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MASTER THESIS

Titel der Master Thesis / Title of the Master's Thesis

Re-Imagining Sustainable Development Goals.

Haiti, Cameroon, and Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Spillover Effect on Neighboring States

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Advanced International Studies (M.A.I.S.)

Wien 2022 / Vienna 2022

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt

A 992 940

Postgraduate programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Universitätslehrgang lt. Studienblatt

Internationale Studien / International Studies

Postgraduate programme as it appears on the
student record sheet:

Betreut von / Supervisor:

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diplomatische
akademie wien

Vienna School of International Studies
École des Hautes Études Internationales de Vienne

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Thank you immensely, Professor Rachwald, for your intellectual guidance, understanding, and serenity. You have inspired me to strive for virtue in everything I do.

I am grateful to my family—my roots derive from your hearts, and even when I am away from home, you nourish my endless growth.

My friends, thank you for being—close to me or thousands of kilometers away—the pillars of borderless support and compassion.



*Flo, no one could ever put you in the shade...
Ethereal from the beginning of times.*

Faleminderit, Atë.

Vienna, Austria

Sunday, 12 June 2022

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ACRONYMS

Abbreviation	Meaning
CAR	Central African Republic
CEMAC	Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DASICON	Diplomatic Academy Students' Initiative Conference
DFF	Dialogue for the Future
EII	Environmental Impact Index
EU	European Union
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
IR	International Relations
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RAP	Regional Action Plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDG 1	Sustainable Development Goal 1: <i>No Poverty</i>
SDG 2	Sustainable Development Goal 2: <i>Zero Hunger</i>
SDG 6	Sustainable Development Goal 6: <i>Clean Water and Sanitation</i>
SDG 7	Sustainable Development Goal 7: <i>Affordable and Clean Energy</i>
SDG 8	Sustainable Development Goal 8: <i>Decent Work and Economic Growth</i>
SDG 10	Sustainable Development Goal 10: <i>Reduced Inequalities</i>
SDG 11	Sustainable Development Goal 11: <i>Sustainable Cities and Communities</i>
SDG 12	Sustainable Development Goal 12: <i>Responsible Consumption and Production</i>
SDG 13	Sustainable Development Goal 13: <i>Climate Action</i>
SDG 14	Sustainable Development Goal 14: <i>Life below Water</i>

SDG 15	Sustainable Development Goal 15: <i>Life on Land</i>
SDG 16	Sustainable Development Goal 16: <i>Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions</i>
SDG 17	Sustainable Development Goal 17: <i>Partnership for the Goals</i>
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SDSN	Sustainable Development Solutions Network
UN	United Nations
[UN] Agenda 2030	Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WWII	World War II/Second World War

ABSTRACT

Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in 2015 under the auspices of the United Nations, represent a comprehensive roadmap towards a future resting on pillars of environmental protection, societal progress, and economic prosperity. So far, a plethora of stakeholders, ranging from the UN, states, international NGOs and regional organizations to scholars and businesses, have worked on establishing methods that will adequately capture the global performance in SDGs achievement. This thesis contributes to the efforts of analyzing different ways in which SDGs are interconnected while focusing on regions and the impact that countries have on their neighbors in attaining SDGs. Through a fusion of a triad of theories deriving from International Relations and International Law, the study aspires to offer novel insights into the evaluation of SDGs implementation. Regional interconnectedness, indirectly reflected through the International Spillover Index, might alter how countries influence and interact with each other in achieving SDGs. When crafting policies and implementing certain activities, not only does a country advance or reverse its SDG performance, but it can also influence the way its neighbors tackle sustainable development. Given the two-year-long global stagnation in attaining the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the approach to distributing resources and setting agendas should be reimagined so that humanity gets back on track to reach the envisioned goals for our common prosperous future.

Keywords: International Spillover Index, Liberal Institutionalism, Regional Diffusion, Regions, SDG Index, Sustainable Development Goals, Sustainable Development Report, United Nations

ABSTRACT [GERMAN VERION]

Die im Jahr 2015 unter der Schirmherrschaft der Vereinten Nationen verabschiedeten Ziele für nachhaltige Entwicklung stellen einen umfassenden Plan für eine Zukunft dar, die auf den Säulen Umweltschutz, gesellschaftlicher Fortschritt und wirtschaftlicher Wohlstand beruht. Bislang hat eine Vielzahl von AkteurInnen - von den Vereinten Nationen, Staaten, internationalen Nichtregierungsorganisationen und regionalen Organisationen bis hin zu WissenschaftlerInnen und Unternehmen - an der Entwicklung von Methoden gearbeitet, welche die globale Leistung bei der Erreichung der SDGs adäquat erfassen. Diese Arbeit leistet einen Beitrag zu den Bemühungen, verschiedene Wege zu analysieren, wie die SDGs miteinander vernetzt sind und konzentriert sich dabei auf Regionen und die Auswirkungen, die Länder auf ihre Nachbarn bei der Erreichung der SDGs haben. Durch die Verschmelzung eines Dreiklangs von Theorien aus den internationalen Beziehungen und dem Völkerrecht will die Studie neue Einblicke in die Bewertung bei der Umsetzung der SDGs bieten. Regionale Verflechtungen, die indirekt durch den International Spillover Index widergespiegelt werden, könnten die Vorgehensweisen verändern, wie Länder bei der Erreichung der SDGs untereinander Einfluss nehmen und miteinander interagieren. Bei der Ausarbeitung von Strategien und der Umsetzung bestimmter Aktivitäten kann ein Land nicht nur seine SDG-Leistung verbessern oder verschlechtern, sondern auch die Art und Weise beeinflussen, wie seine Nachbarländer die nachhaltige Entwicklung angehen. Angesichts der nun seit zwei Jahren andauernden globalen Stagnation bei der Verwirklichung der Agenda 2030 für nachhaltige Entwicklung sollte der Ansatz für die Verteilung von Ressourcen und die Festlegung von Agenden neu überdacht werden, damit die Weltbevölkerung wieder auf den richtigen Weg kommt, um die angestrebten Ziele für unsere gemeinsame wohlhabende Zukunft zu erreichen.

Schlagwörter: Bericht über nachhaltige Entwicklung, International Spillover Index, Liberaler Institutionalismus, Regionale Verbreitung, Regionen, SDG-Index, Vereinte Nationen, Ziele für nachhaltige Entwicklung

PART I

INTRODUCTION

In one of its most comprehensive frameworks up to date, the United Nations set forward a roadmap to reaching sustainable development based on three pillars—environment, society, and economics. In the unprecedented gathering of a diverse set of stakeholders from around the world, ranging from government representatives, and international NGOs, to businesses, the UN established a multi-perspectival platform for analyzing the existing issues and finding solutions for them. Sustainable Development Goals, as laid out in the 2030 Agenda, encompass a variety of fields that are of concern for humanity—from poverty and hunger, over education and infrastructure, to biodiversity and justice. Therefore, the Agenda covers a comprehensive list of topics that are of utmost importance to the people of the world.

SDGs have emerged as a corollary to the Millennium Development Goals that were adopted in 2000. These goals covered a specific time framework for implementation, i.e., 15 years. In 2015, when the process of fulfilling or substantially reaching MDGs was about to be finalized, SDGs took the pedestal as a continuation of the ongoing efforts. Hence, a vast experience and expertise acquired from 2000 to 2015 in the completion of MDGs, assisted the UN system in crafting an even broader scope of issues that it would tackle. Moreover, lessons learned through the implementation of MDGs—challenges and successes—helped in shaping the SDGs more effectively. One of the flaws of MDGs was a diminished far-reaching vision. For example, reaching one specific goal or a target within that goal generated the question *What now?* Namely, if the children around the world acquired primary education, what will the next steps be? Is finishing primary school enough of an aim? Therefore, MDGs provided for the implementation of a series of essential objectives that concerned hunger, poverty, and education, but lacked a more over-the-horizon roadmap. However, MDGs were an important step in designing SDGs and many of the achievements of the latter would have not been possible without the successes and challenges encountered during the MDGs era.

Sustainable Development Goals have, for the first time, epitomized the fusion of three components of sustainable development. The UN system along with a cohort of experts concluded that the preservation of the environment and the progress of society and economics were not mutually exclusive components of development. Therefore, they were envisioned to function

together cohesively and were intertwined to the point where reaching one goal influences the attainment of another goal within the 2030 Agenda. Not only that, but the research in recent years concerning the level of achievement in SDGs generated the necessity to re-consider how the Agenda is being implemented. A vast body of studies strives to analyze the progress and drawbacks when it comes to SDGs. Countries are also involved in the process: For example, they can submit Voluntary National Reviews [VNR], in which they present their performance. Parts of civil society are dedicated to educating people on SDGs and businesses are introducing novel policies to align their practices with sustainable development values. Hence, various stakeholders are aspiring to contribute to understanding SDGs better, but also to adequately implementing them in real life.

As we get closer to the milestone year, which is 2030, we also need to delve into the components of SDGs that are of paramount importance to humanity. By analyzing the connections that exist between goals and various stakeholders, we are set to identify what needs to be improved and/or altered. Hence, only by making sure that we do not repeat the same mistakes from the past, but rather take into account the lessons learned, will we be able to claim that reaching the Agenda 2030 is a realistic ambition. In that light, I aspire that my work contributes to the efforts of the international community in analyzing new methods of measuring performance and improving the up-to-date practices concerning the SDGs.

My enthusiasm for SDGs first emerged during my participation in a pioneering UNICEF UpShift workshop, which offered my peers and me an opportunity to develop a project solution for the problem of mass fights based on nationalism in my high school in Montenegro. Through analyzing the roots of the problem and talking with the main perpetrators of mass fights, we obtained a profound insight into the nature and scope of the issue, as well as potential solutions that could effectively tackle the enduring problem of our high school. Hence, via an effective event we implemented, we contributed to building bridges between those who had previously engaged in mass acts of violence and thus contributed to reaching the SDG 10 [Reduced Inequalities]. The comprehension that as young people we could impact a platform of significance to the whole world was a major catalyzer for me. Besides engaging in a practical framework, I have sought to expand my knowledge of SDGs through the academic curricula. Consequently, profound enthusiasm for SDGs echoes through the topic of this master's thesis.

The thesis merges two academic fields—**International Relations** and **International Law**. The first will predominantly serve to explore the state-of-the-art concerning the implementation of

SDGs and their interconnectedness. The plan is to analyze how the **SDG 10 [Reduced Inequalities]** and **SDG 16 [Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions]** are reflected in policies and actions undertaken in three countries—**Haiti, Cameroon, and Bosnia and Herzegovina**. That way, I can delve into the substance of two given SDGs and examine how they are tackled and taken care of in my case studies. I will analyze SDGs and the Agenda 2030 in the first chapter of this work, through the prism of International Law. I will employ the theory of **Legal Positivism** to scrutinize the acts that pertain to SDGs. After presenting the storyline of how the Agenda 2030 came to be, along with the relevant SDGs, subsequent chapters will provide the analysis of specific countries and their performance when it comes to attaining SDGs. Based on the good practices implemented in these countries, I will explore the extent to which those activities applied in one country influence other countries in proximity, as well as respective regions. Namely, according to the UN-developed concepts—**International Spillover Index**—the idea is that countries' practices when it comes to achieving SDGs have the power to significantly influence the performance of other states. In my work, I will focus on examining the impact that domestic policies pertaining to SDGs of one state have on the neighboring countries; to what extent do the practices get diffused across the region?

The analysis of the interconnectedness between countries, regions, and the international community will be conducted through the theory of **Liberal Institutionalism**. The theory will be expanded by the premises of a sub-theory—**Regional Diffusion**. Although deriving from the realm of regional organizations, the theory provides adequate pillars for drawing lines in-between countries, as well as noticing structural similarities and differences. The triad of case studies—Haiti, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Cameroon—mirrors a diverse geographical representation, incorporating the regions of the Caribbean, South-eastern Europe, and Central Africa respectively. According to the most recent Sustainable Development Report¹, each of the case studies ranks high in the International Spillover Score, a previously mentioned concept that will be further analyzed in the chapters below—in short, the claim is that countries' domestic strategies when it comes to achieving SDGs influence the SDG performance of other states in the world.

¹ Jeffrey D. Sachs et al., “Sustainable Development Report 2022. From Crisis to Sustainable Development: The SDGs as Roadmap to 2030 and Beyond” (Bertelsmann Stiftung, Sustainable Development Solutions Network and Cambridge University Press, 2022), <https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2022/2022-sustainable-development-report.pdf>.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The below-outlined sources pertain to, *inter alia*: the theoretical framework, legal ramifications of SDGs, and examples of good practices. Hence, the existing literature corpus that I will be relying upon includes:

- I. Jahn, Beate. *Liberal Internationalism: Theory, History, Practice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Jahn's book on liberal internationalism offers insights into recent debates concerning the liberal world order. The book sets forward a basis for comprehending both the theoretical and practical arch of liberal internationalism. "In this rare and welcome survey of an important school of thought, Jahn argues that the tensions between the theory and the practice of liberal internationalism have been particularly pronounced since the end of the Cold War"². Although liberal internationalism faced a plethora of issues over the decades, such as the rise of illiberal democracy and financial crises, Jahn claims that alternatives would have been far less successful in accomplishing cooperation and peace in the manner liberalism has done.

- II. Jetschke, Anja, and Tobias Lenz. "Does Regionalism Diffuse? A New Research Agenda for the Study of Regional Organizations." *Journal of European Public Policy* 20, no. 4 (March 7, 2013): 626–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2012.762186>.

While the article primarily considers the proliferation of regional organizations in the post-WWII era, it also explores the drivers and outcomes of regionalization. Diffusion theory claims that certain institutional designs and policies can be diffused/spread across the board of regional organizations. Similarly to the authors, who explore a certain pattern of clustering of regional organizations and resemblances in their institutional designs, I will embrace and modify the theory of a diffusion-oriented agenda for my selected cases. Considering that the authors perceive regional organizations as interdependent, I want to adapt this theory to claim that through the spillover effect, the countries I selected have the capacity to influence their neighboring countries in achieving SDGs.

² G. John Ikenberry, "Liberal Internationalism: Theory, History, Practice," <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/> (Foreign Affairs, 2014), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/2014-08-18/liberal-internationalism-theory-history-practice>.

III. Johnson, Tana, and Andrew Heiss. “Liberal Institutionalism.” In *International Organization and Global Governance*, edited by Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson. London: Routledge, 2018.

Johnson and Heiss prepared a chapter presented in the book “International Organization and Global Governance”, in which they explore the role that liberal institutionalism has played in introducing and facilitating peace and cooperation between countries. The chapter presents, *inter alia*, realists’, Marxists’, and feminists’ critiques of liberal institutionalism, thereby offering a significant source to identify any shortcomings that my chosen theoretical framework might have. In that case, I can introduce necessary adjustments to the theory of liberal institutionalism so that it fits my work more adequately. Johnson and Heiss also explore the future of the contemporary global order alongside the liberal institutionalism that has been so deeply engraved in the constellation of international relations.

IV. Kamau, Macharia, Pamela Chasek, and David O’Connor. *Transforming Multilateral Diplomacy: The Inside Story of the Sustainable Development Goals*. London: Routledge, 2018.

The book offers invaluable insights into the negotiating process preceding the adoption of SDGs. As explained by the authors, the UN Agenda 2030 altered not only the way how the UN handles multilateral diplomacy, but also the manner of conducting the Organization’s own business. The whole process encompassed a broad scope of ideas, negotiations, and divergences. One must not forget about the human agency and the influence that particular people had in moving the negotiations forward. Kamau, one of the authors of the book, partook in negotiations concerning the SDGs and provides readers with a unique perspective on the process. Other people representing governments of the Member States, the UN Secretariat, and the private sector, also offer their outlooks on the story of how SDGs came to be.

V. Sachs, Jeffrey D. *The Age of Sustainable Development*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

The author of the book is also one of the writers of the below-introduced Sustainable Development Report, which offers information regarding the progress achieved by countries in the field of SDGs. Being one of the most unique analysts of global development, Sachs puts forward a framework that merges a diverse set of pillars to solve the most pressing issues of the contemporary world. Hence, the author unifies the issues of environmental degradation, political-

economic inequality, and extreme poverty to showcase that sustainable development emerges as one of the most effective solutions to tackle the most persistent global issues. Thus, relying on some of Sachs' most innovative findings, I will strive to enrich my study through examples and solutions offered in his book.

VI. Sachs, Jeffrey, Christian Kroll, Guillaume Lafortune, Grayson Fuller, and Finn Woelm.

“Sustainable Development Report 2021: The Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals.” Cambridge University Press, 2021.

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2021/2021-sustainable-development-report.pdf>.

Sustainable Development Report 2021 analyzes the SDG Index and Dashboards—an instrument used to assess country performance when it comes to the achievement of the UN Agenda 2030. The authors explore the SDG country performances for over 150 states while employing a broad scope of indicators. The 2021 Report offers not only insights concerning the current and most pressing issues pertaining to sustainable development, but also the impact of COVID-19 on attaining goals set out in the Agenda 2030. One of the most prominent features that I will be deriving from the Report is the *Spillover Index* data. As each country's acts can have positive and/or negative effects on other countries' capabilities to attain SDGs, the Spillover Index “assesses such spillovers along three dimensions: environmental & social impacts embodied into trade, economy & finance, and security. A higher score means that a country causes more positive and fewer negative spillover effects”³.

VII. Spaak, Torben, and Patricia Mindus, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Legal Positivism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108636377>.

Considering that one of the two fields, which stipulate the interdisciplinarity of my thesis, is International Law, I will consider the theory of Legal Positivism, which is one of the fundamental theories of jurisprudence. The book elaborates on the perceptions concerning legal positivism and outlines the theory's relevance in the contemporary legal theoretical framework. Thirty-three chapters of the book incorporate an extensive commentary on legal positivism's ideas, history, development, and influence.

