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A Case Study of SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe

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List of abbreviations

ACF	Advocacy coalition framework
BKA	Federal Chancellery of Austria
BMEIA	Austrian Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
EC	European Commission
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
EEB	European Environmental Bureau
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
G7	Group of 7/8
GCAP	Global Call for Action Against Poverty
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
IMAG	Interministerial working group
INGO	International non-governmental organisations
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KOO	Koordinierungsstelle der Österreichischen Bischofskonferenz
MEP	Member of European Parliament
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OWG	Open Working Group
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TAN	Transnational advocacy network
UN	United Nations
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WEF	World Economic Forum

1. Introduction

The term sustainable development has been around for several years, even decades, especially with the constantly rising issues of climate change and globalisation. In the past decade, also due to the work of the United Nations (UN), the topic has gotten wider recognition and many governments, international organisations, private companies, and non-governmental organisations included sustainable development in their missions and day-to-day business.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have roots back to the 1970s, however in 2015, after an extensive negotiation process involving various actors, all UN members adopted the Resolution A/RES/70/1 titled *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. This resolution contains 17 goals for sustainable development, called SDGs (United Nations, 2015). An important part of the negotiations were the Open Working Groups (OWG), which were not bound to the General Assembly, but were open to all stakeholders and delivered a transparent negotiation process (Caballero, 2019, p. 139). Among the negotiating parties for the goals were not only government representatives and high-level diplomats but also scientists, non-governmental organisations (NGO) and international non-governmental organisations (INGO). Besides governments, NGOs play a vital role in the implementation process of the SDGs, with their unique access to society. Further they are crucial for advocacy work on all levels (Hege and Demailly, 2018).

To put NGOs, international organisations and governments into perspective Global Governance is a common approach in international politics and international relations, as various stakeholders are considered important. Global Governance can have many different forms of contribution and possibilities for actors to participate, it basically describes the process of cooperation from national to international level, through intergovernmental or supranational institutions or agencies. An important achievement was the establishment of the UN in the 20th century. The UN is indispensable when it comes to Global Governance and an essential contact point for NGOs.

Like-minded NGOs with similar interests and line of work seem to have related goals. Due to reasons such as an increased credibility, higher level of access or a

lack of resources and funding they form a cooperation, which takes the shape of transnational networks, advocacy or policy coalitions. There is research about networks and policy and advocacy coalitions, but little on NGO coalitions. For a first definition, NGO coalitions are "organizational forms with broader development aims, more permanent organizational structures and greater member commitment" (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 107). They work by bringing people together:

Positive aspects by joining SDG Watch Austria: There are many, many people who have good ideas. We like to combine these people with good ideas and bring projects down to earth that help society to develop in a sustainable way.

In 2016 several NGOs formed the coalition SDG Watch Europe with organisations from the European Union (EU) member states. The main tasks of the coalition include advocacy and policy coordination between the members for monitoring and reviewing of EU policies, as well as engaging civil society organisations (CSO) in SDG related action (SDG Watch Europe, 2020a). CSOs from 20 countries joined the European platform and additionally started local groups on a national level. Which further lead to the formation of SDG Watch Austria in 2017. SDG Watch Austria monitors the SDG implementation in Austria, brings like-minded NGOs and people together and participated in the drafting of the Austrian Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2020 (SDG Watch Austria, 2020).

To combine the topics of the SDGs and NGOs as part of a wider Global Governance the following question guides this thesis:

*Why do NGOs participate in NGO Coalitions?
A Case Study of SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe*

This research question comes with secondary aspects and questions. Especially about the advantages for NGOs, when joining a coalition. How coalitions work and why the SDGs with their transdisciplinary are set up for coalitions and networks.

The thesis is divided into eight chapters after the introduction it starts with the literature review, containing an overview on Global Governance, the UN and policy coalitions as well as the research gap. Drawing from this, chapter 3 covers the theoretical framework and leads to the analytical framework with the hypotheses. Chapter 4 outlines the methodology and explains the case study and data used for this thesis. In chapter 5 Sustainable Development as a term and the SDGs as a framework are discussed. Chapter 6 presents the Case Study of SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe and leads to the analytical part. At the end follow the empirical analysis and discussion of the hypotheses in chapter 7. The thesis ends with the conclusion in the last chapter.

2. Literature Review

The SDGs as a global framework interlinking countries, governments, agencies, civil society, and economy, need to be embedded in a global approach. Global governance with its ability to include a variety of actors on all levels from local to international is widely established for the complex topic. Therefore, this chapter will lay out the current literature on Global Governance and the contextualisation of the civil society, NGOs, and the UN.

For some years Global Governance has taken up the spot as a common concept in international politics, even though no single definition exists. According to Biermann et al. (2009, p. 1f) the term is either described as a "phenomenon of world politics" or a "political programme or project".

"Some time ago, 'governance' became a widely discussed concept within the field of domestic politics, often used for new forms of regulation that differed from traditional hierarchical state activity ('government'). Generally, the term implies notions of self-regulation by societal actors, of private-public cooperation in the solving of societal problems, and of new forms of multilevel policy, especially in the European Union." (Biermann, 2004, p. 33)

The approach revolves around the concept of governance and its distinction towards government. With government-based frameworks, nation states are at the core, and they are responsible for the political process and the decisions made within a state and on international level. Governance on the other side, includes various stakeholders with much complex structures. Not only national governments are included in certain processes, but also non-state actors, such as expert networks, NGOs, grassroot organizations or multinational corporations and government agencies (Biermann et al., 2009, p. 2). The addition of global to the term indicates the approach's international level of cooperation and governing, which emerged due to the increasing globalisation. There is scientific consensus when it comes to Global Governance, which shows a transformation of international politics and nation states and the important role of non-state actors (Brand, 2011, p. 197). Further, the role of intergovernmental organizations is growing, which comes with changes of authority between national, international and supranational levels

and also an increasing range of actors (Biermann et al., 2009, p. 2). However, there is no singular meaning or understanding when it comes to Global Governance as such and many authors have also added critical additions to Global Governance (cf. Behrens, 2005; Biermann et al., 2009, p. 2; Brand et al., 2000, p. 145; Brühl and Rosert, 2014, p. 51; Gordenker and Weiss, 1996).

This chapter illustrates the current literature, starting with an historical overview of Global Governance, then moving on to civil society and NGOs and how they participate in Global Governance, while proceeding with how NGOs interact with the United Nations. The chapter ends with policy coalitions and networks and concludes in the research gap.

2.1 Overview Global Governance

The 19th century was shaped by the first wave of globalisation and international economic cooperation. Governments negotiated free trade agreements and supranational organizations emerged in favour of capitalism. Early developments of a global agenda started with the Congress of Vienna in 1814/1815. The principle of nation states was developed during the congress and simultaneously the participants focussed on a cooperation between states to secure peace and prevent further wars. The Congress of Vienna was the first of its kind to introduce four novelties, which contributed to a more open and inclusive negotiation. First, there were more than 200 participants, from state officials to local authorities, also smaller states attended and could place their interests. Even though it turned out, they had little success. Second an ad-hoc process of consultation was introduced and prior to the main conference a gathering of experts took place. Third advocacy groups for example anti-slavery movements were allowed to participate and stand up for their concerns. The fourth change, was the inclusion of journalists (Brand, 2011, p. 199 f).

At the beginning of the 20th century non-state actors gained importance and transnational social movements and intergovernmental organisations were established. Starting with the peace movement during World War I and World War II, also labour-, environment- and gender-movements started international networks and can be seen as first bottom-up approaches of Global Governance (Brand, 2011,

p. 202). These movements were able to create publicity and put pressure on governments and made proposals for international cooperation as well as influence national and international policy processes (Brand, 2011, p. 202).

Following the end of World War I and the rising power of the United States the first intergovernmental organisation was founded in 1919, the League of Nations. The use of secret diplomacy up until then should be ceased and peaceful practices implemented, to avoid new wars. Besides the League of Nations the many other international organisations were established in the first half of the 20th century (Brand et al., 2000, p. 22). The League of Nations was dissolved in 1946, however only after the foundation of the United Nations with its Charter coming into force on 24 October 1945 (United Nations, 2021).

In light of World War II and the upcoming Cold War intergovernmental institutions were established and gained importance (Brand, 2011, p. 206). The increasing number of new actors on national and international level demonstrated the limits of the Westphalian sovereignty for states (Brühl and Rosert, 2014, p. 46). According to Brock and Albert these tendencies lead to the delimitation of the world of states¹ and the states monopoly on policy-making (Brock and Albert, 1995).

Since the middle of the 20th century different agencies, organisations and architectures of Global Governance have emerged, with an increase in intergovernmental organisations (Behrens, 2005, p. 13). Important examples for the uprising international organisations are the Group of 7/8 (G7)², the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the UN. The G7 first meet in 1973 and is seen as an informal institution, overarching Global Governance. The members, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, USA and Canada work together in an informal setting, as like-minded countries to foster cooperation. One of their main goals is the development of Global Governance (Oldani et al., 2019, p. 3f). In 1971 the WEF, a private organisation, also held its first meeting with the aim to "provide networking opportunities" and "information on the state of the world economy" (Frieze, 2020, p. 2).

