

**A thesis submitted to the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy of
Central European University in part fulfilment of the
Degree of Master of Science**

Hitting Seventeen Goals with One Stone
A Systemic Approach to SDG Advocacy

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July, 2018

Budapest

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dorottya Bauer', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dorottya BAUER

ABSTRACT OF THESIS submitted by:

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Abstract

The implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is facing challenges in the European Union (EU). Policies and legislation lack the inclusion of these Global Goals. The policy-making of the EU is highly complex system in which advocacy groups are important catalysers of change and hence play a key role in the implementation of the SDGs. Therefore, the research looked at how European advocacy groups engage in the promotion of the SDGs through policy network-, and framing analysis. The research found that advocacy groups have been engaging in different cross-sectoral collaborations to join the debate on the SDGs. The European Commission's Multi Stakeholder Platform (MSP) on the Implementation of the SDGs and the SDG Watch Europe were the two key cross-sectoral collaborations that the researched focused on. The MSP is a policy network within which advocacy groups engage in framing activities. The research identified two frames that revealed how different organisations approach the Global Goals. Two key trends of SDG framing are identified in this thesis; one that promotes systemic change through understanding the agenda as a guiding principle, and another one that neglects the systemic nature of the goals and engages them only as a secondary issue. The battle of these frames is brought to the fore by evaluating one of the campaigns of the SDG Watch Europe. Even though systemic framing is making its way to the EU decision-makers there is a long way ahead before sustainability becomes a guiding principle.

Keywords: advocacy, sustainable development goals, systems thinking, framing, policy networks, European Union

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1. Introduction and Problem Statement

The Agenda 2030 and Systems Thinking

In 2015 the Sustainable Development Goals were adopted at the United Nations. This new agenda takes into account the failures and successes of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and aims much higher with an overarching framework. 193 countries have ratified the agreement, which means that each and every nation feel the necessity of change and have pledged to deliver on it. The Agenda 2030 framework contains 17 goals, from Zero Hunger (SDG 2) to Liveable Cities (SDG 11), and under these goals it is operationalized by 169 targets. A diversity of actors and interests have become active around the Agenda 2030. However, for the moment a systemic understanding seems to miss from the interpretation of the goals.

The SDG framework recognises the importance of interconnectedness. Since the Agenda, many scholars and institutions have been emphasising the importance of these goals as an overarching framework (Le Blanc 2015). Even though, this framework has been highly disputed by scholars like Sam Adelman (2017), this thesis argues that it is currently the most elaborate international sustainable development framework. Scholars such as Jha (2016) and Reynolds (2018) bring the attention to interpreting the Agenda as a call for systemic change. However, the implementation of systemic thinking will not to happen one day to the next.

One of the 193 countries that have ratified the Agenda 2030 is the European Union (EU). The EU is often regarded as a pioneer in the field of sustainability. Moreover, it is an important stakeholder, due to the fact that its policies serve as guidelines to its 27 member states. Most of its member states are far from a path to a sustainable future, and therefore, the efforts of the EU are crucial to achieving systemic change. The goals of the European Union are ambitious, as they promise to implement the agenda on both at an internal and an external level. Furthermore, the EU and its member states are “committed to a life of dignity for all

that reconciles economic prosperity and efficiency, peaceful societies, social inclusion and environmental responsibility. In doing so, efforts will be targeted towards eradicating poverty, reducing vulnerabilities and addressing inequalities to ensure that no-one is left behind” (European Council 2017, 4).

Whether the EU complies with the Global Goals remains vague. A recent report by the Eurostat (2018) suggests that the EU has been moving forward with the implementation of the Agenda 2030. However, judging by the absence of discourse on the Agenda, we can see that the EU is far away from a complete SDG implementation. For instance, the current Commission led by Jean-Claude Juncker is prioritizing security and migration, while paying little attention to the Global Goals (European Commission 2017b). Due to the lack of an appropriate monitoring system, it is relatively difficult to understand to what extent the goals have been implemented.

Problem statement - SDG Advocacy groups in the EU

Various researches have argued that advocacy groups are key catalysers of change in the EU (Greenwood 2011, Richardson 2000). In fact, the research found that they play a key role in the implementation of the SDGs.

The implementation of the goals on a European level is dependent on many different actors, such as the institutions of the European Union e.g. Commission, Parliament, and the Council. There are various studies focused on the power relations, and the processes of EU institutions, which indeed play a crucial role (Thomson and Hosli 2006, Barr and Passarelli 2009). However, as Börzel suggests “European governance happens through negotiations in policy networks linking public and private sectors of different levels and dimensions of government (Börzel 1997, 9)”. Princen and Kerremans (2008), and Coen (2002, 2007) argue that interest groups serve as knowledge source for policy-makers. Furthermore, Heclo (1987) states that political parties and institutions are no longer capable of producing the necessary

knowledge and providing expertise, therefore as Princen and Kerremans (2008) argue there is a mutual interdependence between policy-makers and interest groups.

To encourage knowledge sharing on the implementation of the SDGs, the European Commission established the Multi-stakeholder Platform on the Implementation of the SDGs (MSP). The European Commission gets assistance from advocates of different sectors to move forward with the Agenda 2030. As the name suggests, the MSP is a key platform for engaging the private and the public sector in the implementation of the SDGs. This MSP and the advocates of the SDGs are the key focus of the thesis.

In the field of Sustainable Development, non-governmental organisations (NGO) are key actors. Their roles as European influencers are even more often neglected than those of corporate lobbyists, even though, these groups are very active both on national and European levels. Now that Agenda 2030 is on the table, next to their usual battles, these organisations are strongly focused on the implementation of the SDGs. NGOs in Brussels have set up a coalition; the SDG Watch Europe, to advocate for its implementation as one voice. So far, this organisation is identified as the most active organisation in the field of sustainability. This umbrella organisation serves as the other key point of the research.

The research problem

The research aims to understand *how advocacy groups of the European Union engage in the promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals?*

Therefore the research focuses on understanding the role and construction of the Multi-stakeholder Platform on the Implementation of the SDGs (MSP), as well as identifying the key frames of the advocacy groups and looking what makes a frame efficient in the case of SDG advocacy. Due to the deficiency of available data on the topic, I conducted ten interviews with SDG Watch Europe, and/or MSP members.

Thesis structure

The thesis starts with outlining the methodology of the research. After that it introduces the existing literature on the different concepts involved in the research. Subsequently, the two key organisations of the research, the MSP and the SDGWE, are introduced. The next chapter evaluates the findings of the interviews of the research, as well as the notes from the participatory observations. To analyse the data; the tools of policy network analysis, as well as framing are utilized.

Key Findings

The key finding of the research is that advocacy groups engage in cross-sectoral collaborations and apply different frames to promote the goals. Two framing trends were identified through the analysis of the interviews and the SDG campaigns of the advocacy groups.

The policy network analysis helped the research to understand the role of the MSP as a network. Furthermore, it outlined some key issues of the operation structure of the MSP. The framing analysis allowed the research to identify some key competing frames. One that understands the SDGs as an overarching, systemic framework that could induce system change, and another one that sees the Goals as a secondary issue and ignores the interconnected nature of the SDGs. Via analysing the People's Budget Campaign the research found that systemic frameworks are making their ways to the decision-makers, however due to the complexity of the policy-making arena these frames are not dominant today.

This research is highly beneficial for the understanding of the policy networks behind SDGs, as well as conceptualising the competing SDG advocacy frames. Moreover, it also sheds the light on the role and importance of advocacy groups in the decision-making processes of the EU, as well underlines the importance of systems thinking in policy-making.

The MSP, as well as the SDGWE are powerful actors that can be the catalysers of systemic change in the European Union.

2. Methodology

Overall research design

This thesis is a qualitative assessment of different NGOs and European organisations' advocacy work for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in the European Union. Even though the means of implementation of the Agenda2030 is a relatively popular research topic, the underlying advocacy work in the European Union has not yet been researched thoroughly. Given that the research focuses on how EU advocacy groups engage in the promotion of the SDGs.

For a thorough understanding different methods were used in the research. First of all, the research interviewed ten different organisations in Brussels that are engaged in SDG advocacy work of either the SDG Watch Europe or the Multi-stakeholder Platform, these two organisations are the focus of the research. I also attended the plenary session of the SDG Watch Europe, as well a conference organised by Green Budget Europe and SDGWE, and a subgroup meeting of the Multi-stakeholder Platform. The interviews and the events were then coded to gain deeper insight into the gathered data. In addition, desktop research was also conducted to find relevant documents and understand the projects of the two organisations.

The gathered data was then analysed in different ways. First of all, the research uses a Policy Network Analysis (PNA) to understand the relevance of the Multi-stakeholder Platform, and how the different member organisations are collaborating on this platform. The PNA also helped to conceptualise the Multi-stakeholder Platform. The network analysis outlined the context in which advocates engage in the promotion of the SDGs. Therefore, the research turned to the activities of the interviewed organisations. A key component of

advocacy work is framing, in other words how organisations present the SDGs, as well as how they themselves understand it. The interviews of the research revealed significant data on how framing activities become successful, therefore the analysis of efficient framing revealed the necessity of having a systemic understanding of the Agenda 2030, or in other words the research found that interviewers saw the lack of systemic understanding or as interviewees articulated it the presence of ‘siloes’ as a serious obstacle. Therefore, they engage in framing the Agenda 2030 as a systemic framework.

A key limitation was the rudimentary nature of especially the MSP, and SDGWE as a result many of the discussed projects of the interviews were not available, or the documents were not sufficient for the analysis. Furthermore, some interviewees were less open to answer the questions in depth. In addition, the lack of time only allowed me to attend one of the subgroup meetings of the Multi-stakeholder Platform.

Methods and limitations of data collection

The thesis used a variety of data collection, to ensure the reliability of the used data. These were interviews with members of the SDGWE or MSP, desktop research, participation observation, as well as coding of the interviews and the observations.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the purpose of understanding the role of advocacy in the implementation of the SDGs and the research purpose formulated as I gained a deeper understanding of the different processes in the EU. It has become clear that advocacy on the SDGs evolves around the agenda items of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform. In order to understand the on-going debates and trends of the European Union’s SDG implementation the researcher contacted involved advocates in Brussels. The reason why the field research took place in Brussels is that out of the 11327 organisations registered in the EU

Transparency Registry, 26% are NGOs and 18% are located in the capital of Belgium. Therefore, Brussels is a hub of interest groups (European Parliament 2018).

The researcher conducted ten interviews in Brussels and Budapest and virtually via Skype. The interviewees were picked based on their relations to the SDG Watch Europe and the European Commission's Multi Stakeholder Platform for the Implementation of the SDGs, as well as based on some of the interviewees' suggestions. The researcher contacted various organisations, and interviews were conducted with those ten who responded positively to the requests. The aim was to get a wide range of expertise involved in the research in order to get a holistic view of the European advocacy work on SDGs. Therefore, the following organisations were involved: The World Wildlife Fund, the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), Birdlife Watch Europe, Climate Action Network (CAN), SDG Watch Europe (SDGWE), World Health Advocates, Business Europe, Food and Drinks Europe (FDE), CEE Web, Green Budget Europe and the World Bank.

The 30-40 minutes long interviews were mainly conducted in person in the offices of the organisations in Brussels, during a two-week field research trip. The exceptions were Klara Hajdu from CEE Web, who was interviewed in Budapest, and Mahmoud Mohieldin from the World Bank, with whom the interview was done via telephone.

In most cases, there were five open-ended questions the interviewees were asked (Appendix I). Questions had to be altered depending on the organisation because some of them were not directly involved with the Multi Stakeholder Platform. However, as the SDG Watch Europe represents these organisations at the MSP, NGOs that were indirectly involved with the MSP were also asked about the activities with the SDGWE and their feelings about the MSP. Hence, the answers reflected the key frames that the SDGWE is trying to push through, as well as helped the research understand how the advocates think about the SDGs and the MSP.

Each and every participant was asked to fill out a consent form prepared by the researcher based on the requirements of the Central European University in order to ensure their consent to using their answers and audio recording for the purposes of the thesis. Apart from the one with Lorenzo Ferruci from FDE, all of the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Desktop research

Most of the interviewees introduced a variety of relevant documents utilised for the research. Due to the limited time available to attend the meetings of the Multi Stakeholder Platform, the research had to rely on the notes available from the platform's meetings. Furthermore, European Union documents related to SDGs, and advocacy of lobby activities were used to map processes within the European Union.

Participation observation

As part of her field research, the researcher was a volunteer at the European Environmental Bureau for two weeks in Brussels. This allowed a deep insight to one of the most prominent advocacy umbrella groups of the SDGWE, as well as attending meetings where the EEB was invited.

As a result, the researcher was part of the plenary of the SDG Watch Europe, where major concerns, practices and plan for the organisation were outlined. The members also shared their ideas about the Multi Stakeholder Platform and other relevant topics. Moreover, the researcher attended the People's Budget Conference, organised by the GBE and SDGWE. Last but not least, as a volunteer of the EEB, the researcher attended the Multi Stakeholder Platform's subgroup meeting, on the 21 May 2018, on "Equality, Justice, Inclusion and Decent work". Notes taken at these occasions were important parts of the research.

