



Understanding policy integration of the Sustainable Development Goals: A Network Theory approach

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Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been much debated but there is no question that their goal is to achieve a more balanced and sustainable planet. This study systematically reviewed literature in order to determine the key criteria needed to implement such goals. A search of Scopus indexed journals as well as grey literature published up to March 2020 yielded 114 papers for examination. Using a Network Theory approach, the study found 14 common criteria for successful policy integration of the SDGs. The findings from this paper support that the achievement of the SDGs needs a comprehensive and holistic approach to achieve them. Through an assessment of many different fields of study, commonalities or networks occurred demonstrating how one goal can support and be a means to an end to achieve another. Conclusions consider that using Network Theory to assess tourism policies may assist in the success of policies for the achievement of the SDGs due to its interrelated nature.

Keywords: SDG, Sustainable Development, Policy Implementation, Integration, Network Theory

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INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were created in order to improve basic human rights and eradicate environmental violations on a global and systemic scale and have been highlighted as a crucial element for the study of the contribution to sustainable development (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2020). Although there is no debate on the importance of the SDGs, there has been little work holistically assessing the SDGs in policy integration regardless of the fact that some authors have outlined the need for governance incorporating the SDGs (Siakwah et al., 2020; Spencer & McBean, 2020). Some authors (Brendehaug et al., 2017; Becken et al., 2020) have attempted to undertake policy integration; however, both these efforts deal only with some aspects of sustainability and do not mention the wider, overarching SDG goals. When examining tourism, a key critique of achieving more sustainable tourism has been the lack of policy integration (Hall, 2019; Dodds & Butler, 2009a). Therefore, understanding key criteria for SDG policy integration and to what extent this is present in tourism policies may help illuminate to what extent tourism policy encompasses such goals. This paper uses a wider lens than just tourism to examine SDG policy integration from all industries to ascertain the key elements needed to achieve integration and then examines European city tourism policies to determine comprehensiveness.

The SDGs were created in 2015 and serve as a balanced framework for sustainable development planning and programming over a 15-year time span (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). They contain 17 goals, 169 targets, and 232 indicators that build upon the success of other targets- and indicator-based frameworks such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (McArthur & Rasmussen, 2017) to identify actions for all countries to move forward across a broader range of interlinked goals (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2016; United Nations Development Programme, 2016). One possible explanation of why the SDGs are not well embedded into tourism or other policies is that there is a lack of suggested frameworks and guidelines for SDGs policy integration. Many researchers (Karaosman et al., 2016; Story et al., 2017; Ferro et al., 2019; Betti et al., 2018) have offered critiques of various approaches to SDG policy implementation, but have not provided any framework or guidelines for testing these ideas adequately or extensively. Judicial mechanisms to hold governments accountable for their role in achieving the SDGs are also lacking (Saiz & Donald, 2017; Cronin et al., 2015). This lack of framework suggests that

governments are not yet fully accountable to their citizens or the international community at large. Therefore, this paper seeks to determine what key criteria are needed to successfully integrate the SDGs into policy and then discusses how these criteria can be used to ensure integration and implementation of tourism policies. A systematic content analysis was undertaken using a multidisciplinary approach using Network Theory to illustrate the needed linkage which was formed from the following research question: What criteria are needed to achieve/ implement the SDGs and how does this translate into integrated policies?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Network Theory

Network Theory is defined as the study of the way elements, such as individuals or resources, in a network interact by assuming that a set of objects are connected by some sort of link, pattern, or relationship, and that interaction is impacted by strong and weak binding connections (Oh and Monge, 2016). A general example of a strong connection would be staff who work in the same office and department, whereas a weak connection could be colleagues who work in the same field but for another company. The basic claims of Network Theory work well to explain the question of this study which seeks to determine the key criteria for successful policy integration. In the context of SDGs policy integration, it alludes to affiliations with the SDGs through their commitment to achieve the aims of the 2030 Agenda. This collaboration suggests opportunities for connection, such as in committee memberships. Using Network Theory is also useful for creating, facilitating, and directing various resource and information channels, status signals and certification, and social influence. Network Theory may also be useful in showing the dynamics, tradeoffs, and multi-level analyses of SDGs policy integration.