¹ In German Entgrenzung der Staatenwelt (Brock and Albert, 1995)

² Founded without Canada and Italy in 1975; Russia joined in 1998 and left again in 2014 (Oldani et al., 2019, p. 2)

This research, however, focuses on the UN as an important intergovernmental organisation and the 1970s as the beginning of world conferences. The first ones include the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment 1972 in Stockholm and the World Conference on Women in 1975 in Mexico City. (Brand, 2011, p. 209). The Stockholm conference also marks a turning point in the involvement of civil society in Global Governance with an increasing number of CSOs participating (Tallberg et al., 2013, p. 4). On international level CSOs became a relevant actor since they gained attention and access from intergovernmental organisations (Brühl and Rosert, 2014, p. 47). Until today, the remains of world conferences are a crucial mechanism for the UN and civil society (Brand et al., 2000, p. 27).

2.2 Civil Society and NGOs in Global Governance

With this research looking at NGOs a definition of such is necessary to establish which actors belong to this group, and how they see themselves. NGOs are part of civil society in the broadest sense which is defined as "social life that is public but excludes government activities" (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 3). Civil society is also distinguished from the market and thus concluding in the three sectors, state, market and civil society, which have "'fuzzy' borders and interrelationships that exist between these sectors" (Edwards, 2009, p. 4). In the Oxford Handbook for Civil Society global civil society is summarised as

"the sphere of ideas, values, institutions, organizations, networks, and individuals that are based upon civility; are located between the family, the state, and the market; and operate beyond the confines of national societies, polities, and economies" (Jordan, 2011, p. 95).

As part of civil society, some NGOs belong to (transnational) social movements, which they are a part of as hybrid NGOs or de-hybridised NGOs which emerged from the social movement (Schultz, 2011, p. 228).

Alternative terms for "non-governmental organisation" with slightly different meanings exist in scientific research and among the actors themselves, including the more general term CSOs, grassroot organisation, volunteer sector, transnational social movements, private voluntary organisations, or non-state actors. Some of

which are highly specialised but all agree that they are "durable, bounded, voluntary relationships among individual to produce a particular product, using specific techniques" (Gordenker and Weiss, 1996, p. 18). However, as the UN referred to the phrase "non-governmental organisation" in article 71 of the UN Charter it is the most widespread and commonly used definition. Today the UN defines NGOs as a part of CSOs and as

"... any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, civil society organisations (CSOs) perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizens' concerns to Governments, monitor policies, and encourage political participation at the community level. CSOs provide analysis and expertise, serve as early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements, including Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Typically, they are organized around specific issues, such as the UN pillars of peace and security, human rights, and development. CSOs often promote UN observances and international years and decades established by the General Assembly to focus world attention on important issues facing humanity. Their relationships with offices and agencies of the United Nations System differ depending on their location and mandate." (United Nations, 2020a)

NGOs have been on the rise since the beginning of the 20th century. Although the gross amount of organisations was founded after 1950 with the establishment of more than 33,000 international NGOs between 1950 and 2009 (Weiss et al., 2013, p. 8). Apart from NGOs also persons, institutions and organisations can be defined as part of civil society (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 3). And this can include private companies, scientific institutions or non-profit organisations. The rising number of NGOs and international NGOs together with other actors leads to the conclusion of more exchange between individual groups as well as "a networked structure of global interconnections" (Weiss et al., 2013, p. 10) for further

participation. In regard to, contributions to global governance an increased proliferation of non-state actors increases policy fields with an active civil society.

NGOs represent the link between society and governments or decision-makers (Bolton and Nash, 2010, p. 174). However, on the other side it should also be under critical spotlight, who the NGOs represent and what their aims are, as NGOs do not have any democratic legitimisation and are formally not held accountable for their action (Schultz, 2011, p. 226). Legitimisation is only given by their members who support their action and NGOs are accountable to them.

2.3 Access and Participation of Civil Society

Access defines general institutional mechanisms on how NGOs can take part in policy process of agenda-setting, deliberation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. Participation on the other side, considers how and if NGOs actively make use of the access granted (Tallberg et al., 2013, p. 8). CSOs have been part of the decision-making process on global level since the early 19th century (Brühl and Rosert, 2014, p. 366). Globalisation has opened up the possibility for NGO representatives to take part in the policy making process. Nowadays it seems sheer impossible to think of intergovernmental and supranational organisations or even local governments without the involvement of INGOs and NGOs. With their constant presence they have established themselves as an important player with different functions, access and participation (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 17). Thus, it is necessary to distinguish between access and participation.

For an active civil society, a public sphere which is open and accessible for everybody is necessary. Within the global sphere there should be space for organisations and networks to work on topics with a globalised perspective and a joint agenda. In the past 15 years new technologies and accessible resources have helped CSOs to engage with a widespread public sphere (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2019, p. 378). Open-access websites, world forums, global festivals or international conferences to just name some of the possibilities. In this context, the United Nations play a major role for CSOs by organising global conferences on variable topics for CSOs to participate in next to national delegations and representatives (McKeon, 2009, p. 2).

Access to governments and international organisations varies extremely and has changed in three major points as Tallberg et al. (2013) lay out. First, access to international organisations is mostly dependent on the field in which the organisation is active in. Broad access is given to non-state actors in the field of human rights and development organisations. On the other end, however, are security and finance centred organisations as most closed international organisations. Second, even if most international organisations are somehow open to CSOs today, this has not always been the case and has made a huge jump since the 1990s. Third, there does not seem to be a standard model for access. In the contrary the design of access for civil society very much depends on the organisation and varies in depth and range (Tallberg et al., 2013, p. 12f). The UN is considered one of the leading international organisations when it came to opening up to non-state actors with NGOs being an important feature to the UN's institutional design (Tallberg et al., 2013, p. 12).

According to Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu it is necessary to have a clear structure for civil society access and participation and a minimum set of criteria for successful cooperation between CSOs and intergovernmental bodies. Even with varying access and participation between international organisations, the minimum structure for exchange mostly includes:

1. A clear articulation of rules, rights, and commitments to consultation with civil society
2. Selection criteria for NGO participation in consultations and advisory groups, with an emphasis on diversity
3. Guidelines for the process of NGO contributions
4. Respectful treatment of NGO documents
5. Publication and dissemination of NGO submissions to delegates
6. Formalized submission process for NGO recommendations to intergovernmental bodies
7. Feedback and response to NGO submissions
8. Mechanisms for monitoring of the implementation of these components (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 15f)

Further, an emphasize has to be put on how to monitor NGO participation on international level. First, with access to local knowledge NGOs have a perfect

position to create a database on regional level. They engage with local communities and authorities to assimilate information and make it available for other organisations and stakeholders. Second, through widespread connections NGOs can fill gaps with missing data, enhance knowledge and increase interest in communities. The increasing engagement is especially useful in developing countries. Third, with providing funding for universities in developing countries NGOs support knowledge-generation institutions. To sum up the measures involve an active role in balanced knowledge creation, collection, assimilation and distribution (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 18).

In addition to access, participation goes a step further and looks at how NGOs actively take part. On national and international level governments and international organisations and institutions are emphasising the importance of consulting with the people affected by changes in policies or laws. The Global Fund for Malaria, Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS for example, has a seat for representatives of civil society on their board. Through this mechanism NGOs get the chance to interact with international organisation and express their desires. At the same time international organisations consult with the communities down to grassroot level. In conclusion decisions are made in the public sphere and are visible to everybody especially though the groups affected by the changes. It is even possible for a community to take part in a decision although they are not affected at all. But they might have valuable insight and experience. Participation, which is one of the most important elements of democracy, has changed due to globalisation. In order of the globalisation process, it is now possible that many marginalized communities of different civil societies can participate on a global level. This means that smaller groups get the opportunity to participate and influence decision making and policy outcomes (Jordan, 2011).

Access is generally the same for all actors, however, participation is in no way the same for all NGOs. Background and circumstances make a huge difference when it comes to participation, influence, and accountability. Especially marginalized parts of civil society, such as grassroot movements or NGOs from the Global South are faced with structural constraints (Dany, 2014). Organisations from the Global South and the Global North are not equally represented, which stems from not having the same amount of funding and therefore leading to differences in

participation as well as visibility. To overcome these problems, it is necessary to strengthen operational functions by including local and community-based groups and their knowledge, building capacity through communication, and measuring and monitoring of NGO action and establishing best practice examples (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 17).

To be able to keep an overview of power and the ones that are in charge, transparency is necessary. Due to globalisation and the financial crisis civil society urged to more transparency in international institutions, the public should know where the power is and through whom it is exercised. Therefore, different measures were taken for example freedom of information laws between national governments and international institutions or reforms at the United Nations for the selection and nomination process (Jordan, 2011).