Coding

The Coding uses a mixed methodology, which is based on the methodologies of Emerson et al. (2011) and Strauss and Corbin (2008). I used coding (Emerson et al. 2011) to find commonalities and leading topics in the interviews. Although I used open questions during my interviewee the topic was given and, hence to a certain extent lead the answers.

This process consists of three steps: first finding the focus, second identifying categories and third coding the properties and dimensions of the data. Furthermore, this approach enabled the outlining of the main categories. Categories are the main topics and issues during the interview. To enhance the analysis, categories are linked with subcategories. Subsequently, the categories are linked to an existing larger theoretical framework (Corbin and Strauss 2008). This approach helped the researcher to find an appropriate framework while conducting the data analysis.

To further enhance the research, the analysis also uses the tools of axial coding. Based on Corbin's and Strauss's (2008) methodology, axial coding joins categories with dimensions. This type of coding enables the researcher to take a closer look at processes, structures and consequences, as a result, connecting the previously outlined categories with further important details that the interviewees have revealed.

Last but not least, the analysis needed to pick focal points for the research; therefore the last coding step is the application of selective coding. Selective coding helps find the appropriate theory, enabling the researcher to refine categories and appropriately integrate them. In this case, researchers using selective coding helped to realise the necessity of clarification of the role of the multi-stakeholder platform, the key components that enhance advocacy effectiveness, as well as the identification of key competing frames. This process also helps to connect the ten interviews of the thesis.

The axial coding helped me to find the reemerging topics of the interviews these were helping me to understand the necessity of looking at the issues of the Multi Stakeholder

Platform via policy analysis, as well as what, in such a multi-sectoral context, are the competing frames. After the coding process, the researcher analyses the topic and integrates the data of the interviews into the analysis. Selective coding helped the researcher to identify key topics and theories. The two methods that helped analyse the harvested data was policy network analysis and framing.

Limitations

Due to the short period of the research, I could only organise meetings with ten organisations. Unfortunately, some key stakeholders were busy during my stay in Brussels. Moreover, some of the interviewees were in a hurry and hence focused on sharing the information as fast as possible. While also, some organisations seemed to be less familiar with the work of the MSP and the SDGWE, hence the information shared was not always useful for the researcher. In some cases, I also observed some key biases that came up multiple times in different interviews; these were mainly prejudices between the public-private sectors.

Methods and limitation of data analysis

Policy network analysis and framing provided the key components of the analytical framework of the thesis. The former helps to understand the multi-sectoral context in which the framing of advocacy groups takes place, which is a key analytical point for understanding framing. Framing helped the researcher understand how advocates engage in the promotion of the Agenda 2030.

Policy network analysis

Policy network analysis was partially adopted to understand the importance and functions of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform, the policy network of the SDGs. Only partially because the thesis uses the analytical method only to conceptualise the MSP and does not

analyse in depth, for instance, the relationship between decision-makers and advocacy groups. The thesis also links to logic of venue shopping to the analysis to understand why the MSP is important.

Börzel and Heard Lauréote (2009) argue that governance can no longer be understood as hierarchical, top-down decision-making process. Instead, it is an interaction of actors in a *network*. Advocacy groups are key elements of these networks. Theories related to policy network may help us understand the importance of the MSP and the context in which advocates are working.

Kenis and Schneider and Heclo (1987) argue that Policy networks are best understood as webs of relatively stable and on-going relationship, which mobilise and pool dispersed resources so that collective action can be orchestrated towards the solution of a common policy. According to Börzel (1997) there are two schools of policy networks interest intermediation school and governance school. The former's basic assumption is that the existence of policy networks reflects some sort of power, while the latter sees policy networks as a specific form of governance. "It is a mechanism to mobilise political resources in situation where the resources are widely dispersed between the public and private actors" (Börzel 1997, 4). The thesis argues that the MSP serves this purpose; the Agenda 2030 is a network of issues that requires the participation of both the private and the public sector. Therefore, in the analysis the thesis places the MSP in the web of the EU and explains how it is interred connected with other governing bodies.

Keins and Schneinder state "in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment, where hierarchical co-ordination is rendered difficult if not impossible and the potential for deregulation is limited due to the problems of market failure, governance becomes more and more feasible within policy networks, providing a framework for the efficient horizontal co-

ordination of the interests and actions of public and private corporate actors mutually dependent on their resource” (1991, 27).

Based on the interviews and the research we selected several criteria to analyse the Multi-stakeholder Platform, the policy network behind the SDGs. These are organisational structure, function, heterogeneity and membership.

To compliment the policy network analysis, the thesis uses the logic of venue shopping to explain why policy-networks like the multi-stakeholder platform appear. This explanation helped the research to understand why the Multi-stakeholder Platform is the key venue to promote the SDGs. Pralle (2003) demonstrates that these platforms are able to respond flexibly to emerging issues such as Sustainable Development, furthermore via such venues advocates may turn the tables, furthermore the appearance of new venues may indicate policy-learning. Especially the latter backs up to the conclusion of the thesis that an increasing number of advocacy groups are framing the SDG as an overarching systemic framework.

Framing

After the research have understood the network in which the most significant advocacy work for the SDGs take place the analysis focuses on framing, which was applied to understand how advocates promote the SDGs and what are the key tools to efficient framing, as well how the advocates themselves understand it. Via looking at the framing internal and external criteria of framing I could identify in the case of the advocates’ understanding of the Agenda 2030 plays an important role.

The thesis relies on two separate definitions of framing and analyses the data according to these two definitions. First, a frame is “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation or treatment

recommendation for the item described” (Entman 1993, 52). Therefore, framing is how an organisation presents a topic to the decision-makers or to other organisations. Second, the interviews suggested that, it is also important to analyse and understand, on how the advocates themselves understand the SDGs. Therefore, the thesis also applies a more Goffman’s more sociological definition of framing. He conceptualizes framing as a “schemata of interpretation”. Schema is the lens through which people “locate, perceive, identify and label” phenomena (Goffman, 1974, 21). This definition highlights more the importance of understanding how the advocates see the different issues they engage in.

According Johnstong and Noakes (2005) a frame is successful if it resonates with constituency. The thesis argues that effective advocacy should produce resonant frames. Snow and Benford (1988) explain various criteria that are necessary to the understanding of advocacy framing in the SDG context. However, the interviews revealed some additional criteria that contributes to their success. Therefore, I used Snow’s and Benford’s criteria and complimented them with the data of the interviews. External criteria are centrality and range and interconnectedness of the frame, as well as timeliness, while internal criteria are empirical credibility, transparency experimental commensurability, advocacy coalition, and the advocates itself. The latter has been highlighted by the interviews as well as the framing definition of Goffman (1974).

Looking at the frames and framing of the different advocacy groups I could identify that the majority of the organisations are trying to approach the SDGs a systemic framework, hence next to cross sectoral collaborations organisations engage in the promotion of the SDGs via promoting them as an overarching framework.

Limitations

Mayntz and Marin believe that these policy networks are difficult to empirically study due their lack of stability. However, it is important to understand how they function and

in the case of this research they provide background information on the context in which cross-sectoral advocacy and framing of the SDGs takes place.

However, framing also has its limitations. Borah (2011) systematically examined the published literature on frames and came to the conclusion that the multidisciplinary nature of the concept makes it a ‘fractured paradigm’. She found that framing issues are not always clear-cut and hence for example it’s difficult to conceptualise that frames can influence and how framing works in a competitive context. The latter especially is important for examining in future research whether the siloed frames of advocacy groups of the SDG policy network can over compete the systemic frames also represented in this network.

3. Literature review and theoretical framework

Introduction and Summary

After the introduction to the methodology, the thesis turns to the existing literature on the different topic of the thesis. While the role of advocacy groups is a popular topic, no literature has focused on the role of advocacy groups in the promotion of SDGs.

The literature review first discusses why systems thinking is a relevant approach to the Agenda 2030 and hence to the advocacy activities of the EU. After that existing literature on advocacy activities is evaluated. After that the thesis evaluates the literature advocacy and policy networks. The policy network of the MSP is the context in which the previously explained framing of advocacy groups takes place. Therefore, the chapter looks at some framing related concepts to compliment the ideas outlined in the methodology section. Given the importance of coalitions, such as the SDGWE, for SDG advocacy, the importance of coalition in advocacy is also outlined. So far the role of advocates in SDG promotion has been neglected, hence the research fills this niche.

Systems thinking and the SDGs

Jha (2016) asserts that the SDGs provide an opportunity to implement systems thinking in all governmental policies. Reynolds et al. (2018, 667) reassures that the Agenda 2030 invites the creation of “ an integrated, holistic, multi-stakeholder approach “. He believes that the creation of the Global Goal is the clear indication of the necessity of realising systems thinking in all sectors. Only via systemic application of the goals can integration be achieved. “The key-word for effective implementation is integration-developing the capacity for reaching beyond silo-thinking and fragmented practice” that previously obstacle the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (Reynolds et. al 2018, 678). Niestroy and Meuleman (2016) describe Silos of policy-making as the main obstacle to the implementation of the SDGs. The scholars illustrated three types of silos, mental, political, and institutional. The thesis focuses on the mental silos and underlines how these hinder the framing of the SDGs as a systemic, overarching framing. However, the thesis notes that the political and institutional silos also hinder the systemic implementation of the Global Goals.

Systemic framing is important because as Le Blanc (2015) outlines the SDGs are a network of issues that have to be interpreted in a wider context. “Systems thinking is a broad term used to represent a set of methods and tools that focus on systems- rather than parts – as a context for defining and solving complex problems or fostering more effective learning and design”(Sweeney and Meadow Niestroy and Meuleman s 2010). In other words, Donella and Denis Meadows also reaffirm that issues should be seen in their wide contexts. The book of Donella Meadows’ offered insight into the importance of linking different causes and affects together to be able to understand and change a system (Meadows 2008). She discussed several ways to intervene in a system to make it more effective, for instance changing the paradigm; “the mind-set out of which the system arises” can foster the effectiveness the

system. Therefore via framing the SDGs as a guiding principle advocacy groups aim to intervene in the paradigm of the EU and could eventually and eventually induce a system change. Denis Meadows and Sweeney (2010) add that the single issue focused nature of our design and learning is undermining sustainable solutions, therefore they advocate for looking at problems from a broader, systems point of view. Applying the SDGs breaks up with single-issue focus and allows to look at problems from a broader perspective.

Le Blanc (2015) visualises the connections between the 169 targets of the SDGs. He argues that the interconnectedness of these targets make the horizontal application of the SDGs crucial to any stakeholders involved. Nilson et al. (2016) also study the interconnectedness and interdependence of the SDGs and argued for the application of the global goals as framework. Collette et al. (2017) adds that this interconnected nature of the Global Goals requires integrative implementation, meaning that legislations need to align with each other. To resolve this issue the SDGWE is pushing for stronger policy-coherence.

Building on the importance of systemic thinking, not only our policies need a shift from single goals but also our practices of institutions need to switch to structures that allow systemic thinking. Swanson (2009) argues governmental institutions suffer from various issues (e.g.: lack of policy coherence) due to the absence of systemic thinking, therefore he argues for the implementation of adaptive learning and capacity in different sectors. Niestroy and Meuleman (2016) as previously outlined also acknowledge the obstacle of institutional silos. Unfortunately, the European Union too, suffers from the absence of systemic thinking, its highly bureaucratic nature often hinders the flexible responses that can address more complex issues like the implementation of the SDGs. Therefore, Swanson also advocates for the absolute necessity of systemic change (Swanson 2009).

Even though the Sustainable Development Goals offer an opportunity for transition, there are various critical approaches. Adelman (2015) claims that the inclusion of sustainable

goals hinders the legitimacy of the Global Goals, and reproduces the “growth fetishisms” of the neo liberal system. Horton (2014) also explains that the Global Goals paint a utopia, and like Adelman, blames the status quo for their lack of success. Le Blanc (2015) also notes that there are systemic errors in the Agenda 2030. The thesis notes the contradictions of goal no. 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth, and no. 12, Responsible Consumption and Production, due to the scientific proof of the impossibility of decoupling economic growth from environmental impact (Ward et al. 2016). However, the thesis suggests that as of today there is no alternative agenda that provides such a systemic overarching framework for the issues of the world. Therefore, today the Agenda 2030 is without doubt the most elaborate systemic framework that utilises the initial efforts of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

The role of advocacy in the EU

Given the focus of the research, the literature on advocacy activities is discussed. The literature uses various concepts interchangeably; therefore before the analysis of the literature the used definitions are introduced.

For instance lobbying and advocating are used in different contexts differently. Some authors try to make a differentiation between the two. The definition of the EU for instance makes no clarification whether it differentiates the two, Green (2016) also try to define advocacy, however his definition in its essence doesn't differ from the definition of lobbying. To draw boundaries between different advocacy/lobby activities Biliouri (1999) defines lobbying according to it's nature social or commercial, however it is arguable whether it is possible to grow a thin line between the two for instance: Business Europe would fall into the former category based on its activities in the MSP. However, the thesis will use the word advocacy, simply because the interviewees also used this term.

