

REVIEW ARTICLE

The Benefits of Promoting SDG 17 to Combat Climate Change

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ABSTRACT

193 members of the United Nations approved the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015. According to the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs contemplated the ending of poverty, the protection of the Earth and the promotion of prosperity for all. Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG 17) deals specifically with the creation of global alliances for development. The underlying assumption respecting this point is that these stakeholder partnerships encourage the interchange of knowledge, experience, technology, and other resources to administer efficiently the other sixteen SDGs. Although SDG 17 is very well established in theory, in practice there are still appreciable downfalls as to how to successfully make this theory become a reality. This short review will analyse the potential viability of SDG 17 “partnerships for the goals” with respect to SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), and thereupon SDG 13 (associated with climate action) utilising two south-western France two wind farm initiatives.

Keywords: Sustainable development; Sustainable Development Goal 17; SDG 17; Climate change; SDG 13; SDG 7

1. Introduction

The United Nations highlights the importance of the fact that sustainable development should meet the necessities of today’s generations without jeopardizing those of our future generations to satisfy

their own needs. This definition is part of the 1987 Brundtland report, which aims at creating long-term solutions to resolve sustainable development-related planetary problems.

The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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became a reality in 2015. They entailed 17 goals and 169 targets, and they were part of a document called “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”^[1]. The SDGs encourage the participation of all sectors of society using a participatory process^[2]. The SDG Partnership Guidebook 2020 highlights that sustainable development can happen if there is cooperation from all stakeholders. Presently, our planetary resources (i.e., of all sorts) are finite, and this demands their optimization, as well as the creation of networks between different stakeholders to assure the alignment of the concerns of the distinct project actors. These associations should encompass the widest array of stakeholders possible including NGOs and universities, among others. This very much describes the role of SDG17, which is the creation of alliances to tackle the planet-wide problems that we are presently facing.

2. SDG 17

Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG 17) deals with creating planetary associations for development. It refers to the development of partnerships between multiple stakeholders from all sectors of society and addresses the way in which global alliances may be implemented in the seven areas of finance, technology, trade, capacity development, policy coherence, partnerships, and data. Although the first sixteen Sustainable Development Goals refer to specific actions, SDG 17 addresses the way that the other goals may be implemented through the promotion of development partnerships between the different stakeholders^[3]. In other words, SDG 17 encourages the “right way” of working, through the creation of multi-actor alliances. The assertion behind this argument is that these associations will encourage the exchange of diverse, complementary, and incrementally beneficial knowledge, experience, technology, and other resources between the different stakeholders to accomplish the 2030 agenda^[4].

Using a multi-stakeholder perspective to governance aids to (1) assure the collaboration of a higher number of stakeholders, (2) determine and get around any obstacles that could influence the en-

agement of any of the parties, (3) create a multi-actor practical and collaborative network as suggested by SDG 17. Consequently, project actors should participate at the highest and widest levels of project governance as may be appropriate from local and international. At each of these positions, arrangements are necessary to ensure that the multi-sectorial governance situation is promoted and sustained over time.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has given rise to great progress since it was implemented in 2015. Nonetheless, the COVID-19 situation has led to a re-evaluation of the accomplishment of the achievements attained during this 15-year period. This extraordinary event has revealed and emphasized how important it is to encourage the creation of partnerships between distinct business sectors and actors. Therefore, multi-stakeholder collaboration will be necessary to address the obstacles and challenges that COVID has left us, as our society today begins to recover from but also learn the essential lessons from the pandemic to become more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive. For example, the rapid evolution of the COVID-19 vaccine treatment has demonstrated the effectiveness and importance of multi-actor alliances. Such an example was the COVID-19 Global Vaccines Access (COVAX) project, where a series of very different stakeholders such as governments, scientists, companies, civil society, philanthropists, and community organizations worked jointly in a successful manner to develop the vaccine^[5].