2.4 NGOs and the United Nations

The UN has a longstanding history with civil society and seeks interaction with CSOs and NGOs. As an important actor in Global Governance the UN values the expertise of NGOs, and the information and ideas they bring with them (Tallberg et al., 2018, p. 229). Also many UN Commissions include NGOs from local level to work on conflicts and solve problems on a global basis (Jordan, 2011). In 2000 Kofi Annan, at the time, Secretary General of the United Nations gave a speech in front of the General Assembly at the beginning of the new millennium.

"Probably, the best ideas will come from outside government – from academic researchers, from voluntary organizations, from businessmen and from journalists like you. All of you, together, make up what we call civil society, and you have an absolutely vital role to play. The overall message is that these are problems [note: especially environment and poverty] we share and that we have a common interest in solving. They are problems we can deal with if only we summon the will." Kofi Annan (2000)

His speech emphasized on the important role of a variety of actors and not only the government. Cooperation and working together was and still is an integral part to

overcome the obstacles of the then upcoming millennium, which are still relevant today.

In retrospective NGOs have always been part of the UN system, and their participation has constantly been growing since the establishment of the UN. At the foundation around 40 NGOs had consultative ECOSOC status (Tallberg et al., 2013, p. 4). Having consultative status is important for NGOs, as they then are allowed to join meetings or submit and present statements. Which makes them important consults for UN agencies (Curbach, 2003, p. 75). In 1992 just over 700 NGOs had consultative status (United Nations, 2020b), with the beginning of the SDG implementation process in 2015 the number climbed up to 4,500 NGOs (United Nations, 2016). By 2020 another 1,000 NGOs gained access, now levelling at more than 5,500 (United Nations, 2020c). An extreme increase of NGOs took place during the 1990s, when high potential was accredited to them due to lack of confident in political parties and politics in general and a rising number of individual members joining NGOs (Brühl and Rosert, 2014, p. 47). In other words, more and more NGOs are being established and gaining access and consultative status at the UN.

Beginning in the early 1990s and from the 1992 Rio Earth Summit onwards the partnership started to increase between the UN and civil society and some changes took place at the advantage of NGOs. The output of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit was the Agenda 21 and the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), which was responsible for overlooking the implementation of the Agenda 21. In the official document the negotiating parties widely acknowledged non-state actors with a chapter on their role as an integral part to enforce the Agenda (United Nations, 1992, p. 288). The CSD further supported thematic groupings of CSOs, so called Major Groups, which NGOs could participate in. To join one of the eight Major Groups they had to go through special screening process for accreditation (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 4). The Major Groups were divided into: Business and Industry, Children and Youth, Farmers, Indigenous Peoples and Communities, Non-governmental Organizations, The Scientific and Technological Community, Women, and Workers and Trade Unions.

Later on, at the post-2015 process the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) succeeded the CSD and five additional Major Groups were introduced: Aging, Education and Academia, Local Authorities, Persons with Disabilities, Volunteers

(United Nations, 2020d). Summing up to 13 thematic Major Groups in total. The newly established Major Groups represent and support a much more diverse field of topics, rather than classical UN issues. Adding aging or persons with disabilities, represents the importance such topics have gained over the last few years.

The partnership between NGOs and the UN has been formed over many years of participation and goes beyond physical presence but takes many different forms. With the increasing number of NGOs and individual members also the number of participants from civil society willing to join official meetings and plenary sessions grew. Based on the Global Governance approach, the relationship contains diverse tasks and roles. Most importantly is the expert role NGOs have, by providing input and analysis for government officials and representatives, outside of their usual information sources (Curbach, 2003, p. 106). NGOs further depict an intellectual competition to governments, as they can act and react a lot faster. With their strong ties to the public, NGOs are able to mobilise communities and influence public opinions. Besides expert advice, NGOs offer technical expertise and support operational activities. The monitoring and assessment of international agreements usually is part of civil societies activities, with a more critical view. With including NGOs in decision-making processes, the quality, authoritativeness, and legitimacy of policy decisions increases (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 7).

So far NGO involvement and participation has enriched the process of negotiations on all levels. NGOs often have important knowledge and can contribute to policy documents and declarations with their expertise. Conferences offer NGOs access points, such as submitting research and policy papers (Joachim, 2003, p. 250). These are either published online or given as oral statements at the conference as part of their consultative status. Government and UN representatives can read the papers and statements to get new insights in what civil society demands (Curbach, 2003, p. 106). Especially when there is grassroots connection, which also strengthens the outcome and increases legitimacy (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 7).

The relationship between UN bodies and NGOs has constantly been changing. A huge milestone for NGOs has been the improvement of information exchange between civil society and the UN through Commissions Office and NGO liaisons. UN Commissions usually take place in regular time periods and have a contact person for civil society and NGOs. For example, the Commission on the Status of

Women (CSW), the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) or the HLPF. Each commission has its own convention secretariat, that is in exchange with NGOs. Further they disseminate information and assist with accreditation and establish a network for stakeholders. This also includes mechanisms to give and take feedback for opinion papers or advisory panels. Since the beginning NGOs have tried to engage in a more active way with the UN for agenda-setting and decision-making. They are especially vital for sharing information about urgent issues with the public, but also governments and other international organisations. Over time there have been some prominent examples, where NGOs successfully lobbied for their agenda, or example, the inclusion of human rights language in the UN Charter in 1945, environmental issues in the 1970s or the ban of landmines in 1997 (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 14). In a next step it makes it a lot easier for NGOs to participate in the decision-making process, if they were involved in the global agenda-setting.

2.5 Policy Coalition and Advocacy Coalition Framework

Research about networks and coalitions has been part of political science for decades. By now many different types of coalitions exist including transnational, national or regional groups, which either are a policy or advocacy coalition or network. This research has in common that networks and coalitions "coordinate shared strategies or sets of tactics to publicly influence social change" (Khagram et al., 2002, p. 7).

From the mid 19th century on networks became a new category for European social scientists with the approach of a "decentralized concept of social organisation and governance" (Kenis and Schneider, 1991, p. 26). In other words, there was no "central steering" by the state or government, but rather a pluralist approach with "highly complex informal relationships" outside of institutionalised policy-making. The inclusion of different actors, besides governmental agencies, leads to decisions being made in decentralised and sometimes an informal setting (Kenis and Schneider, 1991, p. 26f). Powell (1990) described networks as a form of organisation, which stands in contrary to markets and hierarchy. Markets being based on contracts and exchanging goods and hierarchy based on employment relationships in the private sector. However, all three organisational forms are

described in an international and economic environment (Powell, 1990, p. 300). In other words, networks were also seen as a form of organisation for actors in an economic sphere.

Policy coalitions are a group of actors which either form a coalition after planned consideration or are constructed ad hoc to lobby for certain issues or more specific a policy. They stand out by having only one purpose, to achieve a change in this policy (Warleigh, 2000, p. 239). The members of policy coalitions do not necessarily have to be limited to NGOs or CSOs, but also private companies or organisations can become a part and profit from each other and even industrial actors can act as mouthpieces for NGOs (Warleigh, 2000, p. 233). Further on EU level policy coalitions have been teaming up with political parties in the European Parliament (EP) to influence decisions or the appointment of Rapporteurs. NGO representatives for example join national delegations to the Council as members to get an easier access to various institutions (Warleigh, 2000, p. 235). From local to European level, policy coalitions find allies for their causes and depending on the topic or expertise other stakeholders are willing to work together. Primary goal of these coalitions is to influence an issue-specific policy outcome at institutions, such as the European Commission (EC), EP, national government or intergovernmental organisations.

One of the outstanding studies about advocacy coalitions was done by Paul A. Sabatier and Hank C. Jenkins-Smith in 1993 (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993). The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) comprises the three approaches advocacy coalition, policy-oriented learning, and policy change (Pierce et al., 2020, p. 65), and is based on five basic premises. First, is the role of technical information. Information is crucial to fully understand the problem, its causes and the impacts of possible solutions. Second, policy change does not happen overnight, it takes time. The time frame can be up to a decade to measure an impact of a policy change. Third, is the premise of a policy subsystem. This includes actors with all backgrounds, who are engaged in the policy area and have the shared goal to influence governments policy making in that issue area. Forth, the participants can come from all governmental levels, as well as international organisations or even other countries. Fifth, based on the ACF coalitions create belief systems which values and prioritises the perception of important relationships, nation states and assumptions of the efficacy of policy instruments. For the actors, their belief system

and believes are on the same level as the policies they are working on (Sabatier, 1998, p. 99).

Within the ACF the policy-subsystem is the most prominent element of its structure seen in figure 1. It includes actors with different backgrounds forming an advocacy coalition (Sabatier, 1993, p. 18). Sabatier argues that a policy-subsystem includes all actors, be it governmental or private organisations and they are interconnected with each other through joint normative and causal beliefs. Together they spend a considerable amount of time co-ordinating activities (Sabatier, 1993, p. 18).