Greenwood (2011) brings the attention to an important detail, which is the EU's definition of civil society. "The EU's definition denotes every type of interest outside of government and military" (2003, 2). The thesis finds this terminology confusing and hence tries to avoid it. The only exception is quotes from the SDG Watch Europe, because they apply the genre in their own documents.

Greenwood (2011), Jordan and Tujil (1998) argue that recently advocacy groups have been taking an important role in governance structures. Today there are more advocacy groups in the EU than political parties (Beyers et al. 2008). Greenwood (2011) finds that advocacy groups aim to influence the EC. However, groups also engage with the Director Generals, and members of the European Parliament. Furthermore, next to enhancing legitimacy, advocates in general serve as a source of knowledge to decision makers (Streck 2002). In addition advocacy groups are also serve as a source of knowledge to decision makers. In complex and specific topics, such as the SDGs, the decision-makers are eager to learn from advocacy groups that obtain the necessary expertise (Princen and Kerremans 2008). Via knowledge sharing advocacy groups can naturally also push and pull the decision-makers towards their own interests.

The literature suggests that the EU system of interest representation is strongly biased towards economic interests (Greenwood 2011), however the research also revealed that there are various NGOs that engage in advocacy activities that aim to balance the dominance of economic interest groups. From a quantitative approach the EU spends 10% of its budget on financing NGOs that engage in advocacy work. EEB, one of the subjects of the research interviews, receives 50% of its budget directly from the EU (Rabkin 2000). McGann and Johnstone (2006) point out that NGOs started to be active political influencers because of the inability of democratic institutions to cover environmental and social issues. The SDGWE is a good example for NGOs being proactive on issues under addressed by the EU, such as the

implementation of the SDGs. As Østergraad and Nielse (2005) add that NGOs join network also to enhance their effectiveness, however they identify that a common issue is the lack of capacity of the institutions, which was a common issue of the interviewed organisations.

Policy-networks in advocacy

Mahoney (2008) suggests that in order to understand the success of the different advocacy groups we need to look into its broader context in the case of SDG advocacy we conceptualise the Multi-Stakeholder Platform as a policy network. The MSP is the context in which, the framing of the different advocacy groups takes place. The Brown explains “that networks can link together many autonomous individuals and organisation that share a common perspective without being subject to authority of any common hierarchy. (814, 1991)”

Richardson (2002) suggests that from the 50s on wards there was a change in the policy-making processes. Policy networks of different issues became more involved in the decision-making. In fact, these networks decided which issues are included or excluded in the policy-making (Heclo 1987). Richardson (2002) further suggests that the interaction of these network members are modified based on the interaction of the network members. Therefore, the competing frames within as the MSP can influence each other. Brown confirms that networks allow exchange of resources and information etc.” (1991,814).

Another benefit of networks according to Brown (1991) is that it enables multi-sectoral cooperation, just like the MSP does. However, it’s important to be able to cope with diversity of opinion. The thesis therefore tries to understand how the network enables this multi sectoral cooperation. Regardless of their difficulties, policy networks may enable finding solution to complex issues like sustainable development.

The establishment of the MSP also created a cross-sectoral platform, where the public and private actors need to collaborate to provide advice to the EC. Börzel and Lauréote

(2009) argue that cross-sectoral coalitions may also enhance the interdependence between public and private actors. Sachs (2012), Le Blanc (2015) as well as toolkits of the United Nations Development Group (2016) outline the importance of involving both the private and public sector in the implementation of the SDGs. By creating interdependence through engaging them in the network of the SDGs, these two sectors are more obliged to collaborate with each other and produce proposals, documents etc. that are aligned with their opinions. In fact, the opportunity of working with NGOs or private sector members was welcomed by many of the interviews of the research.

The theory of venue shopping helps the research understand why groups joined the network of the MSP. Princen and Kerremans (2008) argue that decision-makers and advocates are always on the search for the best venue. Therefore, they are looking for issues that fit the political context or in other words, the mainstream debate. The theory of venue shopping serves as crucial explanation for establishing a network like the MSP. Baumgartner and Jones (1998) argue that radical policy change is often brought about by a shift in institutional venue. Pralle (2003) also researches the theory of venue shopping in the context of advocacy. She suggests that venues appear as a result of policy burst, that they provide new opportunities for previously unsuccessful advocates and joining a network indicates the policy learning results of members.

Networks are key elements of successful advocacy. In fact, the empirical research of the thesis revealed how much hope and energy the different organisations invest into the MSP. Policy network analysis and the theory of venue shopping identifies how the MSP functions, and why it is a crucial policy-network for SDG advocacy in the EU.

Framing and advocacy groups

The PNA explained the context of advocacy work. The methodology section already introduced framing. Therefore this section will only compliment the already outlined

arguments. It will look at the importance of resonance, the definition of success, as well as the presence of silos in the framing.

An important aim of frames is to produce resonance. The research found that one of the most important frame advocates are trying to promote is a systemic understanding of the SDG. “The concept of resonance is relevant to the issue of the effectiveness or mobilizing potency of proffered framings, thereby attending to the question of why some framings seem to be effective or "resonate" while others do not” (Benford and Snow 1988, 619) In other words, resonant frameworks may result in successful advocacy activities; therefore it is important to explore the criteria in order to understand what are the key components of resonance for the frame that promotes the systemic understanding of the Agenda 2030. Mahoney (2008), Kárníková, Coen (2007) are key researchers of the topic.

Defining the success of advocacy was difficult, neither the interviews nor the literature could offer an accurate definition. Mahoney (2015) studied the success of advocacy groups and came to the conclusion that the policy-making process is too interconnected to find which word or policy is the achievement of which advocacy group

Klüver and Mahoney (2015) argue that frames also constrain the organisations. In other words, the frames of different actors can create silos, which in the case of this study may entail the lack of systemic understanding of the SDGs. The silos of policy-makings has been outlined by Niestroy and Meuleman (2016) they argue that mental silos, or in other words the silos of the network members hinder the understanding of new phenomena, such as the SDGs.

Based on a study the two scholars argue that most advocates will stick to their frames (Klüver and Mahoney 2015). However, the consensus nature of both studied organisations suggests that if the platforms want to have a significant impact they must not always stick to

their frames. In the case of the SDGs it is necessary to push off from conventional frames of advocates.

Advocacy coalitions

Successful framing is highly dependent on effective coalition. The importance of advocacy coalitions is highlighted by Streck (2002), Mahoney (2008a), Coen (2007). This section discusses the literature on why advocacy coalitions foster the success of advocacy activities and increase the resonance of frames.

Mahoney argues that there are numerous frames competing in the policy arena of the EU (2008). Klüver and Mahoney (2005) discuss the importance of strategic framing and identify that coalitions may enhance the resonance of the frames. Therefore, coalitions like the SDGWE can foster the success of certain frames.

Streck (2002) argues that coalitions appear due to the fact that traditional democracies are incapable of responding to the emerging policy changes. Carboni (2009) discusses the importance of advocacy coalitions in European health policy-making; she argues that the core of these coalitions is to form around a belief. The thesis finds the word ‘belief’ rather vague and argues that these policy coalitions actually form around goals, such as meeting the SDGs, holding policy-makers accountable, or implementing the SDGs as a framework etc. The issue of sustainable development is more complex, hence the thesis argues that there are some special criteria that enhances successful SDG advocacy that is the necessity of cross-sectoral coalitions. Brown (1991) argues “in many developing countries SD depends on creating effective local organisation, horizontal linkages across sectors and vertical linkages that enable grassroots influence on national policy-making” (1991, 810). He explores how bridging organisations, like the MSP, are catalysing the formulation of networks focused on particular issues. Both in the case of SDG Watch Europe and MSP we can talk about bridging

activities and forming coalitions in the case of the SDGWE or network in the case of the MSP.

Even though the literature on multi-stakeholder cooperation in advocacy is not abundant the research found some relevant debates. Coen (2007) also argues that a key to success is “establishing capacity to coordinate potential ad-hoc political alliances and to develop access”. Moreover, Streck argues that coalitions enable a more flexible structure, and can respond promptly to emerging political dialogues. Streck (2002) and Brown (1991) both argue that these networks should function in a looser structure that does not require significant capacity from any members. This way ensuring that the human resources are not wasted on bureaucratic matters. While discussing the importance of bridging organisations Brown (1991) recognises the difficulties of cross-sectoral cooperation. “This multi-sectoral” paradigm could permit a variety of institutional paths to accomplish development objectives, rather than rely on a single sector approach. In such a paradigm, bridging organisations and bridging function would be critical to spanning gaps between grassroots and policy-makers, between sectors and region, and between cultures and societies” (Brown 1991, 828). Therefore, he believes that bridging organisations could enhance cooperation between different sectors that is basically goal number 17 of the SDGs. These collaborations are crucial to the promotion and implementation of the SDGs.

Conclusion

The literature has significant insights into the different segments of the research. For instance, it explains why a systemic approach is necessary to SDG implementations, how advocacy works in the EU, why framing and policy networks are important for advocates, how advocacy groups pick their venues and last but not least shows the importance of cross sectoral collaborations and coalitions. However, the literature is deficient on how advocacy work contributes to the promotion of the SDGs, therefore the thesis aims to fill this niche.

4. Case study I: Multi Stakeholder Platform for the Implementation of the SDGs

The MSP is the key cross-sectoral SDG network for both the private- and public sector in the European Union. It has significant potential to engage all key stakeholders from NGOs to Trade organisations in the European implementation of the SDGs. Therefore, it serves as an excellent example to illustrate one of the key findings of the research that is the significance of cross-sectoral collaboration of advocacy groups to promote the SDGs. The following chapter describes the history, functions and operations, the membership consistency and the unique features of the MSP.

History

The EU committed to the establishment of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform, an advisory board for the implementation of the SDGs. After the finalisation of the SDGs the United Nations Development Group (2015) published an Interim Reference Guide to UN Country Teams on Mainstreaming, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which the necessity of multi-stakeholder platforms was clearly outlined.

The European Union in 2016 promised to “create a dynamic space bringing together the different stakeholders of the public and private sphere, the Commission will launch a multi-stakeholder Platform with a role in the follow-up and exchange of best practices on SDG implementation across sectors, at Member States and EU level” (European Commission 2016, 5). Henceforth, to seek assistance in the implementation of the Global Goals, the EC set up the Multi-Stakeholder Platform on the Implementation of the SDGs on 22 May 2017. Although this platform is relatively new, it can be considered as a significant step towards meeting the SDGs.

Even though the EU has several other multi-stakeholder platforms, the MSP is the first cross issue, multi-stakeholder platform of the EU on sustainable development. The

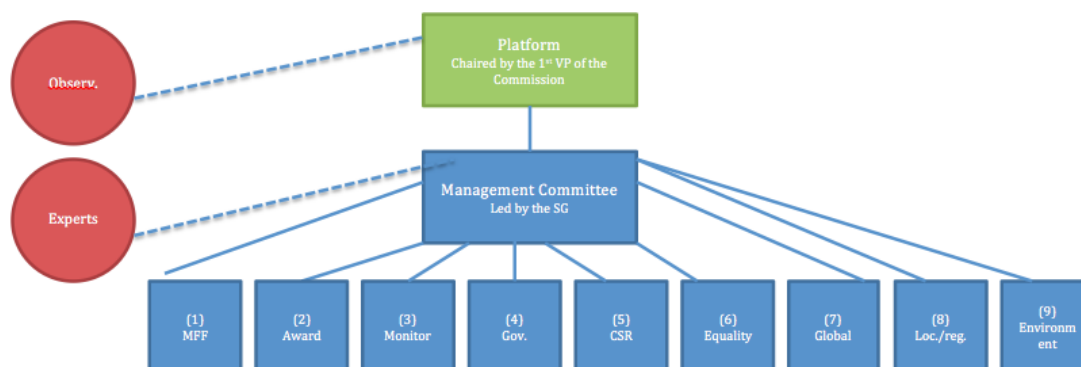
multi-stakeholder nature of the platform provides a unique opportunity to European advocacy groups to engage in cross-sectoral collaborations as well as to address the 169 interrelated targets of Agenda 2030 from a systemic approach.

In the past 1.5 years the MSP has been working on several projects such as reflection on the Multi Financial Framework (MFF), feedback on the implementation of the SDGs, as well as the European Sustainability Awards. Given the relatively short history of the Platform it is difficult to define the impact of these projects.

Functions and operation

The core function of the Platform is to serve as support and advisor for the EC on the SDG implementation. In addition, the MSP should support the EC with advice on sustainability related events, as well as help the selection process of the annual sustainability award. Furthermore, it should provide a forum for cross-sectoral idea exchange on the implementation of the SDGs (European Commission 2017b). So far, the different subgroups of the MSP held various meet-ups on different topics such as the Multi Financial Framework, or the previously mentioned Eurostat report. Virtually it is not obvious how the Commission implements these supportive statements issued by the bodies of the MSP.