As suggested by El-Maghrabi et al. (2018), Network Theory could be a useful tool for SDGs achievement as it can assist policymakers in SDGs goal prioritizing given elements of path dependency among goals. The application is based on the notion that existing patterns of development outcomes can reveal information about the commonalities in countries' unobservable SDGs delivery mechanisms. The application of Network Theory analyzed a country's closeness to "unsuccessful" SDGs to the same SDGs that were being achieved successfully in another country. This application showed the ways Network

Theory can help countries prioritize implementation of the SDGs through goal centrality and goal connectedness but did not outline the myriad of criteria needed. Research from Le Blanc (2015) also argues for the usage of Network Theory in developing a systemic and contextual framework for SDGs policy integration. Le Blanc (2015) tested this framework for the definition of the 2030 Agenda in Brazil and insisted that the theory can extend to similar results worldwide. This paper seeks to expand on these approaches by illustrating the multitude of criteria needed to ensure SDG achievement as a central goal across an entire industry or industries through Network Theory. Although prioritizing implementation of the SDGs is key, there are multiple issues with this ideal. Using Network Theory to illustrate the interconnectedness and the ability to achieve multiple targets supports the idea that achieving the SDGs must mirror the successful policy delivery mechanisms within and across countries globally.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a full scope literature review employing a deductive content analysis. First, a content analysis across multiple fields of study up to March 2020 yielded 114 scholarly articles which were linked to a wide array of disciplines and topics that were searched to ensure inclusivity. These include, but were not limited to: education, gender inclusion, social inclusion, urban and landscape planning, water system management, health care, sanitation and hygiene, food safety and security, fashion business, law, tourism, governance, and agriculture. In order to ensure a comprehensive scope, the key terms ‘SDGs’, ‘policy integration’, ‘policy implementation’, ‘sustainable development’, and ‘sustainable development goals’ were completed on four different dates to ensure a comprehensive search. Using the Network Theory approach, data was analyzed using content analysis to determine first common words, then themes, methods, or cases. Then, once all articles had been assessed and themes or criteria had been grouped or clustered together, it was then cross-checked to ensure reliability and validity of how criteria were defined and identified to ensure clarity. Using a process as defined by Network Theory, each identified element was mapped to create 15 criteria and outline their linkages (see figure 1). This mapping process was then applied to a variety of both city and country policies in Europe. Europe was chosen as a case due to the nature of progress made within the European Union (UN, 2019). Policies were reviewed for inclusion of the SDGs, mention of criteria defined during the mapping process, and specific policy objectives that delineated inclusion/implementation.

FINDINGS

In order to assess whether a policy is integrated, it was first necessary to evaluate and define the criteria for policy integration. Successful policy integration is necessary to build upon and learn from both the successes and challenges of pre-existing related policy practices (Weber, 2017; Allen et al., 2018; Antwi-Agyei et al., 2018; Timko et al., 2018; Giles-Corti et al., 2020; Khayatzadeh-Mahani et al., 2019; Meuleman & Niestroy, 2015). Although not guaranteed to be comprehensive, the most frequently mentioned elements needed for successful policy integration of the SDGs across multiple disciplines were identified in figure 1 and include: collaboration, social inclusion, goal prioritization and mapping, policy evaluation and monitoring, governance, local contexts, funding and financial sustainability, political action and commitment, coordination mechanisms, and policy coherence. Although many of the criteria elements are interlinked and interdependent as this essentially defines integration, each criterion is explained individually for the purpose of understanding and clarity.