³ Sustainable Development Solutions Network, “Spillover Rankings: The Spillover Performance of All 193 UN Member States,” <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/>, 2022, <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/rankings/spillovers>.

VIII. Stiglitz, Joseph E. *Making Globalization Work*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.

During the era of MDGs and before SDGs were adopted, Stiglitz offered a broad range of solutions for the most pressing global issues. Early on, he recognized the importance of integrating the triangle of pillars—social, economic, and environmental—to be able to tackle the most urgent issues that the world has been facing. Some of the problems he analyzed relate to the impact that fast-paced globalization has on communities across the world. As interdependence continues to extend and deepen, so do people realize that local problems often require more than local solutions. Consequently, coming under the umbrella of an ever-unified world, people develop the tendency to resonate and act globally. In that light, in his early work, Stiglitz correctly identified the basis upon which the SDGs would later be founded.

IX. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. “SDG Good Practices: A Compilation of Success Stories and Lessons Learned in SDG Implementation.” [sdgs.un.org/](https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/SDG%20Good%20Practices%20Publication%202020.pdf), December 2020. <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/SDG%20Good%20Practices%20Publication%202020.pdf>.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) acts as a bridge between global policies and national commitments in the fields of economy, society, and the environment. The Department launched an open call in 2018, whereby it collected good practices and lessons attained through the process of SDGs implementation. One of the project outcomes was the development of an extensive database, which features success stories in attaining SDGs in countries around the world.

X. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. “Sustainable Development.” sdgs.un.org. Accessed January 24, 2022. <https://sdgs.un.org/>.

UN DESA maintains a comprehensive webpage that contains essential information when it comes to a wide array of aspects concerning the SDGs. Besides offering reports that explore the scope of SDG achievement, the Department also provides a broad specter of publications that deal with specific cases and regions around the world and their path toward Agenda 2030. Hence, via this resource, I will be able to trace a potential effect and diffusion of a certain SDG-related policy onto the countries in the region or mechanisms for regional cooperation.

XI. United Nations General Assembly. Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [A/RES/70/1] (2015).

Agenda 2030, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, presents a milestone in formulating and outlining a comprehensive path to reaching sustainable development. One of its most prominent provisions is the goal to eradicate poverty, but one shall note that the Agenda foresees the importance of the SDGs' *interdependence*—reaching one goal is closely related to fulfilling the others. Hence, the Agenda provides a fundamental basis for the analysis of the SDGs' legal ramifications and will, thus, present a principal source for my research.

XII. United Nations Statistics Division. “SDG Country Profiles.” country-profiles.unstatshub.org, Accessed January 25, 2022. <https://country-profiles.unstatshub.org/>.

The UN Statistics Division prepared a substantial source of data concerning the progress that countries have achieved when it comes to the SDGs implementation. The webpage examines SDGs in detail and presents data concerning shortcomings and successes in the implementation of Agenda 2030. Hence, the information prepared by the Statistics Division provides an insight into the progress that my selected case studies—Haiti, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Cameroon—have realized so far in approaching/achieving the goals and targets adopted within the Agenda.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The existing corpus of thought in exploring SDGs encompasses the process of how the Agenda 2030 came to be, some pioneering work in gathering good practices, and defining indexes to measure success. When it comes to determining the influence that countries have on each other, the UN system has so far assessed the International Spillover Index. As previously mentioned, the **Spillover Index** measures the scope of influence, both negative and positive, that a certain country can have on other states when it comes to achieving SDGs. However, the numbers do not quite deliver a storyline in explaining how countries around the world influence other states, and why the Spillover Index of certain countries is so high [meaning that positive effects overcome negative externalities].

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haiti, and Cameroon have impressively high scores when it comes to the Spillover Index and are amongst the leading countries of their respective regions

when it comes to their positive influence on other countries in achieving SDGs. Consequently, I am interested to explore the following:

i. Main Question:

- a. *To what extent and in what ways are certain countries capable of influencing neighboring states when it comes to achieving SDGs?*

ii. Sub-questions:

- a. *What effective practices are implemented in Haiti, Cameroon, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the fields of SDGs 10 [Reduced Inequalities] and 16 [Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions]?*
- b. *Which domestic strategies to achieve SDGs 10 and 16 in Haiti, Cameroon, and Bosnia and Herzegovina have generated spillovers, i.e., have been replicated in their respective regions?*

i. Haiti → Caribbean

ii. Bosnia and Herzegovina → Western Balkans

iii. Cameroon → Central Africa

I consider the afore-presented research (sub-)questions important because both my proposed theoretical lenses and case studies offer a novel insight into the implementation of SDGs. If my chosen case studies impact other countries in such scope as the Spillover Index illustrates, then we need to re-imagine our path to achieving Agenda 2030. Thenceforth, we need to fine-tune the state-centric strategies in attaining SDGs in accordance with the regional diffusion dynamics.

THEORY

The interdisciplinarity of this work is woven through the fusion of the theoretical framework of International Relations and International Law. On the one hand, I will supplement my research with the theory from the area of International Law—*Legal Positivism*. “Legal positivism is the thesis that the existence and content of law depends on social facts and not on its merits”⁴. Through the analysis of the UN Agenda 2030, I will explore the legal basis of sustainable development with a focus on two specific goals—SDG 10 and SDG 16. On the other hand, I will employ two theories from the field of International Relations. The theory of *Liberal*

⁴ Leslie Green and Thomas Adams, “Legal Positivism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/legal-positivism/>.

Institutionalism will serve as my overarching conceptual lens, while the *Regional Diffusion* model will function as a sub-theory, which will calibrate and enrich the research design. “Liberal institutionalism argues that emphasis should be placed on global governance and international organizations as a way of explaining international relations. Institutionalism places emphasis on the role that common goals play in the international system and the ability of international organizations to get states to cooperate.”⁵ When delving deeper into the topic, I realized that the Regional Diffusion theory can fine-tune the model of Liberal Institutionalism as the former theory “predicts that states are most likely to emulate the programs of other states within close geographical proximity”⁶. Therefore, certain hypotheses of the regional diffusion theory would predict that states tend to find inspiration in domestic strategies of neighboring countries when it comes to the implementation of SDGs. Accordingly, the Spillover Index suggests that the higher the score of spillover, the more a country generates positive than negative externalities. More specifically, a (not quite) successful set of policies of one country can substantially influence the path to attaining Agenda 2030 in neighboring countries.

The proposed unified theoretical spectrum offers novel insights into the study of SDGs and the manners in which they are implemented. Considering that the field of International Relations will be predominant in my thesis, the two chosen IR theories—Liberal Institutionalism and Regional Diffusion—comprise a self-reinforcing set of premises that will direct my attention toward an in-depth analysis of case studies. While liberal institutionalism establishes pillars for the analysis of cooperation between states to reach common goals, the regional diffusion model deepens the scope of research by concentrating on the mutual influence of countries within regions.

METHODOLOGY

The study will rely on empirical and comparative premises. Firstly, by employing three case studies—**Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haiti, and Cameroon**—I will analyze these countries’ domestic strategies regarding their progress in SDGs attainment. Through exploring how SDGs 10 and 16 work in practice, I will provide an outlook on potential innovative solutions for tackling

⁵ Rebecca Devitt, “Liberal Institutionalism: An Alternative IR Theory or Just Maintaining the Status Quo?,” <https://www.e-ir.info/>, September 1, 2011, <https://www.e-ir.info/2011/09/01/liberal-institutionalism-an-alternative-ir-theory-or-just-maintaining-the-status-quo/>.

⁶ Amy M. Hageman and Sean W.G. Robb, “A Regional Diffusion Theory Explanation for States’ Proposal and Adoption of Anti-Passive Investment Company Laws,” *Journal of Accounting and Public Policy* 30, no. 6 (November 2011): 551–69, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaccpubpol.2011.03.004>.

the most pressing issues. Secondly, relying on a comparative evaluation, I will investigate the scope of impact that each case study has on the neighboring countries. Therefore, solutions introduced by all three countries will be assessed on the spectrum of their similarities and differences; so will the scope of their impact. Through an **inductive approach**, I will be observing developments in Cameroon, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Haiti, collecting data, recognizing patterns, and deriving conclusions. Thereupon, I will be relying on a broad spectrum of primary and secondary sources such as books, journal articles, the UN and governmental documents, reports, documentaries, interviews, etc.

Taking everything into consideration, my thesis will be a policy-oriented application. One of my goals is to explore and analyze the conditions under which a country likely generates a positive spillover effect. In pursuit of exploring selected case studies, my knowledge of languages will assist me in comprehending the topic more profoundly. Considering that Montenegrin, one of my mother languages, is closely related to Bosnian and other languages spoken in South-eastern Europe, I will be able to obtain a genuine outlook on local, national, and regional ramifications. Being fluent in English and having a basic knowledge of French will be invaluable in navigating through findings pertaining to Haiti and Cameroon.

PART II

THE PATH TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in 2015 and one of the main aims so far has been to contribute to a fair distribution of limited resources. SDGs are also referred to as Global Goals as they are robust both in their scope and in the number of the UN Member States that have adopted them. The Global Goals have emerged as a result of extensive deliberations of a plethora of stakeholders. The main aim was to obtain as many different perspectives as possible on the board to ensure that SDGs do not remain on paper only but that different interested parties have a will to implement them in their everyday functioning. Therefore, not only did Member States' representatives partook at the gatherings under the auspices of the UN, but so did the civil society, foundations, businesses, activists, etc. Hence, Agenda 2030 reflects a multi-perspectival diversity through its goals and targets.

Global Goals are concerned with, *inter alia*, poverty, hunger, education, energy, climate, and biodiversity. Each goal is consisted of a set of **targets** to measure, monitor, and evaluate progress. “The 17 SDGs are integrated—they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability.”⁷ Encompassing such a broad set of realms meant that partnerships need to be developed, which essentially echoed through Goal 17 [Partnerships for the Goals]. Nonetheless, the path to establishing a common global roadmap has not been paved with roses. For example, the two goals of specific interest to this work—SDG 10 [Reduced Inequalities] and SDG 16 [Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions]—have been largely contested. Despite the consideration of the *universal values*, it became evident throughout the process that many rifts would emerge amongst the parties. Therefore, even principles considered universal and over-arching were highly contested.

Regarding SDG 10, inequalities have been on the rise in recent years—both within countries and amongst countries. “Income inequality has increased in nearly everywhere in recent decades, but at different speeds. It’s lowest in Europe and highest in the Middle East. These widening disparities require sound policies to empower lower income earners, and promote

⁷ United Nations Development Programme, “Sustainable Development Goals,” undp.org, 2015, <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>.

economic inclusion of all regardless of sex, race or ethnicity.”⁸ Hence, the issue of inequality requires global solutions, whereby institutions and mechanisms on the domestic level can be improved to provide for better living standards. Some of the targets falling under the aegis of SDG 10 are, *inter alia*, the following:

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- 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status*
- 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard [...]*
- 10.6 Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions.*⁹
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As far as Goal 16 is concerned, its foresight is that “we cannot hope for sustainable development without peace, stability, human rights and effective governance, based on the rule of law”¹⁰. Goal 16 reaches even further since it also tackles the issues of armed violence and the insecurity caused thereof, while also reflecting on the devastating impact that such phenomena can have on a country’s development. Hence, the targets of this goal are, amongst the others:

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- 16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all [...]*
- 16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms*
- 16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels*
- 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels [...]*
- 16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.*¹¹
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⁸ United Nations Development Programme, “Sustainable Development Goals | Reduced Inequalities,” www.undp.org, 2015, <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals#reduced-inequalities>.

⁹ United Nations General Assembly, “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [A/RES/70/1]” (2015), p. 21. Emphasis added.

¹⁰ United Nations Development Programme, “Sustainable Development Goals | Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions,” www.undp.org, 2015, <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals#peace-justice-and-strong-institutions>.

¹¹ United Nations General Assembly, op. cit., pp. 25-26. Emphasis added.

One aspect that shall be brought to the reader's attention is that the Global Goals have found their way into the national planning acts. Austria is one of the examples in which the incorporation of Goals has gone one step further, whereby the country's pledge to fulfill the Global Goals is now a part of the Constitution. "From the climate crisis and COVID-19 pandemic to rising inequalities and protracted conflict – these challenges cannot be dealt with in isolation. The way countries respond and the solutions they develop must be integrated."¹² SDGs, covering the economic, social, and environmental pillars of development, seek to provide an integrated approach to tackle the global issues and offer solutions that will be implemented with collective efforts. Therefore, novel approaches to attaining SDGs pertain to developing diverse ways of reasoning, connecting dots, and financing.

Through a systemic approach, rather than a thematic one, the UN specialized agencies have developed methods to tackle a variety of interconnected issues that influence the economic, natural, and societal dimensions. On the one hand, SDG 10 stands for the reduction of inequalities within and among countries, and on the other hand, SDG 16 endorses "peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide[d] access to justice for all and build[ing of] effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels"¹³. Both SDG 10 and SDG 16 are crucial to achieving other SDGs; this can, however, be said for the rest of the SDGs, too. Nonetheless, "one of the lessons learnt from the Millennium Development Goals – the predecessor of the current SDG framework – was that effective and accountable institutions, the rule of law, access to justice, inclusion and peace are key missing links for sustainable development."¹⁴ Besides adopting a set of well-developed goals and targets, it has become important to effectively measure, monitor, and evaluate progress in the realm of sustainable development. Hence, various statistics and indexes have been created to capture the SDG performance. New methods keep emerging with the hope that we can derive valuable lessons that will assist us in reaching the goals encompassed by Agenda 2030 in due time.

¹² SDG Integration, "SDG Integration | About," [sdgintegration.undp.org](https://sdgintegration.undp.org/about), accessed April 29, 2022, <https://sdgintegration.undp.org/about>.

¹³ United Nations General Assembly, op. cit., p. 25.

¹⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and United Nations Development Programme, "SDG16 Survey Initiative: Implementation Manual," March 11, 2022, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-03/UNDP-SDG16-Survey-Initiative-Implementation-Manual.pdf>, p. 1.

WHY DO INDEXES MATTER?

SDG INDEX

“Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by all member states of the United Nations in 2015, describe a universal agenda that applies to and must be implemented by all countries. Sound metrics and data are critical for turning the SDGs into practical tools for problem solving.”¹⁵ When the progress towards reaching the Agenda 2030 is measured, it is essential that novel effective methods come to the fore so that stakeholders can obtain a better grasp of their up-to-date performance. So far, the discussion on SDGs has mostly revolved around individual countries’ progress when it comes to turning the Agenda 2030 into tangible reality. Through various indexes, states receive scores that mark their achievements in the SDGs implementation. Several countries around the world have already accomplished certain goals but need to dedicate more resources to obtaining other envisaged objectives.

Some of the innovative approaches that have brought about new insight into the SDG world have been the SDG Index and the International Spillover Index. “The SDG Index proposes a first-of-its-kind composite measure to track progress on SDGs at national and global level, but it is fundamental that communication of its results is accompanied by a deep understanding of its underlying components and the relationships between them.”¹⁶ Through the ranking system, offered by the Sustainable Development Report, countries can observe what fields they have been exceling in and identify areas for adjustment and improvement. The existing data and research focus on the interconnection between targets within SDGs, SDGs themselves, and the influence that countries have on each other. Moreover, it seems that various actors in a diverse set of fields, ranging from the environment and international finance, have been inspired to delve into the analysis of the interconnectedness of SDGs. One such initiative has been launched through the Environmental Impact Index (EII)¹⁷, which is “developing a new global measure of countries’

¹⁵ Sustainable Development Solutions Network, “SDG Index & Monitoring Tracking Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: SDG Index & Monitoring,” www.unsdsn.org, accessed June 5, 2022, <https://www.unsdsn.org/sdg-index-and-monitoring>.

¹⁶ Eleni Papadimitriou, Ana Rita Neves, and William Becker, “JRC Statistical Audit of the Sustainable Development Goals Index and Dashboards” (European Commission: Joint Research Centre, 2019), https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2019/2019_JRC_Audit_SDG_Index.pdf, p. 23.

¹⁷ The prototype version of the Environmental Impact Index (EII) was launched in 2020, by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, which is the creator of the SDG Index. For results obtained for 2020 see: <https://spillovers.environmentalimpact.global/#/>.

domestic and international environmental impacts [...] This new global measure will inform domestic and international policy debates on sustainable consumption and production in the context of Agenda 2030, the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement”¹⁸. The rationale behind developing the Environmental Impact Index has been, *inter alia*, the lack of metrics that capture the international spillover effects as the previous research has mainly revolved around the domestic resource use but oversaw how one country’s actions can trigger benefits for or generate costs on other states.

Similar reasoning as the one introduced above has served as the basis for the development of the SDG Index. It is important to note that the 17 SDGs incorporate a series of targets to be reached until 2030, “with a number of quantified indicators to monitor progress with reliable and comparable datasets. These data feed national reports prepared by the UN member states. However, these reports are voluntary, not updated on a regular basis, and may not cover every SDG.”¹⁹ Consequently, “in order to assist countries in the annual stocktaking of SDGs progress, Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) launched in 2016 the first edition of the Sustainable Development Goals Index and Dashboards (SDG Index).”²⁰ **SDG Index** or the overall score “measures the total progress towards achieving all 17 SDGs. The score can be interpreted as a percentage of SDG achievement. A score of 100 indicates that all SDGs have been achieved.”²¹ The map representing the SDG Index Score is on the following page—note that the darker the blue color is, the closer a country is to achieving all SDGs.

