Mohamedbhai, former secretary-general of the Association of African Universities, and former president of the International Association of Universities, when he urged African Universities not to focus all their efforts on the World University Rankings, which use criteria that are irrelevant to the African context but instead to focus on research to resolve African issues and communicating their findings appropriately to stakeholder groups (Mohamedbhai, 2014).

Higher Education and the Push Towards SDG 17 in Africa: Why SDG 17 Is Particularly Significant in Africa

Goal 17 seeks to create effective ways to facilitate and accelerate development by strengthening and revitalizing global partnerships. The targets of this goal are key factors for Africa's development and cover five areas, namely:

- Finance: the target is to strengthen domestic resource mobilization and promote long-term sustainability in debt financing.
- Technology: Improve the coordination of knowledge sharing using environmentally sound technologies.
- Capacity building: support the building and nurturing of effective capacity-building initiatives.
- Trade: use interlinkages to create equitable multilateral trade systems aimed at increasing exports from developing countries.
- Systemic issues: Address systemic issues such as policy and institutional coherence, partnerships and accountability.

SDG 17 is particularly important for African universities because partnerships provide opportunities for them to achieve more than they can do alone. Capacity building helps build stronger workforces and better economies for the African countries, enhancing the growth environment. Institutions of higher learning, the engines that supply talent and innovation, are therefore at the core of efforts to fuel development.

SDG 17 is also important because through partnerships universities can map the needs of their communities with their capacities and key offerings.

There is a need to identify growth areas in which to start building: for instance, recent oil and gas deposit discoveries in East Africa vis-a-vis manpower needs to exploit the resources. Without collaborations within and without there will be a shortage of local manpower as well as a shortage of institutions with the capacity to carry out relevant training and research, and thereby contribute to a system-wide approach to realizing the rest of the other SDGs in an existing multi-sector partnership or by developing new partnerships.

Some Strategies in Place to Realize SDG 17 in Africa

According to the Economic Commission for Africa's sixteen-country assessment report on National Strategies for Sustainable Development in Africa (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2011), most countries had developed and were implementing their National Strategy for Sustainable Development. The nations in review were applying the principles of multi-stakeholder participation and ownership, sound leadership and good governance. But the strategies put in place varied from one country to another to reflect their unique environmental and economic dimensions, and each country's specific poverty reduction strategies aimed at fitting their own development agendas.

The Integrated Approach

Taking a leaf from South Africa, where the SDG s were aligned with the country's National Development Plan (NDP), they adopted a bottom-up approach in order to emphasize inclusivity. South Africa developed and adopted an integrated approach whereby it identified key areas in which the private sector could make a substantial contribution to the advancement of the SDGs and cultivated platforms to nurture trust and policy coherence both horizontally and vertically. They focused on building the process around people by reinventing the state to make it less bureaucratic and more people-focused, while relying on dependable data for proper monitoring and evaluation (Laher, Lehohla & Yawich, 2016).

The EBAFOSA Approach

EBAFOSA is a pioneering all-inclusive pan-African policy framework and implementation platform. It focuses on solutions and brings together key stakeholders and actors from the EBAFOSA membership, where successful applications in one area can be transferred to another location. For instance, in terms of peer learning to bridge technology gaps, there is the Zai, an ancient West African farming technique that is simple, affordable and accessible and has been refined over time. It was used in the dry Sahel region to enhance soil fertility, moisture retention, and reclaim severely degraded farmlands.

The technique has been used to address degradation and productivity challenges facing farmers in other arid areas of Africa, such as Northern Kenya. So, through simple peer to peer interaction, farmers in the Sahel can transfer techniques to their counterparts in Kenya (Munang, 2015).

The United Nations University Initiative on Regional Centres of Expertise

One of the longstanding initiatives that have engaged participating African universities in sustainable development initiatives through multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnerships is the UNU Regional Centres for Expertise (RCE s). This is an initiative with global reach that was developed in response to the need to address multiple challenges that hampered previous efforts to strengthen the notion of education for sustainable development (ESD). Consensus was almost universal on the need to strengthen communication, coordination and collaboration in ESD among diverse partners and to shift from normative statements to pragmatic action that encourages holistic ESD by integrating different forms of knowledge, community values and social learning into the learning process. There was also a need to avail this variety of knowledge, information, and experience, as well as the latest developments in science and technology, to different parts of the world.

RCE's were designed to address these needs by fostering alliances among ESD partners from educational institutions of different levels, and non-educational institutions which nonetheless contribute significantly to the advancement of ESD. The primary objective of RCE s was to help transform the concept of sustainable development from a topic of academic study to actually playing an active role in creating positive societal change, a crucial step in accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level as captured by Priority Action Area 5 of the UNESCO Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD.

To date there are over 14 RCE s in Africa. These centres have contributed to the expansion of partnerships across the continent by encouraging institutions of higher learning and other organizations in their respective regions to collaborate with the advance of sustainability through education and raising awareness of specific sustainable development issues relating to their regions.

Some key achievements of the RCEs in Africa include:

- Providing platforms for local communities to avail the much coveted, culturally appropriate and locally relevant solutions that address priority sustainable development challenges.
- Opening up avenues for new opportunities for collaboration and connecting actions across multiple scales (local, regional and global) and facilitating accelerated learning and efficient transfer of knowledge, and
- Developing much needed skills and competencies for the advancement of the Global Action Plan (GAP) on ESD towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Implications of SDG 17 for Higher Education Networks and Higher Education

Goal 17 breathes new air into efforts to revive higher education networks. As institutions chart the way forward for new partnerships, an institution's priorities will need to shift to the promotion of capacity building, technology transfer and policy coherence and extend higher education to all people regardless of their background.

Traditionally, many African academics had relatively limited contact with their peers in other parts of the continent. This was prompted by colonialism; higher education institutions mainly maintained contact with their former colonial ties. However, the situation is gradually changing as academics are progressively establishing relationships with their peers in other parts of the world.

Universities will need to grow and expound networks that align their agenda towards sustainable development and encourage and promote multi-stakeholder partnerships. Sustainable development goal 17 gives impetus for higher education institutions to create direct communication channels with government ministries/ departments and reach out to other networks and institutions for the implementation of the sustainable development agenda. Higher education institutions can also make a priority of building the capacity of educators to incorporate sustainable development in their respective fields and ensure that graduates develop the skills to understand sustainable development from a trans-disciplinary perspective that is universal, integrated and transformative (Vaughter, 2018).

A survey by the International Association of universities titled Higher Education Paving the Way to Sustainable Development, A Global Perspective, revealed that higher education institutions were enhancing collaborations on sustainable development issues, especially at local and national levels. SDG 17 had provided the platform for this, whereby 70 percent of the institutions were found to be actively involved in different networks and collaborating with different institutions on sustainable development issues. They were working together to identify solutions for day to day challenges. However, the study pointed out that replicated networks were competing for the limited human and financial resources. The recommendation was for higher education institutions to stop working in silos and enhance cooperation, thus avoiding unnecessary multiplication of networks (van't Land & Herzog, 2017)

Collaborations are on the rise, such as the Partnership for Africa's Next Generation of Academics, a collaboration between key universities like the University of Botswana, University of Dar es Salaam, University of Ghana, Makerere University, Malawi University, Nairobi University and Stellenbosch University. The aim is to create and sustain top-notch doctoral programmes and scholarly communities and to build partnerships in the arts and social sciences on the African continent. We should also note the Periperi (Partners Enhancing Resilience for People Exposed to Risk) Universities network, whose reach extends to all sub-regions of Africa (Northern Africa: Algeria, East Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Madagascar, Central Africa: Mozambique, West Africa: Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa: Tanzania and Uganda). The aim of this partnership is to create an African-led approach to disaster risk management. Other studies on multisectoral collaborations by African universities, such as PAEPARD, indicate that involvement in multisectoral partnerships led to a growth in universities capacities, made more meaningful contributions to developmental research, enriched curriculums and made universities more able to fully meet their mandates (Nampala, 2016).

Positioning African Institutions to Realize SDG 17

Rising out of the restrictive, colonial backdrop, African universities have made strides in the areas of collaboration. However, African institutions of higher

education still face the uphill task of honing talent with creative ideas in sustainable development and innovations that can fuel the continent through socio-economic transformation and achieve the sustainable development goals. Happily, through networks like the Association of African Universities (AAU), they are on course to reposition themselves as centres of excellence run by a competent workforce through modernizing teaching, promoting transformational leadership, increasing outreach programs, disseminating research findings and leveraging on ICT.

Some lessons to be learnt from top-notch Asian universities include:

Universities should adopt a multi-disciplinary approach:

A multi-disciplinary approach to research and innovation yields better outcomes. For instance, faculty members from Singapore's Management University are required to work together with other faculty members from other fields to provide fresh solutions to issues facing industries. Students are also urged to have multiple degrees or a second major to broaden their perspectives, and 70% of students do. Other institutions advocate for multidisciplinary collaboration in their faculties.

Partner and Collaborate: The Graduate School of Tsinghua University, Shenzhen, was created to nurture top-level executives specifically to carry out scientific and technological innovations. Singapore's Management University set up an International Trading Institute with help from the Singaporean government and leading industry players, allowing the school to have a specialist focus on international trade. The university was able to secure government and industry support as the institute prepares students for commodity and international trading, which is a key pillar of the Singaporean economy.

Form Linkages with Industry: African universities have to increasingly reach out and make connections with industry to develop a responsive curriculum that addresses the needs of employers and to ensure graduates are competent. For instance, Singapore's Management University collaborates with oil multinationals Shell and BP, among others, to produce world-class graduates.

There is a need to develop and recruit leaders with broad experience who can easily work together with government officials and industry leaders to develop curriculums and programs that produce work-ready graduates. Leveraging on technology will also drive

partnerships for learning and research in the coming years (Kang, Koh, & Larson, 2018).

Other examples include the recent collaborations as highlighted in a report by the Science Business Innovation Board; the partnership between Microsoft-Cisco-Intel and the University of Melbourne to enhance student skills for the 21st century; AALTO University's partnerships with industry to transform teaching and learning; AUDI AG building a university institute to fuel innovation; the University Of California's Industry-University Cooperative Research Program (IUCRP) Defining A New Role For The Research University; and the California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology (Calit2)'s partnership to shape the University of The Future and spark on-going innovation, among others.

Conclusions: Lessons African Universities Can Learn from Existing Partnerships

1. University leadership is vital

University leaders ought to make partnerships a strategic priority and consistently communicate the message to the entire academic community. They must make the objectives and benefits of the partnership clear to the entire faculty, and design incentives that make a clear priority of engaging with industry and other local, regional and international partners for mutual benefit and for the benefit of society.

2. Long-term strategic partnerships with built-in flexibility work best

The focus should be on strategic partnerships with a small number of partners who can stretch and aim higher. Long-term strategic partnerships focus the university's creativity and talent on enabling future innovations that can be taken to the market by industry and deliver benefits to society within five to ten years.

3. Commence with a shared vision and develop a strategy

Senior parties from both sides should map out the key areas of collaboration and research priorities. They must understand the kind of partnerships desired strategic, operational or transactional and select the type that best fits their needs.

4. Select the right leaders

Partnerships need to be strongly orientated toward solving the developmental issues of their communities. Successful collaborations only work when managed by people who go beyond boundaries and have in-depth knowledge of the cultures they need to connect.

5. Encourage cross-breeding of ideas

Once a potential partnership is in view, universities should reach out to the top management to let strategic issues emerge and to unearth issues to be addressed in research.

6. Encourage a multidisciplinary approach

Setting up a multidisciplinary institute on campus in partnership with industry can help break down traditional academic silos and drive a new multidisciplinary culture and curricula.

Other lessons include

- Partnerships have a high premium in human capital.
- Relationships ought to be built on a set of principles.
- Ensure there is equity in the partnership.
- In some cases where the goals are broad and social, success may depend on non-insistence on claims to intellectual property.
- Flexible partnerships work best.
- Commitment to a long-term partnership is important.
- Make time, space and avail resources to achieve your partnership s goals.
- To attract industry, universities must embrace multidisciplinary research.
- Ensure company scientists and researchers engage with the institute on a daily basis.

(Edmonson, Valigra, Kenward & Belfield, 2012)

SDG 17 is the anchor goal. It focuses on collaboration and partnerships to strengthen the means of implementation of the other 16 goals. African universities have an opportunity to take the mantle and lead the way by modelling networks with industry, academia and other institutions. But partnerships require firmness in terms

of governance, transparency and accountability. Africa's institutions of higher learning can achieve this, but they have to turn a blind eye to the popular definition of world-class, and develop research, technologies and communication channels in order for their communities to attain a world-class state.

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Building Successful Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships to Implement the 2030 Agenda in the Asia-Pacific region

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Introduction: Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ is indivisible in that it must be implemented as an integrated whole, and must especially recognize that the 17 goals and 169 targets are closely interlinked. The ‘means of implementation’ of the 2030 Agenda therefore ought to be carried out through shared responsibility, mutual accountability, and engagement by all. In line with the calls for 2030 Agenda implementation processes to be participatory and inclusive, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals requires a wide range of sectors and actors to work together to engage and leverage their resources, knowledge and capacities. Through Sustainable Development Goal 17, the 2030 Agenda specifically recognizes the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships and sets out to encourage effective partnerships among the public sector, civil society, the private sector, knowledge institutes and the like by building on previous experience, in order to respond to current and future sustainable development challenges. These multi-stakeholder partnerships are expected to complement national governments’ efforts,

supported by overseas development assistance, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The 2030 Agenda includes partnerships in the five critical dimensions of sustainable development to inform policy decisions at all levels of governance: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.² In practice, this means ensuring that all stakeholders are involved in the implementation and review processes (UNDESA, 2018). Thus, by including them in the five critical dimensions, and listing them as a ‘means of implementation’, the 2030 Agenda potentially changes the way ‘partnerships’ are conducted at the national, sub-national and local levels, and particularly the manner in which a government develops its relations with non-state actors. Governments are expected to partner with non-state actors, such as the private sector, civil organizations and knowledge institutes, and harness their respective competitive advantages in the implementation processes. By involving multiple stakeholders, the 2030 Agenda calls for the development of the necessary institutional space for multi-stakeholder partnerships to drive change towards more responsible, inclusive and sustainable growth (Nelson, 2017).

1. General Assembly resolution 70/1.

2. General Assembly resolution 69/315 and resolution 70/1.

The interconnectedness of the Sustainable Development Goals calls for a new way of partnering, which focuses on addressing the structural and systemic challenges (Beisheim and Ellersiek, 2017). In many ways, the multi-stakeholder partnerships required to implement the 2030 Agenda are different from other partnerships that came before.

By calling for revitalizing global partnerships, the 2030 Agenda exhibits this shift from direct multilateralism to complex, networked arrangements.

The revitalization of global partnerships for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda will undoubtedly stretch the existing geographical imaginations of the multi-stakeholder partnerships at the regional, national, sub-national and local levels, which underpin the idea of nested and discrete scales of conventional mechanisms over sectoral issues. As a result, the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships in pursuit of support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is expected to blur these boundaries by meshing global and local, and state and non-state, stakeholders.

Experience following the Millennium Development Goals implementation process and the Rio+20 Conference has revealed a range of partnerships that work with public, private and multilateral actors on programmes and projects ranging from local to multilateral levels (Schmidt-Traub and Sachs, 2015). Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, a surge in the number of registered partnerships has been recorded in the global partnership platform³, including time-bound joint projects and programmes, strategic alliances and long-term collective commitments (Hazlewood, 2015; Peterson et al, 2014). This reflects the increasing acceptance among governments and non-state actors alike of the critical need for partnerships and innovative solutions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Successful multi-stakeholder partnerships are expected to create synergies to deliver sustainable development by building on three core principles of partnership characterised by 'mutuality': (i) convergence of interest, (ii) complementarity of approach and resources, and (iii) shared value.³

The World Bank further identified, based on the experience of working with partners to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, that the delivery of results by multi-stakeholder partnerships can be leveraged through the availability of quality data and evidence-based implementation, which is generated by shared commitments among partners (World Bank, 2017). Moreover, the multi-stakeholder partnerships needed to implement the 2030 Agenda require a knowledge base that goes beyond sharing and lesson learning, towards co-creating new knowledge to stimulate greater shared understanding. This requires a variety of actors from a wide range of sectors at all levels of governance to play an active role in order to pool resources. These stakeholders need to maximize knowledge and use it as a catalyst to build trust and broaden collaboration. By building the capacity of multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilize, develop and share knowledge through collaborative processes, countries have the potential to apply that knowledge in accordance with their own policy choices and own experiences to deliver their sustainable development priorities.

Building on these opportunities and challenges, the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS), Tokyo, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Bangkok, developed the 'Partnering for Sustainable Development: Guidelines for Multi-stakeholder Partnerships to Implement the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific' (Dahiya and Okitasari, 2018), hereinafter the Guidelines. Following this introduction, the article is organized into five sections. First, we offer a brief overview of the context of and demand for multi-stakeholder partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region. Second, we outline the process by which the Guidelines were prepared. Third, we present their key features. Fourth, we discuss the key building blocks for successful multi-stakeholder partnerships. Finally, we share some thoughts on the potential next steps to operationalise the Guidelines in order to build, strengthen and scale up national, sub-national and local level partnerships.

3. The 'Partnerships for the SDGs' is available from the United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnerships/>

4. As introduced by the Partnerships Resource Centre, Erasmus University, Netherlands. For further information, see: <https://www.rsm.nl/prc/>

Multi-stakeholder Partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region

Context of Multi-stakeholder Partnerships

The Asia-Pacific region is committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This is evident from the various efforts made by UN member states and agencies in the region. These efforts include: (i) the preparation of Voluntary National Reviews by UN member states, (ii) the establishment of regular annual sessions of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), (iii) the launch of the 'Roadmap for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific' (UNESCAP, 2017), and (iv) the launch of the SDG Data Portal for Asia-Pacific.⁵

Multi-stakeholder partnerships are playing an increasingly more important role in the Asia-Pacific region by supporting collective programmes and projects for sustainable development.

In addition, regional cooperation is expected to play a key role in leveraging capacity and policy, and facilitating engagement to support multi-stakeholder partnerships with the delivery of results. In transboundary issues, such as soil conservation, desertification, and water management, partnerships are found to be working across national borders and have been stimulated by regional concerns.⁶ In this regard, the UN member states in the Asia-Pacific region adopted the 'Roadmap for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific' (UNESCAP, 2017), which includes priority areas, implementation arrangements, and a process to track progress with the

Sustainable Development Goals. Recognizing the importance of regional cooperation in complementing the effectiveness of national mechanisms, the Roadmap (UNESCAP, 2017) states:

"In line with the 2030 Agenda, the objective of the road map is to promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development through regional cooperation in a set of priority areas that support effective pursuit of sustainable development by member states" (p.7).

Furthermore, the priority areas of cooperation identified by the Roadmap are those that could be supported using the UNESCAP secretariat's existing expertise and resources, with input from UN member states, the thematic working groups of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM), the work programme and strategic framework, and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG).