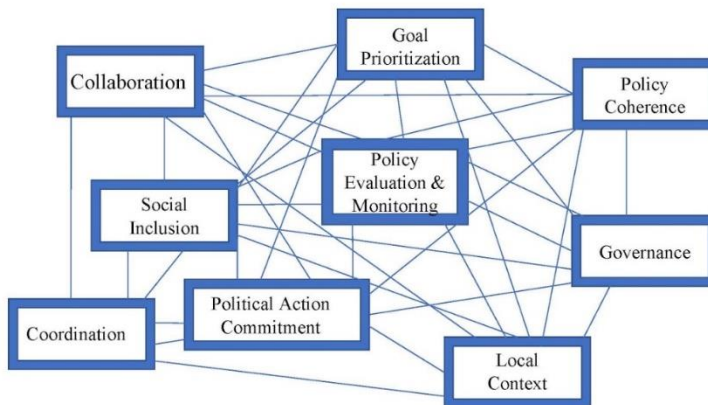


Figure 1: Network of Policy Integration Criteria

Collaboration

A key criterion needed for successful policy integration is collaboration. Collaborative work encompasses partnership building and maintenance that occurs across disciplines, sectors, and governing bodies to achieve a common and agreed-upon goal (Raub & Martin-Rios, 2019). Collaboration is needed because many SDGs require multi-actor, multi-sector, and multi-ministerial relationships to work within a recommended time frame (Kuruville et al., 2018). Nilsson et al. (2016) suggest that the normative framework for policy integration should include a joint responsibility to resolve universal development problems and a commitment to international collaboration. For example, the challenge of integrating the entire SDG agenda into domestic policy can be alleviated by implementing internationally harmonized advisory mechanisms and impact assessment procedures (Nilsson et al., 2016). Khayat-zadeh-Mahani et al. (2019) mention using sustainability as a way to encourage multi-sector collaborations by anchoring the discourse around sustainability in order to re-frame multi-sector discussions through this lens. For example, they mention that the World Health Organization places great emphasis on the role of multi-sector collaboration in addressing social determinants of health; a goal relevant to both human rights and health care.

Partnerships with policymakers and stakeholders are encouraged to be forged with a mindset of longevity and meaningful cooperation to work towards SDGs policy integration. Efforts to advance collaboration can include engaging multiple audiences through training, information sharing, and interdisciplinary learning (Story et al., 2017; Avelar et al., 2019). Policy integration must be connected to knowledge sharing and networking linked to capacity development for knowledge management (Cronin et al., 2015).

Through cross-sectoral collaboration, policies related to sustainability derived from other fields of work can lend their knowledge about policy integration to SDG policy development, integration, and assessment (Nilsson et al., 2016; Nordbeck & Steurer, 2016; Srikanth, 2018; Khayat-zadeh-Mahani, et al., 2019; Cronin et al., 2015). For example, collaboration between both energy and sustainability would be a good partnership to investigate SDG policy integration since energy was found to be connected with 74% of the 169 SDG targets (Srikanth, 2018).

Raub and Martin-Rios (2019) found that hospitality firms can overcome the dilemma in sustainable management by breaking down the United Nations' SDGs into actionable and context-specific subsets and select individual sustainability initiatives with maximum impact. They found that the solutions to the great sustainability challenges ahead involve the active participation of the hospitality industry in establishing partnerships with stakeholders. Also, they offered a roadmap for hospitality firms to identify local issues specific to sustainable management actions.

Integration is not straightforward, and limited knowledge on multi-level governance exists (Pilato et al., 2018). Therefore, the education sector can bridge knowledge gaps regarding integration and SDGs achievement by priming post-secondary students' knowledge to advance SDGs implementation (Avelar et al., 2019). Education has direct impacts on the other SDGs, such as responsible consumption and production, partnerships, and means of implementation.

Social Inclusion

The concept of social inclusion encompasses actions to facilitate participation among marginalized communities, protect basic human rights, and ensure that the SDGs' achievement is centred on equality and equity (Sexsmith, & McMichael, 2015). As the SDGs have an obligation to encourage sustainable development that respects human rights, they must, therefore, combat social problems such as rural poverty and food insecurity, among others (Sexsmith, & McMichael, 2015). For example, newer global initiatives, such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, suggest the importance of meeting SDGs through strong commitments to locally-driven interventions across sectors, focuses on new strategies to reach marginalized groups, and broader advocacy work at national and international levels (Story et al., 2017).