3. The limitations of SDG 17

While the Sustainable Development Goals surely illustrate a way forward, they do entail several disadvantages. One argument is their focal point remains on the economic pillar of sustainability, thereby limiting the potential effects of the latter in promoting ecological and social sustainability^[6]. Moreover, there is presently a necessity for multi-stakeholder partnerships to encompass a greater degree of flexibility, rather than just being limited to an agreement accorded between governments and businesses. Such

a limited context of collaboration reduces the value that may potentially be generated from multi-stakeholder partnerships ^[7].

The development of a lessons-learned archive will aid in expanding the current knowledge while promoting a common understanding of how the creation of global alliances can be efficient and powerful in encouraging change ^[8,9]. Consequently, there is a necessity for knowledge to be compiled and circulated among decision-makers. Moreover, procedures for evaluating and monitoring these partnerships are necessary to measure the evolution and success of these alliances in achieving their pertinent goals ^[9].

In addition, the risks and challenges related to teamwork should also be taken into account, such as the risk of selecting inappropriate project partners, establishing inadequate goals, having inefficient authorities, as well as inadequate accountability ^[7]. A further difficulty to highlight is the complication of incorporating distinct organizational approaches and ways of working, which take up a considerable amount of time and work. All these actions will help us to reflect and reach adequately grounded conclusions on the failings and successes of the distinct methodologies and how improvements may be made ^[9].

4. SDG 17 and climate action

The central goal of the December 2015 Paris Agreements was to decrease global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. As noted by the UN's Former General Secretary Ban Ki Moon, the Paris Agreements were a fantastic achievement for both humans and our planet Earth, and it established the basis to work towards the abolishment of poverty, establishing peace, and assuring a life of self-respect and opportunity for all. With respect to the Sustainable Development Goals, the planetary issue of climate change is accounted for by SDG 13 titled "Climate Action". The SDGs illustrate and present faith and aspiration regarding climate change for the future of

climate change protocols and procedures.

A crucial point to emphasize is that presently distinct platforms are used to manage the Paris and the SDGs. There is therefore currently a problem with respect to accessing integrated information regarding the latter. Consequently, there is still scope for improvement in this regard.

The 17 SDGs (and 169 targets) encompass specific elements of climate policy that are associated to:

- 1) Mitigation of GHG emissions.
- 2) Adaptation to detrimental effects of climate change.
- 3) Finance.
- 4) Transfer of technology to developing countries.
- 5) Capacity building for all stakeholders.
- 6) Promoting collaboration and partnerships among all.

These six aspects form part of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change policy. Ari ^[10] researched the association between the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreements by assessing the SDG targets and their interdependence with the six key climate change items listed above.

The research results (**Figure 1**) show the degree of interdependence, which is presented as a proportion, that is determined by dividing the number of SDG-associated climate change elements by six. As shown in **Figure 1**, SDG 17 appears to be the second SDG that is most associated with the Paris Climate Agreements (i.e., with 66.7% interconnectivity).

By default, very much connected to the Paris Agreements are SDG 13 (climate action) and SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), each with an interdependence percentage of 66.7%. SDG 7 indicates that all planetary residents should be able to obtain dependable, and long-term energy. Moreover, through this goal, GHGs are decreased leading to a reduction of the effects of climate change. SDG 7 is related to the climate action items of climate change, technology transfer, cooperation, and partnerships as well as economic-related items.