¹⁸ Environmental Impact Index, “Environmental Impact Index: Home,” environmentalimpact.global, accessed June 5, 2022, <https://environmentalimpact.global/#/>.

¹⁹ Eric Pichon et al., “Ten Composite Indices for Policy-Making” (Brussels: European Parliamentary Research Service, September 2021), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2021/696203/EPRS_IDA\(2021\)696203_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2021/696203/EPRS_IDA(2021)696203_EN.pdf), p. 21.

²⁰ Eleni Papadimitriou, Ana Rita Neves, and William Becker, op. cit., p. 3.

²¹ Sustainable Development Solutions Network, “Map: Overall Score,” <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/>, 2022, <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/map>.

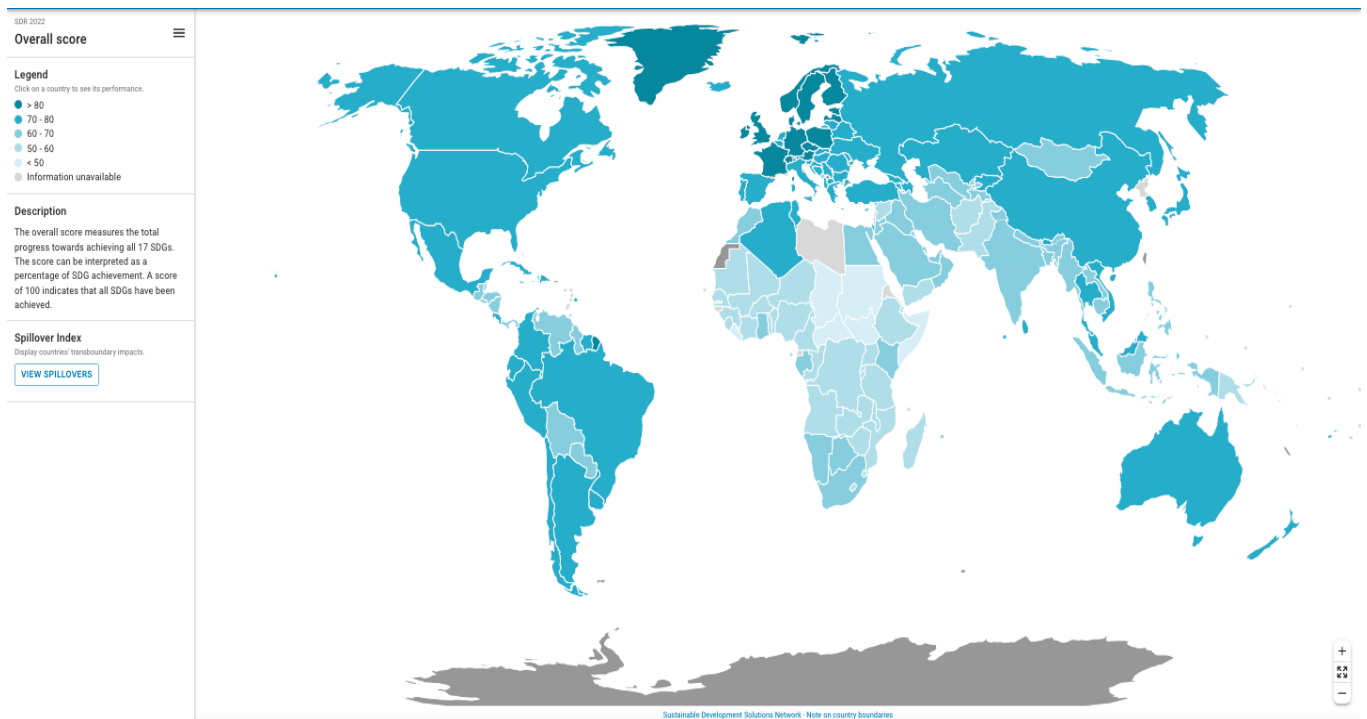


Figure 1: The map portrays the SDG Index Score, which is a measure of the total progress towards accomplishing all 17 SDGs. A score of 100 denotes that all SDGs have been attained. The darkest blue color on the map represents countries whose overall score is above 80, meaning these countries are the closest to achieving all SDGs. The lighter the color blue is, the further is the country from achieving all SDGs.

Source: Sustainable Development Solutions Network. “Map: Overall Score.” <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/>, 2022. <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/map>.

INTERNATIONAL SPILLOVER INDEX

*Every time an investor puts a dollar into an investment, it will fund activities that have both positive and negative impacts on people and the planet. As an investor, your dollar might help create jobs. It also might fund automation that displaces jobs. But outside of your financial return, you might not know what impact your investment is having. Is your dollar helping people you care about? Or is it making their lives worse?*²²

While the above-derived quote pertains to the world of business and finance, it also sums up the International Spillover Index. To be more precise, “international spillover effects are said to occur when one country’s actions generate benefits or impose costs on another country that are not reflected in market prices, and therefore are not ‘internalized’ by the actions of consumers and producers.”²³ The Spillover Index measures the scope and impact of positive and negative externalities, which countries around the world distribute to each other. “A higher score means that a country causes more positive and fewer negative spillover effects.”²⁴

Acknowledging that the spillovers can be both positive and negative, it is of utmost importance to pay attention to both phenomena—important lessons derived thereof can inform the policy- and decision-making processes. In a globalized world where various actions and their effects spread throughout the board, “positive and negative spillovers must be understood, measured, and carefully managed since countries cannot achieve the SDGs if spillovers from other countries counteract their efforts”²⁵. Considering that national statistical offices do not usually measure international spillover effects, the challenges remain as to obtaining comprehensive data across the world. However, recent efforts launched by international and regional organizations strive to close the gap in the existing statistical shortcomings. Moreover, the scale of impact of a

²² Duke University, Massive Open Online Course: “Impact Measurement & Management for the SDGs,” Coursera, accessed June 6, 2022, <https://www.coursera.org/learn/impact-for-sdgs>. Emphasis added.

²³ Jeffrey Sachs et al., “SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2017. Global Responsibilities: International Spillovers in Achieving the Goals” (Gütersloh and New York: Bertelsmann Stiftung and Sustainable Development Solutions Network, July 2017), p. 3.

²⁴ Sustainable Development Solutions Network, “Map: Spillover Score,” <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/>, 2022, <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/map/spillovers>.

²⁵ Guido Schmidt-Traub, Holger Hoff, and Maren Bernlöhner, “International Spillovers and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Measuring How a Country’s Progress towards the SDGs Is Affected by Actions in Other Countries” (Sustainable Development Solutions Network, July 15, 2019), <https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/be6d1d56/files/uploaded/International-spillovers-and-the-SDGs.pdf>, p. 2.

country's actions on the SDG performance of another state entails that the international community has to dedicate extraordinary attention to the spillover effect.

Interestingly, the UN system has recognized the necessity to grasp international spillover effects through some of the SDGs—most prominently, SDG 12 [Responsible Consumption and Production] calls upon the high-income countries to bear responsibility for addressing potential negative effects that their activities generate. Sweden has emerged as one of the first countries to tackle the issue at hand: Via its Generational Goal, the country proclaimed that the aim is to “hand over to the next generation a society in which the major environmental problems in Sweden have been solved, without increasing environmental and health problems outside Sweden's borders”²⁶. Besides SDG 12, SDG 17 [Partnership for the Goals] also recognizes the need to halt and/or reduce negative international spillovers as it “calls for ‘policy coherence’ for sustainable development”²⁷. Goal 17 identifies the importance of a plethora of stakeholders involved in sustainable development and strives to assemble various perspectives and ideas for reaching the Agenda 2030. Ranging from government representatives, international and regional organizations, and civil society, to businesses, finance, and local communities and individuals, it is evident that many international actors play a role in crafting policies that impact the environmental, social, and economic foundations of our world. Hence, the UN system has so far introduced diverse mechanisms for the exchange of ideas and concerns between stakeholders, and the SDG Index and the International Spillover Index provide substance for further elaboration and analysis.

The map portraying the International Spillover Index can be found on the following page—note that the darker the blue color is, the higher the country's score is, denoting that the state produces more positive effects and fewer negative externalities.

²⁶ Naturvårdsverket | Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, “The Generational Goal,” [www.naturvardsverket.se](https://www.naturvardsverket.se/en/environmental-work/environmental-objectives/the-generational-goal/), accessed June 6, 2022, <https://www.naturvardsverket.se/en/environmental-work/environmental-objectives/the-generational-goal/>.

²⁷ Jeffrey D. Sachs et al., op. cit. [2022], p. 28.

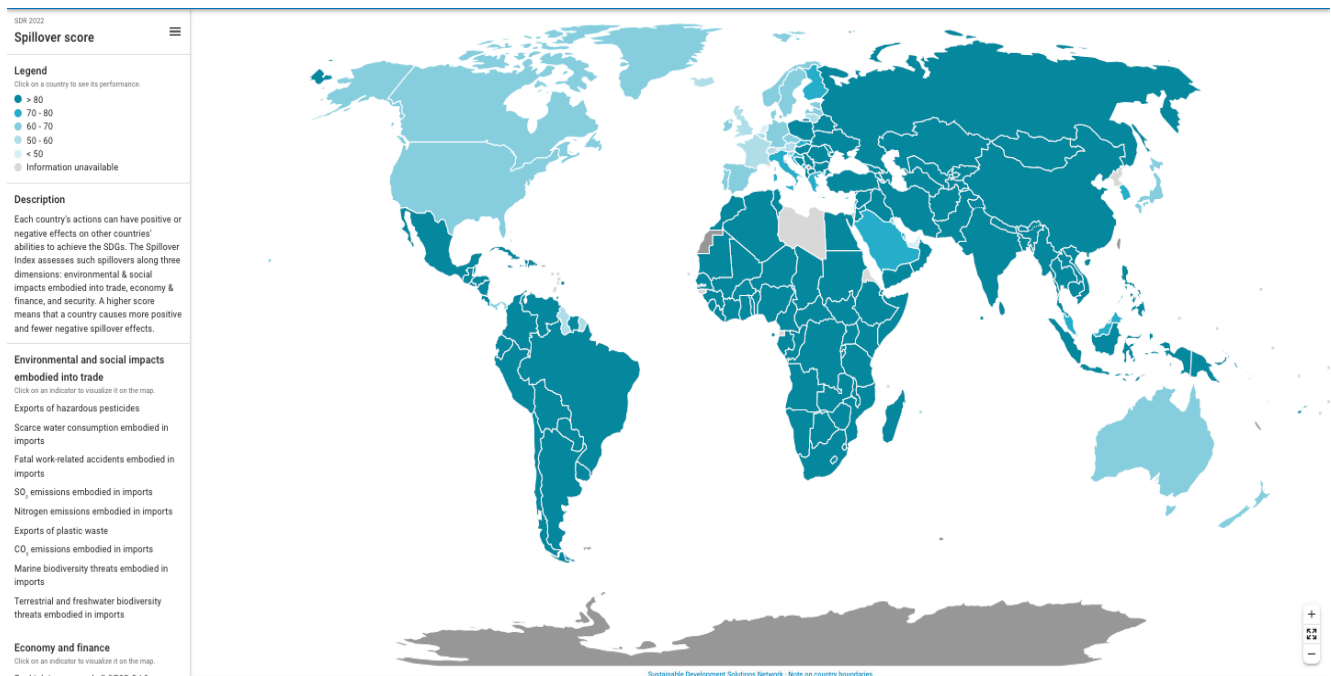


Figure 2: The map portrays the International Spillover Score, which is a measure of the scale of the country's positive and negative spillover effects. A higher score denotes that a country generates more positive and fewer negative externalities. The darkest blue color on the map represents countries whose spillover score is above 80, meaning that these countries are the most successful ones in generating good spillover effects. The lighter the color blue is, the more country produces negative spillover effects.

Source: Sustainable Development Solutions Network. "Map: Spillover Score." <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/>, 2022. <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/map/spillovers>.

Note: If you return to page 25 and observe Figure 1, you will notice that the colors on that map [Figure 1] and this one [Figure 2] are almost inverted. The high-income countries are marked with the darkest blue color [highest score] in Figure 1 because they are the closest ones to reaching all 17 SDGs. Yet, high-income countries are marked with the light/lightest blue color [lowest score] in Figure 2 because they produce the largest quantity of negative spillover effects. The phenomenon will be explained below.

The International Spillover Index encompasses the following categories of spillovers:

Type of Spillovers ²⁸²⁹	Associated with:	Closely related to SDGs [amongst others]:	Challenges
1. Environmental and social spillovers embodied into trade	Pollution, Utilization of natural resources, Social impacts that derive from the consumption of goods and services.	SDG 8 [Decent Work and Economic Growth], SDG 12 [Responsible Consumption and Production], SDG 17 [Partnership for the Goals].	
2. Direct cross-border flows in air and water	Physical flows of, <i>inter alia</i> , air and water, from one country to another.	SDG 6 [Clean Water and Sanitation], SDG 14 [Life below Water], SDG 15 [Life on Land].	Assigning the origins of water and air pollution to a certain country is a rather difficult task. As a result, the International Spillover Index does not currently comprise any indicators to track these types of spillovers.
3. Spillovers related to economic and financial flows	Corruption, Tax havens, Unfair tax competition, etc., Positive spillovers such as international development finance.	SDG 16 [Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions], SDG 17 [Partnership for the Goals].	
4. Peacekeeping and security spillovers	Organized international crime, Exports of major conventional weapons and small arms, Positive spillovers such as investments in peacekeeping and conflict prevention.	SDG 16 [Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions], SDG 17 [Partnership for the Goals].	The small arms trade is difficult to track.

²⁸ Table created by the author of the thesis. The list is adopted in accordance with the categorization presented in the Sustainable Development Report 2022. Bold in original.

²⁹ Considering the presented subcategories that build the spillover scheme, I will assess each of the case studies against a set of outlined standards. Hence, the subcategories will assist me in focusing my research on those areas that are of substantial importance for reaching SDGs 10 and 16. Through identification of good practices and the alterations that occurred in a specific timeframe, I will be able to observe the dynamics of SDGs implementation and policy diffusion.

Beyond recognizing the role of states in adequately addressing and channeling spillover effects, it is important to outline other stakeholders whose actions can have a tremendous impact on sustainable development. “Since businesses drive most resource use and pollution, they should also systematically include spillover information related to their supply chains in annual sustainability and SDG reporting.”³⁰ Then, local action also counts—“different strategies for meeting a given SDG target within a city may create different spillovers”³¹. While there is a lack of analysis of the effects of one country’s actions on other states, the spillovers of cities’ acts are even less analyzed. Consequently, existing research acknowledges “the importance of national-to-international interactions but do[es] not address subnational-to-international spillovers”³². Additionally, one has to consider that states are the formal signatories to the 2030 Agenda, thereby ‘lifting the burden’ of the responsibility off the local policymakers’ shoulders.

When immersing deeper into the topic, we come to another striking piece of evidence—even when local action strives to align with the goals of Agenda 2030, there is no guarantee that the strategy for realizing those goals will not trigger a negative impact on performance elsewhere. For example, local communities that focus on curbing their emission levels

*support progress on SDG13 on ‘climate action’ and SDG7 on ‘affordable and clean energy’, they also contribute to SDG11 on ‘sustainable cities and communities’. However, such local level initiatives may also adversely impact other resources and associated SDGs. Such indirect impacts may occur both within and beyond local jurisdictional boundaries with high or low visibility to local policy-makers.*³³

The above-presented example showcases the interplay between SDGs—how fulfilling one SDG can positively or negatively influence the achievement of another SDG depending on the strategy employed. The need for coordination once again emerges at the forefront. As there are different paths to achieve a certain target and goal, policy- and decision-makers should strive to

³⁰ Guido Schmidt-Traub, Holger Hoff, and Maren Bernlöhr, op. cit., p. 8.

³¹ Rebecka Ericsson Engström et al., “Succeeding at Home and Abroad: Accounting for the International Spillovers of Cities’ SDG Actions,” *Npj Urban Sustainability* 1, no. 1 (April 27, 2021): 1–5, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s42949-020-00002-w>, p. 1.

³² Ibid.

³³ Rebecka Engström et al., “Cross-Scale Water and Land Impacts of Local Climate and Energy Policy—a Local Swedish Analysis of Selected SDG Interactions,” *Sustainability* 11, no. 7 (March 27, 2019): 1847, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11071847>, p. 1. Emphasis added.

avoid those strategies that could impede the global progress to achieve Agenda 2030. Not only are local communities and national governments responsible, but so are the regional councils and international fora, where transparent and open conversations should occur. So far, academia and other stakeholders have recognized the importance of the interconnection of SDGs, but the acknowledgment of regional diffusion is yet to come. Not only are SDGs closely intertwined but so are the local communities, countries, and regions. If it tends to be challenging to identify the specific country that generates air and/or water pollution on a global level, then why wouldn't we go a step back and focus on recognizing—on the bilateral, trilateral, or regional basis—those countries that are not aligning their policies with the goals to which they had assigned in 2015. The process should not be revolving around 'naming and shaming', but rather, pointing out the specific omission so that the actors can altogether derive lessons and prevent similar occurrences in the future.

Both positive and negative spillovers deserve special attention, given that countries cannot achieve the SDGs if spillovers deriving from other states' actions counteract their efforts. The International Spillover Index points to the special responsibility that affluent countries bear—it has shown that negative effects tend to move from rich to poor states. Furthermore, one must consider that the headquarters of many transnational companies are located in high-income countries. These corporations influence the international supply chains to a great extent, and it is the duty of the countries that host the companies to recognize and tackle international spillover effects. Additionally, the current situation in the world calls upon the policy- and decision-makers to act timely and effectively as the most recent Sustainable Development Report [2022] concludes that “for the second year in a row, the world is no longer making progress on the SDGs”³⁴.

