SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT G⚪ALS

Jean Monnet Sustainable Development Goals Network

Roundtable 1 Report

In attendance:
Bruce Wilson, Robbie Guevara, Sharif As-Saber, Renzo Mori Jnr, Mary Johnson, Emma Shortis, and Chris Duke (RMIT); Lay Hwee Yeo (EU Centre Singapore, NUS/NTU); Jo Neary (Glasgow); Rachel England (ANU); Serena Kelly and Mathew Doidge (NCRE Canterbury)

The EU Centre at RMIT University was delighted to welcome members of the Jean Monnet SDG Network to Melbourne for our first Research Roundtable, held on October 22 and 23, 2018. What follows is a brief report of our extensive discussions, outlining the process of Day 1 in order to introduce the decisions made on Day 2.

Day 1 – Research Mapping

The aim of Day 1 was a 'mapping' exercise, in order to get a clearer idea of each researcher's focus and area of interest, in order to establish connections and possible gaps in the network. Each researcher identified the following areas of expertise and interest:

Lay Hwee (Singapore/NUS/NTU)	Focus on EU role and support to SDGs in SEA countries (Looking at connectivity)
Jo (University of Glasgow)	Social policy and public health as they intersect with SDG 3,10 and 1.
Rachel – (ANU)	To rock the sustainable development world – to privilege the voices of the women.
Serena (NCRE, Canterbury)	How EU is viewed as the development actor? How the EU communicates?
Mat (NCRE, Canterbury)	EU as a global actor in the region. Development policy of the EU
Renzo (RMIT)	Mapping Sustainability Governance Initiatives
Sharif (RMIT)	Management (Sustainability) Bangladesh
Mary (RMIT)	Philanthropy and SDGs, Landcare (6 countries) and how it links to the SDGs.
Robbie (RMIT)	SDG 4 (in particular 4.7) civil society
Emma (RMIT)	Environmental diplomacy; climate change & history

During this introductory session, a number of connections, points of discussion and shared questions arose, including:

- The importance of interdisciplinary research—how do we do it effectively, in practice?
- Not much that we talk about or research isn't related to the SDGs—how much is explicit? Is our aim to focus only on explicit activity?
- The SDGs as neo-colonialism?
- The problem of silos, especially within universities—how do we overcome this?
- How do we measure impact? What role for metrics? Green-washing, accountability, transparency, and the dominance of the global north in measurement and assessment.
- The critical role of governance and capacity building.
- How do we contextualise the SDGs in a particular place? Who is not being heard? Reconciling (or not) the local with the global.
- The thorny concepts of "resilience" and "community engagement"
- The roles of universities and international organisations in achieving (or hindering) the SDGs.

Following these discussions, the group turned to focus on the cluster structure proposed in the original grant submission:

Cluster 1: *The European Union: SDG Collaboration with Asian and Pacific Intergovernmental Organisations*

Cluster 2: *The European Union: Interventions in Specific Asian or Pacific Nations*

Cluster 3: *The EU and Non Government Organisations re SDGs in Asia Pacific*

Cluster 4: *EU Thematic Focus in Asian Pacific SDG Implementation*

Each researcher used post-it notes to align their research with relevant clusters, and identify other network members they might collaborate with.

After a long and vibrant discussion, it became evident that many of the research interests of network members overlapped with several clusters, or could not be satisfactorily classified into one.

The question arose of how the Network might better organise itself in order to more effectively draw out connections and collaboration. It was generally agreed that it might be more effective to focus on the themes of the SDGs themselves, while always keeping an eye to the ever-present danger of creating new silos.

To that end, Bruce Wilson suggested the Network might engage with **Professor Jeffrey Sachs' five category framework**. (See Sachs 2015, 274-75—attached):

1. the provision of essential public services: health, education, utilities and infrastructure;

2. complex 'intermediate' goals such as 'decent work' that involve close collaboration between public and private sectors, and civil society;

3. complex high-level goals such as eliminating poverty and hunger by 2030;

4. transformational goals for environmental sustainability, addressing specific topics such as climate-related change, carbon, urbanisation, food, energy and ecosystems; and

5. high level social objectives, related to gender equality, reducing violence and increasing inclusion, and promoting global citizenship.

Each Network member chose the cluster they thought best suited to their own interests and grouped together to discuss connections and possibilities for collaboration. One member of each group then reported back. The outcomes were discussed in detail the following day.

Day 2 – Taking Stock and Network Function

On the morning of Day 2, session chair Robbie Guevara summarised the questions and connections that arose out of the 'research mapping' session into the following framework:

CONCEPTUAL	**CONTEXTUAL**
- Governance of sustainability - Environmental Sustainability - Development, Growth (critical review) - Regionalism - Alternative measurement - Connections across SDGs - Nature of Work (Decent work) - Critical review of the Sachs' FW	- Time (Past, Present, Future) - Space (Place as starting point) - Relationships (Local, Global) - *Honouring perspectives* - *Holding these 'tensions'* - Ensuring voices of the grassroots
- A more participatory approach to capacity-building - More Collaborative - As much about relationship building (across institutions and across sectors, including civil society) - Case study approach **APPROACH**	Working and transforming - our academic/research institutions - platforms of the EU (eg. ASEM, ASEF, etc) - Political institutions (eg DFAT) - NGOs - Norms, policy and regulations **INSTITUTIONAL**

After a long discussion of the merits and pitfalls of the various structures the group had considered in the context of the outline above, it was agreed that the Sachs' framework offered the most suitable approach.