Growing Demand for Multi-stakeholder Partnerships

Building on the needs to support and strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region, the idea of preparing the Guidelines was first discussed at the fourth session of the APFSD in March 2017, where UNU-IAS and UNESCAP co-organized a workshop on 'Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for the SDGs Implementation in Asia and the Pacific'.⁷ The workshop: (i) explored and identified the characteristics of successful multi-stakeholder partnerships for small and medium-sized countries in the region; and (ii) discussed how countries could take full advantage of these partnerships and share respective knowledge throughout the region. A key outcome of this workshop was a decision by UNU-IAS and UNESCAP to jointly prepare the Guidelines for multi-stakeholder partnerships to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Asia-Pacific region.⁸

5. See: <https://www.unescap.org/news/new-un-report-calls-asia-pacific-step-development-reform-efforts-meet-sustainable-development>

6. Regional cooperation, including the promotion of collaboration and capacity-building, has been supporting the implementation of National Action Programmes (NAPs), the key instruments to implement the UN Conventions to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The NAPs are streamlined with the Asian regional priorities as captured in the Regional Action Programmes (RAPs), which were adopted at ministerial level and focused on themes such as desertification, agroforestry, soil conservation, water resource management, etc. See: <https://www.unccd.int/convention/regions/annex-ii-asia>

7. Workshop on Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for the SDGs Implementation in Asia and the Pacific. For details, see: <https://www.unescap.org/events/workshop-multi-stakeholder-partnerships-sdgs-implementation-asia-and-pacific>

8. UNU-IAS and UNESCAP Team Up at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development. For details, see: <https://ias.unu.edu/en/news/news/apfsd.html#info>

Preparation of Guidelines for Multi-stakeholder Partnerships

The development of the Guidelines began with a desk review of scholastic and case-based literature in order to understand the key factors for designing and sustaining multi-stakeholder partnerships. Publications discussing partnerships from the United Nations and other international development agencies were reviewed; this review provided pointers towards the topics to be covered in the process of preparing the Guidelines. In order to prepare Guidelines that are grounded in reality, UNU-IAS and UNESCAP developed and administered an online questionnaire, which was used to solicit feedback from policymakers and development practitioners on the challenges faced by and opportunities available for multi-stakeholder partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region. Thus, the Guidelines also took into account the challenges faced by countries with special needs, including Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs).

In order to validate the Guidelines, UNU-IAS and UNESCAP co-organized a two-day Asia-Pacific regional workshop, *Validating Guidelines for Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for SDG Implementation*⁹, during the UNESCAP SDG Week¹⁰ in November 2017. The workshop: (i) introduced the draft Guidelines; and (ii) validated and complemented the various issues identified in them, such as needs, challenges, bottlenecks, good practices and other elements related to the process. The participants included representatives of governments involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, civil organisations, the private sector, development practitioners, and academia and knowledge institutes.

Following the validation workshop, in-depth interviews were conducted with policymakers and practitioners at the country level to identify lessons learnt from successful multi-stakeholder partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region. During the interviews, respondents were asked to identify the guiding principles that need to be observed in the various activities involved in each stage of a partnership. They were also asked to describe the mechanisms, opportunities and challenges of conducting partnering activities. These activities include, *inter alia*, setting up

goals and objectives, building trust, converging different interests and resources, structuring roles and responsibilities, monitoring and measuring progress, reviewing the outcomes and processes, producing knowledge and learning lessons from it, and strategies to scale up multi-stakeholder partnerships.

As a result of these processes, the Guidelines provide a process-based framework that can support governments in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and related targets, corresponding to challenges to and bottlenecks in implementation identified in the Asia-Pacific region and the means of implementation identified in Sustainable Development Goal 17, such as finance, technology, capacity building, trade and systemic issues. The UN member states' specific needs in this regard, as well as their scope, are considered in the Guidelines for building and implementing multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Guidelines for Multi-stakeholder Partnerships: A Process-based Framework

Globally, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development relies on it being integrated in the UN Member States' national policy agendas. Formulating a 'policy agenda' is an integral part of a standard policy cycle, which also includes the processes of policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, follow up and review. In the multi-level governance frameworks of Asian-Pacific countries, a policy cycle is often embedded at various levels of governance, such as national, sub-national and local. These policy cycles are important for the implementation of any development agenda that the respective levels of government may wish to undertake. Having committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, the UN member states in the Asia-Pacific region have been undertaking the process of integrating it in their policy cycles at the national, sub-national and local levels. The multifaceted 2030 Agenda informs the policy agenda within UN member states and informs the entire policy cycle in the Asia-Pacific region. In turn, it paves the way for the application of multi-stakeholder partnerships for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region.

9. Workshop: Validating Guidelines for Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for SDG Implementation. For details, see: <http://www.unescap.org/events/workshop-validating-guidelines-multi-stakeholder-partnerships-sdg-implementation-0>

10. ESCAP SDG WEEK: Innovation - Integration - Inclusiveness. Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. For details, see: <http://www.unescap.org/events/sdgweek2017>

Considering the importance of policy cycles in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Guidelines are designed as a system of interrelated and collaborative processes that are aligned with the 2030 Agenda policy cycle, which can be seen as evolving in a chronological succession with an embedded input-output model.¹¹ It is considered chronological as it follows a cyclical order of defining problems, developing policies, adopting and implementing policies, and finally assessing these policies against their effectiveness and efficiency for achieving policy objectives, leading toward their termination or renewal. This cyclical perspective emphasizes the feedback processes between inputs and outputs of policymaking, leading to a continual loop.

The Guidelines were designed as a process-based framework that provides step-by-step guidance for the formulation and implementation of multi-stakeholder partnerships for implementing the 2030 Agenda (Dahiya and Okitasari, 2018). This includes guidance on five phases that relate to the most important stages of partnership building and implementation:

- a. In the *initiation phase*, specific problems are recognized, and issues are selected, focusing on the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals that provide structural guidance, shaping the potential strategies and instruments that form the development of multi-stakeholder partnership strategies in the subsequent stages. The crucial step in the initiation phase is to move from recognizing a specific sustainable development issue to integrating it in the formal policy agenda.
- b. In the *formation phase*, partnership strategies and structures are formulated, development activities are planned, the various types of resources are pooled, and necessary decisions are made. The desired development outcomes strategized during this phase need to take into account the potential multiplier effects and impacts of achieving a particular Sustainable Development Goal.
- c. The *implementation phase* deals with the operationalization of the various activities planned under a multi-stakeholder partnership. If properly implemented, a successful partnership can have a transformational effect on achieving the Sustainable Development

Goals. Development outcomes achieved through multi-stakeholder partnerships can further provide opportunities to formulate evidence-based policies, to gain wider and long-term political support and, to a certain extent, support voluntary national reviews¹² whilst ensuring accountability of all stakeholders.

- d. The *review phase* of a multi-stakeholder partnership process is an integral part of the comprehensive, multi-layered architecture of the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. Partnerships as ‘means of implementation’ can measure the achievement of development targets, and further strengthen their accountability arrangements. The review phase also underlines the importance of inclusiveness, accountability and transparency for all stakeholders involved.
- e. The *reinvent or sustain phase* is aimed at supporting the scaling up process of a multi-stakeholder partnership. Depending on the success or failure of the previous phases, this phase may herald a transformation or, in some cases, the demise of a partnership. Lessons learned from successful partnerships directly feed back into the 2030 Agenda policy cycle by supplementing new and innovative ways to expand, adapt, sustain and scale up partnerships to achieve greater sustainable development impacts over time.

In accordance with the input-output process explained above, the design of multi-stakeholder partnerships to implement the 2030 Agenda also features a non-linear approach for those cases where such partnerships already exist; in such cases, stakeholders may decide to scale up or work with a different set of partners to achieve greater developmental impact. Furthermore, the multi-stakeholder partnership framework can be regarded as a system of interrelated collaborative phases, termed modules, including: (i) initiation; (ii) formation; (iii) managing implementation; (iv) review; and (v) reinvent or sustain. These five modules rely on and influence each other, rather than acting as a random set of activities, and they include a number of steps that help to achieve certain milestones towards the design and implementation of multi-stakeholder partnerships.¹³

11. This concept can be traced back to Easton’s input-output model of political system. See Easton (1957).

12. Voluntary National Reviews (or VNRs) are conducted to serve as the basis for regular reviews by the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The results of the reviews are contained in a database available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>

13. The various steps for developing multi-stakeholder partnerships were adapted from Tennyson (2011:6).

Key Building Blocks for Successful Multi-stakeholder Partnerships

The idea of bringing together the various stakeholders to implement the 2030 Agenda is attractive as it creates cost sharing, mutual learning, synergies, and innovation. However, the building of multi-stakeholder partnerships is a complex, time-consuming undertaking due to various issues, such as poor governance mechanisms, unsustainable finance and heterogeneous stakeholders with diverse agendas, among others. To avoid undesired situations, all stakeholders would strongly benefit from developing a better understanding of governance and other key dimensions required for building and implementing successful multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Success or failure at implementing the 2030 Agenda at any level, *inter alia*, depends on the willingness to work together across sectors and boundaries, which highlights the importance of the role of stakeholders in a framework that engages state and non-state actors. Stronger alignment between multi-stakeholder partnerships and national implementation, for example, could help to mobilize resources for implementing the 2030 Agenda, increase national-level ownership, and strengthen partnerships' focus on national priorities for sustainable development. Concerning such functions, the Guidelines indicate that improvements to the enabling environment for partnerships could be helpful for strengthening the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Given the importance of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, more coordination and cooperation is needed among and with new stakeholders, particularly to work across silos and sectors. While governments acknowledge the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships, provisions to foster partnering are still rare. The Guidelines highlight how the availability of legal provisions for partnering, for example, could encourage the various stakeholders to develop the necessary capacity to function outside their conventional roles.

A strategy for an enabling environment for multi-stakeholder partnerships requires support at different levels. Regional, national, sub-national and local platforms could help align partnership-based programmes and projects with regional, national, sub-national and local priorities, identify challenges and lessons learnt, and support the scaling-up of successful multi-stakeholder partnerships. Strengthening the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships at regional, national, sub-national and local

levels requires robust and well-functioning governance. However, the existing governance for partnerships is often weak and fragmented (Beisheim *et al*, 2017). Much remains to be done to improve modalities for building, implementing and sustaining partnerships at the national, subnational and local levels, including the need to generate quality engagement processes and mechanisms that can facilitate partnerships between different levels of government, on the one hand, and all relevant stakeholders – civil society organizations, academia, the business sector and the like – on the other. The content of modalities should include means to ensure inclusiveness and mutuality in the conditions for successful multi-stakeholder partnerships to balance the needs for effectiveness and accountability with bureaucratic intervention. The Guidelines show that, among others, key factors that encourage and ensure inclusiveness and mutuality at an early stage of multi-stakeholder partnerships include goal-driven debates, alignment to the 2030 Agenda, formalization of structures that support decision making to ensure capacity for joint action, and strengthening of governance structure to manage power balance (Dahiya and Okitasari, 2018).

Multi-stakeholder partnerships that contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals are expected to have a transformative impact by addressing systemic challenges that hinder long-term transitions towards sustainability. To be able to do so, the commitment of all stakeholders to strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships and align them closely with the 2030 Agenda is needed, whereby a broader impact, development and expansion of regional, national, sub-national and local platforms for multi-stakeholder partnerships should be pursued. These platforms should initiate, support and follow-up on transformative, effective, inclusive and accountable multi-stakeholder partnerships that are based on local needs and reconcile with regional, national, sub-national and local development strategies. Moreover, the adaptation and harmonization of the legal framework and implementation approaches to pursue coherent multi-stakeholder partnering strategies could help ensure effectiveness. Building and strengthening local partnerships could help to anchor multi-stakeholder partnerships in the local context, to build their local ownership, and to improve their implementation with a focus on enhancing social inclusion.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships should institutionalize peer-learning processes that help policymakers and partnership practitioners to build and learn from on-going and past experiences.

At the regional, national, sub-national and local levels, peer-learning to exchange experiences should be strengthened by sharing knowledge on successful and failed partnerships. Peer-learning processes could help local initiatives to achieve scales beyond individual programmes and projects and to move towards long-term partnerships. Peer-learning processes at the national level that encompass monitoring and review components of both partnerships' processes and outcomes could help policymakers and partnership practitioners to identify multi-stakeholder partnerships that perform well, contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and have the potential for scaling-up or reinvention.

Next Steps: Towards Building Multi-stakeholder Partnerships to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

The building of multi-stakeholder partnerships for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is a complex process, and policymakers and partnership practitioners are continuing to improve their approach, and in doing so may wish to consider:

- a. Developing national-level Guidelines to build, strengthen and scale up national, sub-national and local multi-stakeholder partnerships as a part of the efforts to localise the Sustainable Development Goals. Such partnerships, if designed and resourced well, can play a vital role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals at scale. There is no one-size-fits-all model or approach to building multi-stakeholder partnerships. Their form and function should reflect the unique features and local context of the goals that they aim to achieve and the stakeholders available to work together.
- b. The Guidelines serve as a basis for sharing a process-based framework and key building blocks that can generate successful multi-stakeholder partnership efforts

at the national, sub-national and local level (Dahiya and Okitasari, 2018). The intention is to serve as a dynamic resource that can be refined over time through practice-based feedback from the UN member states that have tried to operationalise the Guidelines; this, in turn, could empower and inspire policymakers and partnership practitioners who can learn further lessons about successful partnership building and implementation to drive transformation for sustainable development.

- c. Broader opportunities for policymakers and partnership practitioners to strengthen the peer-learning processes to share experiences and best practices to help accelerate learning process and avoid common pitfalls in building and scaling up successful multi-stakeholder partnerships.

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The 2030 Agenda and the “Paradox of the Hamster Wheel”

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Introduction

In September 2015, all those who have been working for years in the field of sustainable development welcomed the approval of the 2030 Agenda, with its 17 SDGs and 169 associated goals. We received it with different moods and expectations (excitement, hope, prudence and scepticism) derived from our experience in our respective professional fields and/or social activism.

The approval of 2030 Agenda was preceded by the publication of the encyclical letter "Laudato si" by Pope Francis¹ in May 2015, which many of us view as a document of major moral importance and a clear invitation to rethink our relationship with the planet (understood as our common home). In July 2015, the UN had organized its Third Financing for Development conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where world leaders looked for ways to pay for the SDGs to be approved two months later in New York.

We were also awaiting the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (otherwise known as COP21), which was due to take place between November and December of that year in Paris, and at which countries were to negotiate a new global climate change agreement.

However, we also received the 2030 Agenda with the baggage accumulated since the 1992 Earth Summit.

In a period of little more than twenty years, we had rapidly moved from the enthusiasm of Rio de Janeiro to the clear evidence that the challenges ahead had increased in magnitude, the actions to tackle them had become more urgent, and the real responses to these challenges had been slow and generally ineffective.

My approach to the 2030 Agenda must be understood from previous personal experience in the analysis of the design and application of public policies, plans and programs from the perspective of the advisory body. I therefore viewed it from a non-executive perspective, away from daily management, but with a transversal, integrating and long-term vision. This is an unavoidably optimistic, although necessarily realistic, perspective that recognizes the limitations and imperfections of the new global agenda, but that at the same time - and above all - perceives it as a useful instrument to streamline transitions, break the existing silos within and between administrations, and create decisive alliances among stakeholders.

In short, the 2030 Agenda may be a good tool to overcome what I call the 'paradox of the hamster wheel'. That is to say, the dynamics by which, no matter how titanic our efforts to promote transformative actions, we do not move, or barely move, any further away from the place we were before. Unfortunately, the situation reflected by this image

1. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

is all too common. The 2030 Agenda should allow us to metaphorically break the axis of our hamster wheel and truly advance towards a more sustainable planet and SDG 17 (partnerships for action) should make it possible to build transformative alliances with the millions of people that are working in their own wheel.

This article discusses the importance of SDG 17 and partnerships for the achievement of the global sustainable development goals, and specifically analyzes a subnational experience of the localization of the 2030 Agenda: Catalonia.

1. A Transformative Subnational Agenda to Improve the World (by Transforming Catalonia)

Catalonia is one of the countries that have made decided advances in the localisation of the SDGs following the approval of 2030 Agenda in September 2015. In 2016, the Government of Catalonia pledged to develop a National Plan for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda² and to develop an integrated system of targets and indicators to evaluate progress in the achievement of the SDGs.

This may seem obvious, but it is important to make it clear that localisation of the SDGs is no simple process, especially if the intention is a rigorous, wide-ranging, inclusive and transformative exercise that will last through to 2030. In other words, this process needs to be used as an element of positive change to public policies and not merely as an instrument of communication / political marketing (as it may end up being in some cases).

This complexity is a common trend that many other governments have experienced at the national, subnational or local level. In this case, the main challenges come from:

1. The very broad scope of the plan, covering all 17 SDGs and all public policies;
2. The inclusive nature of the plan, with the participation of all ministries (13 in total);
3. The will to be a core initiative, rather than an agenda working in parallel with the Government's economic, social and environmental roadmaps, and

4. The commitment to incorporating an effective participation process, which is the basis for a process of dialogue and permanent and robust agreement in the medium and long term.

The Catalan Government has adopted an ambitious approach that aims to make the transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda effective. But it is also an eminently practical and realistic approach, which aims to link the 2030 Agenda with the broad set of public policies, plans and programs designed and managed by the Government.

This is why the plan concretizes the 169 targets in the form of clear and tangible commitments to be implemented in Catalonia. The use of the term 'commitments' instead of 'targets' is quite deliberate. It expresses the Catalan Government's will to be proactive and to fulfil the duties acquired through approval of the plan.

After intense initial work, a first draft was delivered to an *ad hoc* inter-ministerial commission in charge of the political leadership of the plan on 7 July 2017, prior to the High Level Political Forum of that year. This draft is currently being reviewed by all ministries of the Catalan Government and is expected to be definitively approved at the end of June 2019. The current version of the Plan contains more than 750 commitments that the Government has identified, sets deadlines for the achievement of every one of these and specifies the ministries responsible for doing so. Finally, the plan includes a list of indicators that will be discussed by an *ad hoc* inter-ministerial taskforce.

These commitments have been classified in two categories that match the global and subnational sustainability agendas. The first includes those commitments or goals to be achieved in Catalonia through domestic policies, plans and programs. The second category includes those commitments or goals representing a direct contribution by Catalonia to global sustainability, to be achieved via cooperation for development and contributions to international initiatives, agreements, negotiations and follow-up.

In a second layer, the plan classifies the commitments according to their alignment with existing regulations and plans as opposed to those that are still in preparation or under review. The former include, among others:

1. The establishment of a universal guaranteed minimum income for citizens (SDG1);

2. http://cads.gencat.cat/web/.content/Documents/Agenda_2030/The-2030-Agenda_transform-Catalonia-improve-the-World.pdf

2. The creation an Observatory on Gender Equality (SDG5);
3. The approval of the Climate Change Bill by the Catalan Parliament in July 2017 (touching on several SDGs, such as 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14 and 15), and
4. The approval of the new maritime program based on an innovative governance system and a strong scientific basis (SDG 14).

Through this approach, the plan aims to more closely link the 2030 Agenda to the regulatory and planning framework, either that in force or that is about to be approved. In other words, it seeks to prevent regional ministries from considering the 2030 Agenda as a planning instrument that has no relation with their daily activity or with their planning in the short, medium or long term.