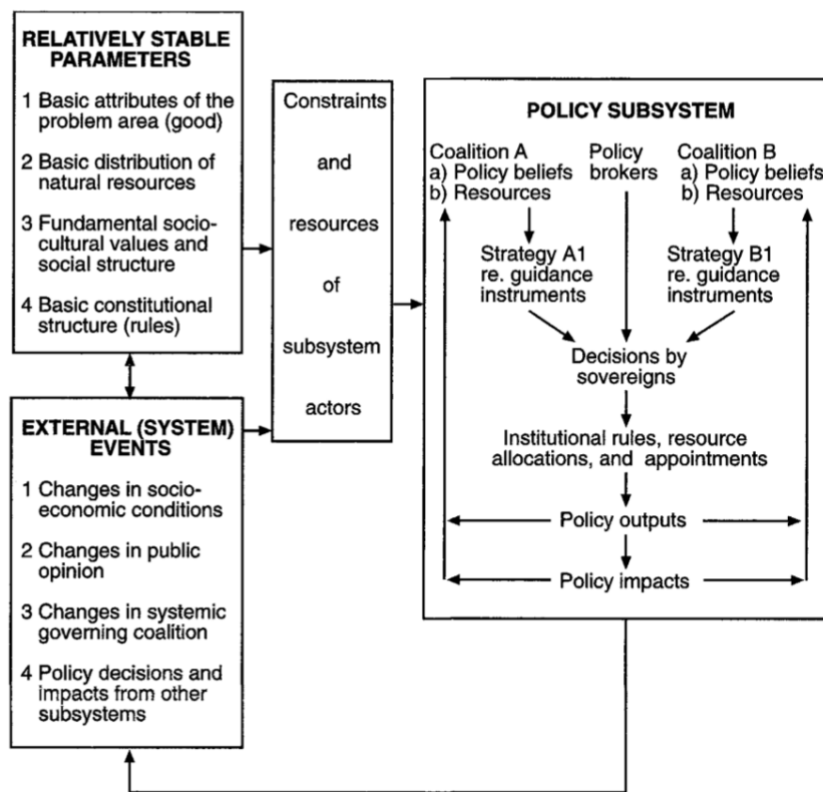


Figure 1: Modul Action Coalition Framework (Sabatier, 1998, p. 102)

The subsystem is mostly affected by external factors which are subdivided into stable or dynamic parameters. The former describes basic attributes of the problem, distribution of natural resources or constitutional structures, and fundamental socio-cultural values and structures. While the latter includes changes in socio-economic conditions, public opinions or systemic governing coalitions, and policy decisions and impacts from other subsystems. Each coalition is however bound together by

the overarching belief system, which consists of three levels. The highest level is the 'deep core' with ontological and normative beliefs, as an example the political left/right-scale belong to the deep core of beliefs. They are quite resistant to change. The second level are beliefs based on the policy area and is therefore called the 'policy core'. Policy core beliefs, being basic normative beliefs, holds the actors of the coalition together. Minor beliefs are on the third and lowest level, called secondary aspects. They refer to casual factors, such as the seriousness of the problem and are easily changed, especially with new data and information emerging (Sabatier, 1998, p. 103f).

2.6 Research Gap

Current Global Governance research gives CSOs and NGOs an integral part as stakeholders in addition to nation states on national as well as international level (Anderson, 2011; Bobková, 2020; Brand et al., 2000). There also are many historical examples where CSOs and NGOs gained access and changed outcomes to their benefit (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2019; Joachim, 2003; Tallberg et al., 2018). Several reasons speak to why it is important to include NGOs in today's research on national and international level (Petersson, 2019, p. 475). Starting from grassroot level where NGOs have valuable insight into the communities they represent and work in. Further they provide information for policy makers and collect data for implementation and monitoring of resolutions (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 102).

Studies, on the role of NGOs usually tend to be descriptive. They describe what role NGOs can take on and how their role has changed over time. Newer approaches compare NGOs to other stakeholders and the value of NGOs to the input, as well as the influence and merit of outcomes. Policies and frameworks such as the SDGs are an output of power relations between different actors and NGOs as stakeholders, are situated within those power relations (Bobková, 2020, p. 134).

The SDGs are seen as one of the most important UN frameworks at the moment and their implementation is vital for changing world affected by climate change, war, draughts, flooding or high demand for natural resources. These many issues are represented by the complexity and interlinkages of the SDGs and the long process leading up to them. Not only then, but also now – halfway towards 2030 – we still see huge issues with achieving the SDGs. Due to the many goals and stakeholders

involved on all levels, constant evaluation and assessment is necessary. Governments as the signatories of the SDGs, do so by compiling the VNR and annual updates at the HLPF. Afterall, all states and stakeholders are called upon to act in accordance with the SDGs, what in turn will lead to problems and difficulties in the process of implementation. Therefore, further research is important in order to support future policy decisions for sustainable development and to keep the momentum going (Hege and Demailly, 2018).

Looking at the numbers of NGOs with representative status at the UN, there is potential in looking at if and how they cooperate with each other. This opens a gap in research about what reasons NGOs have, to form a coalition and what benefits they hope to gain from doing so and if the reasons also apply for this case study. Therefore, this thesis takes a deeper look at setting up networks and their internal structural design, the surrounding topic of the SDGs and the general goals and aims of civil society. Drawing upon the theoretical framework of policy and advocacy networks and coalitions, the term NGO coalition will be further examined, and an analytical framework established to explore the field. The in-depth work suggests the use of a case study to answer the research questions. SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe, representing two different levels for the case study.

The case was chosen according to an analysis of European countries based on the overall implementation of the SDGs vs the progress countries have made in recent years. According to Hametner and Kostetckaia (2020) especially the Nordic countries and Austria are among the leaders of the overall SDG implementation, but lag behind in recent years when it comes to measuring progress over time towards the SDGs in recent years. Eastern and Southern European Countries, such as Czech Republic, Poland, Romania or Portugal have made the most progress based on analysis of the past five to 15 years. SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe were therefore chosen due to the regional proximity. With SDG Watch Europe acting on European level and following up with EU institution. SDG Watch Austria on the other side, mainly takes action on national and region level, but has ties to the European level as well. Austria being a country with a strong lead in overall implementation, but little movement towards the goals, this work will have a deeper look at the work of NGOs overall work. Further in Austria, with SDG Watch Austria, there is a dedicated NGO coalition supporting the SDGs.

Further research about coalitions often revolves around ad-hoc policy coalitions or interest groups and there has been little focus on specific NGO coalitions. Therefore, a case study of SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe was chosen to specify for a more detailed analysis. The following chapter lays out the theoretical and later on analytical framework for the analysis.

3. Theoretical Framework

NGOs working in the same field typically have the same goals, aims and beliefs. Therefore, it seems likely for them to organise themselves and work together, especially when they act on transforming policies. Connecting with each other within a network or coalition enhances their bargaining power and prominence and they can become a relevant stakeholder on national or international level (Delgado-Ceballos et al., 2012). Shared interests, values and beliefs are the cornerstone of a network and hold its members together (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 94). This chapter outlines the theoretical framework for NGO coalitions by starting with different definitions of coalitions and networks such as transnational advocacy networks, the Action Coalition Framework (ACF) and both policy and advocacy coalitions. Then moving on to NGO coalitions and the why and how coalitions are formed, while concluding with the analytical framework for the empiric analysis.

3.1 Transnational Advocacy Networks

The theory around transnational advocacy networks (TANs) was established in the late 1990s by Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998). TANs describe networks established by members with shared values and exceeding national boundaries. Typically, the members are non-state actors and they come together to share information and act within a single-issue area. Networks usually operate as a loose cooperation between the members and in recent years have gained importance as an actor in international governance (Khagram et al., 2002, p. 7). Some research shows their potential to influence international decision-makers and shift their views. Remarkable about TANs is their diverse and broad membership with members such as NGOs, public and private organisations, scientific communities, transnational movements or grassroots groups. Moreover, there are no strict guidelines for the internal organisation and strategies they follow, which makes networks very divers in themselves and difficult to classify (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2019, p. 376).

Looking at the history of network approach, TANs are an advancement of Powell's theory of networks as an organisational form (Powell, 1990). In his 1990 article

Powell describes networks as a form of organisation, which stands in contrary to markets and hierarchy and were seen as a form of organisation for actors in an economic sphere. The big difference for networks is their use of relationships as a means of communication. Compared to actors in the market or hierarchy, participants of networks are viewed as trustworthy and reliable, especially if there is a need for efficient and reliable information (Powell, 1990, p. 304). Therefore, they rely on the exchange of information as a commodity, which is however difficult to measure or standardise and making trust an asset. Especially, when reciprocal communication and mutual exchange between members or individuals is essential. In comparison the other two before mentioned organisational forms in economics use prices and routines as means of communication (Powell, 1990, p. 300). Keck and Sikkink further developed the form of economic organisation and adapted it for advocacy networks, based on the approach that "networks are forms of organization characterized by voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange" (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 8). Again, this makes communication and exchange of information one of the key issues for networks. Coming together sharing information, getting to know each other is an important basis for participants. Besides, the two other characteristics of TANs are the focus on a specific thematic field and the fact that they are usually comprised of non-state actors across national borders (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 94).