Various international crises that have impacted the world in the previous two years lay underneath the stagnation concerning SDG performance. Health, geopolitical, and climate crises have triggered spillovers and significantly hit the most vulnerable countries. For the second subsequent year, the SDG Index world average has decreased in 2021, mostly owing to the effect of the pandemic on SDG 1 [No Poverty] and SDG 8 [Decent Work and Economic Growth]. Moreover, “besides their massive humanitarian costs, military conflicts – including the war in Ukraine – have major international spillovers on food security and energy prices, which are

³⁴ Maëlle Voil, “Press Release: 2022 Sustainable Development Report,” [www.unsdsn.org](https://www.unsdsn.org/press-release-2022-sustainable-development-report), June 2, 2022, <https://www.unsdsn.org/press-release-2022-sustainable-development-report>.

amplified by the climate and biodiversity crises”³⁵. Once again, the regressive developments in the world point to the interrelation of continents, countries, regions, and local communities. A deteriorating situation in one or more components of the system echoes throughout the other parts. It is of utmost importance to identify and draw connections between different segments of the organism to mitigate negative effects and amplify positive changes. Considering that the SDG Index and the International Spillover Index are the first of their kind to encompass a broad scope of measurements for a better grasp of the ongoing situation on terrain, we shall delve into their findings to uncover the existing trends and generate change. Besides, the UN Member States will meet in September 2023, “on the side-line of the UN General Assembly for the SDG Summit to define priorities for restoring and accelerating SDG progress by 2030 and beyond. Ambitious and sound national targets, strategies, and plans are crucial to turning the SDGs into an action agenda”³⁶.

The negotiated strategies and plans, however, seek novel insights as it has become clear that the old ways will fix neither existing nor newly emerging planetary problems. In this light, the UN shall incorporate the available SDG-related indexes within its reformed toolkit as they epitomize the interconnectedness of the world and indicate that solving the most pressing set of issues requires all countries to join the board. States’ actions need to be aligned, whereby they acknowledge that what they choose to do influences—in one way or another, indirectly or directly—neighboring and non-neighboring countries. “The SDG Index was clearly designed to help policymakers track SDG progress and implement the policies needed in their country. The ‘SDG dashboards’ have been analysing trends since the first index. They highlight each country’s progress towards each SDG, and extrapolate its chances of achieving the SDGs by 2030.”³⁷ The data visualization assists policy- and decision-makers in creating meaningful solutions for SDG-related challenges and obstacles. The way the country deals with a certain issue does not only influence its path toward Agenda 2030, but also the success that the globe as a whole achieves.

Sustainable Development Report 2022 presents Finland as the top country according to the SDG Index, followed by the three Nordic states—Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. While the European countries lead the SDGs performance levels, it is interesting to note that they also

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Eric Pichon et al., op. cit., p. 22.

generate a plentiful of negative effects on the other countries' SDGs performance. The phenomenon occurs due to the unsustainable consumption and supply chains deriving from the high-income countries. As mentioned above, the multinational companies—that considerably control the international supply chains and are headquartered in the developed states—contribute to the methods of (mis-)handling spillover effects.

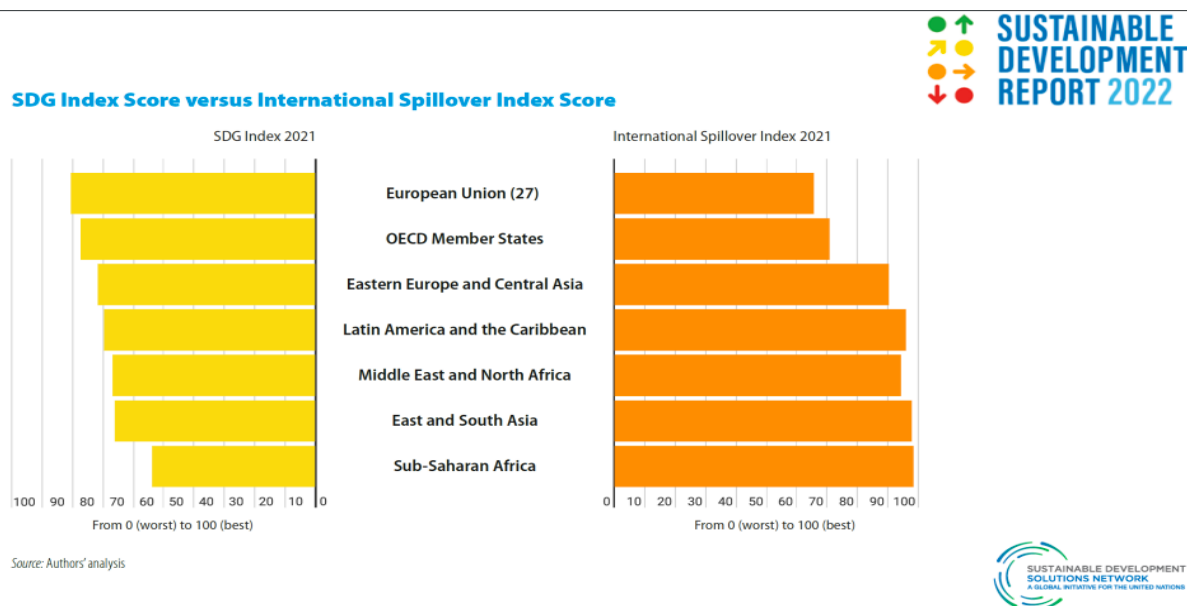


Figure 3: SDG Index Score versus International Spillover Index Score. Under the *SDG Index 2021*, the graph portrays the level of success of regions and the OECD Member States in accordance with their SDGs performance. Under the *International Spillover Index 2021*, the graph portrays the level of success of regions and the OECD Member States in accordance with the spillover effects they generate. As indicated in the graph, note that the higher the Spillover Index is, the more positive effects and fewer negative externalities a region generates. While the EU Member States perform very good when it comes to the achievement of SDGs, they score low with regards to the spillover effects, which means they generate a high level of negative effects on the other states' SDGs performance. Conversely, Sub-Saharan Africa has a lower score concerning the SDGs achievement, but a very high International Spillover Score—the countries in the region tend to cause more positive and fewer negative spillover effects.

Source: Sustainable Development Solutions Network, “Sustainable Development Report 2022: Key Findings,” 2022, https://irp.cdn-website.com/be6d1d56/files/uploaded/SDR22_Launch_02%20June%202022_GL_Public%20version.pdf.

While the EU Member States have very good scores in their SDG performance, which means they are on a successful path towards reaching the UN Agenda 2030, they have low International Spillover Scores [Figure 3]. Hence, the EU Member States tend to generate more negative and fewer positive spillover effects. As an example: “An additional 6.3 tonnes of CO₂-eq. were emitted elsewhere to satisfy European consumption of goods and services in 2015 – approximately 40% of its total CO₂ footprint. The EU27 also generates large domestic and spillover impacts in terms of phosphorus fertilizer (applied to erodible soils) and water stress due to crops.”³⁸ Contrariwise, the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and East and South Asia have lower SDG performance results but high Spillover Index Scores—these countries cause more positive and fewer negative spillover effects.

In the wake of the low scores with regards to the International Spillover Index generated by the high-income countries in Europe, “several instruments and legislations are under discussion in the European Union to address international spillover effects in the context of the European Green Deal.”³⁹ The SDG and International Spillover indexes’ creators and Sustainable Development Reports’ authors underline the urge for setting priorities to halt negative international spillovers caused by rich countries. The message is acquiring impetus before the 2023 SDG Summit and four priorities come to the fore when it comes to tackling the bad effects of international spillovers:

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- (1) Scale up international development and climate finance;*
 - (2) Leverage technical cooperation and SDG diplomacy;*
 - (3) Adopt national targets and instruments to address consumption-based impacts on other countries (do no harm);*
 - (4) Strengthen monitoring and data systems at international, national, industrial, and corporate levels covering the full supply chains, and make them an integral part of SDG reporting.*⁴⁰
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³⁸ Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy, and Center for Global Commons at the University of Tokyo, “Global Commons Stewardship Index 2021: Safeguarding the Shared Resources of the Planet.” (Paris; New Haven, CT; and Tokyo, 2021), p. 43.

³⁹ Sustainable Development Solutions Network, “Sustainable Development Report 2022 — Executive Summary: Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations,” dashboards.sdgindex.org, 2022, <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/chapters/executive-summary>.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Emphasis added.

The above-mentioned priorities emphasize the necessity for better multilateral coordination to prevent imposing harm to others in the system. Hence, when a country is crafting a set of policies intended to tackle certain pressing problems, it shall consider the consequences of such strategies on the neighboring and non-neighboring states, especially when it comes to consumption- and environment-related issues. Moreover, developing and strengthening monitoring and data systems would assist in identifying the gaps in SDG achievement and potentially tracing the root causes of certain issues so that the stakeholders can react timely and efficiently in the wake of disruption.

Subsequent Sustainable Development Reports “showed that substantial data is available on international spillovers, but they were mostly confined to scientific publications behind paywalls and written in styles that are inaccessible to many policy makers”⁴¹. Consequently, this thesis seeks to contribute to the efforts launched by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network [SDSN], which is the body that came up with the above-elaborated indexes and dashboards. I will strive to provide context to the numbers presented in the Sustainable Development Reports by delving into the case studies—Haiti, Cameroon, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. By analyzing the case studies’ good-example policies and their effect on the neighboring countries thereof, I will tend to draw a line of correlation. Ahead of the 2023 SDG Summit, countries need to become more aware of their actions’ impact. Given that the numerous crises in the past two years once again exposed the intricacy and profound interconnection of the multilateral system, more than ever before international actors shall acknowledge that without having everyone on the board, achieving SDGs by the year 2030 will be extremely challenging. Considering that before the COVID-19 pandemic, the pace of achieving the UN Agenda 2030 had already been slow and the process stagnated completely in the previous two years, the international community shall consider the offered expert data and incorporate the viable recommendations into the policy-making agenda. Deriving from the hope that we will embrace the learning and idea exchange processes in the present and coming times, this thesis strives to delve into the spillover effect from the perspective of domestically led policies that got diffused across the region due to their success. Not only have those initiatives had a positive influence on the country’s SDG performance but so have they strived to push forward neighboring countries and their SDG-related standpoint.

⁴¹ Guido Schmidt-Traub, Holger Hoff, and Maren Bernlöhr, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

According to the International Spillover Index, my case studies—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haiti, and Cameroon—are among the leading countries in their respective regions, which means that they cause more positive and fewer negative spillover effects on other countries⁴²:

Case Study	International Spillover Index [out of 100] [2022]	Global Ranking [Spillover Index] [2022]
Haiti	99.21	17 th
Cameroon	99.19	18 th
Bosnia and Herzegovina	91.62	95 th

Given their leading positions within their respective regions, positive initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, and Haiti can lead not only to these countries’ approximation to reaching the goals of Agenda 2030 but also to the progress of their neighboring countries. Therefore, by analyzing diffusion dynamics, its strengths and weaknesses, I will be able to identify areas for improvement in achieving SDGs. However, “consideration of spillovers must be made possible without overwhelming local planners and decision-makers in never-ending cross-border SDG impact analyses. This demands that the international research community reconciles current knowledge and guides analysis to where it is most impactful.”⁴³ In the light of the theory of Regional Diffusion, under whose auspices this thesis operates, I shall consider the dynamics of the regional interconnection and policy-dispersal. Considering the context-specific narratives existing across the world, researchers need to adapt certain measurements to distinct features and conditions of certain regions. The interrelation of regional components pleads for the acknowledgment and identification of negative and positive externalities within and amongst the regions. Hence, the following chapter acclimatizes the theoretical framework of the thesis to the context-specific arch and serves as an interlude to the case studies presented ahead.

⁴² Data in the table is obtained from the Sustainable Development Report 2022 and as visualized on the Spillover Score Map [Sustainable Development Solutions Network, “Map: Spillover Score,” <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/>, 2022, <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/map/spillovers>]. When I commenced my work on the thesis, I relied on the data and rankings from the Sustainable Development Report 2021 as the Sustainable Development Report 2022 was not yet published. The scores and rankings of my case studies have fluctuated in the meantime. However, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haiti, and Cameroon have remained the leading countries in their respective regions when it comes to their International Spillover Scores. Another aspect worth noting is that one of the case study’s practices diffused across the region even before the Sustainable Development Report was first published, so it is evident that the timeline of practices and report results do not necessarily overlap, but the message remains—the leading countries in regions can inspire SDG-related policies and actions of their neighbors.

⁴³ Rebecka Ericsson Engström et al., op. cit. [2021], p. 3.

THEORIES ADAPTED

“Regional diffusion theory predicts that states are most likely to emulate the programs of other states within close geographical proximity (Walker, 1969), and that the spread of policy adoptions may be explained by studying the behavior of bordering or neighboring states.”⁴⁴ Despite the calls to recognize the important place of states and local communities in navigating through the SDG agenda, the research overlooks the role of regions along with their inner and external interactions. While it is important that the international community provides the platform for adapting Agenda 2030 to the city- and nation-specific frameworks, I want to highlight the often-times overlooked component of the theoretical and practical arcade—that of regions. Coming from the Western Balkans, a region still entrenched in war-time storylines, I have learned that the weak components of the system can significantly disturb the functioning of the system altogether. Likewise, if a country in the region sets a good example of policymaking, chances are high that the other states will emulate the course of action at hand. Research conducted in the United States of America provides another example in practice. Namely, “generations of state politics scholars have believed that a U.S. state is more likely to adopt a law if its neighboring states have already done so, that is, that there is a positive regional effect on policy diffusion.”⁴⁵ Similarly, in the modus of the communicating vessels system, the SDG domestic performance can influence the SDG performance of other states. However, it is important to note that the International Spillover Index identifies the negative and positive effects triggered by states on other countries of the world. Yet, it is difficult to attribute a certain impeding effect to a country of origin.

My proposition in the study I am conducting, aligning with the notions of Liberal Institutionalism and Regional Diffusion, underlines the need for a reformed approach to achieve SDGs, calling for a focus on the regional approach. Since the research conducted so far underlines the power of spillovers to halt or accelerate progress towards Agenda 2030, one shall also acknowledge that the measuring, monitoring, and evaluation of spillovers on the regional level has the potential to facilitate the overwhelming analysis fatigue. Namely, considering the various mechanisms put in place to assemble different viewpoints of global actors, the broad scope of

⁴⁴ Amy M. Hageman and Sean W.G. Robb, op. cit.

⁴⁵ Christopher Z. Mooney, “Modeling Regional Effects on State Policy Diffusion,” *Political Research Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (March 2001): 103–24, p. 103.

existing data, and the development of new measurements and indicators, the international community runs the risk of all-embracing too many resources that might be of little use. Hence, instead of diffusing the attention and precious resources on too big or too small of a scale, the middle ground could be the scope of the *region*. Regions have the potential of becoming a link between individuals, local communities, civil society, states, and international organizations.

*The regions studied in political geography exist through the presence of some form of internal political unity, which may derive from the unification of the region under a single sovereign government or a single local authority, from the existence within it of a particular political outlook or aspiration, from the functional unity of the region as an area of formal international cooperation, or from the existence of informal underlying supranational characteristics.*⁴⁶

In my research, when I speak about regions, I concentrate on the interactions of *groups of states* within a spatial context. I strive to be part of the cohort that commits—beyond the state-centric approach in international relations—to exploring distinct and overlooked layers when analyzing the occurrences in the world, especially those that impact the quality of people’s everyday lives. Paying attention to regional diffusion dynamics, especially in the process of reaching Agenda 2030, is worthwhile because “state policymakers and citizens share the human cognitive bias of accepting the familiar and being reassured by those things closest to them”⁴⁷. Furthermore, “state policymakers and citizens look to other states in a satisficing search for solutions to problems, and the states to which they look first are their neighbors, due to familiarity, ease of communication, cross-mixing of media and population, and common values”⁴⁸.

Now it is time to make the case for the plausibility of the Liberal Institutionalism model in the context of my thesis. The theory recognizes that “competition, but also cooperation had furthered the survival of human groups”⁴⁹. In the period following the Second World War, different sides came together to forge a new era of international relations—the period solemnized with peace and prosperity. Moreover, it was the United Nations again that attracted the momentum

⁴⁶ Richard Muir, “Political Regions and Scale,” in *Modern Political Geography* (London: Palgrave, 1981), 191–239, p. 191. Emphasis added.

⁴⁷ Christopher Z. Mooney, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

⁴⁸ Christopher Z. Mooney, op. cit., p. 105.

⁴⁹ Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Western Europe, 1890–1970* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 24.

of creating Millennium Development Goals and the subsequent Sustainable Development Goals. In that light, “‘we can no longer afford to take that which is good in the past and simply call it our heritage,’ writes Hannah Arendt, ‘to discard the bad and simply think of it as a dead load which by itself time will burry in oblivion.’”⁵⁰ The dual meaning of this quote in the context of my work pertains to the two following notions. For one, the message resonating through Arendt’s words is that we should never forget the mistakes of the past because if we do, we run the risk of repeating history. The current situation in the world demonstrates that despite knowing the past, we still tend to replicate the same mistakes. Could we then imagine what would happen if we launched history into oblivion? Yet, we should tend to learn and not just constantly shift the blame.

The second interpretation of Arendt’s quote pertains to the *Zeitgeist*, and I wish to apply it to the topic of my research. Having in mind the massive success launched by the MDGs and SDGs alike and the sheer number of stakeholders involved, we need to acknowledge that these developments have had their flaws. While the UN has embraced the MDGs and SDGs as some of its most fruitful undertakings considering the number of people whose lives have been positively transformed, the International Organization has also engaged in a retrospective analysis of flaws and obstacles. Moreover, if we plan to re-energize the process of achieving SDGs that has stagnated in the preceding two years, then we shall assist the UN in the assessment of its strategies and actions through research.