FIGURE 1: OPERATION STRUCTURE OF THE MSP



As the diagram in Figure 1 suggests, Frans Timmermans, the First-Vice President of the Commission, chairs the Platform. To manage the day-to-day activities of the MSP a Management Committee (MC) was set up as a subgroup, which is led by the Secretariat-General of the EC. The MC reports to the platform and the SG. The role of the management committee is to organise the other sub-groups and other related operational tasks. The members of the Management Committee were selected based on “relevant experience and expertise” via an open call announced (European Commission 2017b). This body reports to the platform.

The previously noted subgroups were set up to examine specific questions, e.g. monitoring, on the basis of terms of reference defined by the SG of the Commission. These subgroups report to the Management Committee. Currently the platform has nine different subgroups: (1) Multiannual Financial Framework, (2) Sustainability Award, (3) Monitoring, assessing and reporting progress on SDGs, (4) Governance, policy coherence for sustainable development and the rule of law, (5) Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), (6) Equality, Justice, and decent work, (7) Global dimension of SDGs, including trade and migration (8) SDGs at local and regional level, (9) Environment, natural resource including agriculture. These subgroups operate until their mandates expire. The SG of the Commission may invite experts with specific expertise with respect to a subject matter of the subgroups.

The platform and its subgroups hold their meetings on the premises of the European Commission. Each meeting’s minutes are available to the public via the website of the MSP. The platform and the management committee shall adopt its opinions, recommendations or reports by consensus. In the event of a vote, the outcome of the vote shall be decided by simple majority of the members. Members who have voted against shall have the right to have a document summarising the reasons for their position annexed to the opinions,

recommendations or reports (European Commission 2017b, 6). Therefore the MSP accepts decisions based on consensus. Unfortunately, as discussed later reaching consensus in such a diverse environment is relatively difficult.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the work of the MSP is done on a voluntary basis; therefore none of the members are remunerated for their work. This feature again will be discussed later in detail. The voluntary nature of initiatives like the MSP imposes time management obstacles for the members and eventually hinders the potential success of the initiative.

Members and the selection process

The MSP's platform consists of a diverse set of 28 members and at the moment ten observers, some of these members are appointed in their personal capacity these should act in the public interest. Observers are appointed, and the organisation can name their representatives. They do not obtain rights to participate in the decisions, however if granted, they can provide expertise in the discussed topic (European Commission 2017a). The Secretary-General of the Commission appointed the platform' and the management committee' members based on their applications. These members remain elected until their term of office or until they are replaced, or resign.

The selection criteria of the platform remain vague. This issue was highlighted by many of the interviewees for instance EEB and WWF. Furthermore, a case study of the Social Platform by Quittkat and Finke (2008) suggested that membership unclear selection method of multistakeholder platforms is not a unique case. Having more transparency and for instance releasing the list of applicants could indicate how much private interest is invested in the SDGs as well as how the EU thinks about the operation of this platform. The member organisations cover a wide range of topics, such as environment and ecosystems, business, families, regional authorities, human rights, farmers and agriculture, cities, universities,

health, youth, research, renewable energy, and fair trade. However, out of the 28 member organisations only five represent private interests (Unilever, Food and Drinks Europe, Business Europe, COPA COGECA, and Radobank). The thesis argues that a more inclusive structure of the MSP could foster the participation of other private stakeholders that are important part of the necessary change.

Some of the organisations like WWF or Birdlife are represented individually, however they are also members of some of the umbrella organisations of the platform. WWF is a member of CONCORD as well as SDG Watch Europe, and Birdlife is also member of the SDG Watch Europe. Therefore, their voices can be much more amplified. As the interview analysis will reveal, NGOs use this advantage strategically.

Unique features

The multi-stakeholder platform provides a platform for cross-sectoral collaboration, as well as direct channel to the EU decision makers. It is not an issue specific platform, but horizontal platform that seeks assistance on implementation of the broad Agenda of the SDG. Therefore the existence of the MSP could foster the achievement of “developing a long-term vision through the lenses of the SDGs and ensure that these goals are fully integrated in the European policy framework (Eurostat 2017)”. However, as later on the interviews will discuss this is a really difficult task and would require stronger commitment from all institutions and decision makers of the European Union.

This multi-stakeholder nature should be one of the most beneficial features of the platform. The Commission Decision on the Establishment of the MSP highlights that the members should represent a balanced choice of the private and public sectors (European Commission 2017b). However, as highlighted previously, the public sector and especially NGOs represent the majority of the members.

Due to the lack of available literature on the platform, the interviewer asked the members of the platform about their feelings about the platform. Many of the interviewees saw the platform as an opportunity. Heidegger, from EEB, for instance stated “But the good thing is that the platform does bring together experts from different fields. And it’s good that these people sit together and discuss and there is some mutual learning.” Similarly, the Smith, BE employee, stated, “I think it’s a good idea to bring all the stakeholders together.” Therefore, some of the members saw the platform as a great channel for cross-sectoral collaboration.

Some other experts view the MSP as a tool to reach out to the Commission. For instance, Weyland from Nabu said, “This way we have another communications channel (the MSP) to reach out to the Commission, the platform opens access to the first vice-president, Timmermans”. Therefore the MSP provides a unique opportunity to have direct contact with decision-makers.

This section introduced the first case study of the thesis, the MSP, which is the most significant network through which stakeholders can engage in the implementation of the SDGs on a high-level in the EU. In Chapter 6 the thesis will elaborate on the importance of the Platform. The next section focuses on an outstanding NGO umbrella group of the MSP.

5. Case study II: SDG Watch Europe

The SDG Watch Europe is the EU’s largest NGO coalition that promotes the implementation of the SDGs. It is an active member of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform and serves as an illustrative example on how to efficiently operate a cross-sectoral umbrella group to engage in the promotion of the SDGs. Furthermore, as discussed in the Analysis its projects are successfully promoting the systemic nature of the Agenda 2030. In other words, it serves as a second illustrative example of cross-sectoral collaborations. The history,

function and operation, membership, as well as its unique features are introduced in this chapter of the thesis.

History

The European NGO community played an important role in the construction of Agenda 2030: many NGOs like the WWF, the EEB or CAN Europe was active advocates of the negotiations. Therefore, it comes by no surprise that they are taking the lead to catalyse the implementation of the SDGs in the EU. Just like the MSP, the SDG Watch Europe was founded after Agenda 2030 was adopted. The aim of this NGO coalition is to tackle the implementation of the SDGs as one systemic framework, uniting the voices of all relevant NGO stakeholders.

“No other actor can combine these different and mutually reinforcing roles as effectively as civil society can. At EU level, with new EU level structures that emerge, Civil Society Organisations (CSO) need to help them to get the right shape while also mobilising people for the implementation phase. Agenda 2030 is nothing less but the most ambitious and potentially transformative global agenda ever adopted by the international community” (SDGWE 2018).

The SDGWE hence sees the NGO society¹ as a key catalyser of transformation and Agenda 2030 as a historical opportunity for implementing policies on all levels. So far the SDG Watch Europe has been a noticeably active advocacy coalition in the EU. For instance, it strongly advocated the fulfilment of the earlier plan of the EU to establish the Multi-Stakeholder Platform. However, they have been also actively speaking up for the importance of applying SDGs as a cross-sectoral overarching framework, for instance, they have created a 6th Scenario to compliment The Commission’s White Paper’s (2016) 5 scenarios of Europe.

¹ Referring to civil society as NGO society because of the previously explained controversy of the EU’s definition of the term.

In this scenario, unlike in the other five, sustainability is a driving force. Moreover, they also developed a campaign for the People's Budget to include the sustainability principles for the EU's Multi Financial Framework. This campaign will be discussed in Chapter 5.

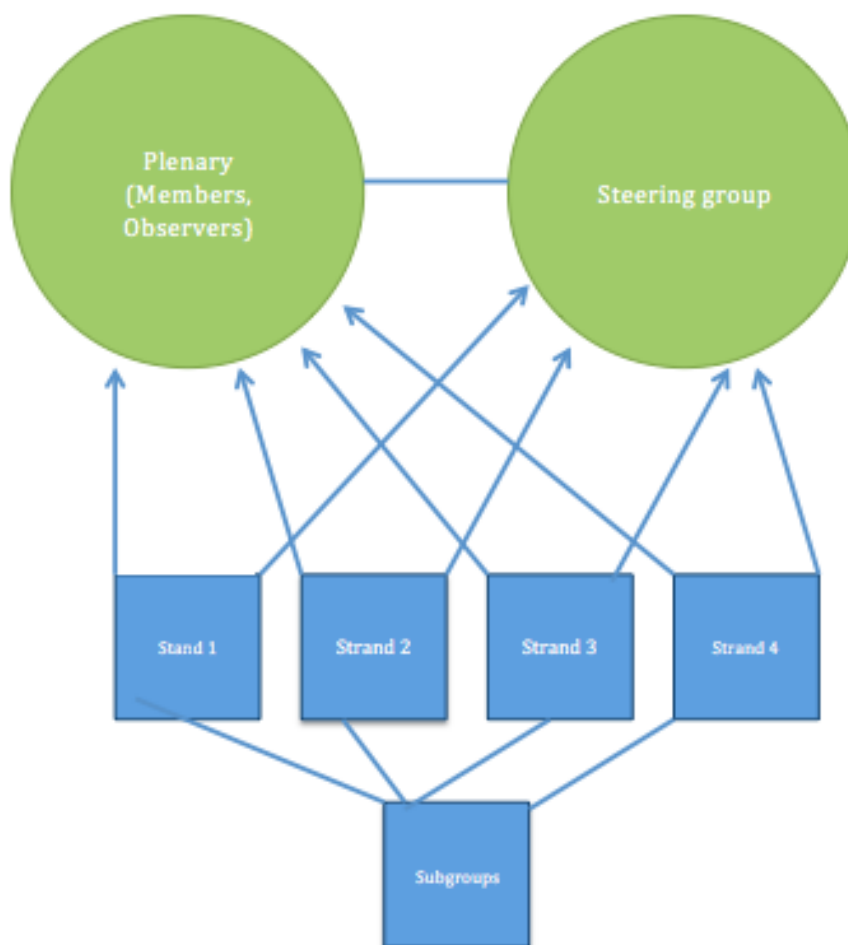
Another project, Make Europe Sustainable for All, is being launched soon. This focuses specifically on Goal no. 10, Reduced Inequalities. Another robust campaign of the NGO coalition is the act 4 SD platform that aims to equip stakeholders with tools to hold governments accountable for and share knowledge about the implementation of SDGs.

Therefore, through its short existence so far the SDGWE has created many leading initiatives that aim to implement SDGs as an overarching framework, as well as its specific goals.

Functions and operation

The SDG Watch Europe is an alliance composed of more than 100 NGOs. The core function of the alliance is to hold governments and EU institutions accountable for the implementation of SDGs and for their relevant commitments that have been adopted prior to and after the ratification of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, it also aims to increase the role of NGOs in policy-making processes related to SDGs (Ad Hoc Working Group on Governance 2016).

FIGURE 2: SDG WATCH EUROPE



The structure of the SDG Watch Europe is composed of three parts (Figure 2)> the Plenary, the Steering Group, and the Work Strands.

The plenary is the platform where the members of the organisation can meet and discuss more general topics to get updates from each other, and make decisions related to the entire coalition. I got the chance to attend one of these meetings while I was in Brussels. The Plenary meets four times a year, and all members are welcome to join.

The four working stands are the core of this organisation. “The task of the SDGWE is divided between 4 interlinked work strands to ensure coherence at all levels” (SDGWE 2018). These four topics are the following: (1) Joint advocacy and policy coordination; (2) Monitoring, Accountability and Review; (3) Engaging CSOS and Citizens; (4) Reflection and

Innovation. The aim of the first working strand on policy coordination is to ensure policy coherence. It examines existing EU strategies, policies and practices in the light of the SDG (SDGWE 2018). It also identifies gaps within the policies of the EU and provides suggestions. The second working stand, Monitoring aims to follow the EU's progress of SDG implementation and that the data provided is sufficient, reliable and verifiable. Strand 3 on Engagement aims "to raise awareness, promote engagement and to help to build capacity towards the implementation of the SDGs" (SDGWE.ORG 2018). The 4th Strand on Innovation aims to be a think tank that explores innovative ways of working, using the SDGs, as well as bringing new knowledge to the coalition.

The strands delegate people to both the Steering Group and the Plenary. Each of the four working strands has 2-3 facilitators who report back to the Plenary. The facilitators also have a coordinator responsibility: in other words, they initiate meetings and handle the communication of the agenda, venue, time etc. Each working strand may set up mailing lists. In addition, they can also call for the establishment of subgroups within the strands. These groups can address more specific topics within the different strands. The strands also delegate a person who reports back to the Steering Group.

The steering group has a maximum of 10 members, out of which each strand delegates 4, and a further 6 are elected by the General Assembly. The mandate of the members is for two years and can be renewed once. The core activity of the Steering Group is to monitor the activities of the work strands. Furthermore, in case of conflict the Steering Group may intervene and mediate the resolution of the issue. The SG is also responsible for overseeing the membership approval process.