From the outside it is often not clear if the arranged cooperation can be described as a network or a coalition. Network or coalition, both organisational forms have three points in common, highlighting the similarities between them. First the members are independent of each other. They all follow their own projects, short-term strategies, and goals, however on a larger scale they all act in line with other members. Second, all members chose to join the network or coalition voluntarily, to work together with other like-minded organisations. Third, with the cooperation they aim to have a global and long-term impact (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 93). This usually leads to a membership based on shared values and a broad definition including many different forms of TANs. However, networks vary considerable in the level of organisation or coherence between individual members (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 94). That is where the distinguishment between network and coalition becomes relevant

and according to Yanacopulos coalitions "involve more value and commitment" (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 93), as well as a higher degree of organisation.

3.2 Advocacy Coalition

According to Warleigh the policy coalition is solely established to influence the policy outcome on a single issue and tries to move quick and find suitable partners on any level and in any institution, willing to support the cause (Warleigh, 2000, p. 237). In the contrary thereto stands the advocacy coalition, as shown in the table below.

"...making them [note: actors] unlikely to consider either radical changes of policy or entrepreneurial, situation-based alliances in order to achieve goals of either short- or long-term standing. Advocacy coalitions prioritize the long haul rather than opportunism, making them usefully pragmatic but less than dynamic [...] the advocacy coalition model helps to distance analysis of EU policy-making away from models which prioritize 'rational choice' by giving primacy to beliefs, values and the banal but often-overlooked factor of the importance of time in shaping EU policy styles and outputs" (Warleigh, 2000, p. 237f).

Figure 2: Advocacy coalitions vs policy coalition model (Warleigh, 2000, p. 239)

Variable	Advocacy coalition model	Policy coalition model
Reason for establishing coalition	Decision-makers' need for technical information	Political expediency: exploiting symmetrical concerns while retaining independence
Focus of coalition	Long-term policy change	Short-term, issue-specific policy outcomes
Potential scope of coalition	Whole policy area	Any interested actors with symmetrical concerns

Location of partners	Particular groups with established interests, e.g. EP committees	Anywhere – varied pattern of partners and opponents expected in all (sub)institutions
Criteria for membership	Shared values	Marginal utility
Duration of coalition	Long-term, if successful	Short-term, but certain partners may collaborate further in the future
Nature of coalition	Partisan	Pragmatic
Learning process of participants	Slow – filtered through lens of existing beliefs	Quick, in terms of strategy; slower in terms of values
Effect of membership on participants	Entrenchment of shared values	Enhancement of political entrepreneurship

Advocacy coalitions or advocacy groups are described by Dellmuth and Bloodgood "as nonprofit or profit interest organizations that may pursue domestic or global strategies, or adopt a mix of domestic and global strategies, to achieve their goals" (Dellmuth and Bloodgood, 2019, p. 256). Warleigh's advocacy coalition model shares similar aspects by focusing on long-term goals and not opportunities, further being led by their values for transformation and not strategic decisions (Warleigh, 2000, p. 238). His model is based on the ACF, developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith and their outline of creating a belief system for policy change, which has to be a long-term aim rather than overnight (Sabatier, 1998, p. 99).

3.3 NGO Coalition

The beginning of the chapter defines TANS as the basis for coalitions and distinguishes advocacy coalitions from policy coalitions. Drawing from this overview NGO coalitions are a distinct kind of advocacy network, with only CSOs as members. In contrary to policy coalitions with not limits to members and more in line with Sabatier's ACF. They are therefore remarkable because, as Yanacopulos (2005) lays out, they are based on TANS, but diverge in the degree of cooperation and organisation between individual members and the environment which the

stakeholders operate in. She argues that NGO coalitions have a higher degree of organisation and more long-term goals:

"NGO coalitions form more permanent links than single-issue thematic transnational advocacy networks. They generally have permanent staff members, a more permanent membership base, a headquarters or secretariat, and are organizations in and of themselves. Most importantly, they have broader strategic aims than single-issue thematically focused networks. Not surprisingly, while these NGO coalitions are organizational entities in and of themselves, they and their members also frequently belong to single-issue transnational advocacy networks. [...] Coalitions create a greater value and commitment together. While networking is an important part of coalition building, networks can exist without coalitions." (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 95)

It basically comes down to the "level of commitment between member organizations" (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 96) which is the key element to decide whether the group is distinguished as a network or a coalition and is in line with the distinction between policy and advocacy group made by Warleigh (Warleigh, 2000, p. 239). Coalitions use the strengths of individual members and rely on other members to follow-up with their promises and action. Due to NGOs having the same beliefs and long-term strategic goals it makes it easier for members to work independently towards the coalition goals. However, this is only possible with mutual trust and the willingness to give up some autonomy for the benefit of the coalition (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 98). At the same time, they have the advantage of having the coalition and its members support each other when voicing a concern or sharing their positions. The exchange of information builds up trust, as members are informed about the activities of other members and the coalition as such. Highly committed members, who actively engage in the goals of the coalition generate trusted relationships. Which in turn leads to the development of strategies – one of the most important drivers for coalitions – to implement their shared visions (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 95f). The main aims of coalitions can be summarised as sharing information and resources, gaining greater visibility, receiving access to a wider public and multiple channels for institutional access.

At first sight the only risk members of a coalition are confronted with is the risk of losing credibility or autonomy (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 95). However, coalitions often have more than 100 members representing multiple opinions, where they must find a common ground. Therefore, NGO coalitions sometimes have to agree on the smallest common denominator to get all opinions represented, and in turn, this can mean a disadvantage for the united voice (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 14). However, only if this information or conflict is shared with actors outside of the coalition will it matter to decision-makers.

3.3.1 Why and how Coalitions Emerge

Modern western advocacy networks have existed since the abolition of slavery campaigns or the international movement for woman suffrage in the nineteenth-century and been increasing and expanding for the past decades (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 39). Thus, leading to a rising number of coalitions as well, which can be seen through the increasing number of NGOs since the 1950s (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 10). In parallel the overall number of accredited NGOs with the UN ECOSOC has grown to almost 5.500 (United Nations, 2020b).

For a coalition to be established a lot of organisational process is necessary and the money required must be provided. A (transnational) coalition often deals with multiple languages and cultures, influence of nationalism or the cost for traveling (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 12). Taking all this into consideration, Keck and Sikkink have found three circumstances making networks most likely to emerge. First, if communication between governments and domestic NGOs is difficult or even somehow blocked and denied, they need to put pressure on governments to communicate with them. NGOs with a wide-ranging network can reach out to other – national or international – NGOs and allies to bypass their governments and the allies respectively their governments putting pressure on the initial government. In other words, this mechanism is also described as "Boomerang Pattern" (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 12). Having a valuable network provides national actors with greater access to leverage their government. At the same time NGOs can profit from this international link to create a legitimacy for themselves. The cooperation between southern and northern, as well as grassroot-level and global NGOs

provides every organisation with legitimacy and a better standing with governments. (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 101). Secondly, activists³, or "Political Entrepreneurs" (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 14), are driven by the cause of creating a network, which they believe will further support their effort to achieve their goals. They will meet with likeminded organisations to discuss common goals and with their shared values set ground rules for cooperation (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 103). Third, the increase in international contacts in recent decades has made it much easier for NGOs and activists to connect and stay in touch, even on an international level. Especially world conferences, cheaper travelling opportunities and increasing international exchange has encouraged NGOs to have an avid information flow and support each other, resulting in establishing networks and coalitions beyond state borders (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 14ff). Even though the circumstances above outline how networks or coalitions emerge, are based on a transnational understanding, they are also viable for NGOs on national level in the sense of gaining access to governments and support from other organisations for an increased legitimisation.