Linking the two theories together—that of Regional Diffusion and Liberal Institutionalism—it is important to note that the international fora such as the UN have perennially provided for the dissemination of ideas and perspectives, policies, and strategies. Therefore, the two theories within the framework of my thesis mutually reinforce each other. International organizations offer institutional mechanisms for coordination and cooperation between and within the different regions of the world. So do the regional political, military, and security organizations. Hence, devoting special attention to developments in the regions through the channels of existing supranational and/or intergovernmental organizations, led by the UN, would offer a smoother way to implement the global ‘to-do list’ for realizing sustainable development—Agenda 2030. Assuming that states do not nationalize information related to certain policies, which would impede the diffusion process, the learning dynamics can take off in two different directions. Either

⁵⁰ Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (London: Vintage Books, 1998), p. xii.

the policy implemented in one country will be successful and might get replicated in the neighboring state or it will fail and the political entities in geographical proximity will learn not to repeat the same mistake of their neighbor at hand. Nonetheless, what is key is the learning experience, which can improve the management of resources across the region and provide for a more effective tackling of the pressing issues.

At this point, Legal Positivism joins the stage to assist me in encircling the adopted theoretical framework. “Central to positivism’s analysis of legality is the institutional nature of law; central to its analysis of authority is the idea of efficacy.”⁵¹ Efficacy in the 2030 Agenda is one of the overarching points. The idea most prominently interlaces through the SDG 17 [Partnership for the Goals]—the goal that calls for coordination and cooperation between stakeholders involved in the SDG agenda-setting. The vision of the SDG 17 is to “strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”⁵².

Target 17.6 calls for the enhancement of *“North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism”*⁵³.

Target 17.7 calls for the promotion of *“the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed”*⁵⁴.

Target 17.16 calls for the enhancement of *“the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries”*⁵⁵.

⁵¹ Dennis Patterson, ed., *A Companion to Philosophy of Law and Legal Theory*, Second edition (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 245.

⁵² United Nations General Assembly, op. cit., p. 26.

⁵³ Ibid. Emphasis added.

⁵⁴ Ibid. Emphasis added.

⁵⁵ United Nations General Assembly, op. cit., p. 27. Emphasis added.

One of the most striking provisions in Agenda 2030, which supports the proposition that the UN should aspire to orient towards regional diffusion dynamics, can be found in the Declaration part:

*“We acknowledge also the importance of the regional and subregional dimensions, regional economic integration and interconnectivity in sustainable development. **Regional and subregional frameworks can facilitate the effective translation of sustainable development policies into concrete action at the national level.**”⁵⁶*

Although there are multiple instances in Agenda 2030 that point to the importance of regional collaboration, it does not seem that the international community is applying such rules in practice. The International Spillover Index serves as proof that the appeals for ensuring ‘indivisibility and integration’ of Sustainable Development Goals and Targets tend to remain on paper only. In that light, during the Diplomatic Academy [of Vienna] Students’ Initiative Conference (DASICON) 2022, the Director of the Vienna School of International Studies/Diplomatische Akademie Wien, Ambassador Dr. Emil Brix captivantly pointed out the following notion related to the SDG 2 [Zero Hunger]:

I looked up the status report of the Republic of Austria on how we have realized the aim of the SDG Zero Hunger, and it says there that we have realized it 100% in Austria. It only says that we have a problem with obesity and this problem which [is] going up and down; maybe it’s more going up. And there, I don’t want to sound cynical, but I don’t think that Austria has achieved the Zero Hunger aim in the SDG 2. It has achieved it within Austria, but we have a responsibility also to take care that this objective of zero hunger is a common good—a common global good. And it does not help if individual member states simply are happy to announce that, for them, they have achieved one of those issues. That’s why I’m saying that I’m feeling that this sort of national statistics and status reports are sometimes not very helpful in achieving this ‘objective’ of keeping it on the record as a common good that we have to work on.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ United Nations General Assembly, op. cit., p. 7. Emphasis added.

⁵⁷ Diplomatische Akademie Wien, “DASICON 2022 - Panel 1: ‘SDG 2 Zero Hunger,’” [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30Usqz2gX4s&list=PLxnl3X63i8ZMdzqEPybtDVqPMS5gt-LVj&index=2), February 27, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30Usqz2gX4s&list=PLxnl3X63i8ZMdzqEPybtDVqPMS5gt-LVj&index=2>. Address by Ambassador Dr. Brix [timestamp: 10:29-11:48]. Emphasis added.

The Ambassador then goes on to say that one of the main drivers of hunger in the world is the lack of peace, i.e., conflicts. When taking just a brief look at the SDGs, Goal 16 [Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions] encompasses the term *Peace* and the components relating to it. Therefore, in the above-presented statement, one can notice that Ambassador Brix has implicitly recognized and brought to the fore both the interaction between the Global Goals and the interdependence of the international system. Goal 16 associated with peace, justice, and strong institutions calls for the promotion of the rule of law, significant reduction of illicit financial and arms flows, broadening and strengthening of the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance, etc.⁵⁸ Having in mind that the International Spillover Index accounts for, *inter alia*, the scale of the organized international crime and exports of major conventional weapons and small arms, one does not have to look further than the *regional* illicit flows and interlinkages.

The need for collaboration is also enshrined in Goal 10 [Reduced Inequalities], which is the objective I also analyze in the thesis through the case studies. The main vision of this objective is to reduce inequality within and among countries⁵⁹. One of the targets within the SDG 10 is the need to ensure the improvement of regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions. Considering that the International Spillover Index explores the spillovers related to economic and financial flows, as well as environmental and social spillovers embodied in trade, SDG 10 has indirectly found its way into the Index.

Remarkably, shifting the focus onto regional crescendos could equip the UN with an enhanced instrument in the existing toolkit. If the countries in proximity do inspire each other when it comes to SDG-related policies, then the 'leaders' of the regions, determined based on their Spillover Score, should receive more attention from the international community. If a good example policy tends to disperse across the region, then the UN shall divert its attention to the leading countries, which could be the drivers of positive change and the focal points for coordination and cooperation between other regional components, be it states, cities, NGOs, individuals, movements, etc. These states could carry the torch of responsibility and lead the regions forward, in line with the 'indivisibility, universality, and interlinkage' principles of the UN Agenda 2030.

⁵⁸ United Nations General Assembly, op. cit., p. 25.

⁵⁹ United Nations General Assembly, op. cit., p. 21.

Hereby, I take into account the potential tensions that could arise if one country becomes a leader and is assigned the torch of driving the region forward on behalf of the UN. However, the International Spillover Index, based on sound metrics that are being further improved, clearly and transparently provides the global ranking of countries with regards to their spillover impacts. The higher the country is on the list, the more positive and fewer negative externalities it diffuses. While high-income countries lead the way when it comes to their individual SDG performance [according to the SDG Index], they achieve very poor results in the field of spillovers. Indeed, a country can claim that it has achieved a certain goal in the SDG basket within its borders but given that Agenda 2030 is a *global* to-do list for achieving sustainable development—all the countries need to be on the board with their performance if we want to assert that we are attaining the goals. Furthermore, to claim that a certain goal has been achieved within a country—a country that generates massive negative spillover impetuses—is not the most adequate deed in the present-day realities, where the well-being of one component depends on the motions that another component propels. Therefore, the level of analysis in many states derives from the *Ptolemaic parochialism* type of approach to achieving SDGs. “In overemphasizing the differences among the many national states, the observer is prone to attribute many of what he conceives to be virtues to his own nation and the vices to others, especially the adversaries of the moment.”⁶⁰ In the modern context, it seems that when countries are crafting their SDG-related policies today, they tend to further their interests while overlooking the bad effects that pursuing such a path could have on other countries in their neighborhood or elsewhere. The development is viewed through the prism of national interests, which is an approach far-fetched from Agenda 2030. We need to re-imagine our level of analysis and policymaking when it comes to the SDGs. Therefore, exploring the characteristics—both benefits and weaknesses—of the regional approach, synchronized with the communal, national, and international efforts, offers a viable alternative to the existing manner of dealing with sustainable development, which is to a great extent state-centric.

⁶⁰ Klaus Knorr and Sidney Verba, eds., *International System: Theoretical Essays* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 83.

PART III

CASE STUDY 1: HAITI

*Haiti, [is a] country in the Caribbean Sea that includes the western third of the island of Hispaniola and such smaller islands as Gonâve, Tortue (Tortuga), Grande Caye, and Vache. [...] Economic, political, and social difficulties as well as a number of natural disasters have beset Haiti with chronic poverty and other serious problems.*⁶¹

The Dominican Republic borders Haiti—the two counties share the island. Jamaica and Cuba are also Haiti's closest neighbors.

*“Haiti has a developing market economy based in large part on agriculture and light industries; coffee is the main cash crop.”*⁶²

Haiti is also a part of the group of Small Island Developing States [SIDS]. “SIDS were recognized as a special case both for their environment and development at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.”⁶³ When it comes to the SDGs 10 and 16, some of the analyzed indicators pertain to the information in the proceeding lines. “In 2012, 18.0% of the population were living below half of the median income”⁶⁴ and the “total amount received in assistance for development increased from **149.6** million dollars in **2000** to **989.0 million dollars** in **2018**”⁶⁵. According to the statistics available for the period from 2000 to 2018, Haiti received the greatest amount of total assistance for developments (millions of dollars) in 2010, and after that, the amount decreased but remained constant. When it comes to SDG 16, “in **2018**, **62.8%** of the overall prison population were unsentenced detainees”⁶⁶. This number has dropped over the years, and according to the available

⁶¹ Christian Antoine Girault et al., “Haiti,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, September 20, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Haiti>.

⁶² Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, “Haiti Summary,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, May 2, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Haiti>.

⁶³ United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, “About Small Island Developing States,” <https://www.un.org/ohrlls/>, accessed March 15, 2022, [https://www.un.org/ohrlls/content/about-small-island-developing-states#:~:text=Small%20Island%20Developing%20States%20\(SIDS](https://www.un.org/ohrlls/content/about-small-island-developing-states#:~:text=Small%20Island%20Developing%20States%20(SIDS).

⁶⁴ United Nations Statistics Division, “SDG Country Profile | Haiti | Goal 10,” [unstats.un.org](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/hti/goal-10), accessed April 29, 2022, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/hti/goal-10>.

⁶⁵ Ibid. Bold in original.

⁶⁶ United Nations Statistics Division, “SDG Country Profile | Haiti | Goal 16,” [unstats.un.org](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/hti/goal-16), accessed April 29, 2022, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/hti/goal-16>. Bold in original.

data, the percent of unsentenced detainees as a proportion of the overall prison population has fallen from 90% in 2005 to around 70% in 2015 and continues to decrease. One of the striking facts points to “the proportion of children aged 1-14 who experienced recent physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers [which] was **83.2%** in **2017**”.⁶⁷

Taking into consideration different delicacies pertaining to Haiti, the 2022 Sustainable Development Report’s results show that when it comes to individual performance, the country ranks quite low. According to the SDG Index Rank, Haiti takes the 151st place out of 163 countries for which the results were obtained. Yet, based on its Spillover Score, which is 99.21⁶⁸, Haiti is positioned amongst the top 20 countries of the world [17/163], being the first-ranked amongst the Latin American and Caribbean countries [the Caribbean region refers to, *inter alia*: Haiti, Cuba, the Dominican Republic⁶⁹]. While an assessment of the country’s performance and spillover scores over the years would be a valuable tool, the 2022 Sustainable Development Report authors state that “due to changes in the indicators and some refinements in the methodology, SDG Index rankings and scores cannot be compared with the results from previous years.”⁷⁰⁷¹ On the following two pages, you can find Haiti’s country profile [page 46, Figure 4] and Haiti’s Spillover score and rank [page 47, Figure 5].

⁶⁷ Ibid. Bold in original.

⁶⁸ Sustainable Development Solutions Network, “Haiti. Country Profile,” <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/>, 2022, <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/profiles/haiti>.

⁶⁹ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, “List of Countries in Latin America,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 10, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/list-of-countries-in-Latin-America-2061416>.

⁷⁰ Jeffrey D. Sachs et al, op. cit. [2022], p. 56.

⁷¹ I started working on the thesis at the beginning of the year when the 2021 Sustainable Development Report was available, while the 2022 edition was being prepared. I was working with the results available for the year 2021 but recently changed the data in accordance with the most recent results.

HAITI

Latin America and the Caribbean

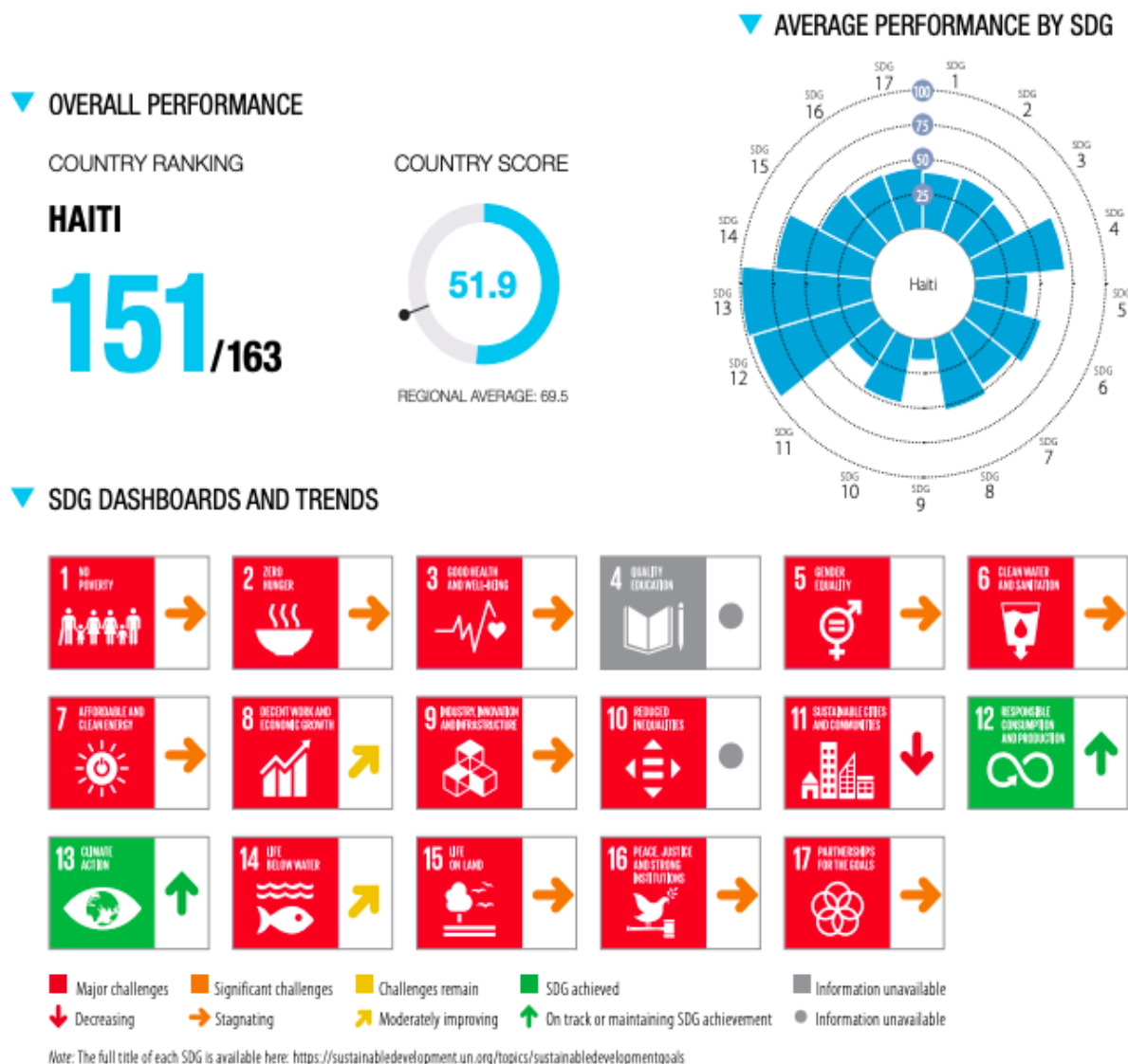


Figure 4: SDG Country Ranking and SDG Country Score for Haiti in 2022. The SDGs are analyzed and the performance on individual goals is presented in accordance with the ongoing trends in the country.

Source: Sustainable Development Solutions Network, “Haiti | Country Profile,” 2022, <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/static/profiles/pdfs/SDR-2022-haiti.pdf>, p. 1.



Figure 5: Haiti’s Spillover score and rank. Represented on the map with dark blue color, yellow margin, and the sign *Haiti*.

Source: Sustainable Development Solutions Network. “Map: Spillover Score.” <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/>, 2022. <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/map/spillovers>.

After the devastating earthquake that hit Haiti in 2010, the UN Secretary-General at the time Ban Ki-moon addressed the General Assembly and reiterated the significance of regional cooperation in assisting the relief efforts after the natural catastrophe that took the lives of hundreds of thousand people and severely destroyed the infrastructure in Haiti⁷². In his remarks, the Secretary-General noted that “hardly a crisis confronts us that does not require actors to cooperate at multiple levels in the search for solutions. That is why the relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations is so important”⁷³. In the meantime, one of the prominent mechanisms for regional cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean has become the *2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean—Regional Knowledge Management Platform*. The

⁷² UN News, “UN Marks Anniversary of Devastating 2010 Haiti Earthquake,” <https://news.un.org/>, January 12, 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/01/1109632#:~:text=On%2012%20January%202010%2C%20a>.