Saner et al. (2019) pointed to the following elements required of inclusive policies and practices: a scientific and technical orientation, transparency and stakeholder participation, accounting for the vulnerability of small and developing states, and responsible financing for local business development.

Goal Prioritization and Mapping

Another criterion for successful policy integration requires commencing the policy process by setting goal priorities and mapping out interactions among various goal priorities (Breuer et al., 2019; Weitz et al., 2018; Barbier & Burgess, 2017; Stafford-Smith et al. 2017; Pradhan et al., 2017; Nilsson et al., 2016). The task of prioritizing and mapping goals begins by grouping similarly aligned SDGs in order to achieve simultaneous improvement among multiple SDGs. This practice demonstrates complementary progress between two or more goals (Barbier & Burgess, 2017). For example, the net gains in the indicators for No Poverty, Clean Water, and Sanitation, and Zero Hunger over 2000-2015 may be strongly interlinked and mutually reinforcing (Barbier & Burgess, 2017). Nilsson et al. (2016) offer the suggestion of implementing a concise goal-scoring system to accomplish this. A concise goal-scoring system would also build partnership and buy-in from companies and investors who need to see policy performance that leverages multiple SDGs at a time (Betti et al., 2018). Their paper maps out 30 generic issues identified by the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) to the SDGs and their targets. There are particular SDGs that have a higher impact for each sector, and for each SDG, there are particular sectors that have a high impact on it, and some sectors are more important to the SDGs in aggregate than others. This mapping should be used as a guide for all stakeholders who want to understand how performance can contribute to the SDGs.

Policy Evaluation and Monitoring

Evaluation and monitoring of data are necessary in order to observe and analyze policy effectiveness and applicability. Many authors suggest that monitoring can also be used to ensure policy integration is being done as planned and to help adapt it to the local context as needed (Kuruville et al., 2018; Alcalde-Rabanal et al., 2018; Zinkernagel et al., 2018; WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, 2018; Du Plessis, 2018). They concluded that further research is needed to understand how to adapt the SDGs, targets, and indicators to specific urban contexts. Overall, the SDG indicators provide the possibility of a more balanced and integrated approach to sustainability monitoring. Du Plessis (2018) concluded that city governors are necessary for obtaining municipal-level buy-in on plans to achieve the SDGs, and these organizations and governments should engage in systematic data collection of the long-term impacts of policy integration.

A proposal provided by Dongxiao et al. (2017) was to introduce a timetable for plans, build an evaluation agenda to elaborate a set of criteria and indicators to monitor the impact of individual and collective action by a committee, and to develop a list of less and better indicators than currently agreed.

Giles-Corti et al. (2020) suggest that achieving the SDGs must be done through evaluating indicator benchmarks and monitoring progress in order to create healthy and sustainable cities, and those spatial inequities must be assessed. To achieve the SDGs, there needs to be benchmarking and monitoring change over time. There is a need for indicators that not only measure the downstream outcomes of urban policies (e.g., air quality) but also the upstream policies (e.g., the presence or absence of air quality legislation) and pathways of influence (e.g., implementation of interventions to reduce polluting forms of transport) (Giles-Corti et al., 2020).

The key components required to accelerate change include strengthened data availability, quality and use, institutional and policy reform for greater cross-sectoral integration and clear accountabilities at the national and local levels if countries are to achieve universal access with equity, sustainability, and quality (Cronin et al., 2015).