3.3.2 How Coalitions Work

Coalitions have numbers between a handful and up to far over 100 members, membership is divers with different requirements for every coalition. Therefore, a coalition's internal structures and strategies are manifold. The strategies are categorised in inside and outside strategies. Meaning inside, where there is direct contact and engagement with governments or international organisations. Such as lobbying, directly speaking to decision-makers by providing information and advice or monitoring of treaties and agreements. Outside on the other hand refers to indirect activities such as raising awareness, "naming and shaming" or civil disobedience. Coalition strategies can also be on the confrontational side or more moderate. A third cleavage runs through conventional and unconventional

³ Activists described by Pamela E. Oliver and Gerald Marwell as "people who care enough about some issue that they are prepared to incur significant costs and act to achieve their goals" (Oliver and Marwell, 1992, p. 252)

strategies (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2019, p. 380f). Leading to the following summary and examples:

Inside/moderate/conventional	Inside/moderate/unconventional
Lobbying; information-provisions, scientific and technical advice, capacity building via cooperation with national local authorities	Monitoring or enforcement on behalf of governments or local authorities with low enforcement capacity, certain forms of capacity building
Outside/moderate/conventional	Outside/moderate/unconventional
Public education and awareness raising, mainstream media campaigns, letter writing, public petitions	Use of independent media, development of new social media platforms
Outside/confrontational/conventional	Outside/confrontational/unconventional
Public protest, mass rallies, 'Naming & Shaming'-campaigns	Direct action, civil disobedience, cross-border litigation, divestment campaigns, boycotts

Figure 3: Strategic profiles of coalitions

Like most political stakeholders, NGOs try to influence political agendas and decision-making, however compared to others they possess little power in a traditional sense (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 16). By joining networks and forming coalitions they utilise each member's strengths and use tactics such as "persuasion or socialisation" (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 16) and reframe the information or context to their advantage. In a power relationship these strategies come with conflict. Coalitions might also pressure governments through economic coercion, reason with opponents or encourage sanctions, provide information and socially shame institutions and governments (Tallberg et al., 2018). Various strategies are available for persuasion and socialisation for coalitions or member organisations including information provision, issue framing, leverage politics, accountability politics.

For any stakeholder or actor being part of coalition information is a key component. Besides official exchange of information many informational flows happen on an informal basis. These information exchanges formally take place in meetings or assemblies and more informal through e-mails, phone calls, newsletters, pamphlets, or conversations. Usually informal information concerns knowledge and news, which would not normally be shared in official settings or might come from unheard voices (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 18). Sharing information with members or government agencies falls into the bracket of inside and moderate strategies for coalitions and at the core of their work (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2019, p. 380).

Besides the method of information flow, it is important, what kind of information is shared. It can be distinguished between testimonial, technical and statistical information (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 19). Testimonial information does not necessarily focus on the content of the matter, but more on the person who tells it. It has to come from people affected by the matter such as grassroot organisations. Technical and statistical information is about facts and figures. For the before mentioned persuasion of decision makers facts are usually presented as either right or wrong. This makes it easier for networks to work with facts and convince people, by sharing their point of view on what is achievable. Testimony and facts complement each other and together both are more tangible for citizens and stakeholders (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 21). Decision makers try to rely on experts for policy decisions, which sometimes results in taking advice from networks and their leaders, as they compile experts in their policy fields and represent their constituencies interests. Usually, coalitions possess a great amount of valuable information, especially on possible reactions to decisions and the consequences for people affected (Tallberg et al., 2018, p. 215).

Further, when NGOs provide governments with trustworthy information it legitimises them as reliable actors. The larger the network is, the greater the trust and legitimacy will be with other networks and the government. Cumulating in more information can be transferred and an even greater value for individual NGOs to join a coalition. (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 21).

A network needs an active flow of information to bind its members together and trust each other, and to work effectively. Receiving information is also vital for a functioning civil society and NGOs have the capability to make politically important information available for the public. In doing so NGOs act in contrary to

intergovernmental organizations, as they, due to the dependency on member states for funding and resources, can be reluctant to share this kind of information (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 17).

As persuasion functions best with the right framing of information and agendas, creating issue frames is essential for coalitions. Policy issues or issue frames are not defined by themselves, "they are the result of strategic framing processes in which NGOs take the advantage of material and ideational resources" (Joachim, 2003, p. 250) and are part of a coalitions outside strategies by creating the issue frame and not directly working with governments (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2019). Frames embedded in the agenda-setting of a policy cycle are divided into the phases defining a problem, finding a solution, and setting the motives, which is described as the framing process. Within the framing process the political opportunity structure sets the institutional opportunities for actors to successfully set frames. Here in turn the three elements access, allies, and political alignment or conflict are relevant for NGOs. Access, meaning the access to international organisations and leading to the amount of allies a coalition can find to legitimise the established frame. Political alignment or conflict will also support the NGO's effort, by finding others whose goals align with their own or bringing contradicting frames together (Joachim, 2003, p. 251f). For coalitions frames are necessary to put policies in perspective and discuss them in public. They support coalitions in the way how their interests are understood. Setting frames can also be useful for old issues, which are not relevant anymore, but they want to bring them back on the agenda. This is possible by reframing issues in a new way (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 17).

"The motivational frame must now manage to connect to the social value system on the one hand and to construct an 'us' against a 'them' on the other, as well as to address the diverging interests within the movement on the one hand and to align these interests towards a common goal on the other" (Habermann, 2011, p. 246).

Strong NGOs which are able to mobilise within the given structures of the UN are capable of changing the issue frame to their own advantage (Joachim, 2003, p. 269). Symbolic events or politics are one way to create the motivational frame. This

powerful tool provides an exemplary showcase and create awareness, which people easily relate to. Often it is not a single event which changes people, but rather a series of symbolic events (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 22). To coalitions symbolic events therefore are important for framing an issue. Both for governmental engagements, as well as the public sphere.

In contrary to symbolic politics, leverage politics aims at "target actors", to seek influence over them by using moral or material leverage and changing public opinion on governments. Moral leverage is the "mobilization of shame" (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 23) which also is an outside strategy, but more on the confrontational side, compared to the moderate issue framing (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2019). Advocacy networks expect governments to value their reputation and not wanting to be called out by activists. By pressuring governments through campaigning, letters of protest or boycotts and therefore publicly shaming states, activists try to enforce policy changes and urge governments to comply with international commitments. At the same time these actions influence public opinions and create negative exposure for the government in question (Gulbrandsen and Andersen, 2004, p. 56f). On the other side, material leverage corresponds with money or goods. This works by linking potential loss or growth in money, goods or even votes to their cause, by providing the necessary information and creating symbols for the target actors they seek to influence (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 23). Without the right information to leverage a government, NGOs will not be taken into account (Warleigh, 2000, p. 239). If networks are able to provide useful information, they can become powerful actors of themselves.

Besides the before mentioned effectiveness of influence on the policy change, coalitions have the aim to hold states and their governments accountable to declared actions. NGOs want governments to follow up with their promises and make the decisions accordingly. Similar to leverage politics activist will use the statements to demonstrate whether they have also implemented the policy changes as promised. Should this not be the case, activists will in return make this knowledge publicly available, aiming at governments to rectify the failed policy changes (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 24). As coalitions are directly working with governments and their agencies this can be seen as inside strategies, however in the unconventional and moderate bracket (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2019).

3.3.3 Under what Conditions Coalitions Have Influence

One aim of NGO coalitions is political effectiveness. This is defined by a change of policies or opinion of governments, international organisations or private actors (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 23). Keck and Sikkink define these levels as "stages of impact" (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 26) because often one stage follows the other. A specific agenda with an discursive position leads to an government that is open to discussions and can be hold accountable for the statements they made, declarations they signed and conventions they joined (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 26).

Successful coalitions have shown to strive to achieve goals on different levels and stages (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 25). First, agenda-setting is done by creating an issue and sharing it within the public sphere. Activists participate in meetings, organise debates, issue public statements etc. Agenda-setting can also be supported by official international days or UN theme years and decades. Second, coalitions try to influence governments on discursive positions by persuading them to join international declarations, conventions or changing their policy positions on issues. Third, an area of influence are the procedural processes of international institutions. NGOs for example developed a wider range of contact and communication with international organisations and will use the contact to claim their point of view. Fourth, there impact can happen directly on the policy level and result in policy changes of targe actors or other organisations and states. However, policy changes do not necessarily entail in behavioural changes. The last stage of influence therefore is the states change of behaviour.

3.4 Analytical Framework

The theoretical chapter lies out the framework for answering the research questions. To do so, however, an analytical framework is also necessary and has been developed drawing upon stimulus and reasons for NGOs to join a coalition. These are based on transnational advocacy networks, policy coalitions and NGO coalitions. The analytical framework consists of four main categories, as follows:

1. Complementary resources
2. Increased credibility and legitimacy
3. Enhanced access
4. Coherence of values

Coalitions depend on their members to share information with each other, similar to networks they use information as a form of commodity (Powell, 1990). This makes information sharing one of the basic characteristics of a coalition. Information is shared voluntarily, reciprocally, and horizontally between members (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 8). Information flows are divided between formal and informal communication. While formal communication acts as the official channel, informal is more bilateral and between individuals. Informal conversations also contain information, which would not be shared in a larger group or can come from underrepresented and unheard NGOs (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 18). If organisations use the information of other coalition members the relationships within the coalition need to be based on trust, each members has to be able to rely on the information the other provides, as well as on the others actions (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 95). The build trust further binds the members together.

Sharing information does not only affect the members of the coalition, but also builds trust within the community and levels the path for political institutions to follow new approaches around sustainable development (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 9). Coalitions use information for an inclusive dialogue between members, building strategies and organising campaigns. A coalition also enhances knowledge creation by filling gaps of missing data and getting communities engaged by sharing information with them and therefore increasing interest in communities (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 18). In other words, coalitions are actively involved in creating, collecting, assimilating, and distributing knowledge and information.