The decision-making of the organisation is "as flexible and consensus-based as possible" (Ad Hoc Working Group on Governance 2016,4). The Governance Arrangements (SDGWE 2016) document highlights that this is due to the high diversity of member

organisations. However, there are certain kinds of decision-making processes, which only require majority voting, such as representation, financial issues, issues concerning the overall direction of the alliance. “A vote during an SDG Watch Plenary is carried if 75% of those entitled to vote, vote in favour of the proposal.” (Ad Hoc Working Group on Governance 2016,4).

Members and selection process

Members can be (1) Brussels based CSO/ CSO’s working at the EU level focused on influencing EU processes and policy, (2) awareness raising citizens mobilisation and knowledge capacity building, (3) EU level CSO umbrella organisations or nationally-based CSO platforms working for national sustainable development or umbrella groups (Ad Hoc Working Group on Governance 2016,3).

Once all elected, members falling into these categories will have the right to vote. Others may participate in SDG Watch meetings, but will not obtain voting rights. Member organisation should delegate one main and one substitute representative. The composition of the SDG Watch Europe is very diverse: there are NGOs related to cooperatives, finances like the Green Budget, the environment (EEB), health (GHA), youth, human rights, families within the platform.

The Steering Group facilitates the selection process. Apart from falling into one of the categories above, there are no other specific criteria for joining the SDGWE. The application process is easy to access via an online form available through the organisation’s platform. Prospective members need to share their details, identify which of the three member categories they belong to, contact details of the representatives, identify their work strand and agree to the Mission Statement of the organisation. Therefore, the organisation continuously accepts new members to join their initiative, and the selection process is transparent and clear.

For the moment, the SDG Watch Europe is a charity organisation without any membership fee. Hence it functions on a voluntary basis. Therefore, not only the delegates of the organisation but also the Steering Group and the employee handling administrative issues are unpaid, which as previously argued, may entail obstacles in the long-run.

Unique features

The SDG Watch Europe is currently the largest umbrella organisation that deals with Sustainable Development Goals. It is unique because it brings together all sectors of non-governmental organisations, hence ensuring that the opinions and positions released by the organisations represent a multidisciplinary stance.

Having a coalition emerging around an issue is not an unusual phenomenon. For instance, even within the SDG there are networks of NGOs such as CAN Europe, CONCORD, CEE Web which are focused on topics like climate change, human rights, or biodiversity protection. These coalitions serve as a platform for knowledge sharing, or standing up for an issue united. However, there are hardly any coalitions that build bridges between all the sectors. The SDGWE hence is a unique opportunity for cross-sectoral NGO cooperation that is a key activity advocacy groups engage in for the promotion of the SDGs.

The network is not only cross-sectoral, but also multi-functional, Given the various fields of expertise represented, there are various activities where the SDG WE can contribute to the SDG implementation process, for instance: monitoring, research, and policy-making. This makes them a strong and recognisable alliance.

Its transparent and non-hierarchical structure makes the work of the coalition easier. Even though it is difficult to come to a consensus in a multi-disciplinary environment, the loose nature, and the straightforward structure of the organisation makes campaigns less bureaucratic and, hence, less difficult to launch.

This thorough description of the functions and operations of the SDGWE show that the organisation is transparent and its operations are easy to follow, this makes it an outstanding cross-sectoral collaboration in the EU. The various recognisable project of the organisation prove that cross-sectoral collaborations, if well organised, can foster the promotion of the SDGs. Furthermore, the People's Budget is a great example on how advocacy groups promote the SDGs as a systemic framework. This will be further discussed in the next chapter of the thesis.

6. Analysis and discussion

European advocacy groups engage in the promotion of the SDGs through the policy network of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform. The MSP opens up a space to cross-sectoral collaborations, which is necessary for the implementation of the SDGs. Within this network advocacy groups engage in the framing of the issue of the SDGs.

The coding identified two key frames, one that comprehends the SDGs as a secondary issue, a pool of goals from which policy-makers can cherry pick and the other one that sees the SDGs as a systemic agenda that needs to be implemented as an overarching framework. The desktop research, as well as the interviews and the field notes showed that the role of the MSP is not clarified. Therefore, the chapter starts with the conceptualisation of the MSP as a policy-network and analysis its membership, heterogeneity, function and structure based on the interviews. This analysis provides a context to the frames of the advocacy groups.

Therefore, the second part of the chapter turns to the frames of the policy-network. Framing is a key activity of advocates through which they influence decision-makers. First, the two key frames are introduced and then the thesis discusses what makes framework efficient and resonant. Then, the last chapter focuses on the framework applied for The

People's Budget to illustrate the use of a systemic framework in the context of the SDGWE and the MSP.

Framing context

The first part of this chapter focuses on the framing context of the advocacy groups, which is the MSP. The research found that advocacy groups engage in different cross-sectoral coalitions. The first one is the MSP, which can be defined as the SDG policy-network of the EU. Therefore, the MSP is conceptualised, and analysed. Furthermore, the logic of venue shopping offers an explanation to why advocacy groups engage in it.

MSP, the SDG policy network

To be able to analyse the context of framing the MSP is conceptualised as policy-network. Kenis and Schneider (1991) define policy networks as webs of relatively stable and on-going relationships, which are capable of mobilising resources and actors. Both the interview data and the desktop research on the MSP revealed that it is difficult to understand the role of the MSP. Henceforth, categorising the MSP as a policy-network helps understand the purpose of the MSP.

Governments often struggle with finding solutions to emerging issues such as the implementation of the Agenda 2030. Streck (2002) outlines that policy networks are important because they are capable of reacting to emerging issues with more flexibility. The unique, systemic nature of the SDGs means that governments often find it difficult to deal with its implementation. The UN has established various guidelines to provide toolkits for actors to improve governance structures. For instance, one of its suggestions is the increased collaboration with multi-stakeholder networks (United Nations Development Group 2018).

Mahoney (2005) confirms that the political context within which the activities of the interest groups operate is crucial to look at. Furthermore, Snow and Benford (1988) as well as Johnston and Noakes (2005) highlight that the context of framing is crucial to understand

what frames work better. “Networks provide a perspective from which to analyse a situation in which a given policy cannot be explained by centrally concerted policy action toward common goals” (Börzel 1997, 10). Even though the thesis will not engage in elaborate policy analysis, it argues that understanding the MSP as the SDG policy-network provides an accurate frame for analysing the context in which the cross-sectoral collaborations and the framing activities of promoting the SDGs takes place.

The interviews touched upon the discussion of the involvement of different organisations on many levels. The answers of the experts highlight that the multi-stakeholder platform has become a key institution of SDG policies and that cross-sectoral collaborations are necessary for the implementation of the SDGs.

Policy network analysis

A policy network analysis involves a variety of analytical points such as the organisational structure, function, and heterogeneity. The thesis also completes this framework with a membership analysis.

Membership heterogeneity

As previously outlined the implementation of the SDGs require the involvement of different sectors. Hence, the membership analysis can help us understand whether this cross-sectoral Platform is heterogenic enough.

As previously outlined the MSP stabilises its membership with limiting the number of members to 30, however it is arguable whether this stable nature of the MSP is fostering the systemic understanding of the SDGs. Given the lifetime membership it is difficult to allow new members in the network. The only way to involve new members is via inviting them as observers, however observers can only give recommendations. Mohieldin (pers. comm), an observer of the MSP explained that observers are only asked to reflect on the work of the MSP and supposed to meet two times a year. However, as an observer he could not give a lot

of information on the work of the Platform, which suggests that observers are not deeply involved in the work of the MSP.

The lack of representations of sectors such as trade and agriculture entails less heterogeneity. Heterogeneity is important because, as the UN argues all sectors should be involved in the policy-making processes of the SDGs (2016). Many interviewees stated that the selection criteria of the MSP was very vague and most likely not strategic (Nicholson 2018, Raphael 2018, Heidegger 2018).

Even though heterogeneity can enhance the systemic implementation of the SDGs it can also hinder the effectiveness of the MSP. As Brown (1991) argues it is challenging to engage all the opinions of a wide network. The interviewees (Smith, Weyland and Heidegger) noted that it is often hard to find common frames within the network and this multi-stakeholder nature of the platform was next to being identified as the key positive aspect of the MSP, was also regarded as key difficulty.

It is also important to note what other stakeholders are involved in the MSP. Given the fact that First Vice-President Timmermans established the MSP, it is an institution with close ties to the EC. Furthermore, different Directorial Generals are also often invited to the meetings of the MSP. For instance, when the researcher attended a sub-group meeting, representatives of DG Education and DG Employment were present. Therefore, high-level representatives are often part of the MSP negotiations.

Function and Structure

Börzel (1997) highlights that the function of the network is also crucial for the understanding of a policy network. The structure of the MSP is a complimentary category in the analysis.

At the meeting of the MSP, Smith noted that purpose of the negotiations and the MSP in general is not clear. In chapter 4, the thesis highlighted that the MSP is supposed serve as

an advisory to the Commission on sustainability related issues. However, in the founding document it is not outlined how the advice of the MSP is included later in the policy-making of the EU (European Commission 2017). As Mahoney (2015) suggests the success of advocacy groups is hard to track in policy-making due to the variety of complex processes through which policies are composed. Due to this complexity, and the relatively recent establishment of the MSP it is difficult to outline how advices are taken into account.

Börzel (1997) argues that networks that have a loose structure and large membership tend to function better, however as previously outlined the MSP has a fairly limited membership with a highly complex structure due to the number of subgroups. Smith (pers. comm.) suggested, “In fact Business Europe has been saying that we shouldn’t set up these sub groups. We don’t need sub groups. But we were the only one that said that, and now everyone is saying there is so many subgroups.” Furthermore, Niestroy (pers. comm.) added, “Since this multi stakeholder platform is there, all capacity is sucked up there, it’s been quite challenging time-wise.” Both Smith and Niestroy criticise that due to the significant amount of work with these subgroups they are overwhelmed, which indicates that the structure of the MSP is not efficient. In addition due to the MSP bureaucratic nature members of the MSP spend a great deal of time working on administrative issues related to it. For instance, Niestroy is also part of the Management Committee, which handles organisational issues.

The attendance of the previously mentioned subgroup meeting confirmed that indeed the workload of these subgroups is heavy, each . Furthermore, the way the discussion was organised did not support effective work. DG representatives and CSR Europe delivered some presentations on different aspects of Education and then discussions on the introduced topic took place. However, it was difficult to understand where the discussion was heading and in fact the conclusion of the session was that during the next session they would come to

an agreement. For now the next meeting of the subgroup has not been announced. However, the slow nature of this organisation really hinders the flexibility and the ability to quickly respond to emerging issues.

The multi-stakeholder nature of these institutions contributes to the systemic understanding of the SDGs. However, as Brown (1991) notes it can be difficult to manage, especially when it comes to consensus. There are significant differences in the understanding of the SDGs and during the field research in Brussels those organisations of different fields highlighted these difficulties. For instance, Weyland (pers.comm.) added: “we have always the rather blocking part, which are blocking all more ambitious initiatives but then there are a lot of other supporting stakeholders.” Smith reaffirms: “I wonder how we can really build consensus on areas or suggestions for action where there is no consensus in the group.” Heidegger also highlights the drawbacks of not being on the same page within the platform “Of course let's say, some stakeholders might be less progressive than the Commission itself, we are trying to influence the Commission to be more progressive so we have to come to a consensus with organisations that are less progressive, and the policy makers we have to try to influence them. “ All of the three advocates indicate that consensus is a challenge that has to be faced. Consensus entails strong dependency between the actors. The systemic and multi-sectoral nature of the platform means that member organisations should be reliant on each other on sharing knowledge and expertise in certain topics. Henceforth, the multi-sectoral nature of the MSP created dependence between private and public actors.

However, for instance Smith also argued that if the Platform succeeds in and comes out with a consensus document, the demands of that document within the Commission and other high-political institutions are more likely to be taken account by the decision-makers.

Choosing the MSP

The theory of venue shopping helps to understand why advocates choose the MSP and why it is important. It suggests that advocacy groups always aim to find and influence those networks with the most influence. Venue shopping is an integral part of the policy-making processes, based on the assumption that advocates act rationally the theory presumes “a group seeking policy change will assess the political landscape and choose a venue that is most responsive to its policy claims” (Pralle 2003, 238). In addition finding the best venue for advocacy can help to induce change (Pralle 2003). This is important for the framing practices of advocacy groups due to the fact that the context of the framing practice determines the outcomes.

Quick response

The Multi-stakeholder platform can foster the implementation of the SDGs and indicates change in the policy arena. Pralle (2003) clarifies that change in policy venues are important because they can induce policy change. More conservative theories suggest that these policy venues are usually rigorous and aim to maintain the status quo and their own policy dominance (Lindblom 1959, McConnel 1966). However, the appearance of the EU MSP is a clear rebuttal to that argument.