Governance

Good governance is defined as necessary to establish policy integration because it is the leadership that guides, directs, and ensures compliance with the new policy (Ladan, 2018). Governance refers to the ways groups regulate in order to achieve SDGs policy integration (Ladan, 2018). For the SDGs to be achieved, implementation strategies need to be backed by law at the national level. This back-up requires triggering the active role of parliamentarians in legislating for good governance and inclusive development, budgetary allocation or appropriation, oversight functions over the executive's actions, and responses to climate change through the progressive realization of the SDGs for sustainable development (Ladan, 2018). For example, Cronin et al. (2015) show that governance is integral in providing an accountability framework, coordination, and role clarity in the water, sanitization, and hygiene. Ladan (2018) also articulates that governance is fundamental to sustainable development because it provides the foundation for economic growth, and socially responsible and environmentally friendly development.

Through governance, states can provide constitutional, accountable, regulatory, and legal frameworks that enable productive activities to thrive while meeting legal requirements, which in turn will enhance sustainable development.

Policy Coherence

Epstein & Theuer (2017) provided the overall conclusion that a more coherent policy design, which considers all the possible interactions between sustainable development and climate action, can increase the effectiveness of the implementation of both the SDGs and climate mitigation and adaptation commitments. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2019) defines policy coherence as a comprehensive standard to support policymakers in achieving the 2030 Agenda. It also recommends that promoting policy coherence requires a strategic vision for implementation, clear political commitment and leadership roles and responsibilities, effective and inclusive mechanisms, and a set of responsive and adaptive tools to anticipate, assess and address long-term impacts of policies. Policy integration is a middle road towards strengthening the institutional capacity for generating, refining, and disseminating sustainability ideas through networks (Wong, 2019).

An example of the need for policy coherence is by Giles-Corti et al. (2020), who identified inconsistencies between the SDGs and the UN-Habitat indicator framework. They found that many of the SDG indicators assess outcomes rather than the success of policies and interventions required to deliver outcomes, whereas the UN-Habitat framework excludes outcome indicators. Pirvu et al. (2018) found that policy coherence was created by developing strong relationships with other community policies, such as state aid, environmental protectionism, and transport, among others.

Policy coherence requires a framework that is focused on joint responsibility and international collaboration (Nilsson et al, 2016; Wong, 2019; Cratsley & Mackey 2018), where multiple interconnected sectors need to take ownership of objectives, rather than leaving the work solely to a singular agency or ministry. Interestingly, this literature review noticed that less than ten articles named this component an important component of SDGs policy integration. Policy coherence also requires political will and commitment (Nilsson et al., 2016), which has to do with institutionalizing collective action among ministries and changing existing national policy frameworks by imposing a

global agreement. This author also noted that to create an integrated and coherent policy, they must first ensure that the normative framework does not give any principled prioritization or hierarchical ordering of any particular policy objective.

In order to improve policy coherence, Wong (2019) suggests establishing a steering committee to creatively engage the network of ministries to develop and implement SDGs policy integration. The hierarchy and committee would provide direction, steer processes and finalize decisions. When there was conflict or tension, the coordinators found consensus through the hierarchy (Wong, 2019). Girardi (2019) found that increasing the coherence intensity between the SDGs and other models and programs by incorporating aspects exclusively present in the SDGs to other sectors and their programs would help achieve the goals of the SDGs. Girardi (2019) focused on food insecurity/scarcity in Brazil.

Local Context

Horn and Grugel (2018) found that SDG policy integration is more likely to be successful if it is attuned to the geopolitical structures and regional contexts of participating nation-states. Sustainability research in Romania by Pirvu et al. (2018) found that it was important to balance regional differences with international visions in order to develop and integrate sustainable policies.

Evaluating SDG policy integration to ensure that sustainable capacity building is achieved within communities is also important. For example, local partners can draw upon their assets, such as extensive networks, deep local presence and trust within communities, capacity to collaborate cross-sectorally, and commitment to working with vulnerable and marginalized populations (Cronin et al., 2015). Pilato et al. (2018) found that Climate Policy Integration (CPI) was useful in assessing how climate change measures are integrated into local development planning. Pilato et al. (2018) investigated the institutional arrangements across local levels (village to district) and sectors, as well as the barriers and opportunities for policy integration in Tanzania

Zinkernagel et al. (2018) noted the challenges of local application include generic characteristics of global frameworks, which need to be complemented with specific indicators that are more relevant at the local city level. Zinkernagel et al. (2018) reviewed the evolution of indicators for

monitoring sustainable urban development due to growing urbanization and revealed that the SDGs, targets, and indicators need to be adapted to specific urban contexts and complement city-level specific indicators. The SDG indicators provide the possibility of a more balanced and integrated approach to urban sustainability monitoring.