⁷³ United Nations Secretary-General, “Remarks to the Security Council on Haiti and on Cooperation between the United Nations and Regional Organizations,” <https://www.un.org/>, January 13, 2010, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2010-01-13/remarks-security-council-haiti-and-cooperation-between-united-nations>.

platform presents a rich source for following the regional dynamics in the Caribbean and regularly reports on developments in the region with regard to the SDG actions and performances. Moreover, on the platform's main page, the reader can find the reference to the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021⁷⁴, which is a different piece of work in comparison to the Sustainable Development Report [which presents the International Spillover Index]. Hence, it seems that the International Spillover Index has not yet found its way to reaching the regional cooperation platforms to assist them in understanding the causes and effects of individual states' actions.

Yet, one has to note that when assessing the results of the most recent data about the countries' performances, in this case, related to Haiti, much of the progress achieved prior to the COVID-19 pandemic was halted or reversed. Furthermore, an earthquake that hit Haiti in 2021 also created additional challenges for the country—especially for the vulnerable groups—in terms of SDGs 10 and 16 and it does not come as a surprise that the country has stagnated when it comes to the achievement of these goals.

*In recent events such as hurricanes Eta and Iota in the northern countries of Central America (2020), hurricane Elsa in the Caribbean, the volcanic eruption in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, or the Haiti earthquake (2021), the erosion of women's social, economic and political autonomy, already exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the loss of hard-fought gains, prevented women from gaining equal access to life-saving information, protection and support after the crisis.*⁷⁵

In light of the previous and newly emerging crises, the Caribbean, led by Haiti, has dedicated significant attention to building networks relating to strengthening the mechanisms for crisis management and building resilience. One such example is the devotion to the Sendai Framework Voluntary Commitments. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 “was adopted at the Third UN World Conference in Sendai, Japan [...] [It is] the successor

⁷⁴ United Nations, “The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021,” 2021, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2021.pdf>.

⁷⁵ Daniela Beltrame and María del Pilar Medina, “Towards Gender Equality and Women's Leadership for Resilience to Disaster Risks in Latin America and the Caribbean” (62nd Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin American and the Caribbean, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, and UN Women, 2022), p. 14.

instrument to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters”⁷⁶. The Sendai Framework calls for, *inter alia*, a better comprehension of disaster risk and the enforcement of disaster risk governance. “There is also clear recognition of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and the regional platforms for disaster risk reduction as mechanisms for coherence across agendas, monitoring and periodic reviews in support of UN Governance bodies.”⁷⁷ The Sendai Framework encourages stakeholders to pledge *commitments* in order to realize the envisioned goals. When it comes to Latin America and the Caribbean, Haiti was one of the first countries in the region to commit to undertaking measures that will assist in attaining the objectives of the Sendai Framework.

In 2018, one of Haiti’s commitments was that of *Localized Preparedness for More Effective Response with Affected Communities*, and it was completed in 2021. The main aim of the commitment initiative was to equip civil society and faith-based organizations in strengthening the preparedness of the local population to respond more adequately to various challenges. The commitment tackled several goals, amongst which were Goal 10 [Reduced Inequalities] and Goal 16 [Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions]⁷⁸. During the implementation of the initiative, citizens have developed capacities to jointly strengthen the resilience of their communities and local groups were established to promote the cause, while simultaneously tackling the themes associated with children and youth, gender, vulnerable populations, and disaster risk management. Towards the end of the previous year, an interesting development occurred. During the Fourth High-Level Meeting of Ministers and Authorities on the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in the Americas and the Caribbean, the respective representatives reiterated the necessity of adjusting the Regional Action Plan (RAP) “so that it reflects and addresses the challenges of this region with regards to disaster risk and contributes to building resilient societies and economies in line with the Sustainable Development Goals”⁷⁹. Moreover, in the Ministerial Declaration issued during the High-Level Meeting, the following was emphasized:

⁷⁶ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, “Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030,” [UNISDR/GE/2015] (2015), p. 5.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, “Sendai Voluntary Commitments | Localised Preparedness for More Effective Response with Affected Communities,” <https://sendaicommitments.undrr.org/>, August 3, 2021, https://sendaicommitments.undrr.org/commitments/20190301_001.

⁷⁹ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, “Ministerial Declaration: Fourth High-Level Meeting of Ministers and Authorities on the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in the Americas and the Caribbean,” <https://www.undrr.org>, 2021, <https://www.undrr.org/publication/ministerial-declaration-fourth-high-level-meeting-ministers-and-authorities>.

*Recognizing the important **role of youth as agents of change** and the contribution of future generations in the face of current challenges, including reducing disaster risk, fighting climate change and promoting resilience [...]*

*Commit to strengthening our risk governance mechanisms, particularly in geographic areas of greater vulnerability, through the engagement of all sectors and at all levels and with the **participation of multiple stakeholders, including older persons, people with disabilities, children and youth, rural communities, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and other historically marginalized groups that require especial protection.***⁸⁰

These two objectives had been encompassed by the voluntary commitment that Haiti pledged and completed regarding its contribution to the Sendai Framework, far before the High-Level Meeting was convened and the Ministerial Declaration issued. As noted above, in the description of the project conducted in Haiti, local communities developed capacities while incorporating the youth and vulnerable groups as essential agents and drivers of positive change. Furthermore, being one of a few countries in Latin America and the Caribbean⁸¹ that pledged the commitment to the Sendai Framework, Haiti has certainly been one of the inspirations behind the Ministerial Declaration. Representatives of the participating states devoted the Declaration “as a contribution from the region to the implementation of the Sendai Framework. **Only Together** can the countries and people of the region be truly resilient.”⁸² Hence, the *region* followed the momentum in pledging to dedicate special efforts to reaching the Sendai Framework objectives. During the Meeting, the parties also called for the development and sharing of “best practices and strategies to improve integrated multi-hazard early warning systems, disaster risk information systems, monitoring networks, impact-based forecasting and exploring ways for strengthening linkages among scientific and technical agencies, communities, and decision makers”⁸³.

⁸⁰ Fourth High-Level Meeting of Ministers and Authorities on the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in the Americas and the Caribbean, “Ministerial Declaration” (Jamaica, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, November 3, 2021), https://rp-americas.undrr.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Ministerial%20Declaration_EN.pdf, pp. 3 and 5. Emphasis added.

⁸¹ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, “Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030: Voluntary Commitments,” <https://sendaicommitments.undrr.org/>, accessed May 10, 2022, <https://sendaicommitments.undrr.org/commitments?regionLocations=region.analysis.americas>.

⁸² Fourth High-Level Meeting of Ministers and Authorities on the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in the Americas and the Caribbean, op. cit., p. 7. Cursive and bold in original.

⁸³ VII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean (RP21), “Regional Action Plan for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in the Americas and

By promising to strengthen regional mechanisms and perceiving them as a contributing factor to reaching international commitments, the Latin American and the Caribbean countries provide an example of how regional diffusion can operate. By learning from each other, and sharing ideas, perspectives, concerns, and good and flawed examples, the states can strengthen their domestic resilience capacities. Therefore, the regional dynamics move in two directions: the *bottom-up approach*, whereby one country's policies related to Agenda 2030 can inspire and influence the performance of other countries in the proximity, and the *top-down approach*, whereby the regional good practices are then implemented in local communities or on national levels. Since the International Spillover Index is a relatively recent operational measure associated with the analysis of SDG performance across the world, it is not an astonishment that regional actors lag with incorporating the index and its findings within their agendas and actions. Yet, regional platforms and bodies, as the case with Latin America and the Caribbean portrays, are aware of the importance of approaching the tackling of development in a unified and coherent manner. Given that Haiti is the leading country in the region when it comes to its International Spillover Score, it certainly can push the region forward by setting good and effective examples in practice.

CASE STUDY 2: CAMEROON

Cameroon is a “country lying at the junction of western and central Africa. Its ethnically diverse population is among the most urban in western Africa”⁸⁴.

The country is bordered by Nigeria, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea.

“Cameroon has a developing market economy based largely on petroleum and agriculture but with a growing services sector.”⁸⁵

the Caribbean (Updated November 2021)” (Jamaica, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, November 3, 2021), https://rp-americas.undrr.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Regional%20Action%20Plan_EN.pdf, p. 8.

⁸⁴ George Benneh and Mark W. DeLancey, “Cameroon,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 10, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Cameroon>. Emphasis added.

⁸⁵ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, “Cameroon Summary,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, May 2, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Cameroon>. Emphasis added.

When it comes to SDGs 10 and 16, some of the analyzed indicators pertain to the information in the proceeding lines. In Cameroon, “in **2014, 22.0 %** of the population were living below half of the median income”⁸⁶ and the “total amount received in assistance for development increased from **218.4 million dollars in 2000 to 2072.9 million dollars in 2018**”⁸⁷. These developments pertain to Goal 10, while some of the noticeable elements concerning SDG 16 are the following: “the proportion of firms experiencing at least one bribe payment request declined from **33.9 % in 2009 to 26.7% in 2016** [...], the proportion of children aged 1-14 years who experienced recent physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers was **85.0 % in 2014**”⁸⁸. According to the SDG Index Rank, Cameroon takes the 134th place out of 163 countries for which the results were obtained. Based on its Spillover Score, which is 99.19⁸⁹, Cameroon is amongst the leading countries in Central Africa [consisting of Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo Republic – Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé & Príncipe⁹⁰]. As in the case of Haiti and Bosnia and Herzegovina: The authors of the 2022 Sustainable Development Report declare that we cannot compare the SDG ranking and scores from preceding years as the methodology and indicators underwent changes and refinements this year. However, prior to the publication of the most recent Sustainable Development Report, my analysis was orbiting around Cameroon, which in 2021 took the 13th global position with regard to its Spillover Score. This year, the country’s performance has slightly worsened, and Cameroon ranks 18th on the global list, yet amongst the top countries in Central Africa. Although Cameroon’s ranking has slightly changed between the two years, this does not pose a challenge for my research, considering the recommendation by the Report’s authors that comparison over time would not be valid, as well as my primary interest to explore the extent to which the countries in proximity can influence each other when it comes to the SDG performance. On the following two pages, you can find Cameroon’s country profile [page 53, Figure 6] and Cameroon’s Spillover score and rank [page 54, Figure 7].

⁸⁶ United Nations Statistics Division, “SDG Country Profile | Cameroon | Goal 10,” [unstats.un.org](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/cmr#goal-10), accessed April 29, 2022, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/cmr#goal-10>. Bold in original.

⁸⁷ Ibid. Bold in original.

⁸⁸ United Nations Statistics Division, “SDG Country Profile | Cameroon | Goal 16,” [unstats.un.org](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/cmr#goal-16), accessed April 29, 2022, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/cmr#goal-16>. Bold in original.

⁸⁹ Sustainable Development Solutions Network, “Cameroon. Country Profile,” <https://dashboards.sdginde.org/>, 2022, <https://dashboards.sdginde.org/profiles/cameroon>.

⁹⁰ University of Pittsburgh, “African Studies and African Country Resources @ Pitt: Central Africa,” <https://pitt.libguides.com/>, May 3, 2022, <https://pitt.libguides.com/c.php?g=12378&p=65816#:~:text=Central%20Africa%2C%20defined%20by%20the>.

CAMEROON

Sub-Saharan Africa

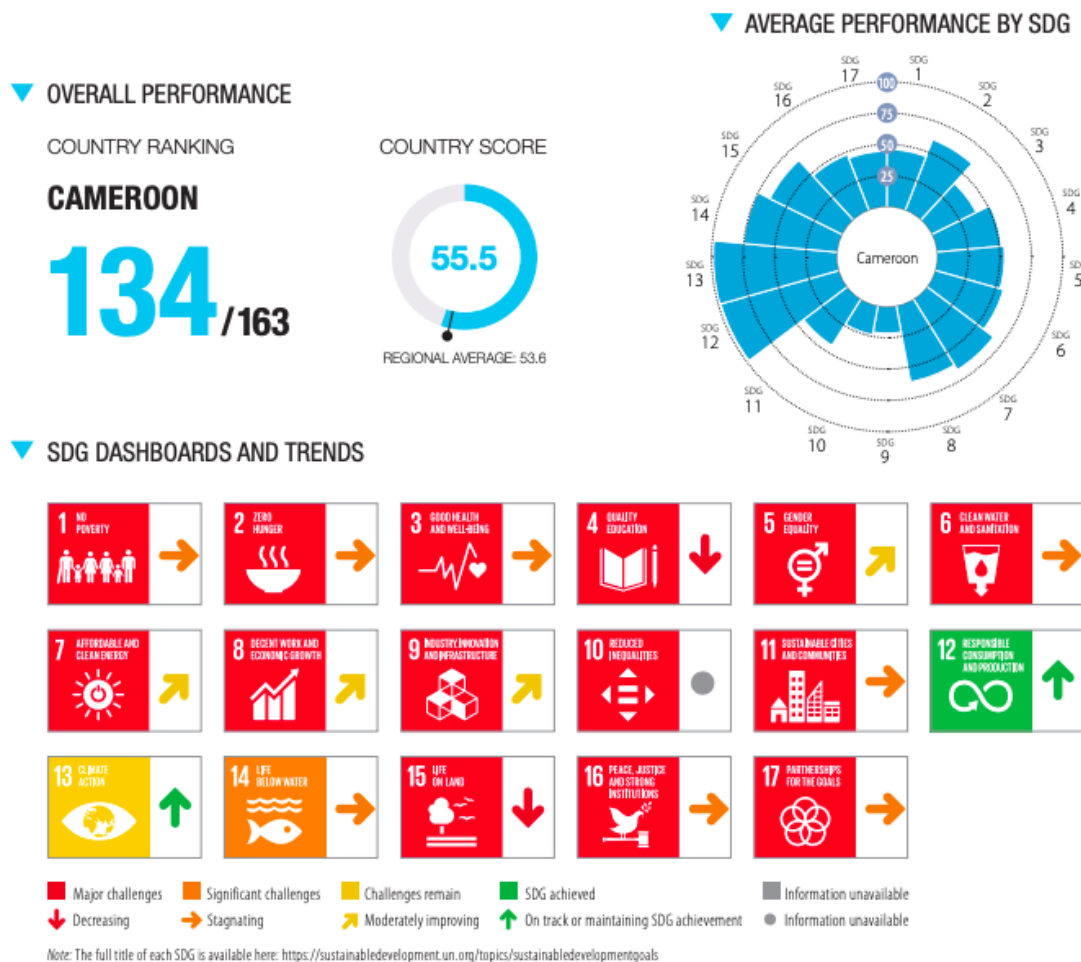


Figure 6: SDG Country Ranking and SDG Country Score for Cameroon in 2022. The SDGs are analyzed and the performance on individual goals is presented in accordance with the ongoing trends in the country.

Source: Sustainable Development Solutions Network, “Cameroon | Country Profile,” 2022. <https://dashboards.sdginde.org/static/profiles/pdfs/SDR-2022-cameroon.pdf>, p. 1.

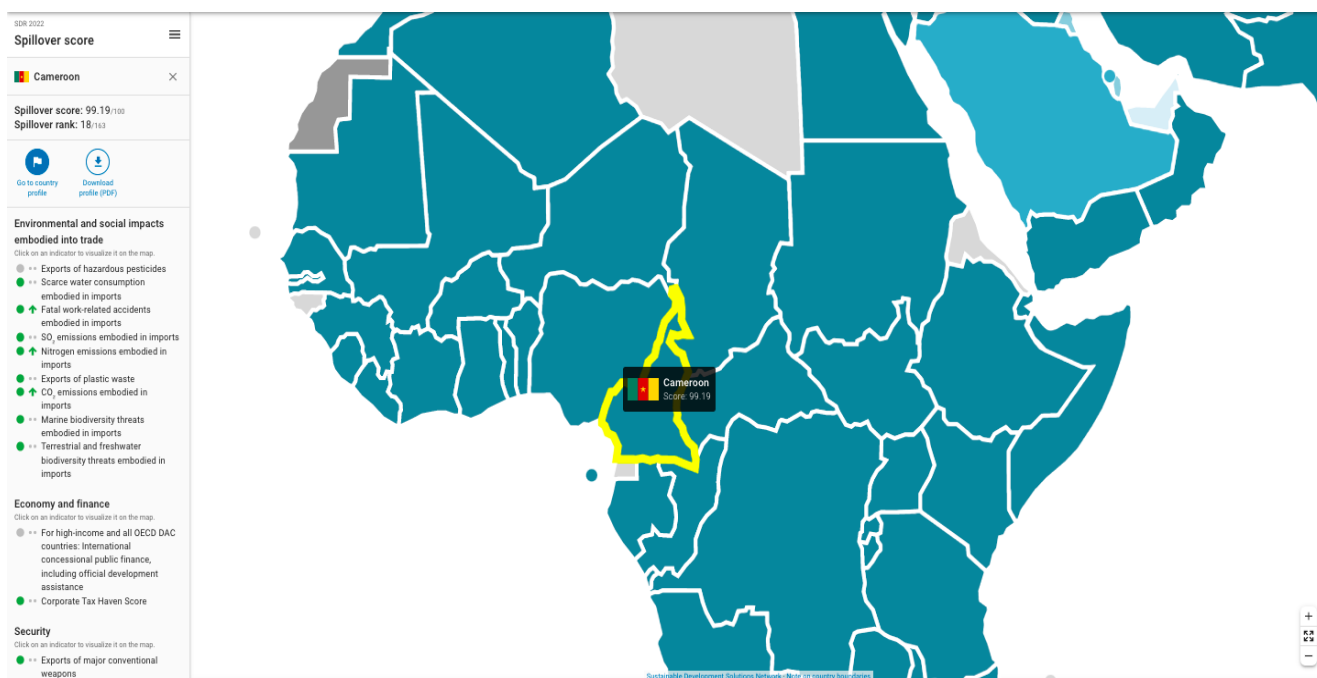


Figure 7: Cameroon’s Spillover score and rank. Represented on the map with dark blue color, yellow margin, and the sign *Cameroon*.