Not only these venues can cause change but they can also be the result of change. Baumgarnter and Jones (1993) accentuate ‘bursts’ within the system that often cause important changes to the policy arena. For instance, the ratification of the Agenda 2030 was an important burst in the system. As previously outlined, networks can respond to these innovations more flexibly. These organisations and the EU itself realised that a separate platform for SDG implementation is necessary. To compliment flexibility, such platforms are also capable to gather expertise from all relevant sectors to provide suggestions for policy-making purposes.

A new chance

The Multi-stakeholder Platform is a new chance to introduce sustainability as guiding principle to the EU. Pralle (2003) reaffirms the idea of Baumgartner and Jones (1993) according to which alternative policy venues give policy-makers and advocacy groups that have been unsuccessful with their activities a chance to turn the tables. As Greenwood (2011) outlines, the EU is usually more focused on economic benefits, and hence sustainability, and environmental issues have been receiving less attention from the current European Commission. Perhaps, the establishment of the MSP could mean a new chance to create balance among the three key pillars of the EU. Nevertheless, it is important that now the NGOs and other involved stakeholders are part of a new channel to high-level decision makers.

Policy learning

Choosing to participate in the MSP means that organisation are willing to participate in the promotion of the MSP. Pralle (2003) further argues that policy learning shapes venue choice – this means that if an advocacy groups chooses a venue they have understood the long-term necessity of dealing with a certain policy issue, like the SDGs (2003, 1). This is important to note, due to the fact that via looking at the membership of the MSP we can see that not only public actors but also private actors are now mobilising capacities for the SDGs, which suggests that more and more actors are understanding the importance of this Agenda. Furthermore, as McLynn (pers. comm.) confirms “It’s good that these people sit together and discuss and there is some mutual learning. And it helps us to get access to high-level commission people, who read the contributions.” Therefore, the platform is a good tool for enhancing policy learning and essentially can contribute to the systemic understanding of the SDGs.

This section introduced the institutional context of the cross-sectoral advocacy framing, the network of SDG interest groups, the Multi-stakeholder Platform. The MSP is a high-level platform and a direct channel to the Commission, therefore its members, including the SDGWE, engage in it actively. The thesis later on will look into some of the competing frames on this platform to realise whether those with a systemic understanding of the Agenda 2030 are in a majority or not. The next section will focus on effective framing within this context.

Framing

The previous section outlined the MSP, which is the network that was chosen by advocacy groups because, as the theory of venue shopping asserts, it is the most beneficial one for SDG advocacy. The establishment of this platform hence opened up a new space to advocates to promote the SDGs. In other words, a new space for competing frames. The analysis of framing helps to understand how the SDGs are promoted in the EU.

Via applying different frames advocacy groups promote the issue of the SDGs in different ways. Entman (1993) defines framing as selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation or treatment recommendation for the item described. Advocacy groups are constantly aiming to produce frames that resonate with the decision makers while also represent their views in a certain topic (De Bruycker 2017). Therefore, one of the key goals of advocates is to produce resonant frameworks. The coding of the interviews identified two key framing trends that are present in the SDG policy network. The first one is a ‘siloed’ view that perceives the Goals as a secondary issue and ignores the interconnectedness of the targets, the second one sees the SDGs as an interconnected systemic agenda that needs to be implemented as overarching framework to induce systemic change. Therefore, this section of the chapter examines first

these two trends, then focuses on what makes one or the other successful based on the answers of the interviews and the theories of Benford and Snow (1988) and Johnston and Noaks (2005). To conclude the MFF project is evaluated.

Non-systemic frames

Many of the interviewees (Hajdu, Heidegger, Niestroy, Nicholson) discussed how siloed the approaches of the EU and the different stakeholders are. In the first interview it became clear that the key challenge not only in the MSP but also SDGWE is “teaching silos how to dance” (Niestroy 2016). Niestroy in the interview underlined that the single-issue minded way of thinking needs to be abolished and a more complex mind-set needs to overtake. Therefore this section discusses the frame that is lacking a systemic understanding of the SDGs.

Niestroy and Meuleman (2016) see three different types of silos: mental, political and institutional. In this thesis we focus on the mental silos. “People have a firm belief that their problem definition and solution are not only the best, but even the only way forward. Different policy sectors like agriculture, transport and environment have their own world view and tend to operate in isolation.” In the case of the SDGs it can simply mean that agricultural organisations, companies would only focus on goal 2- Zero Hunger, because it is the one that is most directly related to the activities of the sector. However, by looking at the bigger picture we can see that hunger is connected to various other goals and cannot be dealt with as single issue.

Food and Drinks Europe revealed that some organisations are only focused on a couple of the SDGs (picture 2). For instance, Ferrucci highlighted that when working on the different NGOs they need to take into account the expectations of their members that, in this case, are companies. As he argued companies want to save money, therefore campaigns on food waste was successful among their members because they saw financial benefits.

FIGURE 3: RELEVANT GOALS FOOD AND DRINKS EUROPE



Source: Food and Drinks Europe.eu 2018

However, Hajdu refers to phenomena like this as “Sustainability Washing”. Meaning that different organisations try to show their commitment by focusing on one or two targets of the SDGs and neglecting the systemic nature of the goals.

Even though it’s important to note that organisations cannot address each and every target individually, therefore here the thesis refers to trend that the representative of the organisation did not see the goal as a guiding principle.

Furthermore, the interviews highlighted a strong confusion of categorization when it comes to sustainability. For instance, in the interview with Business Europe, Smith outlined that Sustainability has three pillars, economic, environmental and social, however she argued that usually mainly the environmental and social aspects are most often highlighted. Therefore, the organisation also tries to put emphasis on the third pillar. While Voitzwinkler drew the attention to the fact that sustainability is often categorised as an environmental

issue. As later on introduced the MFF proposal also pairs sustainability and environmental issues. The consequent categorisation of sustainability as a social issue or environmental issue also enhances the silos around it.

An important observation during the field trip was that during the subgroup meeting on Equality, Justice, Inclusion and Decent Work the topics discussed clearly lacked an inclusion of the sustainability aspect. For instance, the stakeholders spent a significant amount of time on arguing about whether or not elementary- and high school students should receive entrepreneurial education. This discussion was dominated by organisations like Business Europe and CSR Europe, as well as ESADE Business School. Eventually, the conference completely shifted away from the SDGs.

All of these examples show that there are siloed frames present on the Multi-stakeholder Platform, which hinders the success of systemic implementation of the SDGs.

Systemic framing

“Potentially the most transformational aspect of the 2030 Agenda because it really makes you see that all policies should be aiming towards the same end point SD, rather than thinking in silos” (Nicholson 2018). This section looks at how advocates conceptualised the Agenda 2030 systemically and investigates whether they also prioritise the issue.

Weyland, Nicholson and Smith, Heidegger, Voitzwinkler, Hajdu, and Niestroy, all highlighted in their interviews how the SDGs should be understood as a horizontal agenda. As Heidegger (pers. comm.) argues, “Sustainable Development is kind of guiding principle and it is not like one policy field, but our scenario for the future of the EU is a sustainable Europe, so everything should lead towards sustainability.” This is why the thesis calls these frameworks systemic approach because the coding and the comparison of the interviews showed that many of the organisations comprehend the Global Goals as an overarching framework.

Based on the ideas of Meadows the thesis categorises frames as systemic based on whether they are intervening in the system or not. The issue of sustainability is a complex problem and the SDGs are the tools to solve it, however by focusing on just Food Waste or other aspects, the complexity of the problem is demolished and the frame does not interact with the system. Therefore, these overarching advocacy frames bear in mind the complexity of the problem and in a way apply systems thinking to resolve it. “It’s really about approaches, I think that the role of SDG Watch Europe is really focusing on the interconnections and on policy coherence, so calling systemic change, calling for the reform of the whole system.”(Heidegger, pers. comm.)

The organisation consistently applies the frame that interprets the SDGs are not just another policy issue, it is a principle, an overarching framework etc. that needs to be applied and prioritised on all levels of the EU. For instance the organisations works on four different levels ensures coherence at all levels. These levels try to intervene in the system through the intervention points Meadows outlined. For instance, Strand 2 is focusing on monitoring, while Strand 3 is focusing on self-organisation to change the structure of the system. Moreover, all their campaigns People’s Budget, Make Europe sustainable for all etc. promote the SDG’s as a guiding principle for the future of Europe.

Perceiving the Agenda 2030 as an overarching framework is not enough it, has to be a priority issue of the organisation as the interviews revealed. The advocate of BE stated that sustainability should be used as an overall strategy, when we engaged in discussions about Trade Agreements, she drew the attention to the issues of having too strict human right criteria from the EU side, which can undermine the success of trade agreements in for example Asian countries. Furthermore, she outlined that even though the SDGs is an important agenda item, the EU needs to prioritise its competitiveness and when it comes to SDGs the EU should follow the global trends because “ it doesn’t make any sense to Europe

taking actions, and no one else taking actions on the SDGs” (pers.comm.). In this case even though the advocate outlined that she understands that the SDGs should be understood as an over arching framework, she does not see the Agenda as priority issues neither for the BE nor for the European Union.

Many of the organisations frame the SDGs as a guiding principle and a call for systemic change. The case of Business Europe outlined that understanding the Global Goals, as a horizontal agenda is not enough in itself, it is important that advocacy organisations prioritise it on their agenda. Only then the outcomes of the MSP will reflect the systemic understanding of the SDGs and perhaps start nudging the Commissioners to the same direction.

Effective framing

Now that I have identified the two general trends in framing the SDGs I look at what makes them successful. Therefore, first the coding identified how the interviewees understand success and defined how the researcher interpreted success. Then the internal and external constraints of framing were evaluated based on the theories of Benford and Snow (1988) and Goffman (1977) as well as the interviews criteria. To finish with an empirical application of this criteria and understanding whether advocacy groups successfully carry the systemic frames forward we look at the case study of the People’s Budget campaign of the SDGWE.

Success and framing

The interviews of the research identified success in a number of ways. As Mahoney (2008) argues it is relatively difficult to conceptualise success of lobby groups.

“Sometimes it’s making something less bad than it is or making it less than it could have been. Sometimes it could be going beyond your expectations. So for me I think it would be influencing, we kept the debate alive massively on climate.” McLynn (pers. comm.)

makes two important points here, first of all as Mahoney (2005) also argues sometimes it is already a success if advocates make a legislation less against the values of their own interest group, in this case CAN Europe's. The other point talks about influencing, which is the key goal of advocacy groups.

Voitzwinkler (pers. comm.) also mentioned the importance of influencing. "Because then we could see that some of the recommendations were taken into account, more transparency the operational board was debriefed, a new website with more transparent information on the project was developed." In their case the influence was obviously tangible, based on the recommendations of the Global Health Advocates the Commission delivered the aforementioned results.

Smith nuances the ideas of the other two advocates: "It can be wording it can be, or it can be on the scope it can be in the balance of the directive same with general communications. It can be on the approach to what extent the business interests are reflected that's of course what we are advocating for." Therefore, even modifying words is part of the success of an interest group.

Both Niestroy and Hajdu (pers. comm.) suggested that if the proposals of advocacy groups make it to the tables of the decision-maker that means huge potentials to success. Hajdu saw the People's Budget project as a successful initiative because it was able to get into the hands of Commissioner, however she expressed her disappointment that Commissioner Ottinger was very unfamiliar with the content of the proposal.

Based on the theory of framing success or the effectiveness of a frame is producing resonance, due to the fact that resonant frames are more likely to mobilise decision-makers. "The concept of resonance is relevant to the issue of the effectiveness or mobilizing potency of proffered framings, thereby attending to the question of why some framings seem to be effective or "resonate" while others do not" (Benford and Snow 1988, 619) Changing the

wording, or influencing the strategies, or even reading through the proposals means that the frames of the groups to some extent have resonated with the decision-makers.

The success of the advocacy groups can differ it can be a small change that obstacles the worst, changing the wording in a document, changing the scope or it can be convincing a decision-maker to follow the advices of the advocacy group in question. From a framing perspective it is making a frame resonant with the decision-makers, therefore the next section looks at the criteria.

External factors

Snow and Benford (1988) outlined a set of criteria that may constrain frames the thesis categorised this as external and internal factors the following criteria.

Centrality, according to Snow and Benford (1988) is whether the values of the advocacy group are important in a larger belief system, that is the EU in this case. “ It is axiomatic that the greater the correspondence between values promoted by a movement and those held by constituents, the greater the mobilization effort...” (Snow and Benford 1988, 207). They also suggest that being too specific and radical may limit the ability to mobilise, which is discussed in the internal factors section. Therefore, to enhance the success of SDG advocacy the SDGs should become a central value of the EU.

This is of course and ideal case, for now advocates must try to frame the SDG implementation in a way that it aligns with other, more critical values of the European decision-makers. As Heidegger (pers. comm.) demonstrates, from the European Commission’s perspective it is obvious that sustainability is not perceived as a core value, even though the Commission’s White Paper on the Future of Europe that presented five future scenarios (2017) briefly mentions the Agenda 2030 in the introductory part, there is no scenario, which evolves around a sustainable future. As previously mentioned, this is why

the SDGWE created a 6th scenario to compliment the Commission's ideas with one that takes sustainability as its basis.