In short, the National Plan for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Catalonia is a reference framework for all Government actions.

In more operational terms, it is a strategic scorecard that links its actions until 2030 with the SDGs through clear commitments, and regulatory and planning instruments that will help to achieve these commitments, plus well-established responsibilities, clear time horizons and operational indicators.

The plan also includes a category called ‘new commitments’, meaning those that are not included in the regulatory or planning framework in force or in preparation. This is by no means a minor category, but should come to include commitments with major potential for transformation that are currently not part of the Government of Catalonia’s political agenda. It is also a category designed to foster broad debate with the stakeholders during the proposed phase of participation and consultation.

Although all the SDGs are interlinked, the existence of 17 separate goals does not help to overcome the traditional fragmentation of public policies. The plan tries to solve this problem by taking a highly collaborative approach, and also by reviewing the different commitments from the gender, urban, intergenerational and socioeconomic equality perspectives.

2. SDG17 – First Round: a Science-Society-Policy Making Partnership for Localising SDGs

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national, sub-national and local level requires a strong alliance between governments, a wide variety of stakeholders and the scientific community. The existing national and sub-national advisory councils on the environment and sustainable development play a strategic role as advisors to governments and parliaments worldwide in terms of agenda setting and knowledge dissemination. In many cases, however, these advisory councils also play a tangible, long-standing and successful role as the interface between policy, society and science.

As the EEAC network³ highlights in its report *A new science-policy-society interface for the 2030 Agenda: the role of European Advisory Councils on the Environment and Sustainable Development*, some of these councils contributed to the preparation of the national or regional positions regarding the new 2030 Agenda prior to its approval by the UN General Assembly. Others have contributed and/or are still contributing to localising SDGs in their countries, through their advisory role to governments and/or parliaments, the dissemination of the 2030 Agenda among stakeholders and the promotion of independent, transparent and well-informed debate between policy makers, civil society and scientists.

These councils essentially contribute to the localisation of the 2030 Agenda by assuming certain functions of a strong partnership nature:

1. Providing a long-term vision, and rigorous and independent advice, to governments and parliaments.
2. Ensuring and promoting cooperation between scientists, policy-makers and citizens.
3. Providing new methodologies for citizens to conduct research or contribute to scientific evidence.
4. Creating more inclusive and transparent approaches to policy advice.
5. Informing the public.

3. The network of European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) is constituted by 14 councils offering independent advice to national and regional governments and parliaments on environmental and sustainability matters. It was established in 1993 and its council members include representatives from academia, civil society, the private sector and public bodies.

In Catalonia in November 2015, the Government commissioned a comprehensive report to the Advisory Council for Sustainable Development of Catalonia (CADS) –a member of the EEAC network since 2004- on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the country. This council was created in 1998 and its mandate includes:

1. Advising the Government of Catalonia on issues affecting sustainable development, especially on incorporating the principles of sustainability in policy, regional and sectoral planning instruments, draft legislation and regulations, and in the strategic projects and initiatives led by the Government;
2. Assessing the strategic policies for sustainable development put forward by the Government of Catalonia, especially those related to energy, water, food safety, climate change and the green economy, and to formulate proposals for these areas.

Furthermore, according to its regulation, the Council's duties include three elements of a strongly partnership-oriented nature:

1. Encouraging the transfer of knowledge between the Government, the academic community and civil society in the field of sustainable development;
2. Advising the Government of Catalonia on the design and implementation of measures to raise awareness of sustainability;
3. Encouraging the involvement of economic and social sectors in the development process in Catalonia.

In fulfilment of the Catalan government's request, in September 2016 the council launched the report 'The 2030 Agenda: Transform Catalonia, Improve the World'⁴, which was approved at a plenary session held on 27 September 2016, the first anniversary of the approval of the 2030 Agenda by the United Nations General Assembly. The report presents key elements for localising the SDGs in Catalonia: it includes a preliminary International and European diagnosis for every SDG, contains a target-by-target diagnosis referring to Catalonia, and identifies the overall challenges that Catalonia needs to confront for each SDG.

The report, which has been adopted by the Government as a basic input to the National Plan for the Implementation

of the 2030 Agenda in Catalonia, includes contributions from more than 60 external experts and stakeholders invited by the council in its role of Science-Politics-Society interface, i.e. as a facilitator of solid partnerships for the design of public policies (in this case, through the 2030 Agenda).

3. SDG17 - Second Round: an Inter-ministerial Partnership for Localizing SDGs

The design and implementation of the plan for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Catalonia involves the entire Government. On 14 February 2017, the Government approved the way in which the plan was to be organized. First, an inter-ministerial commission was created to lead the plan politically, ensure consistency, and monitor compliance with the SDGs. This body is composed of the secretary generals of the 13 ministries into which the Government is structured. Second, a technical committee was established in order to assist the previous body. This is a task force composed of technical representatives of all ministries that works with 17 groups coordinated by the ministries with the most competences related to the SDGs.

By way of example: the working group on SDG 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere) is coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Families and includes representatives of the following ministries: Presidency; Vice-presidency, Economy and Finance; Foreign Affairs, Institutional Relations and Transparency; Education; Governance, Public Administrations and Housing; Territory and Sustainability; Health; and Business and Knowledge.

Due to the crosscutting nature of the SDGs, no single ministry has played a leading role in the elaboration of the plan: the ones that coordinate the group create a successful dynamic that brings everyone to the table on an equal footing.

4. http://cads.gencat.cat/web/.content/Documents/Informes/2016/Agenda_2030_CAT/CADS-Report_3_2016_The-2030-Agenda_Transform-Catalonia_Improve-the-World.pdf

This methodology helped to encourage synergy between the different ministries, breaking existing silos, and creating a comprehensive vision of challenges and solutions.

In short, this procedure has led to the establishment of an effective, albeit still incipient, partnership within the Catalan public administration itself. A partnership that is crucial for the 2030 agenda, which has also entailed the assumption -in some cases for the first time- on the part of each regional ministry of its role in the promotion of sustainable development. A role, however, that until now was focused on the ministries responsible for the management of the territory, environment, energy, agriculture, livestock and fishing.

The Ministry of Transparency, and Foreign and Institutional Relations and Affairs, through the CADS, the Directorate-General for Multilateral and European Affairs and the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation, with the support of its Technical Office, has been responsible for providing such partnership in its capacity of plan coordinator.

4. SDG17 – Round 3: a Long-term Partnership with Citizens and Stakeholders for Localising SDGs

Public participation is a key element when localising SDGs. Although this again seems obvious, there have been few experiences of real and effective participation of organized civil society in the implementation of the SDGs. This is not intended to be a criticism, especially from the direct experience of organizing a process involving a plan with 750 highly specific commitments, which encompasses all the Government of Catalonia's public policies and which uses highly technical language.

However, we cannot progress in the desired direction without establishing powerful mechanisms for participation and dialogue between civil society and those responsible for decision-making. In this regard, experiences like the Finnish Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development⁵, based on concrete actions and measurable results, must be taken into account, along with other cases that come precisely from the EEAC network. The German Council for Sustainable Development, for instance, has created a competition

for schools that rewards the best ideas to integrate the SDGs into education, and a project to boost the transition towards circular economy at the local level, in cooperation with municipalities and citizens. Furthermore, the council has created an innovative Science Platform called 'Sustainability 2030' and the OpenSDGclub.Berlin initiative.

Other advisory boards, such as those in Luxembourg and the Netherlands (and soon in Catalonia), are making efforts to connect with representatives of the younger generation to operate the society, science and policy interface. In short, an inter-generational partnership for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda based on dialogue and mutual learning regarding the SDGs.

Coming back to the example of the National Plan for the Implementation of 2030 Agenda in Catalonia, it is evident that public participation is a critical element in the process of drawing up the plan. However, this is a complex matter, not just in terms of the scope, specificity and concreteness of the commitments, but also of the deadline for approval of the plan. These aspects are clear challenges that should be addressed not only to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the plan, but also to build strong, successful and long-term partnerships for the achievement of the SDGs.

In this case, a feasible way to organise this participation and to reinforce a Government-Society partnership would seem to be to channel participation through the existing consultative and participatory bodies of the Catalan Government, where the most relevant stakeholders are represented. In parallel, a huge effort will be made in terms of dissemination of the SDGs among Catalan society.

The earliest contacts with relevant stakeholders and local administrations were made just after the Government issued its request to the Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia in 2015. The right conditions for the establishment of the first partnerships between the actors that intend to work for the achievement of the SDGs now exist. For example, the Council for Labour Relations of Catalonia has done an excellent job of disseminating the 2030 Agenda among its members (unions and employers' associations). This has led to the assumption of clear commitments on the part of these members and the establishment of concrete collaborations under the umbrella of the SDGs.

5. <https://commitment2050.fi/>

The establishment of these partnerships has a priori been positive, but we certainly need to think about scaling them through the creation of an alliance or platform that brings together governments, public administrations, the scientific and business communities, trade unions and organized civil society. An alliance that also reaches out to all citizens in a better way.

However, it is obvious that the specific objectives of these partnerships must be considered. Among other reasons, to generate formal relationships, which might be very interesting from the institutional point of view, but which do not make it possible to articulate specific strategic collaborations. Collaborations, in short, that make the transformational intent behind the 2030 Agenda effective.

In conclusion, it seems appropriate to build an ecosystem of actors involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, based on sharing a vision and general principles, and from there work on specific partnerships based on concrete and measurable commitments.

5. SDG17 – Round 4: the Role of Higher Education Institutions

As an interface between Science-Politics-Society, at the Advisory Council for Sustainable Development we have an intense relationship with the scientific community in our country. This relationship is also maintained at a European level through the EEAC network, which holds multiple seminars for debate between scientists and decision-makers. On a European level and worldwide, we also foster the involvement of prestigious research centers and universities in the debates on ways to achieve and measure the SDGs.

Beyond that, an increasing number of reports, articles and guides to good practices are trying to involve the university world in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. There is remarkable abundance of such reports addressed at governments and other organizations, which contrasts, very often, with the level of ambition of the actions undergone to implement the SDGs and their success in terms of results.

Fortunately, many universities are no longer alien to the existence of the 2030 Agenda and have begun to integrate it in their training and research programs. However, is this enough? Are substantial changes being made to the organizational structures of universities to

break the silos and promote cross-sectional training and research that is more closely linked to the challenges currently posed by society?

These are important questions, but the same ones could be asked of any other non-university organization. However, they are relevant when formulated in the field of educational institutions and, specifically, in higher education institutions, essentially due to their extremely high level of responsibility for the training of our future professionals and for research on key aspects for the sustainability of the planet and our society.

Hopefully the university world will not use the SDGs as a mere element of communication, inspiring interesting activities but with little potential to transform.

Instead, the 2030 Agenda should be a driving force behind the necessary changes to the way we address both training and research and attract talent to our universities and research centers. The risk of this not happening is more than evident (as is the case with so many other types of organizations, including governments, businesses, etc.).

It is therefore especially important to establish strong partnerships between universities, the various levels of government, the business world and organized civil society based on the major challenges involved in the 17 SDGs. In terms of research, there are obvious challenges of a transversal nature that only scientific collaboration between universities and research centers can solve. It is for this reason that the Advisory Council for Sustainable Development has repeated in several of its reports the need for public research agendas that allow the establishment of partnerships between governments and research institutions based on the priorities and needs of a certain territory in the medium and long term.

With regard to the training of our future professionals, it is more than necessary to forge strong partnerships between economic actors, universities and public administrations to guarantee the adequacy of the training on offer and the market's demand for skilled workers.

The intention is not just to achieve the decent work and economic growth proposed by SDG 8, but also to promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation (SDG9). In addition, and just as importantly, the challenges included in SDG1 (poverty), SDG3 (health) and SDG 10 (reduction of inequalities) must also be met, since the absence of suitable jobs can lead to serious consequences for the welfare and social integration of our citizens.

This is the real transcendence of the 2030 agenda, understood as a tool for the creation of joint visions and partnerships between the sectors and stakeholders that are necessary for the transformation of our society. As I said at the beginning of this article, the 2030 Agenda should help to put an end to the 'hamster wheel paradox'. It has the potential to do so, but only if there are partnerships.

The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) – SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals

Charles W. Richardson

Dean of the School of Business and Associate Professor of Marketing, at Claflin University. Member of the Board of Directors (Board Chair in 2017) of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), and Advisory Board of Planet Forward.

Introduction

As far back as 1983, with the establishment of the Brundtland Commission, it has been a widely accepted notion that education will play a critical role in advancing the paradigm that future development should incorporate balanced perspectives of human, economic and environmental concerns. Education for sustainable development has natural synergies with the global sector of higher education. In the early part of the 21st century, efforts began to organize and institutionalize this effort. In 2001, the Education for Sustainability Western Network (EFS West) was established by Second Nature, with funding from the Compton Foundation. EFS West served college and university campuses in the western U.S. and Canada, providing resources and support for their sustainability efforts. In 2004, EFS West held the first North American Conference on Sustainability in Higher Education in Portland, Oregon. The success of this conference and increasing demand for EFS West's resources led it to evolve from a regional network to an independent higher education association serving all of North America – the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. AASHE was officially launched in December 2005, serving as the first professional higher education association for the campus sustainability community in North America. Today, AASHE empowers higher education faculties, administrators, staff and students to be effective agents of change and drivers of sustainability innovation, with over 1000 members across 30 countries. We work with and for higher education to ensure that our future world leaders are motivated and equipped to solve sustainability challenges.

Collaboration with Other Institutions and Existing Relationships

The AASHE (Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education) mission is as follows:

AASHE empowers higher education faculties, administrators, staff and students to be effective agents of change and drivers of sustainability innovation. We work with and for higher education to ensure that our future world leaders are motivated and equipped to solve sustainability challenges.

In the United States and abroad, the organization seeks appropriate partnership opportunities in the field of higher education, as well as with other non-profit and for-profit entities. To that end, we have a substantial network of sustainability oriented organizations. These partnerships fall into several categories:

Strategic Alliances

AASHE enjoys solid and longstanding relationships with a small group of leading organizations. We are working together to increase the number of global sustainability citizens.

National Wildlife Federation

NWF is a voice for wildlife, dedicated to protecting fauna and its habitat and inspiring the future generation of conservationists. Its Campus Ecology program has been working with colleges and universities for more than 25 years to protect wildlife and habitat through campus sustainability programs.

Second Nature

Second Nature strives to help build a sustainable and positive global future through leadership networks in higher education. Its primary tool, Climate Commitment, integrates a goal of carbon neutrality with climate resilience and provides a systems approach to mitigating and adapting to a changing climate.

U.S. Green Building Council

USGBC is committed to transforming the way our buildings are designed, constructed and operated through LEED — the top third-party verification system for sustainable structures around the world.

College and university leaders across the US and around the world have stepped up to model sustainability across curricula, operations, management systems, and community relations. In celebration of the bold advance toward sustainability across US higher education, these organizations have pledged to support the next big leaps forward with a collective outlook that will convey to the world that the US is serious about demonstrating social, economic, and environmental sustainability and is doing so in a way that prepares graduates for 21st century imperatives. We collectively support a vision whereby:

- By 2025, 20 million graduates across all majors will be global sustainability citizens: learning about relationships between natural, physical, economic, social, and cultural systems.
- These graduates will understand how their personal and professional choices impact these systems.
- They will have the agency to create solutions that allow people and the environment to thrive.

In order to achieve these goals, AASHE, NWF, Second Nature and USGBC pledge to:

- Expand our collective capacity to convene and empower higher education leaders to intensify climate commitments, share best practices and drive sustainability in their core businesses.
- Consolidate and leverage our efforts to embolden more students to lead whole-campus sustainability initiatives and prepare them for 21st century careers.
- Cross-promote and increase alignment of our respective rating systems, frameworks and recognition platforms.

Coalitions

AASHE participates in coalitions to magnify our impact and stay informed about issues of interest to the higher education sustainability community:

Better Buildings Alliance

The Better Buildings Alliance brings together leaders from the nation's commercial building industry to share and advance energy efficiency solutions.

The Council of Higher Education Management Associations (CHEMA)

An informal voluntary assembly of management-oriented higher education associations in the United States and Canada.

Disciplinary Associations Network for Sustainability (DANS)

An informal network of professional associations working on a number of cross disciplinary projects on education for sustainability.

Environmental Paper Network

The Environmental Paper Network shares a common vision of a forestry, pulp and paper industry that contributes to a clean, healthy, fair and sustainable future for all life on earth.

Higher Education Associations Sustainability Consortium (HEASC)

HEASC is a network of higher education associations that are committed to advancing sustainability within their constituencies and within the entire higher education system.

New Economy Coalition (NEC)

The New Economy Coalition (NEC) is a network of organizations imagining and building a future where people, communities and ecosystems thrive.

Partnerships

With access to over 10,000 professionals from almost 900 institutions, AASHE business partners are well positioned to increase their exposure and business opportunities within the higher education sustainability community. There are several options for these partners to conduct outreach efforts to the AASHE membership:

- AASHE Membership
- Sponsorship
- AASHE Annual Conference & Expo
- AASHE Publications
- AASHE Workshops
- AASHE Webinars

With the aim of advancing international collaboration and learning to boost the campus sustainability movement, AASHE continues to work with our international counterparts, Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability (ACTS) and the United Kingdom's Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC), as well as continuing to encourage international higher education institutions to become AASHE members.

[Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability Incorporated Association \(ACTS\)](#)

ACTS is a nonprofit member-based organization representing higher and further education institutions in Australia and New Zealand. ACTS aims to inspire, promote and support change towards best practice sustainability within the operations, curriculum and research of the tertiary education sector. ACTS seeks to build community and business partnerships at the local, regional and international level, in order to bring together a network of people for positive engagement, capacity building and change.

[The Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges \(EAUC\)](#)

The EAUC is the environmental and sustainability champion for Further and Higher Education in the U.K. The EAUC is a strong alliance of universities and colleges, sector bodies and commercial organizations. Subscriptions and service generated revenue are used to fund the EAUC's work of representing and promoting the interests of members and the provision of support services to drive sustainability in the heart of tertiary education across the U.K. and internationally.

As part of the development of our current strategic plan, priorities for AASHE have been established so as to be in sync with our programs and services and increase value for our members. The elements of the plan are the voice of our constituency, and are intended to best serve our members and advance our mission over the next

three years. This plan will be a guide for the board and staff to continue to improve upon.

We will continue to connect members with the programs they need to improve their institution's sustainability performance. We will work to recognize their achievements and celebrate how far higher education has come in advancing sustainability. We will provide opportunities to learn from peers, develop skills, and engage campus communities in sustainability. We will also improve and expand upon STARS, our most valued program and an instrument of change that has helped transform such a large number of colleges and universities. We will also focus on strengthening our organization, fiscally as well as culturally.

We are working to put our sustainability values and model into practice in every aspect of what we do and how we work.

We will embark on a process to identify the future needs of our community in response to the increasing societal and political challenges that we are facing today. Our commitment to the principles of sustainability connects us all and drawing from one another for support and inspiration will enable our community to be more resilient in these difficult times. Our work is more important today than ever before. This plan provides direction for our future, details about how we hope to accomplish our goals, and strategies for measuring our performance. Perhaps most importantly, it is about growing and strengthening our community and bolstering our collective impact.