Besides sharing information NGOs also organise themselves in a coalition to share resources. Being in touch with governments and international organisations, organising campaigns and preparing statements is very time and resource intensive. By working together and sharing responsibilities based on the particular specialisation of each member organisation, coalitions can decrease costs. While at the same time increasing their legitimisation through a larger member base and

added negotiation power (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 95). Pooling resources saves not only time but also money in terms of hiring researchers or other staff who would do the same work in different organisations. Coalitions use research to increase their credibility, so when one organisation spends money on high-quality research it is useful for them to share the results with the coalition, to give the coalition more credibility as well (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 102f).

Deriving from the literature on Global Governance and networks information flows between and sharing resources with members and other stakeholders reduces costs for NGOs and makes them become a part of the coalition.

H1: Complementary resources: NGOs are more likely to participate in NGO coalitions that provide them with complementary resources in terms of information, expertise, and organizational resources, allowing them to promote their objectives more effectively and at lower costs.

As NGOs do not have any democratic legitimisation, they need credibility to be taken into account by governments or international organisations (Schultz, 2011, p. 226). Afterall, sharing information and resources is of no use to a coalition if they are not able to lead discussions with decision-makers. Therefore, to build a credible reputation and be seen as a valuable partner it is essential for coalitions to be successful and trustworthy. Which NGOs can prove to be, by providing governments with trustworthy information and as a result it legitimises them as a reliable partner (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 21). Large coalitions with a substantive amount of member organisations are able to generate greater trust and legitimacy by combined forces (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 102f).

With any kind of development process and change of policies CSOs have local experience, which they use to contribute to on international level of Global Governance (Gordenker and Weiss, 1996, p. 19). Especially in rural areas the role of NGOs is imperative, as grassroot organisations usually have strong ties to the community and authorities on local level, because they themselves are part of the local community (Kunreuther, 2011). In return grassroot organisations rely on INGOs to provide them with feasible and trustworthy information, to legitimise their work (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 22).

The SDGs in particular are a global framework with interlinked, and interdisciplinary goals and need active exchange from local to international level, which is offered through coalitions (ACSC, 2016, p. 3). Technical developments in past decades also made exchange accessible and reasonable between grassroots organisations and INGOs (ACSC, 2016; Caballero, 2019). NGOs further belong to civil society with their strategies mainly focussing on advocacy work and being part of a wider network gives them more credibility.

H2: Increased credibility and legitimacy: NGOs are more likely to participate in NGO coalitions that amplify their credibility and legitimacy.

Access to international organisations or governments varies extremely, mostly, however dependent on the thematic field of the policies. Environmental governance, human rights and development organisations for instance have great involvement of CSOs and in contrary security, finance and migration have only little involvement on international level (Tallberg et al., 2013, p. 5). Gaining access, is also dependent on the political opportunity structure, which describes the opportunities NGOs have to join policy-making on every level (Joachim, 2003, p. 251). On international level, the UN for example led the way to opening up to non-state actors and inviting CSOs to join negotiations and treating them as an equal stakeholder (Tallberg et al., 2013, p. 12). Access further, looks at the institutional mechanisms how NGOs can take part in the policy process, e.g. vocal access points, regulations for meetings etc. On the other hand, participation recognises whether NGOs also make use of the access gained (Tallberg et al., 2013, p. 8). Access or participation a general set of rules is useful. These include a guideline with clear rules and rights for consultations and contributions by NGOs. Disclosed criteria and a transparent process for participation. Governments and international organisations should also have a formalised process for submissions from civil society. These contributions should also be published and disseminated to government officials and delegates. To prevent a one-sided information flow it is necessary to have feedback-loops in place for governments to respond to input from NGOs (Gemmell and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 15f).

Gaining credibility with governments and international organisations comes along with better access to said institutions, such as the UN. Further, it also makes

it easier to leverage governments to be taken into account and make decisions based on the coalition's beliefs. By participating in a coalition the NGO gets the opportunity to enhance their access.

H3: Enhanced access: NGOs are more likely to participate in NGO coalitions that enhance their opportunities to access international organizations and governments.

Working together with shared information and resources, having access to governments and international organisations inevitably leads to a coherence of objectives and interests. In a policy subsystem, described by Sabatier, actors with all backgrounds are engaged in the policy area and share the goal to influence the decision-makers policy making (Sabatier, 1998, p. 99). The policy subsystem brings NGOs together who share normative and casual beliefs and who will spend time and money to co-ordinate their activities to achieve their goals (Sabatier, 1998, p. 103).

Each coalition is thus bound together by the overarching belief system, which consists of three levels. The highest level is the 'deep core' with ontological and normative beliefs, as an example the political left/right-scale belong to the deep core of beliefs. They are quite resistant to change. The second level are beliefs based on the policy area and is therefore called the 'policy core'. Policy core beliefs, being basic normative beliefs, holds the actors of the coalition together. Minor beliefs are on the third and lowest level, called secondary aspects. They refer to casual factors, such as the seriousness of the problem and are easily changed, especially with new data and information emerging (Sabatier, 1998, p. 103f). Being cause driven and working together creates greater coherence of NGOs objectives, values, and interests. But the overarching aims, and also long-term goals are the same for all NGOs within a coalition (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 93). While their shared values allow NGOs to follow their own short-term goals and create campaigns individually.

Strong coherence within the coalition hence supports long-term goals rather than quick solutions on singular policies (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Warleigh, 2000). For NGOs with the same values and goals be it short or long-term would therefore be willing to work together and trust the other organisation with their work due to the coherence of values.

H4: Coherence of values: NGOs are more likely to participate in NGO coalitions display coherence in terms of shared core values, objectives and beliefs.

4. Methodology and Data

In order to answer the research question adequately, it is necessary to apply the right methods applicable for the research question, both for the collection of data and the following analysis. Considering this, the research follows a case study and a qualitative approach with primary sources, secondary literature and qualitative interviews has been chosen. The theoretical framework is based on a Global Governance approach and draws from an extensive study of the secondary literature, which is also used for the structure and guideline of the interviews. For the collection of data this work relies on secondary literature about the ACF, TANs and advocacy coalitions as well as NGO coalitions. The theoretical framework concludes with an analytical framework for the analysis of the collected material. By defining core elements of different types of coalitions and networks the analytical framework is applied and leads to discussing the hypotheses and research question.

Secondary literature includes works by Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith about the Advocacy Coalition Framework (1993), Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink and their work on Transnational Advocacy Networks (1998) or Alex Warleigh on policy coalitions in the EU (2000) and Helen Yanacopoulos on NGO coalitions (2005). Primary resources are the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (2015) and documents published by the Austrian government on the SDGs (Bundeskanzleramt Österreich, 2017), climate change (Bundesministerium für Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus (BMNT), 2017a, 2017b), as well as the Austrian VNR (Bundeskanzleramt, 2020).

Additionally, to primary and secondary literature, and official documents eight expert interviews were conducted with representatives of member organisations. Expert interviews are not about the person in question but rather their "organisational and institutional context" (Meuser and Nagel, 2005, p. 72), and they were the main source of data for the analysis. Experts represent and speak for an organisation, but not for or about themselves. Working for an NGO, they further have knowledge of their organisation as well as the coalition and give access to the NGOs motivations when it comes to participating in a coalition. Nevertheless, an expert who is working for a member organisation, also becomes part of the research topic, simply by their job title and position within the NGO (Meuser and Nagel, 2005,

p. 73). Their position in the organisation gives them certain insight and value to their work. Therefore, being a member of or working for an organisation qualifies them as an expert in the field.

Among the experts interviewed were NGOs which are either part of SDG Watch Austria, SDG Watch Europe, or both coalitions. The interviews took place in January and February 2021 and lasted between 20 and 50 minutes. All interviews were held online, due to lockdown restrictions in Austria. Seven interviews were conducted in English and one in German and transcribed in the respective language, six interviewees were women and two men. They held various positions in their organisations from director, chair or founder to employee or secretary as well as consultants or volunteers.

This thesis looks at the upstream process before implementation and monitoring. In other words, the general involvement of and reasons for NGOs to participate in a coalition. Going back to the MDGs the availability of data, capacity of technical knowledge or the way policies were implemented and data collected, often took place in so called data silos. The SDGs with their more extensive targets and indicators try to go against this silo thinking (ICLEI, 2015). Them being more interdisciplinary and interlinked it is fitting to have a closer look at coalitions in the realm of sustainable development. Hence, the case study of SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe.

The case was chosen according to an analysis of European countries based on the overall implementation of the SDGs vs the progress countries have made in recent years. According to Hametner and Kostetckaia (2020) especially the Nordic countries and Austria are among the leaders of the overall SDG implementation, but lag behind in recent years when it comes to measuring progress over time towards the SDGs in recent years. Eastern and Southern European Countries, such as Czech Republic, Poland, Romania or Portugal have made the most progress based on analysis of the past five to 15 years. SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe were therefore chosen due to the regional proximity. With SDG Watch Europe acting on European level and following up with EU institution. SDG Watch Austria on the other side, mainly takes action on national and region level, but has ties to the European level as well. Austria being a country with a strong lead in overall implementation, but little movement towards the goals. Further in Austria, with SDG

Watch Austria, there is a dedicated CSO-based coalition supporting the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs.