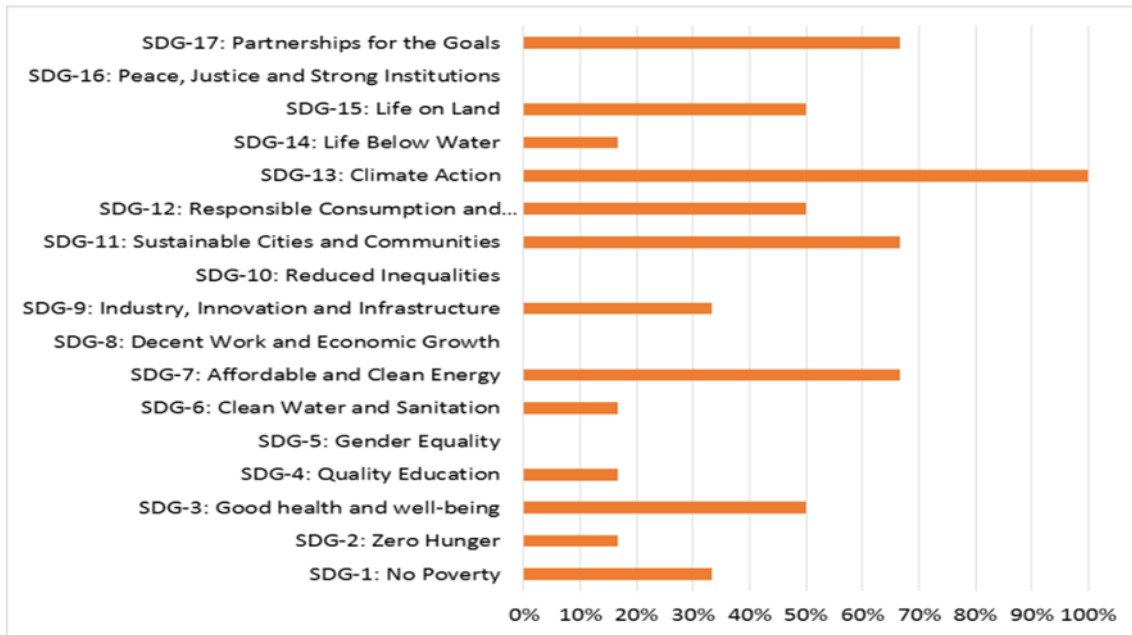


Figure 1. Interconnectivity between SDGs and climate agreements ^[10].

5. The Thollet-Coulonges and Liglet wind farm case studies

France is the second largest wind producer in Europe. With respect to renewable energy initiatives, the French authorities possess grounded engagement processes that assure that all actors are able to participate and communicate their perspectives regarding specific initiatives. These legal actions represent the essence of Sustainable Development Goal 17, giving all potential project actors the opportunity to engage in a well-established procedure to attain project approvals or rejections.

Consequently, despite the elevated potentiality of wind farm projects to contribute to national energy independence, developers are required to pursue a tedious and thorough process in order to allow, encourage and enable the input and collaboration of a wide array of project actors in a democratic and clear manner. Nonetheless, once a project is approved after this lengthy and open process, it will usually be able to carry on to its completion without encountering any further obstacles. In a way, it is a kind of forced stakeholder participation at the approval stage to clear the ground for project implementation through an established exhaustive but fair legal process that effectively pre-empts possible later difficulties and

ensures the means of effective comprehensive stakeholder project participation.

5.1 The Thollet-Coulonges project

The Thollet-Coulonges wind farm initiative that covered the two named communes located in the “La Vienne” department, involved a wide array of stakeholders that were antagonistic towards the project. At its initiation stage, the project entailed the development of 20 wind turbines of circa 3,300 kilowatts to generate a total power of 66 MW.

The proposal for this initiative was first presented in 2013, as part of an aspiring national renewable energies scheme in the Poitou-Charentes region (now part of Nouvelle-Aquitaine), specifically aimed at developing wind energy potential ^[11].

Despite the high potential for wind farm projects in supporting the economic and political objective of national energy independence, developers must nevertheless still follow the established legal procedures aimed at properly considering and taking account of the often-conflicting interests of all stakeholders. Perceived environmental obstacles are usually the main grounds of contention in the consideration of project proposals.