Our Mission

To inspire and catalyze higher education to lead the transformation of global sustainability.

Our Vision

AASHE will lead higher education in becoming a foundation for a thriving, equitable and ecologically healthy world.

Our Values

Transparency, Collaboration, Hope, Stewardship, Innovation, Courage, Accountability, Diversity & Inclusion.

Our Strategic Goals (through 2020)

Goal 1: Empower members to be transformational leaders for sustainability by providing indispensable resources and outstanding professional development

- Develop new and improve existing resources, tools and publications
- Strengthen the annual conference and expo to be the marquee forum for all stakeholders in the higher education sustainability community
- Offer high-value professional development programs
- Expand opportunities for networking and community building

Goal 2: Catalyze sustainability action and innovation through STARS

- Simplify reporting requirements and reduce barriers to participation in STARS
- Strengthen the value of a STARS rating
- Improve the quality of STARS data
- Increase net income for STARS

Goal 3: Boost higher education's contributions to global sustainability through increased outreach, communications and advocacy

- Advocate for policies that advance sustainability in higher education
- Champion the value of sustainability in higher education and increase support for sustainability in terms of academia, engagement, operations and administration
- Identify new high impact strategies to best advance our mission

Goal 4: Enhance organizational capacity and resilience

- Increase the AASHE member community
- Optimize internal efficiency and improve customer experience
- Strengthen organization leadership and governance
- Create a culture that supports employee well-being and motivation
- Ensure AASHE's financial health and stability

Importance of SDG 17 and Perspective on Implementation

As a comprehensive list of sustainability goals/targets, SDG 17 represents an opportunity to establish a paradigm that can eliminate or at least minimize the temptation and tendency to view challenges through silos, whether defined by academic expertise, interest area, organizational structure, technology or any other factor. It is an opportune time to address this issue, in a discussion of capacity building in a higher education framework.

“Creating a better world requires teamwork, partnerships, and collaboration, as we need an entire army of companies to work together to build a better world within the next few decades. This means corporations must embrace the benefits of cooperating with one another.”

Simon Mainwaring

As a leader of an organization dedicated to sustainability, and as an individual citizen of the world, I am a firm believer in the benefits of collaboration. In the globally connected world we now live in, developments and decisions no longer occur on a simply local level, but have national, regional and global impact and implications. As global competition intensifies for access to markets, products and technology, strategic alliances are gaining importance worldwide. Whether contemplated as a short-term means of survival, or as an integral part of a carefully considered long-term global strategy, strategic alliances have become familiar as a viable option for firms competing in the global marketplace.

In their book, “Strategic Alliances: An Entrepreneurial Approach to Globalization”, Yoshino and Rangan (1995) state that “Strategic alliances will have the best chance for success if they are treated comprehensively as instruments of long-term competitive advantage, rather than short-term defensive maneuvers”.

Strategic alliances can be defined as “associations to further the common interests of the members”, with cooperation between two or more independent firms, linking specific facets of their businesses, and involving shared control and ongoing contributions from all partners.

The ultimate measure of success in any relationship, which will include alliances for business or social reasons, is the ability of the participants to subordinate their personal interests to those of the collaboration.

Understanding alliances is a critical first step towards their successful management.

Alliance management can and should be actively planned and executed, undertaking the challenge of transforming an agreement into a productive relationship. Elements of that challenge include organizational, managerial, legal and relational ambiguity, balancing of cooperation with competition and ingrained, but usually different (if not outright opposing) managerial mindsets. Distance, language and cultures present new challenges to managing detailed operations, and partners utilize systemic procedures that require reconciliation. A growing network of alliances compounds these issues and intensifies the uniqueness of the managerial challenge. Successful alliance management will necessarily entail a widespread understanding of the alliance, protect and augment core competencies, shift the managerial mindset, prepare to expend additional resources, coordinate between varied, and often new, functions, and most importantly, anticipate and orchestrate a network of alliances. The most successful organizations will possess the skills to properly manage their array of internal and external networks. It is these organizations that will make the critical transition to a “global network” entity, possessing the capabilities that meet the strategic needs of the environment.

Capacity building is, by definition, a multifaceted initiative, addressing diverse concerns, and best achieved through efficient use of individual talents as shared resources.

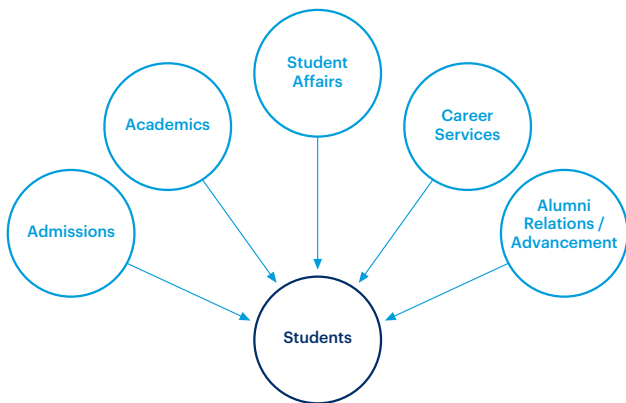
Adam Smith’s theory of absolute and comparative advantage is relevant here, and the specification of business/corporate social responsibility reflects the importance of a balanced approach, with focus on the three pillars of “People, Planet and Profits”.

It should be recognized that the sustainability movement must be perceived as a specific set of concerns, but it is still an initiative that encompasses content from across all aspects of an education mission. The inability of an individual (person, institution or other entity, or area of study) to be successful in isolation, requires cooperation across disciplines and organizations. The ultimate achievement of the sustainability movement is to cease being viewed as a separate movement from discipline-specific interests, and become integrated throughout and across all areas of interest – science, business and the arts.

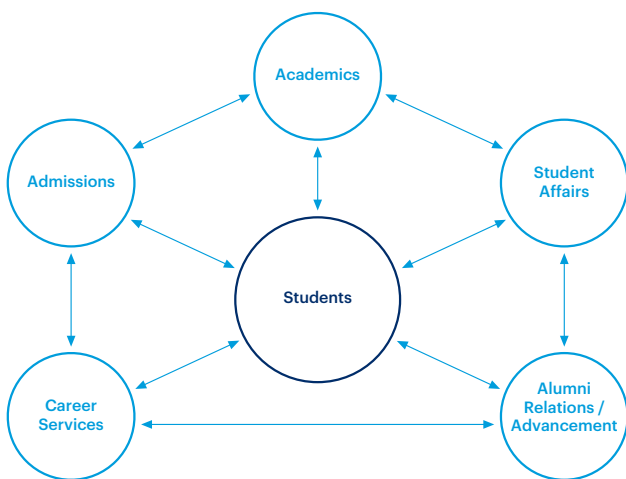
Implications and lessons learned are the recognition that sustainability organizations must resist the inclination and tendency to be too insular, operating in a “safe” space where everyone agrees. The real potential lies in the ability to draft and integrate those that are currently considered “outsiders” and “contrarians”, which now greatly outnumber the “believers”. The danger lies in the inability to make these conversions in a timely manner, running the risk of earning a reputation of being a failed attempt, described by the words: “we tried that, but it didn’t work”.

Obstacles and Barriers to Partnerships and Alliances

In the workplace, however broadly defined, behavior is driven by measurements. The higher sector suffers from a silo mentality in both operational and product delivery perspectives. From an operational perspective, Markowitz and Craig (2017) provide evidence of how operational business units fail to demonstrate the appropriate focus on students’ well-being, as reflected by the comparison of existing versus optimal operating paradigms:



The siloed university.



A better way.

Interestingly, they take the baseline position that “College graduates view these benefits as a result of coursework that is not siloed within any one particular major or course of study, but rather the direct result of a learning environment where knowledge is shared and received across conventional disciplines.”

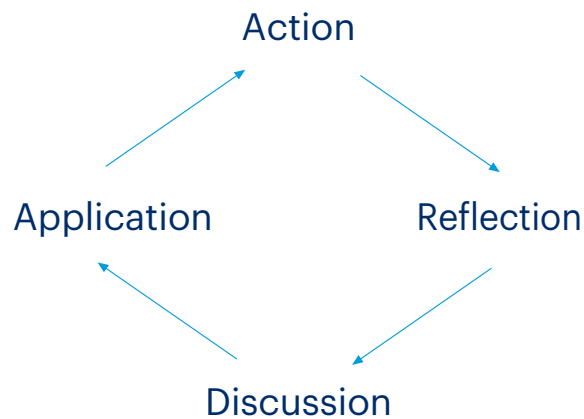
However, in many, if not most, institutions this paradigm of knowledge sharing is rare, and for good reason. Within higher education, the delivery of the core product/service of knowledge suffers from existing performance evaluation metrics that do not typically reward collaboration. Academic areas are generally defined in narrow ways, and research projects that cross different disciplines are not typically encouraged or rewarded. Highly regarded journals are usually defined by specific, rather than broad academic focuses and less weight is given to research published by anyone other than a first author. “Publish or perish” typically dictates that faculties “color within the lines” of their disciplines.

Implications of SDG 17 for the Institutional and Higher Education Sector

In a handbook developed at the Asian Development Bank Institute, Tokyo, Terrence Morrison (2001) provided a framework for developing capacity building programs in which the use of experiential learning serves as a fundamental component of teaching pedagogy. The handbook provides “a framework of actionable learning that links three domains of learning: emotion, thought and behavior, and underpins each with a growing capacity to learn how to learn.”

| LEARNING DOMAIN | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>FEELING</i> | <i>THINKING</i> | <i>ACTING</i> |
| LEARNING TO SENSE | LEARNING TO OBSERVE | LEARNING TO ADAPT |
| LEARNING TO EMPATHIZE | LEARNING TO ASSESS | LEARNING TO CHANGE |
| LEARNING TO CARE | LEARNING TO REFLECT | LEARNING TO TRANSFORM |
| LEARNING TO LEARN | | |

Experiential learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combinations of grasping and transforming experience.



- Set in a paradigm which, at the very least, implies, and optimally demands, community engagement, experiential learning intersects with service learning. This perspective is reflected by the Carnegie classification of community engagement: collaboration between institutions of higher education and their wider communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. In practice, experiential learning:
 - Connects the campus with the community
 - Generates capacity-building partnerships
 - Enhances student learning
 - Addresses critical community issues
 - Encourages student learning and development
 - Involves active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in, and meets the needs of, a community
 - Is integrated into, and enhances, the academic curriculum
 - Helps foster civic responsibility
 - Goes beyond what is learned in the classroom
 - Is a hands-on experience
 - Helps students to gain new skills by working directly with the community
 - Involves communication, team-building, and critical thinking; builds self-esteem; and develops a sense of responsibility for decision-making

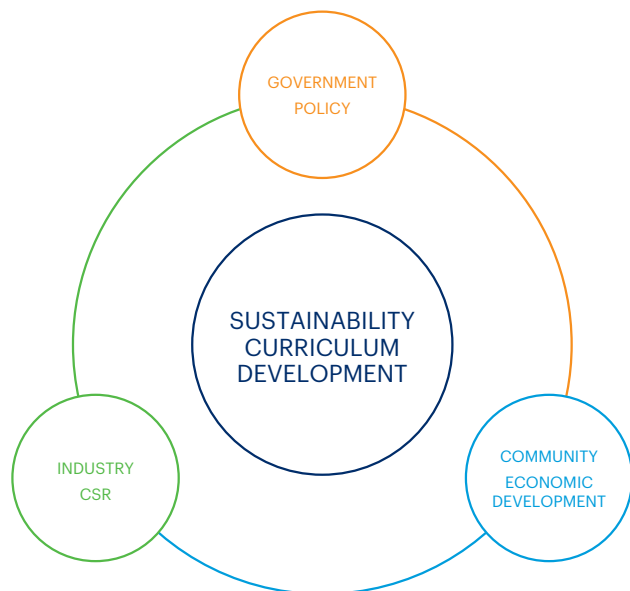
The optimal nexus of experiential and service learning is characterized by programs that:

- Must have some academic context and be designed in such a way that not only ensures that the service enhances the learning but also that the learning enhances the service
- Equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring.

Jeavons (1995) establishes a framework: “Service-learning is a pedagogical strategy that combines meaningful service with academic study in order to 1) teach civic

responsibility, 2) strengthen communities, and 3) exchange community- and university-derived resources and expertise. Service-learning is distinct from internship experiences or volunteer work in that it aims to equally benefit both the recipients and the providers of the service, all within a framework that promotes civic engagement and enriches the scholarship of the university. In a service-learning course, students participate in a three-part process. First comes the presentation and analysis of theories or ideas in the classroom. Next is the opportunity to apply or test those theories in a concrete way within a service setting. And third is the chance for students to reflect on and refine what they have learned in light of their experiences. These steps are repeated over the course of the semester and are guided by an instructor working in tandem with a community partner.” This framework is shaped by participation from the relevant sectors of:

- Government
- Industry
- Community



Recommendations

- Seek out and pursue opportunities for cross-discipline and cross-sector collaboration.
- Pursue opportunities to educate the segments of the population that are not aware or accepting of factual arguments supporting sustainability goals.
- Develop messages that target emotional responses, and are aligned with scientific perspectives.
- Establish regional centers, housed by institutions of higher education, as Sustainable Environment Institutes, that will serve as a hub where students, faculties and staff can partner through meaningful collaboration and common goals of advancing the institution and bettering our social well-being, health and prosperity. The SEI will serve as a clearing house for programs and projects, faculty expertise and student involvement to articulate the way in which these goals are supported through sustainability initiatives at the home institution. The Institute will serve as a boundary-spanning entity reaching across schools, departments, programs, our community, government agencies, industries and other institutions. It will be a catalyst for economic growth, collaboration and partnership and will position each host institution as a leader in this arena beyond the 21st Century.

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Alliance of Networks for the Environmental Sustainability of Higher Education Institutions in Ibero-America

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Introduction

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly passed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an action plan in favour of humanity and the planet. As stated in the second paragraph of the preamble to resolution A/RES/70/1, “All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan” (UN, 2015: 1).

The 2030 Agenda defines 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets that make up this new global action plan, which is a continuation of the Millennium Development Goals. The new universal agenda identifies five major spheres of action: people, the planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.

Goal 17 proposes the need to “Revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”. According to target 17.16, this new Partnership must be “complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries”. In turn, target 17.17 specifies the duty to “encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships” (UN, 2015: 31).

Although the revitalization of a “Global Partnership for Sustainable Development” is presented as the last of the SDGs, in practice it is a necessary condition for the achievement of all the others. The 2030 Agenda is universal and therefore requires contributions from all national governments, international agencies, public organisations and citizens of the world.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) need to be among the first stakeholder in civilian society to respond to the United Nations’ call to “Transform our world”. In compliance with their social and environmental responsibility, universities and other HEIs can be assumed to be “interested parties” in the worldwide effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. They should therefore become leading actors in the new universal partnership being called upon by the United Nations in the form of the 2030 Agenda.

The contributions by HEIs to the new Global Partnership for Sustainable Development can be described in similar terms to target 17.16: the exchange of specialised knowledge, technologies and financial resources. They can also contribute through their rich and extensive experience in the creation and operation of partnerships in order to achieve shared goals. Universities and other HEIs participated in global action plans that predated the SDGs and were aimed both at promoting development in general (Millennium Development Goals) and the achievement of universal targets in specific sectors (Health for All by 2000, Agenda 21, Global Action Programme and Decade on Education for Sustainable Development, and others). The specific fields of action in which higher education institutions have made a significant contribution especially include the environment and sustainability.

Universities and other HEIs were among the main institutions to answer the call of the Stockholm Conference in 1972 to support the action plan proposed in the Swedish capital, especially in relation to environmental education and training. Thanks to the support and promotion of certain international organizations, Latin America and the Caribbean was one

of the first regions of the world in which higher education institutions started to organise themselves into partnerships to cooperate in making significant contributions to international efforts to overcome the environmental crisis.

This work was initiated by the *Centro Internacional de Formación en Ciencias Ambientales* (International Environmental Education Centre – CIFCA) in 1975 and continued by the *Red de Formación Ambiental para América Latina y el Caribe* (Environmental Training Network for Latin America and the Caribbean – RFA-ALC) from 1981 (Sáenz, 2012). As a result of more than three decades of on-going work to foster the incorporation of the environmental dimension in higher education institutions, the *Alianza de Redes Iberoamericanas de Universidades por la Sustentabilidad y el Ambiente* (Alliance of Ibero-American University Networks for Sustainability and the Environment – ARIUSA) was constituted in 2007.

ARIUSA is a network of university environmental networks in Latin America, the Caribbean and the Iberian Peninsula that coordinate their activities and cooperate to promote commitments to sustainability among HEIs. Its creation involved participation by six university environmental networks grouping 96 HEIs in Ibero-America.

A decade later, there are 25 university environmental networks in the alliance, with 431 universities and other HEIs from 19 countries in the region: Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Peru, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Chile, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Panama, Bolivia, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Spain and Portugal.

In its first ten years of operation as regional network of networks, ARIUSA has gained major experience of collaboration between national networks of universities, researchers, HEIs and international cooperation organisations to foster commitment to sustainability and the environmental efforts of universities and other HEIs. In undertaking this experience, it has constructed a model for the coordination of actions and academic cooperation that could well serve as a reference for similar organizations of university networks.

ARIUSA has yet to agree to a common position of its university environmental networks with regard to the 2030 Agenda. It is close to doing so via the decision of its Coordinating Committee, made up of representatives of all the networks. At present (March 2018), a special

commission is working to propose an official alliance document “on universities and their role in contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals” (Sáenz, 2017b: 16).

As occurs with respect to many other issues, the decision of the ARIUSA Coordinating Committee on the SDGs will be based on the approaches and positions as previously agreed by the networks of universities and higher education institutes that form the alliance. Long before the passing of the 2030 Agenda, a large number of Latin American networks and universities had already assumed, through documents such as those of the *Misión, Visión y Proyecto Educativo Institucional* (Institutional Educational Mission, Vision and Project), their commitment to sustainable development and specifically environmental sustainability.

This article presents a summary of the historical background of ARIUSA, its basic guidelines for association and cooperation between university environmental networks, its main actions to promote the sustainability of higher education institutions and the current procedure to assume a shared position and commitment with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It ends by formulating a series of recommendations for HEIs, university networks and other institutions with a vested interest and invites them to join the new Global Partnership that the United Nations is calling for in order to comply with the 2030 Agenda.

Brief History of the Construction of the Alliance of Networks

In the first decade of operations of ARIUSA, a series of important events can be identified in the process of its construction as a network of university environmental networks in Ibero-America (see graph 1).

Four events were landmarks for establishing the different stages of the history of this network of university environmental networks: the meeting at which ARIUSA was created in 2007, the first Workshop in 2010, the meeting to launch GUPES-LA in 2012 and the celebration in 2017 of the alliance’s tenth anniversary. These events mark the beginning and ending of the three main stages in the history of ARIUSA, and which correspond to its periods of formation, growth and consolidation. The other important events have been the ARIUSA Ibero-American Workshops held in 2012, 2013 and 2016.