Funding and Financial Sustainability

Poornima (2017) noted that equitable development in countries with high levels of socio-economic disparities can only be brought about through the implementation of inclusive social policies backed by financial resources. Both the diversification of financial resources as well as ensuring consistent funding is imperative to sustainable policy integration of the SDGs (Story et al., 2017). These authors found that NGOs who typically have multiple donors to fund each project contributed to success and sustainability (Story et al., 2017). Bartram et al., (2018) also suggested improvements to the considerable investment needed to attain the SDGs, which includes highlighting the important leadership role of the state and the usefulness of disaggregating financial and capacity-building assistance. Bartram et al. (2018) provided two recommended improvements related to improving financial self-sufficiency: disaggregating financial and capacity-building assistance and data reflective of aid-providing and aid-receiving countries. Dongxiao et al. (2017) also recommended embedding the SDGs agenda into development finance institutions for the purpose of promoting knowledge sharing and identify best practices.

Political Action and Commitment

Political leaders need to be informed that it is in their interest to ensure that the SDGs are an integral part of their agendas as political struggles may hamper SDG progress by prioritizing commercial interests over the SDGs' commitment to 'leave no one behind' (Weber, 2017). Cronin et al. (2015) stated that political action and commitment come from government leadership and explicit national policy on sustainable development. Political action and commitment can appear as the provision of adequate human resources and opportunity development, economically, socially, and culturally appropriate technology, robust monitoring and supervision, and clearly assigned roles and responsibilities to a single government agency.

Nilsson et al. (2016) outlined that it is imperative that political will needs to be included to change existing national policy frameworks by imposing a (voluntary) global agreement. Second, political will is not primarily a challenge at the level of the substance of the goals, but instead, has to do with the (lack of) will to change institutionalized and, in many places, efficient and effective existing national policy frameworks (Nilsson et al., 2016).

Coordination Mechanisms

Coordination mechanisms are defined as linking between and within sectors characterized by more flexible and adaptive management approaches (Wiegleb, & Bruns, 2018; Pilato et al., 2018; Cronin et al., 2015). An example of such a mechanism would be enhanced coordination strategies across sectors such as partnerships between public, private, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Story et al., 2017). Coordination is essential for institutions as it allows flexibility to reach across sectors in order to maintain and enhance links for communities' participation and ownership and ensure policy formulation and political prioritization to strengthen accountability (Cronin et al., 2015). For example, Pilato et al. (2018) write that multi-stakeholder coordination is crucial to ensure consistency between development and climate change objectives, as different actors might prioritize different objectives.

Coordination is integral to facilitate successful SDG policy integration in order to plan and delegate tasks between stakeholders as well as to plan and integrate national priorities (Antwi-Agyei, et al., 2018). Antwi-Agyei, et al. (2018) found that it was important to empower national coordinating bodies to overcome misalignments across different sectors. Gera et al. (2018) also stated that coordinated actions are required for the achievement of the SDGs, where a “systems approach” for service delivery that would ensure financial protection against costs, and enhancing community participation and accountability.

DISCUSSION: NETWORK THEORY FOR THE USE OF POLICY INTEGRATION IN TOURISM

Successful policy integration is necessary to build upon and learn from both the successes and challenges of pre-existing related policy practices (Weber, 2017; Allen et al., 2018; Antwi-Agyei et al., 2018; Timko et al., 2018; Giles-Corti et al., 2020; Khayat-zadeh-Mahani et al., 2019; Meuleman &

Niestroy, 2015). This, however, cannot be achieved without recognizing that all the components for policy coherence are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. This is shown when the identified components of policy integration are organized into a network and explained using Network Theory.