This was the case with the Thollet-Coulonges ini-

tiative proposal, which was widely debated and challenged, by the very dynamic and engaged environmental associations and the Vienne anti-wind turbine federation. Furthermore, the local population was very much divided on the wind farm project proposal and the great controversy generated gave rise to a lengthy court action against village council members over conflict of interests allegations in that they were in some cases farmer landowners of areas where the wind generators would be built so that they would be entitled to receiving rental payments. A few members of both councils were made to pay fines, while one mayor was destitute, and a new council had to be consequently elected. In the end, the project evaluation process took seven years for the project to be approved. Then it was only through a decision made by the Conseil d'Etat, the highest court in the land, and it was then only in February 2023, close to a decade after first being mooted, that the project (i.e., now encompassing the building of only 15 wind turbines) was finally given the green light for its commencement, with the publishing of the tender call for the associated construction project.

5.2. The Liglet project

In France, the landscape is one of the main reasons why local authorities reject renewable energy initiatives, principally due to the visual effect that these projects can have on the natural scenery. This was the situation with the construction of the wind farm project in the commune of Liglet. Moreover, the initiative proposal was very much debated and entailed a tedious and lengthy administrative process that was executed according to the established procedures. The Prefect of the Vienne département had previously rejected the authorization of the project in 2019, however additional appeals were presented, and the legal case was only finalized in December 2022 after a period of eight years, when the Conseil d'Etat, declined the undertaking of the Liglet initiative. It's essential to point out that the decision was made principally on the basis that the construction of the wind farm would considerably affect the natural landscape of the UNESCO World Heritage site of the

Abbey of Saint-Savin and the Priory of Villesalem in the nearby commune of Journet.

5.3 About both projects

The factors that generated major conflicts of interest between the stakeholders in both projects tended to be those of a social and economic nature, relating to the way of life of the people in the proposed locations of the wind farms. The area is very rural with ambitions to develop rural tourism and an installation of wind farms would be seen as disrupting a settled way of life and as creating a visual blight on the landscape. Associated with this were environmentalists concerned with the possible effects on non-human stakeholders, such as birds, bats and other wildlife, besides local authorities and local associations concerned by the possible effect on local tourism and thus on their local economies.

The State really had a conflict of interests, all to itself, a kind of double stake, one unexpressed directly, one active, one being an interest in increasing the national green energy generation capacity but also another, on the other side, so to speak, as being the effective ultimate custodian of the national cultural heritage. The former interest was, in practical terms, delegated to the developers of the projects, in that success by the developers in obtaining approval would help the State's strategic ambition, but in the examination of the project, the State remained formally mute. On the other hand, the State, generally through its regional authorities and cultural and environmental agencies, was the ultimate arbiter of such matters as the preservation and protection of landscapes.

There were thus numerous stakeholders with numerous overlapping conflictual interests, needing a great number of both administrative and legal processes and repeated appeals over several years before final formal decisions were handed down. The decisions can, in both cases, be said to take account of objections and representations by stakeholders and to mitigate the conflicts of interest aroused by the projects, in the case of Thollet/Coulonges by the reduction in the density, in the number of wind

turbines from the 20 originally proposed to the 15 finally approved, in the case of Liglet by the complete rejection of the project on the grounds of the severe impact it would have had on the landscape in an area with several historic buildings of national cultural importance.

6. Conclusions

From these two renewable energy examples presented in this article, it is possible to see how SDG 17 can be effectively harnessed but still in a fair, open, and socially and culturally responsible manner to facilitate the application of both SDG 13 and SDG 7 “Affordable and clean energy”, as a means of reducing the effects of climate change via the transitioning to renewable energies.

Although SDG 17 is very effective in theory, it does have its limitations for example the variety of stakeholders considered in multi-stakeholder partnerships is often still limited to governments, companies and civil society. The French examples presented in this review show that this should not be something to worry about. Although lengthy, the exhaustive French process does ensure that consideration is given to the concerns of all stakeholders, albeit in a legal rather than a voluntary context, and that once decisions are handed down on project proposals, often with provisions on concerns raised by stakeholders, they will usually be accepted as being fair and legally consensual. Performing comparative exercises to evaluate why some multi-actor alliances are more effective than others in attaining the different objectives set by the Sustainable Development Goals is imperative to proceed satisfactorily towards the successful carrying out of the SDGs.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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