Graph 1
Main events in the history of ARIUSA. 2007 – 2017



Source: Sáenz 2017

The formation stage spanned between October 2007 and March 2010. The Agreement on the creation of ARIUSA was drafted by the representatives of two international and four national university environmental networks. Their names are shown in table 1.

During the formation stage, basic standards were gradually agreed on for the organization and operation of ARIUSA. These standards were passed as an “*Acuerdo sobre Principios y Organización*” (Agreement on Principles and Organisation – ARIUSA, 2010), which defined this alliance as a “network of academic – scientific cooperation relations and of coordination of actions between networks and universities acting in Ibero-America and with an explicit environmental commitment” (Ariusa, 2010: 1).

The ARIUSA growth stage began in March 2010, with the alliance’s first Ibero-American Workshop. As well as passing the *Acuerdo sobre Principios y Organización*, this meeting also accepted the incorporation of new university environmental networks. From this time on, the alliance started to grow with the adhesion or creation of 15 new networks. These networks are presented in table 2.

The ARIUSA consolidation stage commenced on 3 December 2012 with the launch of the Latin American Chapter of the Global Universities Partnership on Environment for Sustainability (GUPES-LA). This meeting agreed on a common agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean between ARIUSA and GUPES, which was supported by funding from the Regional Office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, also known as UN Environment).

Table 1
Founding networks of ARIUSA in 2007

| No. | Acronym | Network | Category | Region or Country |
|-----|-----------|---|----------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | RFA-ALC | Red de Formación Ambiental para América Latina y el Caribe | Founder | Latin America and the Caribbean |
| 2 | OIUDSMA | Organización Internacional de Universidades por la Sustentabilidad y el Medio Ambiente | Founder | Ibero-America |
| 3 | RCFA | Red Colombiana de Formación Ambiental | Founder | Colombia |
| 4 | REDFIA | Red Nacional de Formación e Investigación Ambiental | Founder | Guatemala |
| 5 | COMPLEXUS | Consortio Mexicano de Programas Ambientales Universitarios para el Desarrollo Sustentable | Founder | Mexico |
| 6 | RC-GAU | Red Cubana de Gestores Ambientales en las Universidades | Founder | Cuba |

Source: Sáenz 2017

Table 2
Founding networks of ARIUSA in 2007

| No. | Acronym | Network | Category | Region or Country | No. |
|-----|----------|--|-----------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | MADS | Red de Universidades en Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible | Project | 2009 | Ibero-America |
| 2 | PICyTA | Red del Postgrado Iberoamericano en Ciencias y Tecnologías Ambientales | Project | 2009 | Ibero-America |
| 3 | RAUSA | Red Argentina de Universidades por la Sostenibilidad y el Ambiente | Adherent | 2010 | Argentina |
| 4 | ACUDES | Asociación Continental de Universidades de Desarrollo Sustentable | Adherent | 2010 | America |
| 5 | REASul | Red Sur Brasileira de Educación Ambiental | Adherent | 2010 | Brazil |
| 6 | CTIE-AMB | Red de Investigación sobre Ciencia, Tecnología, Innovación y Educación Ambiental en Iberoamérica | Project | 2010 | Ibero-America |
| 7 | CADEP | Comisión Sectorial para la Calidad Ambiental, Desarrollo Sostenible y Prevención de Riesgos | Adherent | 2011 | Spain |
| 8 | REMEPPAS | Red Mexicana de Posgrados Pluridisciplinarios en Ambiente y Sostenibilidad | Adherent | 2011 | Mexico |
| 9 | RINSA | Red Iberoamericana de Investigación sobre Sustentabilidad y Ambiente | Project | 2011 | Ibero-America |
| 10 | REDIES | Red Costarricense de Instituciones Educativas Sostenibles | Adherent | 2011 | Costa Rica |
| 11 | RAI | Red Ambiental Interuniversitaria del Perú | Adherent | 2012 | Peru |
| 12 | RISU | Red de Indicadores de Sostenibilidad en las Universidades | Operative | 2012 | Ibero-America |
| 13 | RAUDO | Red Ambiental de Universidades Dominicanas | Adherent | 2012 | Dominican Republic |
| 14 | AMBIENS | Red de la Revista Iberoamericana Universitaria en Ambiente, Sociedad y Sostenibilidad | Project | 2012 | Ibero-America |
| 15 | JUSTA | Red de Justicia, Sostenibilidad y Ambiente | Project | 2012 | Latin America |

Source: Sáenz 2017

Table 3
ARIUSA adherent and project networks. 2013 - 2017

| No. | Acronym | Network | Category | Region or Country | No. |
|-----|------------|---|-------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 1 | REDVUA | Red Venezolana de Universidades por el Ambiente | Adherent | 2013 | Venezuela |
| 2 | RAUS | Red de Universidades Sostenibles | Adherent | 2013 | Colombia |
| 3 | RCS | Red Campus Sustentable | Adherent | 2013 | Chile |
| 4 | RIMAS | Red Internacional de Estudios sobre Medio Ambiente y Sostenibilidad | Researchers | 2015 | Ibero-America |
| 5 | RedMA | Red de Medio Ambiente | Adherent | 2016 | Ecuador |
| 6 | REDCCA | Red Ecuatoriana de Carreras de Ciencias Ambientales | Adherent | 2016 | Ecuador |
| 7 | RENUA | Red Nicaragüense de Universidades por el Ambiente | Adherent | 2017 | Nicaragua |
| 8 | PAIs | Red de Planes Ambientales Institucionales | Adherent | 2017 | Mexico |
| 9 | RedSA | Red de Sustentabilidad Ambiental | Adherent | 2017 | Mexico |
| 10 | RUPADES | Red de Universidades Panameñas para el Desarrollo Sostenible | Adherent | 2017 | Panama |
| 11 | UAGAIS | Red de Universidades Argentinas para la Gestión Ambiental y la Inclusión Social | Adherent | 2017 | Argentina |
| 12 | RASES | Red de Ambientalización y Sostenibilidad en la Educación Superior | Adherent | 2017 | Brazil |
| 13 | ReLaC-GeRS | Red Latinoamericana y Caribeña para la Gestión Sostenible de Residuos Sólidos | Project | 2017 | Latin America |

Source: Sáenz 2017

This most recent stage brought the creation and adhesion to the alliance of 13 new national and international university environmental networks. The networks that joined ARIUSA between 2013 and 2017 are shown in table 3.

The most recent ARIUSA event, its fifth Ibero-American Workshop, was held in Santa Marta (Colombia) in October

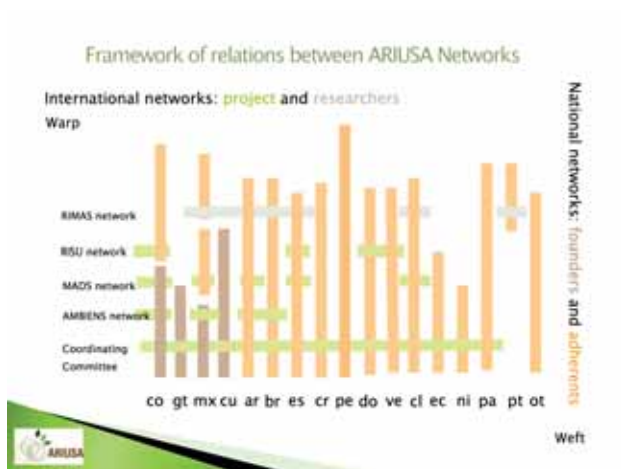
2017. It was also a celebration of the first ten years of the alliance of university environmental networks and the first five years of the shared agenda with GUPES. The meeting of its Coordinating Committee decided to put together a new work agenda for the forthcoming years that should include “an approach to universities and their role in contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals” (Sáenz, 2017b).

Association and Cooperation Scheme in the Network of Networks

On the basis of its efforts as a network for more than a decade, ARIUSA has been constructed as a framework for communication, coordination, cooperation and co-managerial relations between different types of university environmental networks working together to foster the institutionalization of the environmental commitments of universities and other HEIs in Ibero-America. This general idea is represented in graph 2.

Like any such framework, ARIUSA is formed by weaving two sets of threads: the weft and the warp. The first set, or weft, is the solid base of the framework and is made up of 20 national university networks in 15 Latin American, Caribbean or Iberian countries. There are additionally universities in another four countries that participate in one of the international project networks. In total, these are the 19 countries that were listed in the introduction.

Graph 2
Framework of relations between networks in ARIUSA



Source: Sáenz 2017

The warp is the second set of threads that are weaved into the weft. At ARIUSA, the warp is made up two types of international networks: project networks and a network of environmental researchers. At present, ARIUSA has four international project networks and an Ibero-American network of academics that are working on environmental and sustainability issues, all of which have already been mentioned in the tables in the previous section.

There are basically four types of relations that weave these two groups of networks or threads into the ARIUSA framework: Communication, Coordination, Cooperation and Co-Management. Each type of relation has a variety of corresponding functions and activities in ARIUSA, as presented in a summarised manner in graph 3.

Like any social network or organization, no matter how simple or complex, the fundamental relation at ARIUSA is that of communication.

The basis of all social relationships is the exchange of information and ideas in order to coordinate group actions and this network of networks is no exception to the general rule. Likewise, it shares two types of communication with any other network of social relations: formal and informal. Given the importance of ITCs in the modern world, communication via internet is also more frequent among networks of networks than direct interaction and face-to-face meetings.

The most important spaces for forging personal relationships in the framework of the alliance have been the ARIUSA Ibero-American Workshops. As reported earlier, in the first ten years there have been five such meetings. ARIUSA Workshops are face-to-face meetings held over several days involving as many representatives of networks and other interested colleagues as possible, which take the chance to conduct different academic activities related to environmental sustainability.

Graph 3
Basic relationships between networks within ARIUSA.



Source: Sáenz 2017

Since the decision to create the alliance and in its reference documents, the two most prominent types of relationships between networks have been those involving coordination and cooperation. According to the *Acuerdo sobre Principios y Organización*, “ARIUSA is a multi-centre and pluri-directional system of horizontal relations for academic and scientific cooperation and the coordination of actions between Ibero-American environmental networks and universities” (Ariusa, 2010, p. 1).

All of the networks in ARIUSA are, at the bare minimum, expected to regularly report on their activities and to try to coordinate some of their mutually coinciding actions.

This basic coordination of events is achieved by producing an annual agenda that compiles the main activities scheduled by each of the networks in the alliance to ensure that they do not interfere with each other.

The last of the basic relationships between member networks of ARIUSA is that of Co-Management. From the first version of the *Acuerdo sobre Principios y Organización*, it was established that “in order to guarantee the democratic nature of the cooperative relationships that it constitutes, ARIUSA is organised in a decentralised manner and with no type of hierarchy between its members, thus creating as horizontal an organisational structure as possible” (Ariusa, 2010, p.1). Therefore, the main decisions in this network of networks are made collectively and, preferably by consensus, by the ARIUSA Coordinating Committee. This Committee is made up of the representatives of each of the networks forming the alliance, irrespective of whether they are founders, adherents, projects or researchers. On this Coordinating Committee, all networks carry the same weight and importance: each representative has a right to speak and vote (when necessary), regardless of whether they are national or international networks, large or small, or members from the beginning or recently joined.

As agreed since 2010, the Coordinating Committee chooses “an ARIUSA Coordination that shall be undertaken by one or several of the representatives of active networks that express an interest, commitment and the possibility to dedicate the necessary time to fulfilling their functions” (Ariusa: 2013: 5). These include representation before other networks and organizations, enquiries to the Committee from network representatives, any internal or external communications required, the coordination of joint projects, and the procurement of resources to fund the alliance’s activities.

Since the creation of ARIUSA in 2007, its coordination has been collective. Throughout the first decade, this was the duty of the representatives of the *Red Colombiana de Formación Ambiental* (Colombian Environmental Training Network – RCFA) and the *Organización Internacional de Universidades por la Sostenibilidad y el Medio Ambiente* (International Organization of Universities for Sustainable Development and Environment – OIUDSMA). At its meeting in October 2017, the Coordinating Committee decided to create a Managerial Committee made up of three representatives of networks, which would be elected every two years, to thereby “progressively renew and, at the same time, maintain Coordinators with experience of ARIUSA management” (Sáenz, 2017b: 16). So now, in addition to the RCFA representative, the Managerial Committee also involves participation of representatives from the *Red Campus Sustentable* (Sustainable Campus Network – RCS) in Chile and of the *Red de Sostenibilidad Ambiental* (Environmental Sustainability Network – RedSA) in Mexico.

Although not expressed in writing in any of its documents, an important principle that is always applied by the ARIUSA Coordinating Committee, when making decisions on its action plans, has been that: “Whoever proposes commits and whoever commits complies”. Through application of this principle, a high level of compliance has been achieved with the alliance’s work agendas, because all of its activities have a team that is responsible for their execution, and which is led by the proposers themselves.

This principle is directly related with another that appraises the work done by the members of the alliance over the financial resources, as the means for achieving its mission and goals. ARIUSA has conducted intense activity in its first ten years of operation, but it has never received steady finance. Although some networks receive annual funding from associate universities, participation of university environmental networks in the alliance does not imply the payment of any kind of fees. From very early on, it was made clear that its activities would mainly be conducted “on the basis of the contribution of time and work by the representatives of universities, through the national or international networks of which it consists” (Ariusa, 2010: 6).

In a small number of cases, the dedication of time to the alliance’s activities is supported institutionally by universities to which the representatives of networks on the Coordinating Committee are associated. This was the case from 2007 with the ARIUSA Coordinator, who dedicated almost half of his workshop to coordination

activities, as part of his academic activities at the University of Applied and Environmental Sciences (U.D.C.A). This university offers the same support to the *Red Colombiana de Formación Ambiental* by assigning to another of its professors the functions of Executive Secretary of this university environmental network.

On the basis of the work of the members of the Coordinating Committee, of the Managerial Committee and of some close colleagues, ARIUSA has often managed to receive funding from international cooperation agencies. In its first years it received small amounts from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and the *Asociación Universitaria Iberoamericana de Postgrado* (Ibero-American Postgraduate University Association – AUIP). Of much greater importance has been the funding for pre-degree student mobility grants provided since 2010 by the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI) and the Regional Government of Andalusia, Spain. Thanks to the *Red de Ciencia, Tecnología, Innovación y Educación Ambiental en Iberoamérica* (Network of Science, Technology, Innovation and Environmental Education in Ibero-America – CTIE-AMB) major funding was obtained from the *Programa Iberoamericano de Ciencia and Tecnología para el Desarrollo* (Ibero-American Science and Technology for Development Programme – CYTED) and the *Departamento Administrativo de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación* (Science, Technology and Innovation Administrative Department – COLCIENCIAS) in Colombia (Sáenz, 2012b). Since 2013, a joint ARIUSA – GUPES agenda has been in development, which is co-funded by resources provided by the Environmental Training Network for Latin America and the Caribbean (RFA-ALC), of the regional office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, otherwise known as UN Environment).

Promotion of Sustainability in Higher Education

Although the creation of ARIUSA was formalised in 2007, this alliance of university environmental networks in Ibero-America cannot be understood as anything other than the result of a prolonged collective effort by Latin American academics and the employees of international organisations that, since the mid-seventies, started to promote “the incorporation of the environmental dimension in higher education”, shortly after the

Stockholm Conference. Two of the main international organisations that took on this task in the early years in Latin America were the *Centro Internacional de Formación de Ciencias Ambientales* (International Environmental Science Training Centre – CIFCA), based in Spain, and the Environmental Training Network for Latin America and the Caribbean (RFA-ALC) that was first based in Mexico and later in Panama (Sáenz, 2012).

The initial work of CIFCA was continued by the RFA-ALC and one of the first results was the creation of the *Red Colombiana de Formación Ambiental* (RCFA) in 1985. Over the following years, similar networks were formed in other Latin American countries, but most of these ceased functions very quickly. In 1994, the *Red Cubana de Formación Ambiental* was set up in Cuba and in 1996 the *Red de Formación e Investigación Ambiental* (REDFIA) in Guatemala. These three national networks, together with the regional network, would be joined by two others in forming ARIUSA in October 2007.

According to its constitutional agreement, the initial goals of ARIUSA were to “develop academic cooperation activities aimed at coordinating events of common interest, the realization of collaborative research projects and support for the creation and strengthening of postgraduate programmes on environment and sustainability” (Ariusa, 2007: 2). These goals were formulated more broadly in 2010 when the *Acuerdo sobre Principios y Organización* was passed, which established as a “fundamental mission or objective the promotion and support for academic and scientific cooperation and the coordination of actions, in the environmental field, between Iberian, Latin American and Caribbean universities, through their university environmental networks” (Ariusa, 2010: 2).

In compliance with its mission and goals, ARIUSA has developed a series of projects aimed at promoting the institutionalization of the environmental commitments of universities and other HEI in the region. All the activities have been articulated since 2013 through a joint agenda with the Latin American Chapter of the Global Universities Partnership on Environment for Sustainability (GUPES-LA).

On the joint GUPES – ARIUSA agenda, the most prominent activities have included two series of National and Latin American Forums of Universities and Sustainability. The first was held throughout 2013, when national forums were held in ten different countries. It ended with the I Latin American Forum of Universities and Sustainability, at Viña del Mar (Chile), in December of the same year.

On the basis of the reports of the six national forums and the Latin American one, a book was published titled “*Universidades y Sostenibilidad en América Latina y el Caribe*” (Sáenz, 2015a). The second series was brought forward to between 2014 and 2017. Until the end of last year, a total of 24 national forums or equivalent events had been recorded and it closed with the II Latin American Forum of Universities and Sustainability.

Another international collaborative project that generated major dynamics at ARIUSA was focused on the “Definition of indicators for the evaluation of the sustainability indicators at Latin American universities”. By late 2013, this project had agreed on a total of 114 indicators and these were then put to the test in the first half of 2014 with a group of 65 universities, from 11 national networks, in ten Latin American countries (Benayas et al, 2014 and Sáenz, 2015b).

From 2014, and on the basis of a selection of a smaller group of indicators, a series of National Diagnoses on the Institutionalisation of Environmental Commitment in Higher Education were put forward. This ARIUSA initiative was adopted by the RFA-ALC and UNEP, and thanks to its efforts, achieved the support of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

By the end of October 2017, responses had been received from 355 universities and other HEIs in ten Latin American countries. From these, four national reports have been published (Cárdenas, 2014; Torres and Calderón, 2015; Cesadesu and Anuies, 2016; and Sáenz et al, 2017). Several networks in other countries have expressed an interest in their respective diagnoses. On the basis of the information that has been compiled, and that will continue to be obtained from different surveys, the plan is to set up an Observatory of Sustainability in Higher Education (Sáenz, 2015d).

Commitment of HEIs and Networks to the Sustainable Development Goals

When ARIUSA was created, almost two decades had already passed since the concept of sustainable development had been coined by the Brundtland Commission and been institutionalised within the United Nations system in the wake of the Rio Summit. This concept has been the object of much criticism and resistance from major sectors of the academic community in the region that, since the seventies, has

been in charge of environmental matters, particularly that which is identified with the so-called “Latin American Environmental Thinking” (Ángel, 1997 and Leff, 2009).