Tourism, as an industry, is multi-faceted and fragmented, and therefore using the Network Theory approach to link the many criteria of the SDGs outlined in this study could be both beneficial from management as well as measurement standpoint. Many tourism policies do discuss sustainability but as Sharpley (2000: 14) clearly outlined sustainability policy instruments have promoted product-centred sustainability without considering the need to see tourism as a vehicle for “holistic, equitable and future-oriented development”. Other literature outlines the importance of tourism to the achievement of the SDGs (Hall, 2019) yet states there is a lack of policy implementation (Dodds, 2007; Bianchi, 2004; Dodds & Butler, 2009a&b). When examining tourism, this seems evident in both city as well as country policies. For example, many national and city tourism policies have no mention of the SDGs. In many cases of policy development, sustainability is mentioned; however, it is mentioned as a separate concept rather than integrating goals or priorities within wider concepts. For example, a city tourism policy for Paris, France (2022) shows that when sustainability was mentioned in their policy, it was often a separate concept rather than an integrated component of the tourism strategy. Paris’s policy has four distinct strategic targets of which sustainability is one; however, sustainability is not meaningfully integrated into the other strategic pillars nor related to the SDGs overall. In addition, although sustainability is one priority, the economic priority and measures contradicted the sustainability goals by calling for an increase in tourists and more expanded infrastructure to support mass transportation. When examining France’s National tourism policy, there is also no mention specifically of the SDGs (see www.atout-france.fr), although many mentions of things that could relate to some of the goals. If tourism policies do not even mention the SDGs, it begs the question how governments can monitor the successful achievement of such goals?

Figure one demonstrated the interaction of the most commonly mentioned policy integration factors, which help demonstrate how they interact as outlined by Network Theory. As shown, the elements of policy integration are interdependent and interlinked with one another. They can be arranged into a network formation which shows how these interactions occur. For example, Policy Coherence and Governance are interdependent of one another in the

network, but these two factors are also crucial for Goal Prioritization. Within the network, some elements are more closely linked than others; however, they are all essential to achieving the outcome of policy integration.

When using this network to assess European tourism policies, goal prioritization was mainly absent or not well defined, and collaboration or governance was not specific in any form. Although a much more in-depth policy evaluation is needed, this preliminary examination does showcase that for successful tourism governance and policy integration, perhaps wider implementation could be achieved if a network approach was undertaken. As stated by Adie et al. (2020), there is a lack of focus on policy implementation within the tourism and the SDGs and that a “process perspective is developed that takes into account the range of stakeholders and interests, values, and the power relations between actors prior to and during the project together with a comprehensive understanding of what is success” (p. 1044). Not only is a longer time frame needed to assess policy, but a process to link all elements needed for success. No policy examined listed the SDGs and very few eluded to goal interdependence, or evaluation, or monitoring

CONCLUSION

Identification of the elements needed for policy integration of the SDGs is a useful first step; however, in order to further achieve the SDGs within a tourism context, this paper suggests three recommendations. First, there needs to be further research to test the Network Theory approach with tourism policies in order to determine utility. Second, this study echoes Allen et al. (2018) in that implicit in the SDG design is that each of the SDGs and their respective targets depend upon and influence one another. Further research to map each specific policy action of a policy or strategy between different SDG targets would likely build strong collaborative partnerships and coordination actions. These authors suggest that using Network Theory to map identification of success indicators and areas requiring improvement may also assist strategic tourism priorities that are not currently explicitly or directly tied to achievement, let alone achievement of the SDGs. Goal-aligned priorities that connect policy formulation and political prioritization could drive further research and institutional reshaping as well as strengthening accountability in various sectors. Finally, although it is well documented that indicators are useful tools for measurement, using a Network Theory approach to determine their breadth and scope across multiple regions may help ensure a more holistic

approach to the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental scope of tourism. Therefore, there is a need for further research across different geographical regions.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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