The example of Voitzwinkler illustrates perfectly why centrality is important for SDG advocacy. "We actually published it on the same day as Junker had his annual State of the Union speech and he talked about replenishing the trust fund. So that was a good coincidence because we got a lot of calls from journalist. ..." The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa was a successful campaign of the Global Health Advocates. Migration is a central topic in the EU countries at the moment; therefore that provides a centrality to the issue.

It is not enough if a campaign reflects a central value, it is also important to release it timely, when the topic is on the top of the agenda of the EU. The **timing** of the campaign release, even if it was a coincidence, helped the GHA advocates reach out not only to decision makers but also to the media. Voitzwinkler called this campaign a success due to the significant reach out it has achieved. In this case, the resonance with the EU Agenda as well as timeliness of the campaign led to success.

Time is absolutely crucial for allowing the discussion to evolve and, especially in the case of such a diverse platform, to let the advocates find common points that will lead to an agreed frame and eventually to consensus. It is important to note what Smith highlights in her interview "And in a way it may have been easier to come to a consensus had the platform been set up earlier because we would had time to have discussions and understand each other better."

It is important that advocacy groups concentrate on issues with a wide range that is connected to several issues rather than focusing on a small scope. **Range and interrelatedness** is another criteria identified by the Snow and Benford (1988). According to the scholars, if the range of the issue is too specific it loses from its 'hierarchical salience'. However, Mahoney (2005) warns that being too broad can undermine the success of

campaigns. Hence, it is fundamental to find the right balance. Linking the campaigns to other issues is also important and increases efficiency. Heidegger explains that “Because you arrive in front of decision makers, I mean the EU is very siloed, because then you can sell and come and make the link between different policies you will automatically reach another level of people within the EU more director level.” The People’s Budget is a great example for a framing that has a wide range and is interconnected. Using the financial framework of the EU in a way that it implements the SDGs as colleagues of the CEE Web, and Green Budget Europe named a framework as one of the most successful campaigns. Moreover, The People’s Budget is an illustrative example to show how to frame new ideas and communicate them through a mainstream issue. “We need to rethink where the money goes in order to build an economy that is more equal and sustainable. An economy based on well being. (Gergely and Hobil 2017, 2)”. In case of this campaign, the framing is not applying radical ideas, for instance: degrowth, that may deter decision-makers. Instead, it chooses a morally obliging angle, the future of citizens.

Internal factors

Now that the thesis evaluated the external factors there are also various internal criteria that contribute to effective framing. The thesis uses two of Snow’s and Benford’s criteria of efficient framing: ‘empirical credibility’, ‘experiential commensurability’ and compliments this framework with transparency, frame consistency, the importance of coalitions, and the advocates perception of the topic.

Mahoney (2008) asserts that credibility is an essential tool for advocates to mobilise decision-makers. By **credibility** the scholars refer to the fit between the real world and the framing. In other words, Snow and Benford (1988) promote that a realistic representation of an issue is crucial. Credibility was one of the mostly emphasised criteria for success within the interviews. For instance, Yrjö-Koskinen (pers. comm.) warns that if too radical issues are

brought in, the advocate may lose credibility that is the basis of the reputation of experts. Weyland (pers. comm.) and Nicolson (pers. comm.) both argue that the being evidence based is a key to success. Johnston and Noakes (2002) also find empirical credibility a key to successful framing.

In addition to credibility, **transparency** is also crucial. "...I didn't use secret ingredients for my advocacy work. But just transparency, transparency, transparency" (Weyland). Ferruci (pers. comm.) also argued that today customers demand transparency therefore, their work is also very transparent. In other words, transparency reinforces the credibility of the advocacy groups. Greenwood (2011) highlights that even though the EU's Transparency Register obliges to register the advocacy activities there are certain loopholes that different organisations try to exploit. For instance, it is vague how expenditures are calculated; moreover as Nicholson (pers.comm.) highlights meetings with decision makers outside of the Commissions are usually not registered.

It is fundamental that the solutions offered by the frame are realistic. Next to credibility Snow and Benford reaffirm that a frame's '**experiential commensurability**' influences the effectiveness. By this terminology they refer to whether "(the frames) suggests answers and solution to troublesome events and situation which harmonize with the ways in which these condition have been or are currently experienced" (Snow and Benford 1988, 208)". Yrjö-Koskinen (pers.comm) mentioned the example of one his colleagues who in the Finnish parliament rose that abolishing subsidies that benefit families could increase the country's sustainability. Unfortunately, this Malthusian, radical idea deters decision-makers and could even result in the loss of credibility; hence various negative impacts for future issues. In the case of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is an outstanding risk that due to the high complexity of the issues the advocates' frames can become too abstract and undermine their effectiveness. The interviews often discussed more innovative ideas, such as

shifting away from the mainstream discourse of measuring success through GDP. However, the interviewees were aware of the sensitivity of the topic. Smith, for instance, argues that “if you push too far then you can also deter” meaning that advocates must be careful with framing issues to radically, or in other words ensuring the experiential commensurability.

Coherence may also enhance the success of the frame(s). Johnston and Noakes (2005) also stress the importance of **consistency** in framing. Voitzwinkler (pers. comm.) also highlighted that, “we are coherent across the different processes in our asks whether be on energy climate change financing international NGO”. Therefore, GHA tries to align the different frames of the different topics. As Niestroy (pers. comm.) and Nicholson (pers. comm.) highlighted, Policy Coherence is one of the top priorities of the SDG Watch Europe. Looking at the different campaigns of the SDGWE they always include references to the other campaigns e.g.: PB refers to the 6th scenario of the campaign. In fact, policy coherence is an EU standard that is being addressed by the MSP as well. McLynn (pers. comm.) recognises that “The Agenda 2030 is massive, implementation is challenging, and coherence is challenging”. Especially in the case of 17 goals and 169 targets, it is difficult to bear in mind each and every one of them, this is why the thesis argues that advocates should push for the systemic implementation, that looks at it as a framework rather than as a set of single issues that different organisations can ‘cherry-pick’ from.

NGO coalitions enhance the resonance of frames. According to Johnston and Noaks (2005) effective framing is enhanced by strong coalitions. One of the most outstanding patterns that the research brought to the researcher’s attention too was the importance of NGO coalitions. McLynn (pers. comm.), Yrjö-Koskinen (pers. comm.), Heidegger (pers. comm.), and Voitzwinkler (pers. comm.) all highlighted that SDGWE is a powerful coalition in the EU.

Coalitions amplify the voice and contribute to credibility etc. However, what is peculiar about the SDGWE is that this is a cross-sectoral SDG coalition, hence it is an organisation which has an immense value due to its diversity of opinion and the ability to coordinate these opinion and produce campaigns that bear in mind all the standpoints of the member organisations.

McLynn states, “I think SDG Watch is very much the same depending and you are working with groups that understand the issue, that understands the importance of working together and that understands that without working together it will be much harder to achieve the objectives, and I think that’s the same for most networks you need to be coordinated and organised, and I think that’s where SDG Watch would be important. (pers. comm.)” Having almost 100 member organisations in the SDG Watch Europe also contributes to the credibility of the organisation, which contributes to effective framing. The SDGWE as explained previously also decides with a consensus, which should suggest that all members are advocating the exact same point of view. This is a huge competitive advantage in the MSP, due to the fact that many SDGWE member organisations are represented individually in the MSP, for instance WWF and CONCORD. As Niestroy (pers. comm.) reveals, to ensure that all of these organisations opinions are aligned at the meetings of the MSP, they hold strategic meetings prior to the MSP events.

Given the systemic nature of the SDGs an organisation by itself could hardly promote the systemic application of SDGs without working close with other organisations. Even though the SDGWE was highlighted as an important coalitions and opportunity by all of its members it is interesting to look at the obstacles they face. Niestroy (pers. comm.), Heidegger (pers. comm.), McLynn (pers. comm.) and many other interviewees argued that there are many obstacles the organisations are facing. One of them is the lack of capacity for function, which takes away from the abilities of the coalition. Furthermore, Heidegger

highlighted the bureaucratic burdens the institution has to face that again slows down the processes of the SDGWE, and eventually can lead to obstacle the quick reaction of the organisations.

The advocate him- or herself play a crucial role in the framing process. Goffman argues that a frame is a schemata of interpretation. In other words, how people (in our case the organisations or the advocates) perceive the world. Mahoney and Klüver (2015) in there two faced analysis argue that the advocate personally plays a crucial role. Hajdu also highlighted that it is an issue how the different advocates understand the SDGs (pers. comm.). However, the personal understanding is not necessarily separable of the view point of the organisation, therefore it was difficult to tell based on the interviews which interviewee obtained a systemic understanding of the goals.

The People's Budget an effective systemic frame?

After examining the internal and external factors that make a frame successful, we turn to the SDGWE's campaign on the MFF: The People's Budget. This campaign applies a systemic frame and its potentials have been highlighted various times in the interviews.

The MFF is the budget proposal for the proceeding 5 years of the European Commission. Currently, EU decision-makers' as well as advocacy groups' attention and efforts are evolving around this proposal. The People's Budget Campaign's aim is to implement sustainability as a guiding principle for the MFF. The campaign's demands are the outlined in the text box below.

Table 1: People's Budget Sustainability Principles

- The EU budget should **work for the people and with the people**, with greater transparency and accountability, respectful of diversity and meaningful participation of the citizens.
- The EU budget should **strengthen the common European values**, in Europe and globally
- The EU budget should **increase wellbeing and contribute to decreasing inequality** and social exclusion at all scales.
- The EU budget needs to take **holistic approach, support systems change and promote innovation**, which is required for the transition to sustainability and building a circular economy.
- The EU budget has to serve the development of a **diversified and resilient economy** and society, where the full potential and **participation of all communities, organisations and businesses** of any size is fully achieved
- The EU budget should **serve the public good**.
- The EU budget should contribute to **decreasing the total environmental pressures** (use of natural resources, use of land and emissions of waste, toxic substances, greenhouse gases and alien genotypes), and should not contribute to shifting of environmental pressures in time and space.
- The EU budget should **contribute to improving the state of environment and maintaining and restoring ecosystem services**, which is the very foundation of our society and economy.

Source: People's Budget 2018

These demands ensure that the key aspects of sustainability are taken into account by the budget of the EU. The campaign calls this sustainability proofing and by implementing this framework, the EU would ensure that its budget is allocated and spent sustainably.

As previously outlined, a framework should take into account a set of internal and external criteria to produce resonant frames. The People's Budget campaign is addressing a **central issue**, the budget of the EU. Furthermore the centrality of the campaign is underlined by linking it to the common European values.

The campaign's range is focused and coherent. Based on the previously outlined criteria, the frame needs to have a tangible **range** and it should ensure **coherence** with other projects. It is important to note that encouraging systemic change is a difficult task in a rigid framework like the EU, however starting with a focused scope like the Budget of the EU can have positive outcomes. In addition it is coherent with the debate of the EU and is coherent with the rest of SDGWE's frames where sustainability is a guiding principle.

Furthermore, the campaign is **timely**, as previously mentioned, the MFF is one of the key debates of the EU. Hajdu explained that already in 2016 the CEE Web has started to work on this campaign to prepare it for this drafting period of the MFF. Building it up slowly and making sure that it is ready for this period ensured that the advocates are ready to start reaching out in the right time when the MFF is on the top of the EU's agenda.

The campaign is built on research and a database as a result ensuring its **credibility**. Hajdu (pers. comm.) revealed the strong research that has been done to build this campaign. The organisation compiled not only best practices but also bad practices that provided a strong research background that reinforced the credibility of the campaign.

In addition, it is a solution-oriented campaign. Hajdu explained that they gathered best and worst practices for the MFF to offer tangible ideas and solutions. This ensures the **experiential commensurability**.

The People's Budget has been set by the SDGWE, therefore there is a strong **coalition** behind this campaign. Furthermore, the leaders of the campaign GBE, CEE WEB and the Hungarian Clean Air Action group have been proactive and organised conferences etc. for the promotion of the campaign. For instance, during the field trip they hosted a conference on Sustainable Finance, where the main topic was the MFF and various Commissioners, for instance Commissioner Katainen, joined the event and add their thought on sustainable finance.

The interview with Klara as well as the SDG Plenary introduced highlighted that this campaign has been reaching high-level decision-makers. For instance, Commissioner Ottinger got the PBs in his hand but when they discussed the paper he was not familiar with the contents.

The **venue choice** for the promotion of this campaign was first the SDGWE. This is due to the fact that, as Hajdu revealed, it was CEE WEB that came up with the idea of Sustainability Proofing already in 2016. The SDGWE was is a strong coalition, through which they could reach more advocacy organisations as well as more decision-makers. In addition, the SDGWE also promoted this campaign on the MSP subgroup meeting on the MFF. After the first meeting of the sub-group in January, the network seemed to have come to an agreement. However, Ferrucci and Smith both told that the statement that the platform released for the MFF was too far from their positions, and they therefore decided not to join it. Unfortunately, the statement is not available on the website of the MSP, and therefore its contents could not be analysed. It remains uncertain whether the idea of sustainability proofing made it to the statement.