Sharing or taking into consideration these positions, when deciding on the name of its alliance of university environmental networks, the founders of ARIUSA opted for the term ‘sustainability’ as opposed to ‘sustainable development’. This concept was joined by that of the ‘environment’, which has always been the centre of interest both for the representatives of Latin American environmental thinking and those who have promoted the incorporation of the environmental dimension in the region’s higher education institutions.

Another of the considerations behind ARIUSA’s name including the term sustainability is that it is a characteristic or condition that many social processes can have. Cities need to be sustainable, and so do institutions, the future, society, development, consumption and any economic sector or activity. Such a broad concept means that many university and higher education institution networks in Latin America and the Caribbean easily identify with what this alliance represents.

For these and other reasons, the ARIUSA name has never been questioned by proposals that it should include the term ‘sustainable development’.

In general, the concept of sustainability has been widely accepted to describe the most general objectives of the work done by the university and HEI environmental networks belonging to ARIUSA.

Without being discussed or agreed on in any explicit manner, the term ‘sustainability’ is understood at ARIUSA to mean the environmental sustainability of contemporary societies in general and of Latin American ones in particular. Hence, from the passing in 2010 of the *Acuerdo sobre Principios y Organización* it was established that “all cooperation and coordination actions conducted by ARIUSA shall be aimed at promoting respect for the environment and the sustainability of systems for the social and productive organization that each of our countries decides upon democratically” (Ariusa, 2010: 2).

Though not promoted from ARIUSA, the concept of sustainable development has been adopted by an increasing number of environmental networks of higher education institutions and universities belonging to the alliance. There has been an even stronger tendency in recent years towards public manifestation of the commitment of many institutions and university networks in Ibero-America to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) approved by the United Nations in 2015.

A representative case of this tendency is that of the University of Applied and Environmental Sciences (U.D.C.A), based in Bogota (Colombia). Since 1994, this university has been proposing the mission of “development of academic excellency through the generation and diffusion of knowledge, respect for constitutional human rights, and sustainable human development, in benefit of Colombian society” (Anzola and Cabrera, 2005: 48). The current version of this mission ratifies its commitment to “sustainable human development on a local, regional, national and international level” (U.D.C.A, 2018).

In coherence with this commitment, the U.D.C.A also adopted the Sustainable Development Goals and is incorporating them in different aspects of its academic life. The most prominent of all is the inclusion of the SDG as a central theme of the so-called *Cátedra Ambiental* (Environmental Chair). This is a compulsory course for students at the university and forms part of the syllabuses of all training programmes on a pre-degree level. The issue of the SDGs was incorporated in *Cátedra Ambiental* courses from the first semester of 2017. To date, 75 of these courses have been given, attended by more than 1,500 students. By 2021, all pre-degree students at the university will have good knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals due to having taken the *Cátedra Ambiental* course and some other subjects on their syllabuses.

The University of Los Andes is another Colombian institution of higher education that has recognised the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals. In March 2018, it created the *Centro de los Objetivos del Desarrollo Sostenible para Latinoamérica y el Caribe* (Sustainable Development Goals Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean) in association with the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). This centre has been conceived as a “regional hub for research and training on the SDGs, and for public policies related with sustainable development” (Uniandes, 2018).

This process whereby some Colombian universities have started to express and put into practice their decision to support the achievement of the SDGs has also been extended to their university environmental networks. Colombia has two such networks. The first is the *Red Colombiana de Formación Ambiental* (Colombian Environmental Training Network –RCFA), one of the founding networks of ARIUSA. It was created in 1985 and since then has operated in uninterrupted fashion. It is, without a doubt, the oldest such network in Latin America and the Caribbean. The other Colombian network is the *Red Ambiental de Universidades Sustentables* (Environmental Network of Sustainable Universities) that was created in 2010 and joined the alliance in 2013. In 2014, both networks signed a cooperation agreement whereby they agreed to develop a series of joint actions to foster the institutionalization of the environmental commitment of Colombian universities (RCFA, 2018).

The events that the two networks convene include the National Forums on Universities and Sustainability. These events are held every two years and form part of the broader series of national forums coordinated by ARIUSA and GUPES-LA in a large number of countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The II Colombian Forum was held in Bogota in August 2015 and the issues covered especially included that of the Sustainable Development Goals. There were two talks on the matter: “*Universidades: ¿A la zaga o a la vanguardia de la sostenibilidad? Su papel ante la Agenda de Desarrollo Post 2015*” (Universities: At the rearguard or forefront of sustainability? Their role before the Post 2015 Development Agenda – Martínez, 2018) and “*Universidades Colombianas y Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible*” (Colombian Universities and the Sustainable Development Goals – Franco, 2018). On the basis of these presentations, certain recommendations were proposed whereby Colombian universities can contribute to the 2030 Agenda and compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals.

In consideration of this background and the fact that some universities are already working on their commitment to the SDGs, the *Red Colombiana de Formación Ambiental* decided at its most recent assembly to include the issue in its work plan for this year (Beltrán, 2018).

Peru is another Latin American country in which a large number of higher education institutions are organised into a very important university environmental network belonging to ARIUSA. The *Red Ambiental Interuniversitaria* (Inter-University Environmental Network – RAI) groups a

total of 75 Peruvian universities and is supported by the country's Ministry of the Environment. Although it has yet to agree on an official stance with regard to the SDG, the RAI plans to do so at the *VII Foro Universidades, Gestión Ambiental y Desarrollo Sostenible* (Universities, Environmental Management and Sustainable Development Forum) to be held in May 2018 (Cárdenas, 2018).

Some universities in Peru have already begun work on the implementation of their commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. Such is the case of Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia (UPCH), which defines its vision as a "University integrated with leadership and global presence, which grows, researches, innovates and diversifies, with highly qualified and committed teachers and researchers, which proposes and promotes public policies and technology transfer, contributing to the country's sustainable development" (UPCH, 2018). To put this vision into practice, it has formed "a nucleus of teachers from all faculties that have been working reflexively on education for sustainability" and that shall be in charge of "analysing graduate profiles and syllabuses of the programmes offered by the UPCH from the 17 SDG" (Vidal, 2018).

Mexico also has a major tradition of networks of universities and higher education institutes that are committed to the environment and sustainability. In fact, three such Mexican networks are members of ARIUSA. In May 2007, the University of Campeche hosted the HEI members of the *Red de Programas Ambientales Institucionales* (Network of Institutional Environmental Programmes – PAIs) of the *Consejo Regional Sur-Sureste* (South-Southeast Regional Council – CRSS) of the *Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior* (National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutes – ANUIES) and agreed to a declaration whereby "HEIs play a preponderant role in the implementation of education and research strategies to support the transition towards sustainable societies" (Red PAIs, 2007). The document will be updated at a meeting of this network scheduled for next April (Ramos, 2018). The same month, a meeting of the *Consortio Mexicano de Programas Ambientales Universitarios para el Desarrollo Sustentable* (Mexican Consortium of University Environmental Programs for Sustainable Development – COMPLEXUS) is being planned at which it is expected that proposals shall be analysed for support of the 2030 Agenda and the inclusion of the SDGs in its work agenda (Escalona, 2018).

Other university environmental networks belonging to ARIUSA are in similar situations. The recently created

Red Latinoamericana and Caribeña para la Gestión Sostenible de Residuos Sólidos (Latin American and Caribbean Network for Sustainable Management of Solid Waste – ReLaC-GeRS) reported that it will be dealing with the issue of the 2030 Agenda at its next meeting, scheduled for May, and that it will be defining there the Sustainable Development Goals that it will be prioritising in its work (Espinosa, 2018). The *Red de Medio Ambiente* (Environmental Network – REDMA) of Cuban universities, coordinated by the Ministry for Higher Education (MES), already has a draft document titled "*Integración de las Metas de Desarrollo Sostenible y Objetivos de Desarrollo Económico-Social del País al 2030 en Planificación Estratégica de la Educación Superior Cubana*" (Integration of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Country's Economic-Social Development Goals for 2030 in the Strategic Planning of Cuban Higher Education). This document is "circulating among the member universities of REDMA for their approval next month at the national workshop" (Merino, 2018). Meanwhile, the coordinator of the *Red Venezolana de Universidades por el Ambiente* (Venezuelan Network of Universities for the Environment – REDVUA) reports that there shall shortly be a consultation with the higher education institutions in this network on the commitment they shall be assuming in terms of the SDGs (Hidalgo, 2018). Finally, in Guatemala, the *Red Nacional de Formación e Investigación Ambiental* (National Network of Environmental Training and Research – REDFIA) proposes that it shall work specifically on "SDGs related to matters of climate change" (Rodríguez, 2018).

For the last two years, some networks in ARIUSA have taken the initiative to define a standpoint with regard to the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

In turn, other networks are beginning this process motivated by the decision of the Coordinating Committee of this alliance with respect to the SDGs in October 2017.

At the meeting of this Committee in Santa Marta (Colombia) a special commission was appointed that shall be responsible for proposing a document to the Regional Conference on Higher Education in Latin

America and the Caribbean (CRES 2018), which should present “an approach to universities and their role as contributors to the Sustainable Development Goals” (Sáenz, 2017b: 16). The first meeting of this Committee agreed to the “development of a base document with the lines of strategic action that could consider the SDGs in terms of the duties of universities in ARIUSA” (Arguedas, 2018: 2). To assist with the work of this special commission, the representatives of the networks of universities and higher education institutions are being asked to report to the Coordination on their positions and progress with respect to the SDG.

Recommendations to stakeholders with an Interest in the 2030 Agenda

Based on the experience of more than 40 years of collaboration in the network of Ibero-American higher education institutes and, especially, ARIUSA’s work in the last decade, the following recommendations can be formulated to the different stakeholders with an interest in contributing to compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals:

- Higher education institutions are called upon to respond positively to the call by the United Nations General Assembly to form a new global partnership to articulate efforts of national governments, other interested institutions and the people of all regions of the world to achieve compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals agreed upon in the 2030 Agenda.
- In this revitalised Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, universities and other HEIs can make significant contributions on the basis of their traditional functions of higher education, scientific research and innovation and direct liaison with society. They can also put greater effort into their educational work by leading by example the assumption of complying with social and environmental compliance.
- The contribution by HEIs to the achievement of the specific targets proposed for each sustainable development goal can and must be done without neglecting their reflexive and critical attitude to the economic and social systems that are generating the global problems that the 2030 Agenda seeks to resolve. In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, the contribution to compliance with the SDGs is possible, even when maintaining the observations and doubts

that have been expressed for decades by several academic sectors with regard to the concept of sustainable development.

This possibility is approached by the very same resolution of the United Nations General Assembly that passed the Sustainable Development Goals. Point number 59 of the said document recognises that “there are different approaches, visions, models and tools available to each country, in accordance with its national circumstances and priorities, to achieve sustainable development” (UN,2015: 15). Different approaches, models and views of current and future societies are also present among higher education institutes, which have always been bastions for free thought and expression of ideas.

Recommendations to university networks for the environment and sustainability

- Latin American and Caribbean university networks can provide the Global Partnership with rich and broad experience of the coordination of actions and cooperation in joint projects, especially in the field of environmental sustainability. This experience goes back to the mid-seventies, with joint projects in the framework of the *Centro Internacional de Formación de Ciencias Ambientales* (CIFCA) and the Environmental Training Network for Latin America and the Caribbean (RFA-ALC), which in the last decade have been continued by the *Alianza de Redes Iberoamericanas de Universidades por la Sustentabilidad y el Ambiente* (ARIUSA).
- This also includes the experience of academic partnership with many other university networks in the region. Prominent among these are the: *Asociación de Universidades Grupo Montevideo* (Montevideo Group University Association – AUGM), *Asociación de Universidades Confiadas a la Compañía de Jesús en América Latina* (Association of Universities Entrusted to the Society of Jesus in Latin America – AUSJAL), the Association of Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean (UDUAL), the Inter-American Organization on Higher Education (OUI-IOHE) and the Association of Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean for Integration (AUALCPI).
- Some of these university networks have already expressed their wish to contribute to compliance with the SDGs and others are on the verge of doing so. This favourable circumstance should be exploited by calling on all

university networks working in Latin America and the Caribbean to coordinate their actions and develop joint ventures to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region.

Whatever the scale of the partnership of university networks being built, one of the first steps needs to be the establishment of a baseline or assessment of the initial status of the process of associating higher education institutions to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Knowledge of this process is even more incipient and differentiated for the different aspects of economic, social and environmental sustainability to which universities contribute. In order to overcome this situation, there is a need to construct a basic system of indicators to be able to assess the contribution made by HEIs to the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Recommendations for other institutional stakeholders

- National governments and international cooperation agencies with an interest in compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals will find higher education institutions and their university networks to be reliable allies with a tried and tested capacity to make significant contributions to global action plans like that proposed by the 2030 Agenda.
- HEIs and their university networks are in fine condition to provide the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development with critical and reflexive thought, scientific knowledge, technological innovations and proposals for public policy to make effective contributions to compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals and the agreed targets.
- To contribute to compliance with the 2030 Agenda, national and international stakeholders must provide institutional and financial support to universities, HEIs and the networks grouping them for their activities and projects undertaken in order to help to achieve the SDGs on different scales, from the local to the global.
- As a whole, all stakeholders from national governments, international agencies and civilian organizations must work together to transform the current relationships between human beings and mankind with the planet, to make them much more equitable and sustainable.

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Partnering with Higher Education Institutions for SDG 17: The Role of Higher Education in Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

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Introduction: Partnerships as a Goal

We live in a world that is experiencing complex challenges of poverty and inequality in the availability and consumption of resources. This is a world where economies have internationalised; people are increasingly linked across borders through markets, formal and informal networks, politics, capital and social media. Given such interconnectedness and interdependence, these social challenges demand collaborative action that is gender inclusive and politically contextualised (Tandon, 1991).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call for collaborative action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 17 SDGs were built on the success of the Millennium Development Goals, while including new areas such as climate change, financial inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among other priorities.

An ambitious and interconnected global development agenda requires a new global partnership – this includes funding development, connecting people through information technology networks, international trade flows, and strengthening data collection and analysis.

It was therefore agreed in principle that a successful sustainable development agenda requires multi-stakeholder partnerships between businesses, NGOs, communities, Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), Governments, the United Nations and other actors, and that this would be crucial for the achievement of these goals (Dodds, 2015). These 17 ambitious goals and the complex challenges they seek to address neither fit neatly into demarcated sectors, nor into national borders. For example; climate change is global, and businesses are just as important for fighting it as governments. Innovation can't happen without universities and scientists and certainly not without the exchange of knowledge across continents. Gender equality is as much about communities as it is about legal instruments. If our epidemics are global, their solutions are too. Inclusive partnerships built upon a shared vision and shared goals that place people and the planet at the centre are needed at the global, regional, national and local level (UN India 2018).

In September 2015, with the adoption of the SDGs, a separate 'SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals', was created to reiterate the importance of partnership in the achievement of the SDGs. There had been much euphoria about the idea of partnerships since the 1990s, as they were viewed as a 'means' to achieve socio-economic

development goals. This was the first time that partnerships were looked upon as a 'goal'. Goal 17 calls for partnerships to mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, and particularly developing ones.

This paper will explore the role of HEIs in achieving the SDGs and in multi-stakeholder partnerships. Given the emphasis that intergovernmental agencies place on partnerships including various stakeholders and their growing relevance for solving the challenges of local development, the second section of the paper will provide a historical account of partnerships. The third section will concentrate on the lessons learned from partnerships in the last two decades. After that, the paper will present the findings of a survey conducted by PRIA to understand the nuances of partnerships in present times. The final section will analyse the implications for higher education institutions in achieving the SDGs.

History of Partnerships: A Means for Socio-Economic Development

Practitioners and scholars have used the term 'partnership' to describe collaboration between state and non-state actors or between two or more non-state actors such as businesses and civil society (Pattberg and Widerberg, 2015). In the context of this paper, "Partnerships" can be voluntary multi-stakeholder or multi-institutional initiatives, organised around a common purpose, and administered as an entity in their own right, distinct from their constituent partners.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships are unique in both character and substance.

They are collaborations between stakeholders that are affected by a common problem but have different interests, perspectives, access to resources, approaches and ways of understanding the problem. A successful partnership is one that utilises these differences to achieve the defined goals of the joint venture. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are generally directed at the problems and challenges of sustainable development, from environmental protection and management, to social

inclusion and sustainable economic growth. They have a shared vision, maintain a presumption in favour of joint problem-solving, promote a work ethos that exploits mutual self-interest, and add value beyond that achievable by the principal alternatives.

At the end of the Cold War, the world witnessed the rise of international markets and world trade, and the meteoric development of information flows and transportation systems that helped to create an interdependent world. These factors favoured increased activity and influence of civil society, which started playing more national and transnational problem-solving roles (Brown, 2004). At the onset of the 1990s, the Participation Committee of the NGO Working Group on the World Bank decided to advocate the need for a bottom-up participatory development model within the Bank for its own projects and policies (Long, 2001). Such a movement also encouraged participatory approaches and fostered the growth of partnerships.

Against this background, multi-stakeholder partnerships were seen as a means to achieve socio-economic development at the global level during the 1990s and have become part and parcel of many countries' developmental strategies. They have been employed as instruments in issues ranging from environment, health and development cooperation to social rights and security (Schäferhoff et al. 2009).

A variety of multi-stakeholder coalitions, initiatives and councils were active in the run-up to the Earth Summit and beyond, at both the global and national level. 1990 brought the World Conference on Education for All, which was the first of its kind to witness concerted NGO participation. This was followed by the World Summit on Children in 1991 (Tandon, 1993). Interest in partnerships generally continued to grow throughout the 1990s, as both NGOs and businesses became increasingly involved in sustainable development and searched for recognised niches and ways to contribute, as well as to collaborate with each other. The first categorical call for the active engagement of various social groups was made by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) of 1992. This was a follow-up to Agenda 21¹ of the Earth Summit, which called for a "Global

1. Agenda 21 acknowledged nine stakeholder groups who could contribute substantially to developing policy and implementing what was decided. Those groups were: Women, Children and Youth, Indigenous Peoples, Non-Governmental Organizations, Local Authorities, Trade Unions, Business and Industry, Scientific and Technological Community and Farmers.

Partnership for Sustainable Development” and alluded to multi-stakeholder partnerships between “public, private and community sectors” to boost implementation (UNCED 1992).

A decade later, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg reiterated the message, and the so-called Type II² or Johannesburg partnerships were created. Emphasis was placed on being cognizant of the social, environmental and economic aspects of Sustainable Development in both the design and implementation phase. After WSSD, the multi-stakeholder approach became a recurrent theme in various forums. It was prominent at the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico. The increasing role and capacity of private capital was acknowledged, and it was proposed that they should increase their involvement with checks and balances conducted by civilian organizations. The private sector and the CSOs together played an integral role in strengthening and organizing multi-stakeholder platforms on crucial development issues. Some other forums like the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005 strengthened this approach.