Each member of the network nominated a cluster, and one person from each group then volunteered as cluster leader, as per the table below. Each cluster leader agreed to prepare a one page report to share with the entire network by **Friday, November 2**.

Cluster	Discussion Summary	Members
1. the provision of essentially public services: health, education, utilities and infrastructure;	Role of the EU in advancing the SDGs as a transformational agenda for provision of essential public services - Mapping EU in ASEAN & ASEM - EU and Education Aid in Asia/Pacific - Role of Higher Education Institutions (Influencing the Research Agenda)	Renzo Mori Jo Neary Robbie Guevara Sharif As-Saber **Leader:** Lay Hwee Yeo
2. complex 'intermediate' goals such as 'decent work' that involve close collaboration between public and private sectors, and civil society;	There were no volunteers for this cluster in attendance on Day 1; on Day 2, Sharif As-Saber volunteered to produce a report.	Renzo Mori Mary Johnson **Leader:** Sharif As-Saber
3. complex high-level goals such as eliminating poverty and hunger by 2030;	How the SDG poverty reduction targets are communicated by the European Union and other key international development actors, and the public perception of poverty in relation to the SDGs, focusing on the Pacific region?	Serena Kelly Mathew Doidge Jo Neary Rachel England **Leader:** Serena Kelly
4. transformational goals for environmental sustainability, addressing specific topics such as climate-related change, carbon, urbanisation, food, energy and ecosystems; and	Policy mechanisms (local/global) ↓ Community engagement/collaboration ↓ Regional communities in transition to sustainable communities (place-based policy mechanisms) ↓ Case studies (what works?)	Mary Johnson Robbie Guevara Chris Duke **Leader:** Emma Shortis
5. high level social objectives, related to gender equality, reducing violence and increasing inclusion, and promoting global citizenship.	Mapping (EU activity and SDG interconnectedness in AP) IGOs (ASEAN, ASEM) Individual countries (Laos, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Philippines, Bangladesh, Australia, NZ) NGOs (ITUC, ASPBAE, aid projects)	Lay Hwee Yeo Bruce Wilson Chris Duke Mary Johnson Serena Kelly Mathew Doidge **Leader:** Rachel England

Looking Forward

With regard to the clusters, it was agreed that:

- Absent network partners would nominate themselves for the most appropriate group/s
- Cluster leaders would coordinate communication. They will start a conversation in their cluster about what each person is doing; how to build a picture; what the opportunities might be. Part of this is paying attention to conceptual issues; governance; measurement; development; regionalism etc
- Part of the role of the clusters will also be to interrogate within the group whether the Sachs formulation makes sense; this work will test Sachs' framework in practice.
- Some particular case studies to focus on might be: Laos, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Philippines, Bangladesh, Australia, New Zealand—where there is possibility/choice. (How do we bring place into our collaboration?)
- Bruce Wilson or Emma Shortis will be in each cluster in order to ensure cohesion across the network

Planning the Work Program

Events Breakdown

2 x Research Roundtables
Singapore 2019 and Canberra 2020

3 x one-day policy dialogues;
Planned for Melbourne, Singapore and Canberra

6 x Early Career/Graduate Workshops
Melbourne and Online

1 x Conference (2020)
Melbourne

TIMELINE

2019
2 x policy dialogues
1 x Roundtable
3 x ECR

2020
1 x policy dialogues
1 x Roundtable
3 x ECR
1 x Final Conference

It was noted that Singapore is hosting a student workshop from 15 - 28 June 2019, and the possibility of aligning the next Research Roundtable, a Policy Dialogue event and an Early Career workshop with that event found general support amongst the group. Bruce and Emma will liaise with Lay Hwee to further this discussion.

Early Career/Graduate Workshops
- The first workshop will be a more generic introduction to Europe, run by the EU Centre at RMIT, drawing on the considerable expertise and experience of Canterbury. This will most likely be held in March/April 2019.
- After that, 1 workshop will be managed by each of the clusters. They could be held in person, aligned with other events, and live streamed.
- As noted above 1 workshop (run by Cluster 1) will likely be held in Singapore in June 2019. Sharif As-Saber also suggested the possibility of arranging a workshop in Bangladesh on 'decent work'/public-private NGO to coincide with his organising a conference in either March or December.

- The final conference in 2020 might be held to coincide with the UN HLPF, and should also coincide with the Jean Monnet Network on Migration (hosted by ANU) final conference. It should include a policy dialogue.

Deliverables
- 4 monographs
- 12 policy briefs
- 24 articles

Network Website

Please visit www.rmit.edu.au/sdgnetwork

Feedback included:
- Include more detailed write up of the SDGs
- Should act as a repository of slides etc (Network member activities)
- Page of links to other sites—Glasgow etc, Singapore summer school; Resources page
- Contact details added

Please send Emma any updates, items of interest, relevant publications, etc!

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