On the 2nd of May, the European Commission announced its proposal for the Budget. At the SDGWE Plenary meeting on the 16th May it was outlined that the NGO umbrella group is not happy with the proposal. For example: sustainability did not become a guiding principle, like the PB's demands. Even though the proposal has a brief chapter on Sustainability and the Environment the SDGs, the SDGs are not a guiding principle of the whole proposal. As previously outlined, this is an categorisation error, where only the environmental aspects of sustainability are brought to the fore, suggesting the lack of systemic understanding from the EC's side. This is a clear obstacle to producing resonant systemic frames.

However, the plenary also highlighted improvements for instance: more budget is allocated for climate and energy, and Commission proposal includes a rule of law mechanism, if there is a systematic breach on rule of law there would be a consequence on the funds. Although these contribute to achieving sustainability, they are not ultimate solutions to the issues the EU needs to face by 2030.

The cross-sectoral NGO coalition mobilised great efforts to promote systemic implementation of the SDGs for the new budget of the European Union. The People Budget's campaign already made it to Commissioner Ottinger, which Hajdu highlighted as an important achievement. Commissioner Katainen and various others were present at the conference of this initiative meaning that the campaign has already reached the decision-makers.

Taking the sustainability as a principle for the budget could be an initial step for implementing sustainability and systems thinking in the other sectors of the European Union. The MFF report is a highly complex proposal where various interests, and hence also frames, compete with each other. Even though the coalition was not happy with the outcomes, the campaign did reach a lot of decision-makers and both the coalition and the network still have the time to influence the MFF. Implementing systems thinking in the MFF report could launch the EU on the path of breaking up with the mental, bureaucratic and institutional silos. However, for now the systemic framing was not resonant with the decision-makers.

Donella Meadows, in her book 'Thinking in Systems', argues that "Once we see the relationship between structure and behaviour, we can begin to understand how systems work, what makes them produce poor results, and how to shift them into better behaviour patterns." (Meadows, 2008). The work of the SDGWE recognises the failures of the current principles and paradigms according to which the EU is functioning. The EU has failed to implement the SDGs because of deficiencies of the system. These deficiencies can be overcome via

intervening in the System. For instance, Meadows (2008, 194) outlines that via changing the paradigm of the system, or in other words: “the mind-set out of which the system- its goals structure, rules, delays, parameters- arises”- is a good place to intervene into a system to increase its effectiveness. Therefore, the SDGWE’s People’s Budget campaign can be understood as a systemic frame that aims to change the paradigm and also the goals of the EU. Whether this campaign will succeed or whether sustainability in general will become a guiding principle in the EU remains a question of the next 12 years.

Future research

Given the deficiency of research on this topic there is a lot of more aspects future research could focus on.

Future research could investigate the progress of the MSP via policy analysis. In the methodology we have already outlined how the implementation of the Agenda is in its initial phase. Therefore, the thesis did not analyse existing policies. The majority of the MSP’s work is still in an early stage and whether the systemic framing of the SDGs will succeed is uncertain.

A comparative analysis with other existing or historical multi-stakeholder platforms could reveal significant insights on how to make the Platform more effective. Moreover, a study of multi-stakeholder relations in similar issues could also be beneficial for the understanding of the multi stakeholder cooperation in the SDGs.

Furthermore, since it is not enough if a small platform’s advocates are thinking in systems, research could also evaluate how decision-makers perceive the SDGs.

7. Conclusion

In this last chapter of the thesis the key points of the research are summarized. The aim of the research was to understand how advocacy groups of the European Union engage in

the promotion of the SDGs. The research found that advocacy groups engage in cross-sectoral networks and coalitions and use different frames to promote SDGs. Two main framing trends were identified; one that promotes the SDGs as an overarching, systemic framework that call for a systemic change, and another one that comprehends the goals from a siloed point of view and does not recognise the systemic nature of the SDGs, and hence regards it as a secondary issue. To come to these findings, the thesis looked at the MSP, which was identified as a key platform for SDG advocacy. The research then identified and analysed the two competing frames, based on the interviews of the research, and discussed what in theory makes frames efficient. Finally, to analyse an example where the SDGs were applied as a guiding principle, the thesis analysed the campaign of the SDGWE's People's Budget campaign.

The policy-network of the SDGs

The research found that advocacy groups engage in cross-sectoral collaborations to promote the SDGs, one of these is the policy-network of the SDGs, the European Commission's Multi-stakeholder Platform for the implementation of the SDGs.

The research revealed that the Multi- Stakeholder Platform is the policy-network for the SDGs, which are joined by not only advocacy groups but also decision-makers of the EU. Policy network analysis evaluated the network's membership and function and structure and outline the key issues with the current setting of the MSP. The fixed membership of the Platform does not ensure inclusivity of all stakeholders, which hinders the ability of other interest groups to join the network and the efforts of advocates. In addition, via applying the logic of venue shopping, the thesis identified why advocates choose this platform to promote the SDGs. As Pralle argues (2003) the fact the multi-stakeholder platform has a diverse group of members indicates that those organisations found the SDGs a key policy issue. Furthermore, the MSP can be a catalyser of policy change, and provides a chance for

advocacy groups to change the dynamics of the debate. For instance, public advocacy groups have now more space to articulate their needs and bring their frames to fore.

Framing of the SDGs

The frames of the advocacy groups are key tools for promoting the implementation of the SDGs. Therefore, when advocating the SDGs the organisations apply different frames that reflect their interests.

Two generic frames were identified; one that sees the SDGs as a systemic agenda, and another one that ignores the interconnectedness of the goals. Based on the theories of systems thinking, the systemic frames try to intervene in the system and change its effectiveness, or in other words they call for systemic change through advertising the SDGs as a guiding principle. The effectiveness of these frames is strongly related to the ability of producing resonant frames. Using framing as a theoretical and analytical perspective helped the research analyse the interviews and understand how are the frames constructed. Both external and internal criteria were evaluated to understand how SDG related advocacy could produce resonant frames. These criteria were based on the interviews as well as the ideas of Benford and Snow (1988) and Johnston and Noaks (2005): Centrality, range and interrelatedness, timeliness are external factors. Internal factors are credibility, experiential commensurability, transparency, the coalitions behind the frame, as well as the advocates themselves. The SDGWE was identified as a highly beneficial coalition behind the systemic frames of the SDG promotion. Furthermore, the organisation was another proof that to promote SDGs advocacy groups engage in cross-sectoral collaborations. To apply the criteria and see how a framing works through an empirical example, the research evaluated the People's Budget Campaign. It found that even though the outlined criteria have been met, the advocates of the MSP did not find this proposal appealing. Furthermore, the current MFF proposal does not reflect the SDGs as a guiding principle.

Recommendations

The rudimentary stage of SDG implementation calls for change in the system. There are several ways to improve the effectiveness of the MSP and the framing strategies of the advocacy groups to be able to achieve a system change that is required for the implementation of the SDGs.

The heterogeneity of the Multi-stakeholder platform needs to be increased. Having only 30 members on the Platform limits its potentials. As in the case of the SDGWE, the coalition is able to represent a wider set of NGOs, which fosters the systemic understanding of the Agenda 2030. Furthermore, it also increases the legitimacy and credibility of the umbrella group, which has positive impacts on its framing. Furthermore, the MSP needs to increase its transparency, especially on articulating how members are chosen, and produce reports on the achievements of the platform. Some of the interviewees highlighted their confusion of the MSP. Clarifying the aims and objectives will foster the work of the members as well.

Another finding was that some of the interviews indicated the presence of strong biases between the public and the private sector. For instance, some interviews discussed how corporate lobbyists are always blocking the work of the MSP. Even though this might be the case, it is important to put aside the usual biases, as well as the silos, and learn how to cooperate with new stakeholders. Otherwise, these biases hinder the collaboration between different stakeholders.

As Le Blanc (2015) suggest; even though the SDGs are a network of targets, the SDGs are not necessarily taking systems thinking as its basis. There are systemic errors within the goals for example the previously mentioned issue of growth, and therefore the next review of the Agenda should try to resolve some of these flaws to ensure that a systemic implementation is definitely possible.

In conclusion; advocates are important catalysers of policy change in the EU, and although the Multi-stakeholder Platform provides a unique opportunity to work on the implementation of the SDGs in a cross-sectoral network, it remains questionable whether this Platform will be able to bring the SDG to the forefront of the EU's agenda.

The advocates engage in the promotion of the Agenda 2030 through framing it in different ways. Their frames impact the understanding of the decision-makers, therefore producing resonant frames that comprehend the SDGs as a guiding principle, or as an overarching framework could foster the decision-makers understanding of sustainability, and perhaps break-down mental, political, as well as institutional silos in the European Union. Applying the SDGs as a guiding principle in the EU would induce systemic change and could lead to hitting seventeen Goals with one stone.

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Appendix I- Interview Questions

- 1.) How did you get into advocacy work?
- 2.) What would you name as the most successful campaign related to your work with the SDGs or SDG Watch Europe (depending on the expert being interviewed)
 - a. Follow up question: What would you name as a successful/effective campaign?
- 3.) What do you see as your key goal with your work in SDG Watch/ Multi-Stakeholder Platform?
 - a. Name opportunities or difficulties
- 4.) How do you feel about the Multi Stakeholder Platform so far?
- 5.) Do you think there is a secret ingredient that contributes to the success of the SDG Watch Europe/ Multi Stakeholder Platform? Anything missing?

Appendix II- List of MSP members

Member organisations	Birdlife
	Business Europe
	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
	COFACE Families Europe
	Committee of the Region
	CONCORD
	COPA COGECA
	CSR Europe
	EUROCITIES
	ETUC
	EESC European Economic and Social Committee
	ENEL
	EPHA European Public Health Alliance
	ESADE Business School
	European Environmental Bureau
	European Youth Forum
	International Integrated Reporting Council
	Social platform
	SDG Watch
	Transparency International
	Unilever
	WWF
Members in Personal Capacity	Vandinika Shukla (European Commission's young leader)
	Christian Timman (EU High-level Expert Group)
	Wiebe Draijer (Chairman of the Radobank Managing Board)
	Janez Potocnik (Director of the Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development of the Republic of Slovenia)
	Mella Frewen (Food Drink Europe)
	Sergi Corbalan (Fair Trade Advocacy Office)
	Peter Bossman (Mayor of Piran)
Observers	Roby Biwer (Former Mayor of Bettembourg)
	European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils
	European Economic and Social Committee (2 people)
	EIB
	ESDN
	IUCN
	OECD
	UN/UNDP
	WB

Appendix III- List of SDGWE Members

Full members	Act Alliance EU
	ALDA-European Association for Local Democracy
	ALSVIS
	Caritas Europe
	CBM
	CEE Bankwatch Network
	CEE web for Biodiversity
	Climate Action Network Europe
	European Volunteer Center
	Climate Alliance
	COFACE Families Europe
	Conservation International Europe CI-Europe
	Cooperatives Europe
	Culture Action Europe
	Deutsche Stiftung Wltbevoelkerung
	ECOLISE
	Education International
	EU-CORD
	Eurochild
	Eurodiaconia
	EuroNGOs
	European Anti-Poverty Network
	European Association for the Education of Adults
	European Disability Forum
	European Environmental Bureau
Full members	European Federation of National Organisation Working with the Homeless
	European Partnership for Democracy
	European Patients' Forum
	European Public Health Alliance
	European Volunteer Center
	European Women's Lobby
	European Youth Forum
	Fair Trade Advocacy Office
	FERN
	Friends of the Earth Europe
	GCAP Italy
	Global Call to Action Against Poverty
	Global Forum for Media Development
	Global Forum for Media Development
	Global Health Advocates

	Green Budget Europe
	HelpAge International
	Housing Europe
	IFOAM
	International Council on Social Welfare
	International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network
	Light for the World International
	Lithuanian NGDO Platform (NNVBO Platforma)
	Make Mothers Matter EU delegation
	National Youth Council of Ireland
	Oxfam International EU Office
	Plan International EU Office
	Save the Children
	Search for Common Ground
	SKOP Malta
	SLOGA – Slovenian Global Action Social Platform
	Soleterre – Strategie di Pace ONLUS
	SOLIDAR
	SOS Children's Villages
	Stop AIDS Alliance
	Terre des Hommes
	The Danish 92 Group
	The Finnish NGDO Platform to the EU Kehys
	Transparency International EU
	Wetlands International – European Association
	Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF)
	World Vision EU Representation Office
	WWF European Policy Office
Observers	Alianza por la Solidaridad
	Biodegradables
	Caucasus Environmental NGO Network
	Child Fund Alliance
	CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation
	Civil Society Europe
	DOCHAS
	European Network Against Racism
	European Peacebuilding Liaison
	Fair Fish International
	Forest Stewardship Council
	Friends of Earth Hungary

	Haurralde Foundation
	International Institute for Sustainable Development
	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
	Life Lond Learning Platform
	MedSOS
	NABU- Naturschutzbund Deutschland
	National Union of Students UK
	Organization Earth
	Sustainable Europe Research Institute Germany
	Trade Union Development Cooperation Network
	Confederation
	Women for Water Partnership