More recently, in 2012, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio + 20), the central role of partnerships was emphasized in the resulting document: “The Future We Want” (Pattberg and Mert 2013). The conference led to over 700 voluntary commitments as an outcome of stakeholders coming up and making concrete promises with regard to sustainable development. Consequently, multi-stakeholder partnerships have become integral to achieving socio-economic development goals. These partnerships are unique because they include and utilize the competencies of a wide array of stakeholders on a large scale for finding solutions to complex and interdependent socio-economic problems. According to the IDR (Institute of Development Research, 1992), ‘many are the product of interacting systems of problems that are mutually reinforcing.’ Self-regenerating interactions of poverty, poor health, unemployment and poor quality of education are some examples.

To understand, and act effectively to solve such complex problems requires more resources than are available to

any single agency. Partnerships allow organizations to pool their resources, including name-recognition and legitimacy, to bring heightened and focused attention to a specific theme, goal or objective. Institutions create partnerships in order to multiply impact and accelerate change — though their effectiveness in this regard is disputed (Atkisson, 2015).

Two Decades of Partnerships: The Lessons Learnt

As multi-stakeholder partnerships have become the norm for addressing the socio-economic development challenges of our times, their effectiveness has been of key concern to practitioners, policy makers and academics.

A detailed review was undertaken by the International Civil Society Centre (ICSC) in 2014 of 330 WSSD multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) (Pattberg et al. 2012). The study found:

- Thirty-eight per cent of all partnerships sampled are simply not active or do not have measurable output. Twenty-six per cent of all partnerships show activities but these are not directly related to their publicly stated goals and ambitions.
- Second, partnerships fail to deliver on the promises made by many of their advocates.
- Partnerships fail to foster the inclusiveness and participation of the previously marginalized.
- Most partnerships appear to lack the organisational capacity, resources and transparency to implement their goals.
- Fourth, MSPs are “not just neutral instruments for implementing internationally accepted sustainability norms, such as the Millennium Development Goals and Agenda 21, but rather sites of contestation over distinct ideologies, perspectives and practices” (Mert and Chan 2012).

An underlying problem was that many MSPs have vague goals and lack appropriate monitoring and reporting mechanisms, making it difficult to connect between their output and impacts on the ground, and their monitoring is not always independent (Beisheim & Liese 2014). There is a need for a transparent, accountable, efficient,

2. Type II partnerships characterized more inter and intra national collaborations along with the involvement of civil society and private actors. These groups collectively formed voluntary transnational agreements to meet some sustainable development goals.

participatory and qualitative governance structure in order to increase the effectiveness of MSPs.

Martens (2007) observed that most multi-stakeholder partnerships tend to be concentrated in areas where technical solutions can lead to quick gains such as vaccine programmes and renewable energy systems. Partnerships such as the GAVI Alliance that enhances the dissemination of immunization or the standard-setting Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) have proven highly effective at problem-solving (Beisheim and Liese 2014). Overall, however, and based on the conclusions of recent analyses, partnerships have a limited track-record in terms of effectiveness (Schäferhoff et al. 2009).

Based on the foregoing analysis of the history of development partnerships over the past three decades, a decision was made to undertake a quick survey of the existing networks of the PRIA and UNESCO Chair to get a sense of current state-of-play in partnerships. The following dimensions were assessed in the survey:

- How frequent are partnerships?
- What are the main reasons for building partnerships?
- Which types of actors and institutions participate in such partnerships?
- What are some of the key challenges faced by partnerships in realising their goals?
- What approaches have been found effective in dealing with such challenges?
- What is the role of leadership in conflict resolution?

The following section presents the findings of the survey³ conducted last month on the above dimensions.

Survey Findings: Development Partnerships

How frequent are partnerships today?

There has been a crescendo of activity with multi-stakeholder initiatives over the past few years. As shown in Figure 1, the survey finds that 94.5% of the 180

respondents have engaged in partnerships in the past, reiterating that partnerships are an accepted way of achieving socio-economic development goals. These MSPs are seen by many as additional and flexible means that could be used to effectively implement the sustainable development goals.

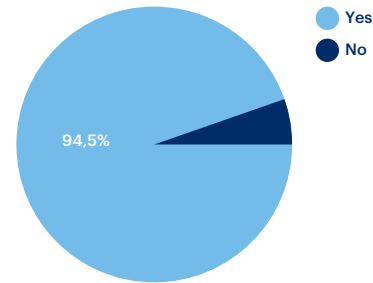


Figure 1: Percentage of organisations engaging in partnerships

What are the reasons for forming partnerships?

Partnerships are formed around a particular issue or a set of issues. Almost 75% of the respondents feel that partnerships are important to influence other powerful stakeholders such as the government or businesses. By collaborating with national and international decision makers, community-based organisations and NGOs develop insights as well as information about how these institutions operate. This provides an opportunity for NGOs and community-based organisations to influence various departments and representatives of the government and other international bodies. Nearly 70% of the respondents feel that partnerships are forged to solve particular problems. It is in a crisis context when various stakeholders feel encouraged to adopt collaborative approaches in order to find solutions.

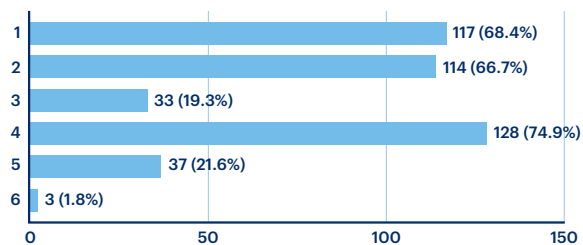


Figure 2: Purpose of partnerships

Legend:

- 1: To solve a particular problem;
- 2: To Scale up;
- 3: To fulfil a statutory requirement;
- 4: To influence other more powerful stakeholders;
- 5: Others;
- 6: All of the above

3. A quick survey was conducted in March 2018. As a part of the survey a multiple response questionnaire was circulated among the PRIA partners globally to understand the challenges they grapple with in a multi-stakeholder partnership and the factors that can make a partnership a success. The Survey had 180 respondents.

66% of the respondents feel that partnerships provide a way to scale up their operations and expand their agenda. Most community-based organisations and NGOs are localised in their reach. As much as their local presence is important, it is accepted that most socio-economic problems are not solvable at the micro level hence tapping into the resources and knowledge of other stakeholders in the partnership is helpful for scaling up their impact.

19% of the respondents feel that they enter partnerships in order to fulfil statutory requirements.

As evident from the findings above, collaborations refer here to multi-party, multi-level, multi-institutional collaborations beyond interpersonal collaborations involving a few interested individuals. Such partnerships involve stakeholders that exercise various degrees of power. Hence, for partnerships to be successful they must be structured with clearly defined goals, roles and responsibilities; only then can the stakeholders use their expertise, skills and innovation to solve the identified problems. Liese and Beisheim (2011) argue that the effectiveness of MSPs partly depends on how ambitiously and stringently the goals have been set. High levels of precision limits the room for interpretation and innovation while lower degrees of precision lead to discretion and ambiguity. Precise rules and goals also have a stabilizing and reassuring effect, causing governments and firms to invest resources when trying to achieve the goals of the partnership (Keohane and Victor 2011). Building trust and improving collaboration among stakeholders to the level of consensus regarding strategies and goals increases the likelihood of success (Visseren-Hamakers et al. 2007). Hence, goal-setting is not only about the end product but also the way in which goals are set in a collaborative and inclusive process.

Which entities commonly engage in partnerships?

Partnerships involve collaborations between various stakeholders affected by the problem that come together to redefine and explore new approaches to solving these problems. Such partnerships can be local, regional, national and international in nature. These stakeholders, such as the government and its agencies at various levels from the local to the national; international and multi-lateral agencies; funding organisations; businesses, NGOs, media and academia come together to solve a specific problem. The survey finds that more than 90% of the respondents partner with NGOs, 80% with the community (including community-based organisations)

and around 73.7% with the government (at various levels from village to national). International agencies have featured in nearly 70% of the partnerships forged by the respondents and 68.4% have partnered with academia. The private sector and media account for 68% and 42% of the partnerships forged by the respondents.

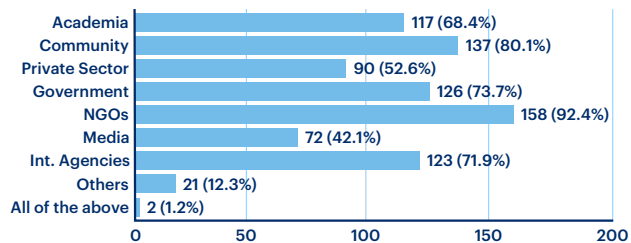


Figure 3: Stakeholders in the partnership

According to Tandon (1991), some stakeholders may not be very obvious, but many are. In a collaborative approach, significant stakeholders come together to define, frame and solve the problem. Tandon (1991) goes on to say that stakeholders may choose to join in or not to join in at a different stage or drop out at a subsequent stage.

For such partnerships to succeed, one needs the combined willingness, capability and resources of partners. As much as it is important to engage the most powerful and influential members (Beisheim 2012; Newell et al. 2012), it is equally important to involve the relatively less powerful members, such as community organisations and NGOs.

What are the key challenges that these partnerships face today?

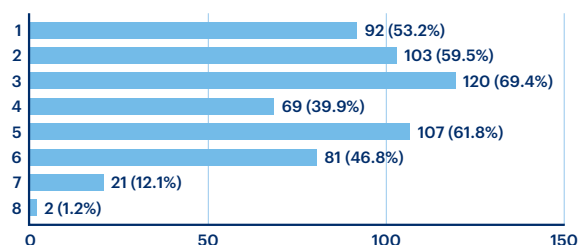


Figure 4: Challenges in partnerships

Legend:

1. Power Dynamics;
2. Availability of resources and information;
3. Varied interest and agenda of different partners;
4. Dissimilar styles;
5. Different perspectives;
6. Ambiguous roles and responsibilities;
7. Others;
8. All of the above.

Almost 70% of the respondents feel that different parties bring different interests and that it is challenging to work around these. According to Tandon (1991), when government agencies come together with international agencies, community-based organisations and NGOs, it must be understood that each of these parties are likely to represent a different set of interests. These varied interests are likely to shape the path of their collaborative effort. Effective partnerships explicitly share these differences of interests and develop ways to use them to strengthen the partnership.

Nearly 62% of the respondents feel that different parties bring different perspectives to the partnership. Perspectives here mean how the parties understand the given problem and its underlying causes. These differences may get represented or may remain hidden, but it is important to acknowledge that the partners' perspectives will vary in a collaborative effort.

Almost 60% of the respondents feel that the availability of resources and information in a partnership is a major challenge. It needs to be recognised that different stakeholders in a partnership have access to varying degrees of resources and information. For example, the kind of data that deprived urban communities have about the sanitation and housing problems in slums is different from the kind of information that national health and housing authorities, ministries of urban development, research institutions and international bodies have on the same issue. These differences in information and data reinforce the perspectives of different partners and the interests they represent (Tandon, 1991). The sharing of information that each partner has at the very beginning can create a better understanding of all partners and enable joint work.

More than half of the respondents feel that collaboration between parties requires a certain degree of power balancing. Power struggles between partners can arise early in the partnership or emerge later. These sometimes arise as a consequence of the success of the cooperation. Less visible conflicts may indicate that conflict remains covert when there are no strong organisations to balance the power asymmetries. Power balancing factors are important for 'levelling the playing field' among the partners. The intervention of third parties to ensure the mutual influence of otherwise unequal partners can play a balancing role. These third parties can provide support for less empowered groups in the partnership that might have been otherwise ignored (Tandon, 1991).

Almost 47% of respondents felt that ambiguous roles and responsibilities are a major challenge in partnerships. Nearly 40% of them felt that dissimilar styles of communication, of meetings and of interaction can be challenging in a partnership. Community based organisations, NGO leaders, government officials and representatives of international agencies all represent different styles of communication, articulation, speech, language, dress, and so on. It is important to recognise these differences from the outset, and design practical methods to overcome them.

What factors contribute to successful partnerships?

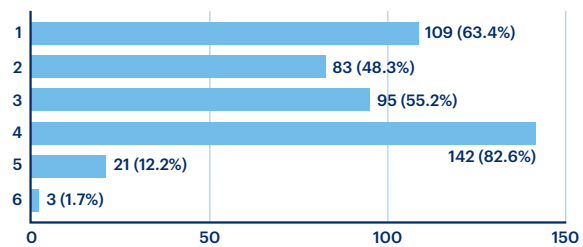


Figure 5: Features of a successful partnership

Legend:

1. Reframing the problem;
2. Strong organisation/collective of relatively lesser powered partners;
3. A clearly defined structural mechanism (Multi-party/ multi-level/ multi-institutional partnerships with clear goals);
4. Mutual empowerment of all the partners to work with each other (Some partners like POs & NGOs might not have the capacities to work at the scale of government agencies. If their capacities are not built then these agencies might not be able to match the levels of aggregation of the other parties.)
5. Others;
6. All of the above

82.6% of respondents feel that a successful partnership should empower its stakeholders, especially those who have been historically marginalised. It can be inferred that collaborative efforts need to simultaneously focus attention on strengthening such organisations and their leadership in order for such MSPs to work. This might be a situation where national governments and international donor agencies could invite community-based organisations and NGOs to forge a partnership. A common approach by civil society is to collaborate with the community-based organisations to form an alliance that can then negotiate, enter and sustain a partnership.

More than 63% of the respondents feel that cooperation is contingent on reframing the problem to make joint actions possible. Initiatives that are based on joint

decision-making generate a greater sense of ownership among stakeholders. According to the IDR (1992), the reframing process often puts forward catalytic ideas and influential individuals who then articulate and champion the possibility of new solutions.

More than 55% of the respondents feel that although informal relations are important at the outset and during conflict resolution, formal agreements are also important for organising joint work.

How crucial is leadership for making partnerships successful?

Leadership of individuals and organizations is considered a key ingredient, and during the course of the partnership's lifetime, different types of leadership are needed. The start of a partnership needs an entrepreneur or broker (Glasbergen 2010), "convener" (Gray 2007), or "orchestrator" (Abbott and Snidal 2010). The leader plays the catalytic role of bringing people to the table, mitigating divergent opinions, and driving the difficult start-up process forward. Such a role requires both formal and informal communication.

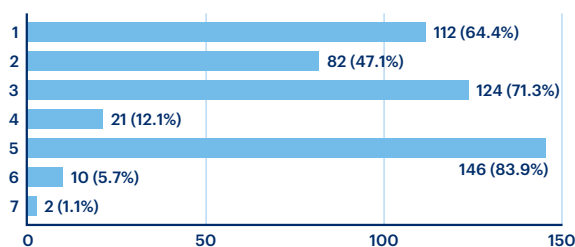


Figure 6: Conflict resolution in a partnership

Legend:

1. Informal communication between individuals;
2. Organisations playing a bridging role within the partnership;
3. Acknowledgement and appreciation of diversity of the partners;
4. Mediation of third parties outside the partnership (international donors);
5. Clear communication of roles of different partners;
6. Others;
7. All of the above

It is important to recognise right from the initial phase of the partnership that conflicts are likely to arise, especially if the collaboration is between partners who have a history of discord. Since collaborations and conflicts go hand in hand, leadership becomes critical:

- a. 83% of the respondents feel that clear communication of roles and responsibilities helps to avoid confusion and

ambiguity and thus conflict. Hence the leader needs to facilitate the communication of clear roles and responsibilities, in line with the goals of the partnership.

- b. Nearly 71% of the respondents feel that the acknowledgement of diversity in the partnership leads to avoidance and mitigation of conflicts in the collaboration. The leader should actively identify the diversity of capacities and resources among partners and facilitate the acknowledgement and appreciation of the same by each partner.
- c. 64% of the respondents feel that informal communication between representatives of stakeholders is useful for diffusing situations of conflict. Informal communication can lead to exchanges of views that enable mutual influence without individuals being forced to prematurely commit to unpopular and controversial positions, thereby avoiding conflict. A leader can encourage the representatives of stakeholders to engage in informal communication or provide tacit support to the informal relationships in the best interests of the partnership.
- d. 47% of the respondents feel that some organisations need to play a bridging role (IDR, 1992). The leader can play this catalytic role by acting as an intermediary who bridges the differences between various stakeholders. It is difficult for parties to come together on the basis of a negative historical relationship and perceptions about the other. This can be mediated by the leader playing such a catalytic role.
- e. 21% of the respondents feel that external agencies/third parties need to mediate to diffuse a conflict situation. According to the IDR (1992), third parties can provide information, resources and neutral perspectives that allow the regulation or resolution of the conflict both formally and informally. They can provide alternative ways to deal with the deadlock. A leader can invite such a third party or lend support to the partner by accepting the mediation of the third party to resolve the conflict.

While effective leadership is recognized as an important feature of successful partnerships, it is still difficult to operationalize. Effective leadership needs to be inclusive to various stakeholder groups, and especially historically marginalised communities, including women. Gender sensitive and inclusive leadership is necessary in order to play the bridging roles in partnerships.

In some circumstances, such cooperation is effective, both for solving specific problems and for building the social and institutional capacity required for future

development. In terms of the SDGs, the responsibility for achieving these goals is shared between existing institutions, including NGOs, governments, businesses, international agencies and higher education institutes.

Partnerships for SDGs: Implications for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

What do the above findings and analysis suggest about the requirements for achieving Goal 17 of the SDGs? What does it imply for HEIs to become active and effective partners?

- I. MSPs are essential for the effective achievement of the SDGs. Most existing partnerships do not include HEIs, which must 'revisit' their core functions of teaching and research through the lens of the SDGs.
 - Engaged teaching will mean building partnerships with local development actors. Teaching of all subjects needs to be more engaged with the real world, and society-at-large, and not only in the classroom. Innovative pedagogical tools can be adapted for students to learn about locally distinctive aspects of their discipline, whatever it may be. If a mutually beneficial partnership with local communities and institutions - business, government, civil society - is built, teaching and research may become supportive of new knowledge and its use. Furthermore, structured and regular interactions with local actors may generate research questions that are relevant for achievement of the SDGs locally. In essence, a well thought out and calculated partnership, in turn increases the impact it has on the process as a whole (Tandon, 2017).
 - This will imply overcoming disciplinary silos and working with a multi-disciplinary approach to both teaching and research. The generation of relevant knowledge and mobilisation in relation to the SDGs will require different academic disciplines to come together, in such a way as to combine different forms and modes of knowledge and of knowledge production. It will also require the valuation of indigenous, practical and experiential knowledge, in addition to theoretical and experimental knowledge (Tandon, 2017). Both teaching and research may include inter/cross-disciplinary practice, secondment and immersion programs. Academic rewards and research/teaching grants may need to be linked so as to stimulate such partnerships (Tandon, 2007).

II. Complementarity of expertise, resources and networks are essential features of such partnerships. The sharing of information readily and respect for other partners' expertise and resources are essential for successful partnerships.

- HEIs interact with civil society, local government and businesses from a position of being the 'sole' repositories of knowledge. Even when they have partnered with others, this has mostly been a charity-like approach, whereby it is assumed that academics know it all, and that it is the others who need to be 'taught'. This approach has been one of the main reasons why HEIs have not featured in partnership agendas for development. This monopolistic perspective of academia's knowledge is what needs to be altered. Unless and until they modify this approach in order to become respectful of 'other's' knowledge, perspectives and styles of working, the achievement of successful partnerships is going to be difficult. In order to develop such respectful partnership models, innovations and pilots, the three higher education missions of teaching, research and service should be designed to be carried out in an *engaged* manner (Tandon, 2017).
- HEIs tend to approach others in a 'teaching' mode; openness to learning from others will be essential for effective partnerships. Academics are teachers. They teach what they know. When they enter into partnerships with others, they start teaching what they know. They rarely listen to what others have to say. They are so busy teaching others that their attitude to others' experiences, knowledge and perspectives becomes impaired. Academics need to learn from others in the partnerships.