Source: Sustainable Development Solutions Network. “Map: Spillover Score.” <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/>, 2022. <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/map/spillovers>.

Cameroon was the most challenging case out of the three to be examined when it comes to regional diffusion. During an informal conversation with my peer from Cameroon, he said that it would be quite difficult to find an initiative that got diffused from his country to the neighboring states. He added that the states in Central Africa do not have a high level of cooperation unless it concerns monetary policies under the auspices of CEMAC [Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa]. “Numerous conflicts across Central Africa have led to instability, low levels of regional integration and cooperation, weak State institutions, corruption, poverty and disenfranchisement.”⁹¹ Furthermore, looking at the region, additional two realities need to be considered.

⁹¹ United Nations, “Security Challenges Threaten to Derail Democratic Strides in Central African Region, Briefers Tell Security Council,” [www.un.org](https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/sc14927.doc.htm), June 8, 2022, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/sc14927.doc.htm>.

*The first reality is that, even if cross-border challenges such as terrorism, organised crime, and migration are not new, they still require regional and interregional solutions. This explains why there is increasing institutional overlap among African regional organisations, with many trying to tackle the same issues in the same geographical areas. The second reality is that multiple memberships offer African states the opportunity to pick and choose the venue that best suits their particular national interests at any given moment. The proliferation and the expanded scope of African regional organisations in peace and security thus contribute to enabling states to ‘forum shop’.*⁹²

However, the most recent development in the region evoked a higher level of interest in strengthening the regional coordination and cooperation in Central Africa, and it is about the crisis in the Central African Republic. Namely, “violence erupted among armed groups in the C.A.R. [Central African Republic] in 2013, when then-President Françoise Bozize was ousted by the Séléka, a Muslim minority rebel coalition. In January 2021, hundreds of C.A.R. civilians fled sporadic clashes after the presidential election, many of them to Cameroon.”⁹³ In April 2022, the Government of Cameroon in partnership with the UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] convened the Regional Ministerial Conference in Yaoundé, the country’s capital, to address the regional approach in the context of forced displacement related to the crisis in the Central African Republic. The three-day ministerial conference hosted the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, who said that “the aim of the conference was ‘to create a positive regional dynamic in the search for solutions for Central Africans refugees’”⁹⁴. The High Commissioner called for a broad partnership between national governments, businesses, civil society, development actors, refugees, and other actors. Participating in the conference were, amongst others, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Chad. The outcome of the conference was the Yaoundé Declaration that pleads for a more concerted action in the region to assist ca. 1.4 million displaced Central Africans. The conference outcome document

⁹² Amandine Gnanouénon, “Mapping African Regional Cooperation,” <https://ecfr.eu> (European Council on Foreign Relations, October 29, 2020), <https://ecfr.eu/special/african-cooperation/>. Emphasis added.

⁹³ Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “Central African Republic Refugees Leaving Cameroon on Promises of Peace,” <https://www.voanews.com/> (VOA, June 2, 2022), <https://www.voanews.com/a/central-african-republic-refugees-leaving-cameroon-on-promises-of-peace/6600313.html>.

⁹⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “UNHCR, States Vow to Step up Support for Solutions for Those Displaced by Central African Crises,” <https://www.unhcr.org/>, April 28, 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2022/4/626a63394/unhcr-states-vow-step-support-solutions-displaced-central-african-crises.html>.

establishes the foundations for the creation of a regional coordination mechanism that would promote solutions for tackling such pressing issue as displacement crises. Having in mind that Central Africa has undergone several major-scale refugee crises, some of the countries in the region have received hundreds of thousands of refugees—Cameroon being the state that received the largest number. Having in mind that relative to its size, Cameroon has welcomed such a vast number of refugees, the country has certainly carried the regional torch toward assisting in relief efforts. In that light, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees

*Grandi praised Cameroon, which hosts about half of the CAR's refugees. He says Cameroon is home to about half-a-million refugees from the Central African Republic, Nigeria, and other nationals who find hospitable reception and peace in the central African state. Grandi says he met with Cameroonian authorities and UNHCR partners to find ways of increasing and coordinating international aid to improve conditions for people displaced from their homes by crises.*⁹⁵

It was the Prime Minister of Cameroon Joseph Dion Ngute, who appealed for a more coordinated regional management of the crisis. Moreover, the first objective of the Yaoundé Declaration underlines Prime Minister's call, as the provision at hand appeals for a collective pursuit of a regional approach "to deliver solutions for refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees from the Central African Republic, whilst maintaining protection and promoting self-resilience"⁹⁶. In the *Preamble* of the Declaration, the signatories applaud "the commendable hospitality of countries that have welcomed Central African refugees on their territories to protect and support them, as well as their on-going initiatives and commitments in this regard"⁹⁷.

With respect to Goal 16 [Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions], the Yaoundé Declaration calls for the strengthening of the institutional and normative mechanisms for the protection of asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons, and returnees. With regards to Goal 10

⁹⁵ Moki Edwin Kindzeka, "UN Refugee Chief Vows Support for CAR Refugees in Cameroon," [https://www.voanews.com/ \(VOA, April 29, 2022\), https://www.voanews.com/a/un-refugee-chief-vows-support-for-car-refugees-in-cameroon/6550827.html](https://www.voanews.com/ (VOA, April 29, 2022), https://www.voanews.com/a/un-refugee-chief-vows-support-for-car-refugees-in-cameroon/6550827.html). Emphasis added.

⁹⁶ Republic of Cameroon et al., "Yaounde Declaration on Solutions in the Context of Forced Displacement Related to the Central African Republic Crisis," [https://data.unhcr.org/ \(UNHCR Operational Data Portal \(ODP\), April 27, 2022\), https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/92342#_ga=2.189702627.978274658.1654955131-913864821.1654955131](https://data.unhcr.org/ (UNHCR Operational Data Portal (ODP), April 27, 2022), https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/92342#_ga=2.189702627.978274658.1654955131-913864821.1654955131), p. 2.

⁹⁷ Republic of Cameroon et al., op. cit., p. 1.

[Reduced Inequalities], the Declaration promises to tackle the issue at hand by vowing to promote socio-economic inclusion and resilience of refugees and host communities. Similarly to the case of Haiti, it is evident that strengthening *resilience* has become a leitmotif in times of crises. Furthermore, recalling the case of Haiti and the inclusion of the necessity to interchange positive examples within mechanisms of regional cooperation in the Caribbean, the Yaoundé Declaration also envisions “the harmonization of public policies, standards and procedures through the exchange of good practices for the protection and solutions of Central African refugees”⁹⁸. Considering the major role that the UNHCR has had in assembling the broad spectrum of partners and support for the relief efforts with respect to the crisis in the Central African Republic, it is interesting to note that the agency had previously developed similar mechanisms in three other regions—for the crises in Afghanistan, Central America and Mexico, and the East and Horn of Africa. Hence, the coordination mechanisms for addressing the disturbances in the above-mentioned areas of the world seem to have inspired the support for the development of a similar platform in Central Africa. Such replication of strategies for dealing with regional crises also points to the diffusion dynamics, but this time on the international level. Adapting the existing mechanisms and good practices to the region-specific profile is an important lesson derived.

CASE STUDY 3: BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

“Bosnia and Herzegovina [is a] country situated in the western Balkan Peninsula of Europe.”⁹⁹

The country is surrounded by Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

“Though the area possesses a variety of natural resources and an important history of industrial production, it remains one of the poorest regions of the former Yugoslavia.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Republic of Cameroon et al., op. cit., p. 3.

⁹⁹ Noel R. Malcolm, Paula Pickering, and John R. Lampe, “Bosnia and Herzegovina,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 21, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bosnia-and-Herzegovina>. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁰ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, “Bosnia and Herzegovina Summary,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, May 2, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Bosnia-and-Herzegovina>. Emphasis added.

When it comes to SDGs 10 and 16, some of the analyzed indicators pertain to the information in the proceeding lines. The “total amount received in assistance for development declined from 946.3 million dollars in 2000 to 751.8 million dollars in 2018.”¹⁰¹ Also, “in **2011, 12.0 %** of the population were living below half of the median income”¹⁰². Concerning the situations in the field of SDG 16, some of the noticeable elements are: “the prevalence rate of bribery was **20.7 %** in **2010** [...], in **2018, 20.9 %** of the overall prison population were unsentenced detainees [...], in **2016, 48.0** people were detected victims of human trafficking.”¹⁰³ According to the SDG Index, Bosnia and Herzegovina takes the 59th place out of 163 countries for which the results were obtained. Based on its Spillover Score, which is 91.62¹⁰⁴, Bosnia and Herzegovina is the second-ranked country in the Western Balkans region [consisting of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia]. According to the 2021 Sustainable Development Report, Bosnia and Herzegovina was the first ranked country in the Western Balkans per its Spillover Score, but the situation has altered in the meantime and the state’s position has changed. Albania, with the Spillover Score of 93.6¹⁰⁵ is now the frontrunner among the six countries of the Western Balkans. Having in mind that I have conducted research with regards to Bosnia and Herzegovina as the region’s leader in the Spillover Score prior to the publication of the most recent Sustainable Development Report, I will still pursue by presenting a good practice from Bosnia and Herzegovina that got diffused across the region. The rankings of countries are an ever-changing occurrence and as the methodologies and indicators get refined and adjusted, so do the positions of countries change within the framework of their SDG and Spillover Index performance. On the following two pages, you can find Bosnia and Herzegovina’s country profile [page 59, Figure 8] and Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Spillover score and rank [page 60, Figure 9].

¹⁰¹ United Nations Statistics Division, “SDG Country Profile | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Goal 10,” [unstats.un.org](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/bih#goal-10), accessed April 29, 2022, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/bih#goal-10>.

¹⁰² Ibid. Bold in original.

¹⁰³ United Nations Statistics Division, “SDG Country Profile | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Goal 16,” [unstats.un.org](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/bih#goal-16), accessed April 29, 2022, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/bih#goal-16>. Bold in original.

¹⁰⁴ Sustainable Development Solutions Network, “Bosnia and Herzegovina. Country Profile,” <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/>, 2022, <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/profiles/bosnia-and-herzegovina>.

¹⁰⁵ Sustainable Development Solutions Network, “Albania. Country Profile,” <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/>, 2022, <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/profiles/albania>.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Eastern Europe
and Central Asia

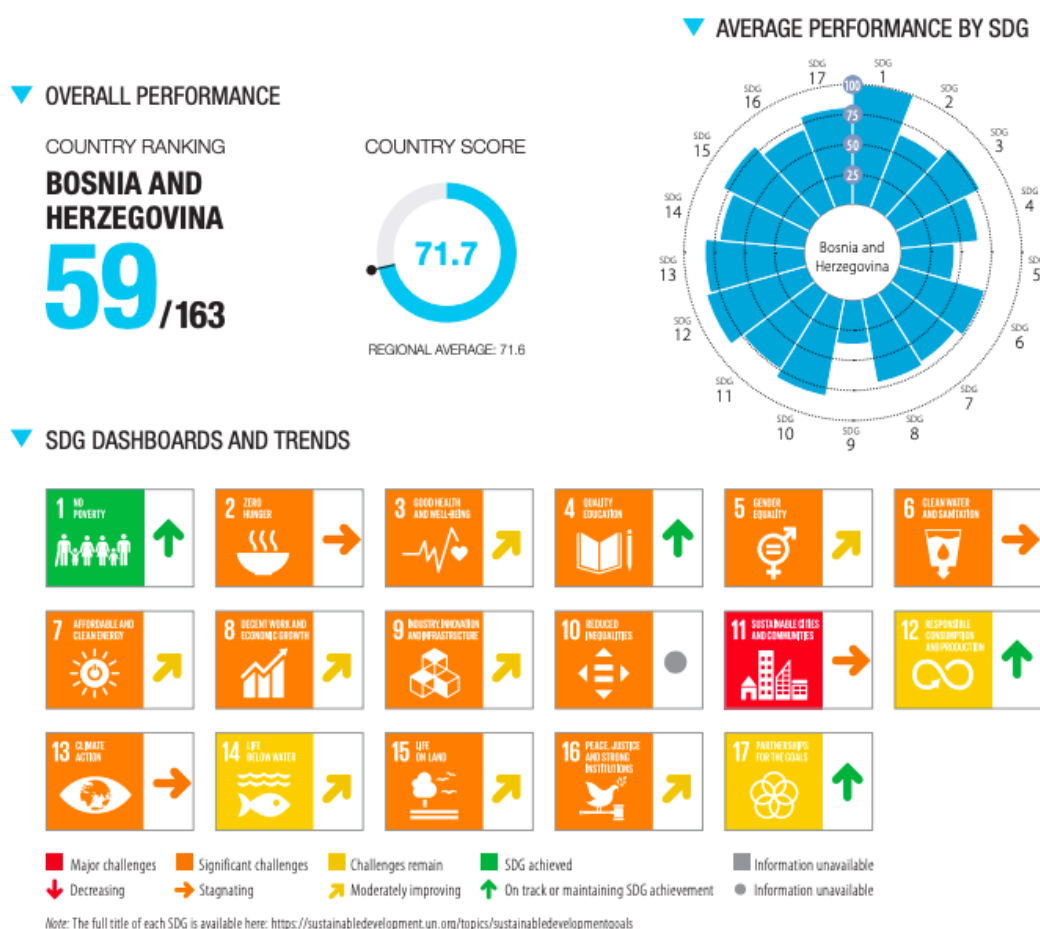


Figure 8: SDG Country Ranking and SDG Country Score for Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2022. The SDGs are analyzed and the performance on individual goals is presented in accordance with the ongoing trends in the country.

Source: Sustainable Development Solutions Network, “Bosnia and Herzegovina | Country Profile,” 2022, <https://dashboards.sdginde.org/static/profiles/pdfs/SDR-2022-bosnia-and-herzegovina.pdf>, p. 1.

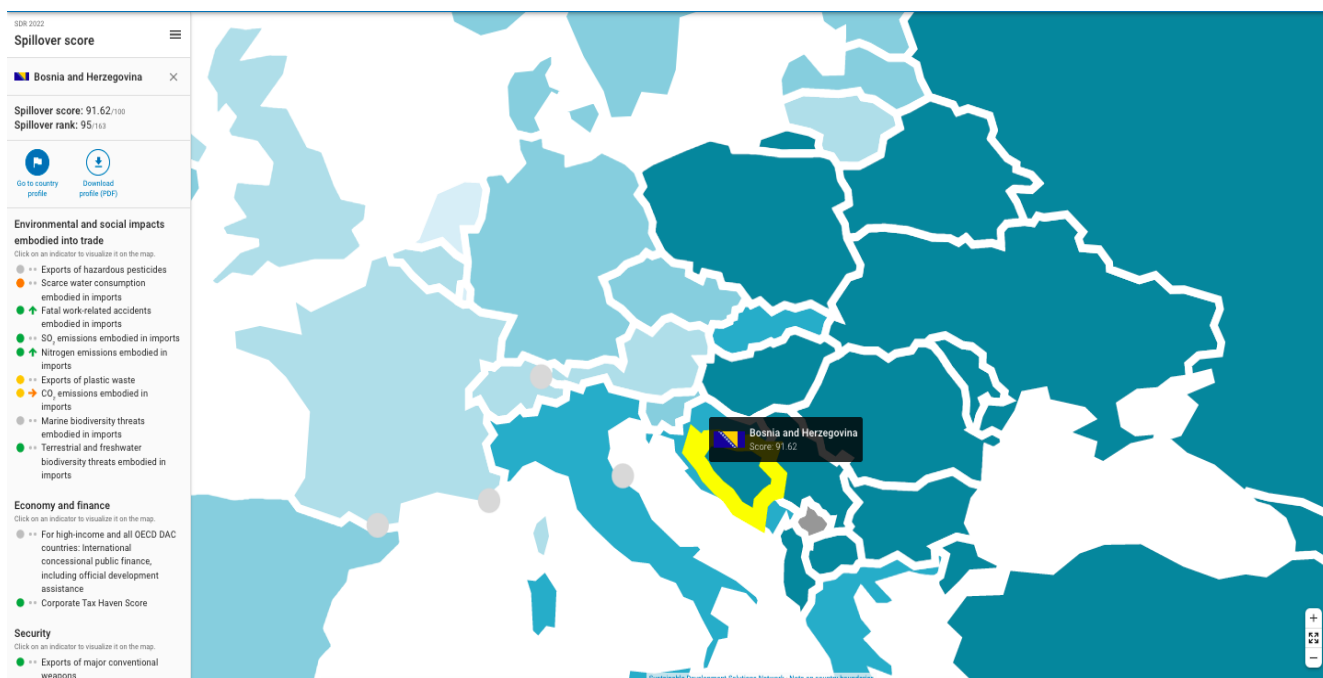


Figure 9: Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Spillover score and rank. Represented on the map with dark blue color, yellow margin, and the sign Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Source: Sustainable Development Solutions Network. “Map: Spillover Score.” <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/>, 2022. <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/map/spillovers>.

Due to BiH’s geographic position in the Western Balkans; its complex demographic structure and (in recent history) challenging political dynamics, inter-communal tensions and trends echo the loudest across this particular country, especially so when they are imported from the outside. They also often yield the strongest reactions, which in turn look back to affect the region. In short, BiH is a central element in the peace and security equation in the Western Balkans which directly impacts the state of regional cohesion, its stability and progressive development.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ United Nations Peacebuilding, “Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund Project Document Template. PBF Project Document,” <https://www.un.org/>, accessed May 26, 2022, https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/BIH/181228_PRODUC%20BiH%20-%20Fostering%20dialogue%20and%20social%20cohesion%20in%20BiH,%20Montenegro%20and%20Serbia.pdf, p. 7. Emphasis added.