III. The bridging of leadership to re-balance power asymmetries is crucial for effective multi-stakeholder partnerships.

- HEIs have enormous intellectual, physical, financial and human resources; this creates huge power differentials with other partners. In many societies, regions and communities, HEIs are among the most resourced institutions. They have enormous physical infrastructures (classrooms, labs, residences, office space, recreational facilities, etc.) that are far superior to anything available to local communities, or even local government agencies (Tandon, 2017). This creates major power differentials. This aspect has also emerged out of the findings of this study's survey, where the respondents have identified power differentials as one of the main challenges to

building partnerships. In light of this, it is even more important for HEIs to be mindful to these dynamics when working with others. Sensitivity to such power rebalance is critical for HEIs to contribute effectively.

- Readiness to share such enormous resources with the partnership may require more flexible and responsive leadership of HEIs. HEIs are not inclined to share their resources. Leadership of HEIs also plays a critical role in defining and determining the partnerships in which HEIs engage. The UNESCO Chair's study on 'Strengthening Community University Research Partnerships' clearly highlighted the importance of leadership for defining universities' 'engagement' strategies and how they approach different kinds of 'external' partnerships (Hall et. al., 2015). Such leadership then steers the vision and mission of universities in a way that facilitates and encourages vibrant and respectful partnerships.
- IV. It is essential for the capacity to work effectively in multi-stakeholder partnerships to be strengthened among all actors. Such capacities are especially crucial in order for HEIs and their academics, administrators and students to learn.
- The capacity to build, nurture and engage with multiple partners is weak in most HEIs as they operate within the confines of the university/institutional campus. Engagement with external partners in the real world may require new human capacities and institutional mechanisms. Higher education systems and institutions need to become proactive in building stronger, beneficial partnerships with SDG actors, such as governments, civil society, the media, industries, policy think-tanks, research institutions and so on in order to have the maximum impact and to move this inclusive global sustainable development agenda forward (GUNi, 2017). This would require dedicated capacity building of all its stakeholders (faculties, students, administrators, etc.), and also the need to create institutional enabling mechanisms in order to realize this agenda (Hall et. al., 2015).
 - The capacity to co-construct knowledge with humility is not something available at a HEI. HEIs continue to belittle the knowledge prevalent in their communities as well as the experience of practitioners. Knowledge generated through time-tested methods by scholars engaged with HEIs find currency in the discourse on the issue of 'whose knowledge counts?' The actual practice of co-construction of knowledge leaves a lot to be desired. (Hall, Tandon and Tremblay, 2015). According to Hall,

Tandon and Tremblay, even when HEIs are mandated to foster engagement with the communities, it is rare for research to be mandated as a part of community engagement (2015). Researchers and students need to learn CBPR and related methodologies for mutually respectful co-construction of new knowledge that are so necessary for achieving the SDGs. HEIs need to invest in building the capacity of their students and faculties (and communities and civil society) to learn about partnerships, and the nuances of collaborative research, such as community-based participatory research (CBPR) methodologies (Tandon et. al., 2016). The UNESCO Chair's Knowledge for Change (K4C) initiative aims to build the capacities of next generation researchers for such collaborative research, which it calls 'Community Based Research'. K4C also builds on 'partnerships' between universities and civil society for addressing the SDG goals.

- V. Favourable policies and individuals can create an enabling environment to foster more in-depth engagements between HEIs and other stakeholders.

National policies can have a substantial impact on the willingness of HEIs to engage with multiple stakeholders as they create a formal expectation with which to comply. For example, the fact that the UK government has created a structure to encourage public engagement in HE, the NCCPE, clearly makes a difference. The recent decision by the University Grants Commission in India to allocate significant funds to the creation of a new generation of Centres for Community University Engagement is another example (Hall, Tandon and Tremblay, 2015).

Such efforts can be augmented by the presence of favourable top leadership in ministries and HEIs. Hall, Tandon and Tremblay (2015), "found that middle level leadership such as Deans, Chairs, Unit Heads and Centre Directors play a critical role. They are the ones who mediate between the academic staff and students and at the higher levels of administration." Their openness to change can make a difference.

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Conclusions

Building and Enhancing Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

Highlights from the Report

Since its creation in 1998, GUNi's mission has been to strengthen the role of higher education in society by contributing to the renewal of its visions and policies across the world from the perspectives of public service, relevance and social responsibility. One of GUNi's main aims is to promote the exchange of resources, innovative ideas and experiences, while allowing for collective reflection and co-production of knowledge on the key issues, innovation, social responsibility and relevance of higher education on a global scale.

This publication is an exercise of co-creation and collective reflection that has gathered the experiences of seven organisations that, in some way or another, link higher education and sustainable development. These seven organisations are very different from each other: some are local or regional, others are international, some are small, and some are large, they have more or less resources... but they all strive for a fair and sustainable future. Universities and higher education institutions are, in this sense, key actors for achieving these overarching goals.

Sustainable Development Goal 17 to "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development" is an instrumental SDG that focuses on creating an enabling environment and favourable conditions for the implementation of the other 16 SDGs. In this publication, the authors highlight some key dimensions for successful partnerships, with a special focus on higher education, which is understood to include all missions (research, teaching, third and fourth mission) and to be an actor that should by nature be easily able to contribute to all 16 SDGs.

Universities are cooperative by nature. Research knows no boundaries and academics often collaborate with colleagues from different institutions. However, there is still ample room to increase collaborations with non-higher education stakeholders (governments, enterprises, social entities, society at large, etc.). Higher education institutions have the potential to make significant

contributions on the basis of their traditional functions of teaching, scientific research and innovation and direct liaison with society.

The authors agree that the environment can have an important impact on fruitful partnerships. Partnerships in enabling environments with intentional public policies, sufficient funding mechanisms and resources from diverse stakeholders and space for adaptability and creative approaches to global and local challenges can have a greater impact.

Multi-level, multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinary and participatory partnerships are becoming the norm to manage complex social and behavioural changes. No single actor can make a real change alone. Global challenges affect and are in turn conditioned by a wide range of elements and dimensions, and no simple one-sided approach is sufficient. In addition, these partnerships need gender sensitive and inclusive leadership, clear shared goals and an inherent trust in the collaboration of its members to subordinate their personal interests to those of the partnership.

Adaptability to different contexts and challenges, flexibility when implementing solutions (especially to avoid bureaucratic obstacles and delays) and internal dynamism are some of the characteristics highlighted in the articles for successful partnerships.

Another element highlighted by the authors is accountability to society, which requires transparent actions and activities, the monitoring of the achievements and processes and appropriate communication.

These partnerships should aim to facilitate more distributed governance and open communication (the world is shrinking) and in-country capacity building. There is an intrinsic need to shift the mentality from 'lobbying' to application, finding and implementing real applicable solutions and avoiding excessive theorizing.

The ultimate achievement of the sustainability movement is to cease being viewed as a separate movement from discipline-specific interests and instead become integrated throughout and across all areas of interest – science, business and the arts. Higher education and research partnerships can facilitate this multi-disciplinary integration of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs via their wide variety of activities (teaching, research, knowledge transfer, etc.).

To summarise, this first publication by the GUNi Group of Experts in SDGs and Higher Education has tried to share and build on different approaches to SDG 17 (the "tool" objective) by means of the expertise, experience and recommendations of seven different organizations that represent different cultures, dimensions and ways to engage in multi-stakeholder partnerships. We are convinced that the conclusions reached, and the varied recommendations of the authors will be helpful for those interested in achieving a sustainable and fair future.

The image features a dark blue background with a large, abstract graphic on the right side. This graphic consists of numerous curved, overlapping lines in a lighter shade of blue, creating a sense of depth and movement. The lines are arranged in a way that suggests a large, curved object or a dynamic flow. In the lower-left quadrant, the word "About" is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

About



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Planell was born in Barcelona, graduated in Physics from the University of Barcelona (UB) in 1975 and earned his doctorate in Materials Science from Queen Mary University of London, in 1983. Since 1992 he has been a full professor in the Materials Science and Metallurgy department of the Barcelona School of Industrial Engineering at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC). He succeeded Imma Tubella i Casadevall as President of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) in April 2013. In 2013, he received the George D. Winter award from the European Society for Biomaterials. Likewise, in 2001 he was awarded the Catalan government's Distinction for the Promotion of University Research and in 2006 he received the City of Barcelona award, in the technological research category. He has been a member of the Catalan Royal Academy of Doctors since 2006 and is an elected member of Barcelona's Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences. Since January 2018, he is president of the Catalan Association of Public Universities (ACUP) and the Global University Network for innovation (GUNi).

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An award-winning urbanist, Bharat Dahiya is a Senior Advisor to the Environment, Development and Sustainability Program with the Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. He combines academic research, policy analysis and development practice aimed at examining and tackling current social, economic, environmental and governance issues in global urban context. He holds a PhD in Urban Governance, Planning and the Environment from the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom. Since early-1990s, During his work at the World Bank, UN-Habitat, the Asian Development Bank and UNDP, he initiated, led and contributed to technical assistance and operational projects on sustainable urban development in Asia-Pacific and the Middle East. He has also held academic positions in Australia, Indonesia and Thailand. Bharat conceptualized and coordinated the United Nations' inaugural report on 'The State of Asian Cities 2010/11'. At the World Bank, he co-authored a book, 'Urban Environment and Infrastructure: Toward Livable Cities' (with Anthony G. Bigio). Bharat is Series Editor for the Springer book series, *Advances in 21st Century Human Settlements*. For his contributions to sustainable urban development in Mongolia, the Municipal Government of Ulaanbaatar decorated Bharat with a Medal of Honour, and the Government of Mongolia awarded him with a Certificate of Honour. Reuters, China Daily, Inter Press Service and SciDev.Net have quoted his work.



Carme Gual

Carme Gual i Via holds a Degree in Law from the University of Barcelona and has a Postgraduate degree in Political Science. Her expertise in institutional communication and representation led her to her position as Director of the Catalan Agency for Cooperation and Development (ACCD) of the Government of Catalonia, a position she holds since September 2017. She has previously served as Director of Strategic Projects and Communication of Foment de Ciutat SA. She has also coordinated the International Relations of the Urban Habitat Department of the Barcelona City Council and has been technical adviser at the District XI of the Department of Cooperation of the same City Council, where she managed various international cooperation and solidarity projects between Barcelona and cities such as Gaza, Tel Aviv or Sarajevo. She created and directed the Irregular Settlement Plan of the city of Barcelona between 2012 and 2013. She has participated as an expert in projects of the World Bank, UN Habitat and the Inter-American Development Bank in matters related to sustainable urban development and citizen participation.



Thomas Jørgensen

Thomas Ekman Jørgensen is Senior Policy Coordinator at EUA. His responsibilities include ensuring coherent policies for universities as well as overall policy development and managing cross-cutting issues with policy relevance.

Dr Jørgensen worked with EUA as Head of the Council for Doctoral Education for a number of years. He studied History and German Studies at the University of Copenhagen and the Free University of Berlin. He received his PhD in History and Civilisation from the European University Institute in Florence in 2004 and worked as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Copenhagen and at the Université libre de Bruxelles before coming to EUA. As a historian, he has worked on students and left-wing movements around 1968. He has also published on youth movements during World War I.



Akpezi Ogbuigwe

Akpezi Ogbuigwe former Head of Environmental Education and Training, UNEP and former Coordinator, Ecosystem Management Programme, UNEP is also the founder of Anpez Centre for Environment and Development. Between 2010 and 2012, she was a Guest Professor of the prestigious Tongji University, Shanghai, China. In May 31, 2011 she gave a TEDXFGCU talk on *Africa: An Alternate Narrative*. She currently serves as a Juror in the UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD; Adviser for the African Region, UNU Regional Centres for Expertise; and Council Member Earth Charter International. She has over thirty years of professional experience as a Law teacher and is an avid researcher in *transformational change in higher education in Africa*, environmental law and policy, and sustainable development; she is a facilitator of university partnerships and is involved in civil society engagement. She is a recipient of awards and honours such as the Environmental Creation Awareness Award by the Environment Outreach Magazine (2010); The Outstanding Young Persons of Nigeria Award in recognition of contribution to Moral and Environmental Leadership by the Nigeria Junior Chamber on the occasion of their 40th Anniversary Convention (1997). Rachel Carson Distinguished Lecturer, The Centre for Environmental & Sustainability Education

of Florida Gulf Coast University, USA. She has contributed to knowledge in the field of environmental law and education for sustainable development through several published articles in international journals and book chapters such as A.Ogbugwe, 2017, 'Lessons from the UNEP Ogoniland Environmental Assessment for New Oil & Gas Frontiers in Africa', Rivers State University Oil & Gas Journal, 2017; A.Ogbugwe, 'Climate Change Education in Africa', *Southern African Journal of Environmental Education*, 2009; A.Ogbugwe, *Empowering Students for Environmental Action: The Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in African Universities Partnership Programme*, Chapter in Young people , Education, and Sustainable Development: Exploring principles, perspectives and Praxis, Netherlands, Wageningen Academic Publishers; Ed by Corcoran and Osano.



Mahesti Okitasari

Mahesti Okitasari is a Research Associate at United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) based in Tokyo, Japan. She joined the Institute in 2014. Prior to joining UNU-IAS, she has several years of research and consulting experience on disaster management, urban housing and regional planning in Indonesia. Mahesti holds a PhD in urban planning from the University of Tokyo. She is particularly interested in understanding institutional architecture and how effective urban policies are identified in response to the shortcomings in bridging the gap between social, economic, and environmental sustainability in the global South. Her current works include assessing multilevel governance arrangement and decision making to implement the 2030 Agenda, researching gaps and opportunities in sustainable housing policies and practices, and building knowledge on partnerships for Sustainable Development Goals.



Arnau Queralt

Arnau Queralt i Bassa is Director of the Advisory Council for Sustainable Development of Catalonia (CADS), a section of the Presidential Department of the Generalitat (Government) of Catalonia and Chairman of The European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC). He has a degree in Environmental Sciences from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), a Master's degree in Public Administration in the Interuniversity Programme for Government and Public Administration (ESADE, UAB and UPF) and a Diploma in European Affairs from the Diplomatic School of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and the Catalan Pro-Europe Board, of which he was director. He has been a member of the Board of Governors and Academic Council of the Institut Universitari d'Estudis Europeus (University Institute for European Studies) and was President of the Col·legi d'Ambientòlegs de Catalunya (College of Environmentalists of Catalonia).



Charles W. Richardson

Charles W. Richardson, Jr. currently serves as Dean of the School of Business and Associate Professor of Marketing, at Claflin University. He previously served as Chair of the University Sustainability Council at Clark Atlanta University. He holds a doctorate in Marketing and International Business from Pace University's Lubin School of Business. His previous education includes a M.B.A. in Marketing (New York University, Stern School of Business), a M. S. in Operations Research and Statistics (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute), a B. S. in Mathematics (Pratt Institute), and Masters Certificates in Finance (Wharton School of Business) and Project Management (Stevens Institute of Technology). Dr. Richardson's research interests include Consumer Social identity, Cross Cultural Consumer Purchasing Behavior, Green Business Models, Ecopreneurship, Corporate Social Responsibility, Cause Related Marketing and Marketing's Role in Sustainability. Prior to coming to academia, Dr. Richardson spent significant time working in the corporate sector, primarily with AT&T. His experience includes ten years of effort in the international business arena, providing extensive knowledge and experience in international strategy, global alliances and ventures, mergers and acquisitions; and transition planning and change management. Dr. Richardson is also active in executive education, having taught and facilitated classes and workshops in Marketing, Organizational Theory and Design, Emerging Markets, Business Processes and Social Entrepreneurship, just to name a few. He holds certifications in Integrated Planning in Higher Education, Quality Assurance and Practice of MBTI Step I and Step II Instruments. He spent the 2013/2014 academic year as an ACE (American Council on Education) Fellow, assigned to New Jersey City University and its President, Dr. Sue Henderson. His community involvement includes serving on the board of directors (Board Chair in 2017) of the Association of Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), and on the advisory board of Planet Forward.



Orlando Sáenz

Sociologist with a Master's Degree in Urban Development from El Colegio de México. Diploma of Advanced Studies in Theory and History of Education, of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). He has held positions of professor and researcher since 1977 in universities in Colombia and Latin America. He has published in books and journals on social medicine, urban social movements, science and technology, environmental management and higher environmental education. For eight years, he was Head of the National Program of Environmental Sciences and Habitat, in the Administrative Department of Science, Technology in Innovation (COLCIENCIAS). Since 2005 he works at the University of Applied and Environmental Sciences (U.D.C.A.), where he has served as Vice Chancellor for Research and Postgraduate Studies, Dean of the Faculty of Environmental Sciences and leader of the University and Environment Research Group. Since 2007, he is the Coordinator of the Alliance of Ibero-American Networks of Universities for Sustainability and the Environment (ARIUSA). 25 Ibero-American Environmental University Networks are currently participating in this Alliance, which brings together 431 universities in the region.



Kazuhiko Takemoto

Prof. Takemoto is Director of the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS). He is concurrently a Programme Professor of the University of Tokyo, Integrated Research System for Sustainability Science (IR3S), and Executive Secretary of Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Japan. Prior to joining UNU, he developed policies on international environmental cooperation and global environment, in particular, climate change and bio-diversity as Vice-Minister for Global Environment Affairs (2008-2010) and as a Director-General of Environmental Management Bureau (2005-08). He served for CBD/COP10 as its Alternate President (2010), OECD/EPOC as Vice Chair (2004-07) and UNFCCC/COP3 as Special Assistant to its President (1997). He is a Council Member of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). He holds a PhD in environmental engineering from The University of Tokyo and a Master of International Public Policy degree from the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University.



Rajesh Tandon

Rajesh Tandon is an internationally acclaimed leader and practitioner of participatory research and development. He founded the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), a voluntary organisation providing support to grassroots initiatives in South Asia and has continued to be its Chief Functionary since 1982. He was appointed UNESCO Co-Chair on Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education for two terms (2012-2016 and 2016-2020). After completing electronics engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur, Dr. Tandon obtained a gold medal in management from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Calcutta. He later pursued his PhD in organisational science at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, a marked departure from physical science subjects. A pioneer of participatory research, he has given new meaning to academic research by redefining the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Dr. Tandon has authored more than 100 articles, a dozen books and numerous training manuals. For his distinguished work on gender issues, the Government of India honoured him with the prestigious Award in Social Justice in March 2007. The University of Victoria, Canada, named Dr Tandon a Doctor of Law (Honoris Causa) in June 2008. He is the first Indian to be inducted to the International Adult and Continuing Education (IACE) Hall of Fame (class of 2011). The Indian Adult Education Association (IAEA) awarded Dr Tandon the Nehru Literacy Award in 2015.

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