Similarly to other countries in the region and the world, COVID-19 has generated socio-economic disturbances and threatened to stall the progress that Bosnia and Herzegovina has been making towards achieving SDGs so far. “In addition to capacity gaps in the health sector, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the challenges faced by highly decentralized governance systems when country-wide, cohesive responses and continued cooperation between the authorities in BiH as well as with international partners are needed.”¹⁰⁷ In the framework concluded between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the UN Country Team in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2021-2025, the country had pledged to strengthen its activities on both the regional and international stage. The country has recognized that there are “strong, complementary linkages between the pathways for achievement of domesticated SDG targets for BiH, the priority actions for EU candidacy, and regional frameworks, including the Western Balkans Action Plan”¹⁰⁸. The Western Balkans Action Plan is the UN-wide strategy for maintaining peace in the Western Balkans and is supported by the UN Human Rights. “The adoption by the Secretary-General of a UN Action Plan for the Western Balkans, in June, created space for UN Human Rights to promote the application of an HRBA [Human Rights-Based Approach] to its implementation and enhance its work in the region, together with UN entities and other partners.”¹⁰⁹ On its own, the initiative has tackled and contributed to the enforcement of the SDG 16 [Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions]—in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the rest of the region.

Considering the war that occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995, the country has since undergone a long process of stabilization and reconciliation. It was in this country that the peacebuilding project *Dialogue for the Future* [2014-2016] was first established, after a dialogue between the UN Secretary-General and the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The program was introduced by the State’s Presidency, funded through the UN Peacebuilding Fund, and it engaged more than 50,000 citizens in various seminars, dialogue and youth forums pertaining to topics of youth, culture, and education. “Following their leadership and successful implementation of the joint Dialogue for the Future initiative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the BiH

¹⁰⁷ Bosnia and Herzegovina and United Nations Bosnia and Herzegovina, “Bosnia and Herzegovina and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025. A Partnership for Sustainable Development” (Bosnia and Herzegovina and United Nations Bosnia and Herzegovina, May 20, 2021), p. 19.

¹⁰⁸ Bosnia and Herzegovina and United Nations Bosnia and Herzegovina, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁰⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “United Nations Human Rights Report 2019” (Geneva: United Nations Human Rights Office, May 2020). p. 33.

Presidency initiated discussions to foster regional dialogues on its basis.”¹¹⁰ The main aim of the regional program *Dialogue for the Future [DFF]* has been to establish a platform for a constructive discussion between diverse communities, citizens, and highest officials to assist in building trust. During the Brdo-Brijuni Summit in Montenegro in 2015, regional leaders recognized the importance of the *Dialogue for the Future* and decided to diffuse it across the region.¹¹¹ In the second phase of the project, the UN Country Teams in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia collaborated with stakeholders to design a strategy that would support the intercultural dialogue and empower the youth, girls, and women for a more active social engagement.¹¹²

The program was oriented towards budling and strengthening the capacities of adolescents [10-18 years of age] and the youth [18-30 years of age], with a strong gender component, thereby contributing to the enhanced equality—in the mentioned premises, the features of the SDG 10 [Reduced Inequalities] can be recognized. The program reached the marginalized groups and along the way, participants actively contributed to the development of their communities and constructively engaged in the decision-making processes. All the envisioned activities had the objective of contributing to the reinforcement of cohesion on the national and regional levels. *Dialogue for the Future*, thus, fell under the window of cross-border/regional projects as envisioned by the United Nations Peacebuilding. Furthermore, under the aegis of the Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund, it is reiterated that the

*multi-country DFF [Dialogue for the Future] framework also provides the space for the UN to help ensure the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development in BiH and the region. The leaders of BiH, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia all assigned on to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; they are now accountable to deliver these goals to their citizens. The SDGs complement the goals of DFF as their fulfilment indirectly addresses many of the drivers and root causes of instability, negative dynamics and conflict.*¹¹³

¹¹⁰ United Nations Peacebuilding, op. cit., p. 2.

¹¹¹ United Nations Development Programme, “Zajednički Regionalni Program ‘Dijalog Za Budućnost’/Joint Regional Program ‘Dialogue for Future,’” <https://www.undp.org/>, accessed May 24, 2022, <https://www.undp.org/bs/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/zajedni%C4%8Dki-regionalni-program-dijalog-za-budu%C4%87nost>.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ United Nations Peacebuilding, op. cit., p. 18. Emphasis added. Bold in original.

As explained at the beginning of this thesis, I chose to explore SDG 10 [Reduced Inequalities] precisely because it was the goal that my team and I contributed to after attending one of the workshops that fall under the auspices of the regional initiative *Dialogue for the Future*. We successfully tackled the perennial problem of mass fights based on nationalism in our high school¹¹⁴ and thereby made a small, but significant step for our community, country, region, and the world when it comes to getting closer to achieving SDG 10. Knowing the impact that the regional initiative that started in Bosnia and Herzegovina has had on my life, I am grateful to its conceptual creators and the efforts initiated thereof for the initiative to obtain the features of a regional one. What is also impressive is the number of actors that coordinated the implementation of the program, ranging from local communities, national governments, regional bodies, and the UN specialized agencies, such as UNICEF, UNDP, and UNESCO¹¹⁵. *Dialogue for the Future* has indeed initiated a profound conversation that connected different parts of the international community. While the initiative was inspired by the efforts of one country, the policy later got diffused across neighboring states, and from then on, the region was carrying the torch of getting one step closer to implementing the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

In 2019, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres' submitted the Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace to the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Secretary-General stated that

*Under the peace and security pillar, the alignment of regional strategies and peace operations in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa regions is being assessed, strengthening integrated peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts on the basis of comparative advantages in the Central African Republic and Mali and encouraging greater coordination of efforts and joined-up approaches in the Middle East, the Sahel and the Western Balkans.*¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Kimberly Chriscaden, "Equity for Girls: Learning to Create Community in Montenegro," <https://www.unicefusa.org/>, October 10, 2018, <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/learning-create-community-montenegro/34935>.

¹¹⁵ United Nations Peacebuilding, "Dijalog Za Budućnost/Dialogue for the Future," <https://www.undp.org/>, accessed May 24, 2022, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/ba/c8a49361bbddc8de4054f3b98b4a053b963238f0662e93686ecd5dc82c5695d2.pdf>.

¹¹⁶ United Nations Secretary-General, United Nations General Assembly, and United Nations Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General: Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace," [A/73/890-S/2019/448] (2019), p. 3. Emphasis added.

Once again, it is vital that all the components, of which the international community consists, recognize the importance of regional dynamics and diffusion. As portrayed in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a successful policy was disseminated through the region with the support of the UN system. Moreover, as Bosnia and Herzegovina often emerges as a weak link in the region, that holds the power to tilt the balance on different sides, it is of the utmost importance to recognize that contributing to the stabilization and democratization process in this country has the potential of impacting other countries in a positive manner. Moreover, Bosnia and Herzegovina's Spillover Score places it in the top position when it comes to the countries of the Western Balkans—the impact that this country's policies and actions related to SDGs have on the rest of the region is undeniable.

PART IV

SUMMARY

The study I have conducted tackles an in-depth outlook in the area of sustainable development, through the lenses of International Law and International Relations. While relying on Legal Positivism, I briefly explored the legal foundations upon which the Sustainable Development Goals are built. Through the perspectives of Liberal Institutionalism and Regional Diffusion, I have analyzed a triad of case studies—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, and Haiti—to identify and observe a catalogue of domestic strategies for the achievement of SDGs 10 and 16, individual progress of these states, and the ways they influence other countries in their proximity, as well as their regions in general. While analyzing the existing literature corpus on the subject, I have mostly relied on primary and secondary sources, such as the UN and government documents and reports. Through applying an inductive approach, I have first thoroughly explored the topic and derived conclusions and lessons. Having in mind that it was their high Spillover Index Score that pointed me to choosing the triad of cases I did, at first, I expected to find a plethora of good practices and a strong impact of these countries on their neighbors. Considering that I have analyzed one good practice per country that aligned with and integrated SDGs 10 [Reduced Inequalities] and SDG 16 [Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions], the findings have accordingly pointed out the good effect that such domestic strategies and actions had on neighboring states and respective regions. Although the UN Charter and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promote the concerted efforts based on regional approaches to tackle the most pressing political, socio-economic, and security issues, it seems that countries of the world are still overlooking how much the acts and policies they undertake influence their neighbors and other parts of the planet. Therefore, the future research of scholars and the UN organs, specialized agencies, and programs alike could orient toward identifying other positive examples in achieving SDGs—their interrelation with and impact on the other involved stakeholders. Reaching beyond the analysis of individual states' progress, we need an approach that would incorporate the regional diffusion dynamics within the SDGs framework. SDGs should strive for the uniqueness not only in their fusion of environmental, social, and economic columns but also in the range of partnerships they establish between a plethora of actors involved in turning the UN Agenda 2030 into tangible reality. This thesis is an ode to the *Partnership for the Goals*.

CONCLUSION

Pondering the complexities of the International Spillover Index, throughout my research, I have dedicated efforts to explore the spillover effects from the perspective of how a country's domestic policies, strategies, and concrete actions can inspire the acts of neighboring states and respective regions and/or existing regional platforms. My research orbited around SDG 10 [Reduced Inequalities] and SDG 16 [Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions] and the enthusiasm for these two goals derives from my personal and academic experience. As mentioned in some of the previous chapters of this thesis, I had the honor to expand my horizons and assist my community, while contributing to the achievement of SDG 10, on the local and national levels. Considering that a small positive change somewhere in the world brings us all one step closer to attaining the Global Goals, it is encouraging to know that through successfully tackling the issue of nationalism in my high school, my peers and I left a mark on the path towards realizing the vision of sustainable development. Concurrently, my curiosity to delve into SDG 16 derived from the academic enrichment I obtained during the courses on sustainable development and Agenda 2030, conducted by Ambassador Dr. Martin Sajdik, to whom I owe my most sincere gratitude.

Through the lenses of the two aforementioned goals, I examined three case studies—Haiti, Cameroon, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The three countries have faced different kinds of hardships throughout the centuries and have provided for challenging cases. Yet, it was a delight to witness how the web of interconnections developed in front of my eyes as I immersed deeper into the country- and region-specific contexts. Under the aegis of three theories—two from the field of International Relations and one from the area of International Law—I could establish pillars for building a hypothesis and conclusions for this research. Liberal Institutionalism as an umbrella theory provided for the foundation to explain the crafting of SDGs in the first place, and subsequently, to analyze the relationship between the UN-formed bodies and agencies, on the one side, and countries and regions, on the other. For a more nuanced approach to the research, the sub-theory of Regional Diffusion offered more focus as it is compatible with the model of Liberal Institutionalism. As the UN Charter, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and a myriad of other multilateral agreements and resolutions envision—a regional approach to tackling the most pressing issues in the world should serve as complementary to the internationally-launched efforts. By encircling the theoretical framework with the theory of Legal Positivism, I engaged in analyzing the provisions pertaining to Agenda 2030 and their efficacy in practice.

By the end of my research, I have come to realize that the whole thesis could essentially be considered a contribution to SDG 17 [Partnership for the Goals]. Given that Agenda 2030 envisages coordination and collaboration of different stakeholders in the SDG-attainment process, the analysis of interactions between countries, their neighbors and respective platforms for regional cooperation is one form of partnership development. The UN system recognizes the need for orchestrated efforts on a regional level when addressing the most pressing issues, especially those that are country- or region-specific. Moreover, in the light of this research and in line with the International Spillover Index, oftentimes local communities, countries, regions, but also the UN overlook the power of regional diffusion dynamics. The International Spillover Index is one of the indicators of deep connections in the contemporary world. One country's actions with respect to SDGs can generate effects that spill over to the neighboring countries, but also beyond. Nonetheless, the International Spillover Index accounts for the general trends in how countries across the world influence each other when it comes to the attainment of SDGs. Yet, my idea was to deepen the up-to-date efforts on measuring the spillover effect that are certainly praiseworthy and provide an additional layer of analysis by focusing on the regional spillovers.

If the conceptual arch underlining the Spillover Index is the awareness that states generate and send out different types of externalities across the continents, then we can go one step back and acknowledge the impact that gets diffused within one region; the same can be said for local communities. Just as certain issues—be it local, national, or international—require a global mindset and type of solutions, so do certain regional disturbances call for a coordinated regional assessment. In evaluating and crafting a regional approach, however, the acknowledgment that a country's set of policies and acts can get diffused across the rest of the region is largely overlooked. While states and regional organizations, as well as the broader international community, call for exchanges of good practices between countries, there is a discrepancy in the practical arcade. Although certain declarations, resolutions, and other types of acts can implicitly echo successful policies put in place in certain countries, the gap in acknowledging the inter-regional dynamics remains. Furthermore, given the historic, cultural, political, and socio-economic ties that build bridges between countries within regions of the world, it would be vital to empower platforms for knowledge-sharing that could offer opportunities for **replicability** of policies, strategies, and actions. Acknowledging the domestic-specific backgrounds, the examples of good practice can be adjusted and upgraded to fit the context of the state, region within a state, or a local community.

The examined case studies of Haiti, Cameroon, and Bosnia and Herzegovina show how a successful domestic initiative to address an issue can be diffused across the region and assist other countries in attaining Sustainable Development Goals. At the end of the day, it is not only about the good examples and rewarding the torch-carriers. The UN should—in its coordinated efforts to navigate the wheel towards sustainable development—also **focus on less successful practices**. Local communities, national governments, regional mechanisms, businesses, civil society, and others should be given a chance to inform themselves about failed policies, plans, and activities, implemented across the world. In the interchange of opinions and ideas, the focus should be on deriving valuable lessons. Although a policy that was unsuccessful in one place could prove to be effective elsewhere, that still does not change the fact that offering a platform with both good and less successful initiatives would provide impetus to others and better usage of resources thereof, especially in the regional context where countries tend to share similar challenges.

One of the interesting findings of my study revolves around the timing of the diffusion of a country's practice to the rest of the region. For example, Cameroon provided a more challenging case given that the collaboration in Central Africa tends to be diminished due to, *inter alia*, conflicts in the region and the multiple memberships of countries in regional organizations that assume the same or similar tasks and responsibilities. Hence, through in-depth research to find an initiative that commenced in Cameroon and got diffused across the region because of its success, I encountered a deadlock. Right about the time when I was prepared to give up on the hypothesis—guided by the country's International Spillover Index Score—that Cameroon shall have, in one way or another, influenced at least one country in Central Africa when it comes to the realization of Agenda 2030, a breakthrough emerged. Due to its efforts to receive hundreds of thousands of refugees from the Central African Republic and the adopted strategies pertaining to refugees, Cameroon got applauded by the UNHCR. Moreover, the country, in partnership with the UNHCR, inspired and mobilized other states in the region to unite strengths and jointly provide solutions for the crisis in the Central African Republic, thereby promoting the stance of SDGs in the region. Taking into consideration that development in an inter-regional relationship occurred only in times of an unprecedented **crisis**, this is the point where the regional diffusion shines through. Interestingly enough, a similar conclusion applies to the cases of Haiti and Bosnia and Herzegovina—policies tend to get diffused in the aftermath of massive disturbances.

Indeed, crises do unite people, regions, and the world, but we cannot and should not afford to wait until an emergency occurs—be it natural, political, social, or economic—to be able to unite. If the regions that do not nourish high levels of internal cooperation unite when uncertainties hit, then the UN aspiration to build bridges—before an emergency strikes—gains significant legitimacy because the key message to be derived is that these regions **can** cooperate. Besides establishing networks between countries in the region, the UN and regional organizations should strive for establishing apparatuses to jointly account for, measure, and monitor spillover effects. If the aim is to reduce negative externalities and provide impetus to positive spillovers in order to strengthen the roadmap for sustainable development, then countries need to communicate and genuinely collaborate, under the aegis of the UN. A supplementary layer to strengthening Agenda 2030 could be stipulated by **setting up a system in which the resources are channeled towards a country whose policies tend to influence and spill over onto the region the most.**

Away from the approach of Ptolemaic parochialism in international relations, we should tend to expand our state-centric view on sustainable development. While the role of a multi-stakeholder partnership is recognized, cities, countries, and regions should take into consideration how their actions influence other parts of the system. At the end of the day, international actors should be aware that it is in their best interest to consider the effects of their actions on others because, sooner or later, they will also get affected by the acts of others—**sustainable development is a reciprocal process.** Not only will my country's methods on its path to achieving SDGs affect our region and beyond, but so will the activities of other cities, states, and regions impact us and our SDG performance. In such an interlinked process, *nobody wins unless everybody wins.*

The thesis in front of you has indeed been resting upon the pillars of compassion and hope that we, as humanity, can reach beyond the self-oriented approaches. We should not need unprecedented crises to recognize how intertwined our lives are. We do not need catastrophes to unite us.

This thesis is an ode to the deep connections between humans—which we so often put aside—but transformed onto a macro-level.

We can learn from failures, and we can be inspired by others' triumphs.

Although I used to think that plights might teach us how to reconstruct existing narratives and build arches of sincere affection, now I know that we still tend to return to our old habits, and that is not the way forward.

May we, The People, inspire each other to catapult the visions we nourish for a brighter future to rebound at the present-day realities and illuminate our transformative mentalities.

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PLEDGE OF HONESTY

On my honor as a student of the Diplomatische Akademie Wien, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it.

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