Using the method of open coding of the material collected through the interviews with a bottom-up approach after transcribing and sectioning the material according to the analytical framework. Based on the framework the coding was as following:

- Complimentary resources
 - Sharing information (formal/informal)
 - Kind of information that is shared
 - Sharing resources
 - Participation and conflict within the coalition
- Increased credibility and legitimisation
 - Coherence of SDGs
 - Act as one strong voice
 - Broaden the own horizon
- Enhanced access
 - Access to governments
 - Working with the government
 - Political role
- Coherence of values
 - Structural goals
 - Specific action
 - Visibility

Two extra categories for information about the interview partners and the case study were used to identify case specific information.

5. Sustainable Development Goals

The "Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development" or SDGs was adopted on 25 September 2015 and includes 17 goals for sustainable development, to give governments and other stakeholders a guideline for action on sustainable development. Within the UN environment one of the starting points for the SDGs was the UN Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, where the Agenda 21 was adopted and further on in 2000 the Millennium Summit with the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The time frame of the MDGs, however, ended in 2015 and was replaced by the SDGs with an expanded conceptual framework. The SDGs are used by a wide range of actors on international, national, and regional level and there are also networks and coalitions such as SDG Watch organisations on all levels as well. SDG Watch Austria describes the SDGs as a new network concept of understanding of poverty, environmental destruction, inequality, production and consumption patterns, and corruption (SDG Watch Austria, 2020). The framework recognizes that different problems need to be tackled everywhere and simultaneously. The SDGs have a universalistic claim, there is little regional or thematic limitation. In addition to the 17 goals, 169 targets and approximately 230 indicators for the targets were defined to make implementation measurable. The Austrian Federal Government further published "Austria and the Agenda 2030" in 2017 (Bundeskanzleramt, 2020) and the "Austrian strategy for adaption to climate change" (Bundesministerium für Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus (BMNT), 2017a, 2017b) for a more detailed pathway for action in Austria.

This chapter first gives a short overview on the background of sustainability and critical view on sustainable development, then goes into the framework SDGs with its interdisciplinary and coherence of the goals and last briefly discusses the involvement of NGOs.

5.1 Sustainable Development

Triggered by the report "The Limits of Growth" of the Club of Rome in 1972, environmental protection and resource consumption became issues that were first discussed and later negotiated at international level. Milestones in this process are

above all the UN Conference on the Environment in Stockholm also in 1972, the Brundtland Report of 1987, the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, later on the MDGs, now followed by the SDGs and supported by the Paris Agreement adopted at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2015 (COP 21). The Brundtland Report also speaks of sustainable development as such for the first time and agrees on common goals such as intergenerational demands for sustainable development (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). It has also been defined for some time now that state and economic factors must be included.

The concept of sustainability comes from forestry and fishing at the beginning of the 19th century and is as comprehensive as the concept of the environment, the number of approaches and concepts therefore is very diverse (Michelsen and Adomßen, 2014, p. 4f). Significant differences result from the understanding of the term and the ascribed possibilities of action, which leads to normative expectations, and a certain understanding of nature and society to each other⁴ (Köhler and Wissen, 2011). In addition, the different approaches make it clear how power relations are structured and who should be able to work with the SDGs. Sustainability is perceived as the guiding concept of the necessary social-ecological transformation (Neckel, 2018, p. 11). Further, sustainability in the sense of its original definition means, to think in terms of impact (Michelsen and Adomßen, 2014, p. 5). For example, what effects are included by the definition of sustainability or how does it include effects to social-economic conditions. These questions should be discussed on all levels by civil society. The SDGs pick up this wider range of issues around food, consumption, mobility and even the economic system as well as a sense of justice and equity (Neckel, 2018, p. 12).

While the ecological movement in the 1970s, which was a phenomenon within certain groups, in its efforts to represent the topic of ecology and sustainability, today the rise of climate awareness, got a boom through climate change. This moment assumes that sustainable action is a clear matter. Sustainable action and ecological justifiability are linked in discourse and new social lines of conflict emerge (Neckel, 2018, p. 56ff). Since political forces want to maintain social power and the capitalist growth economy is not being questioned, the efforts of the SDGS can be questioned

⁴ Gesellschaftliche Naturverhältnisse

as a greenwashing. Discussed by Weigand, change by economic actors will only take place if there is an economic incentive for them to do so. This incentive is often given through certificates based on the economic system (Wiegand, 2018, p. 46). Looking at the SDGs, they are not legally binding and only contain recommendations, therefore based in the current economic system will only slowly lead to any change, as actors need a higher incentive, than moral expectations.

The question arises as to the implementation of sustainable strategies and concepts. Brand und Wissen (2018) addresses this question in detail in their article "What Kind of Great Transformation?", as a reference point for analysing different understandings of transformation. They fundamentally distinguish between a strategic and an analytical approach to transformation concepts. The strategic approach concerns power and regulatory structures on the economic and political level for states, international and intergovernmental organisations. The analytical approach focuses on social-ecological transformation. According to them, it would be important to link the two discourses with each other and to enhance the social-ecological dimension by including current projects, those already implemented or those in the implementation stage, which aim to gradually realize a different social coexistence on a social, ecological and economic level. As already mentioned above, Neckel advocates a public discourse on sustainability (Neckel, 2018, p. 14). In order to enable a public discourse among equally well-informed participants, however, there must be equality of information. In this respect the role of the state is to make relevant information accessible to all citizens without barriers (Rogall, 2013, p. 108). Further this is where NGOs and Coalition come in to pick up the information and get the role of dissemination it within society.

Per se the broad definition and design of the SDGs is made for the participation of many actors and stakeholders. Zimmermann (2016) in his miscellany "Nachhaltigkeit wofür?" takes a closer look at the role of stakeholders for the necessary social change attested to the SDGs. Zimmermann and Anged (2016) see the individual with their values and beliefs as an essential factor, where social change oriented towards sustainable action can work. According to them it is down to each individual and their decisions and actions to decide whether their activities are sustainable. Although individuals are always embedded in a social system and they cannot make decision outside of ecological, economic and institutional frames

(Zimmermann and Anged, 2016, p. 68). NGOs and in a wider extent also coalitions are individuals with a common interest coming together in the civil sphere to align their activities and follow mutual goals (Gordenker and Weiss, 1996, p. 18).

In the interest of political and economic premises, actors define what is meant by sustainability. Sustainability as such is a widely discussed and contested term. Neckel describes the demand for sustainability as a order of justification for sustainability, which determines the values of practices, objects and actors, and leads to the drawing of social boundaries and generalisation of the term sustainability (Neckel, 2018, p. 17f). The overall social discourse on the topic of sustainability shows that growth and technical progress are seen as a prerequisite for solving problems at political, ecological, social or economic level. In the counter discourse, a critical examination of the effects of politics and ecology takes place in Political Ecology (cf. Robbins, 2004).

Understanding sustainability as a widely discussed term, used by many different actors in the political, economic, and social sphere, it should be put into a transdisciplinary context. Transdisciplinary aims to productively integrate different social environments into complex problems (Jahn, 2008). Which is the case for the SDGs, as they aim for social change:

Social changes, in a certain sense pre-decided by power, by economic constraints or by technological innovations, are embedded in the diverse habitats and subjected again to participatory reflection - that is, the different truths, needs and problem definitions are made visible and related to each other.

(Hanschitz et al., 2009, p. 183)

Sustainable development is a task for society as a whole, which must take into account the living environments of different cultures, resources and opportunities. Solidarity and cooperative behaviour at regional and international level is necessary. Sustainable action must be actively defined at various levels so that new cultural practices can be established. Instead of differentiating between society, economy or politics, the aim is to perceive and include processes of power distribution appropriate to the respective context of practice. Different forms of knowledge, skills and action are exchanged, brought together and "shared with each other" in a

proper sense (Hanschitz et al., 2009, p. 183). Results and processes should always be formulated and shaped by the actors concerned (Hanschitz et al., 2009, p. 184).

5.2 SDGs as a Framework

After two years of elaboration and negotiation, the SDGs were adopted in September 2015 (United Nations, 2015). The goals are economically oriented, despite social and ecological guidelines. Seen in their entirety, the goals contain contradictions and discrepancies, which leave room for interpretation. This can be perceived as positive, since a wide range of actors can use the SDGs as a framework for action. In contrast to earlier international agreements, the SDGs contain precise objectives with their targets and indicators. SDG 1 - 12 are of a socio-economic nature and refer to poverty, health care, education, discrimination, work or water supply. SDG 13 - 15 are dedicated to the topic of ecology. The last two, 16 and 17, deal with the structures of society, institutions, peace, and regulate the manner of international cooperation:



Figure 4: 17 Sustainable Development Goals

1. No poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

- 10.Reduced Inequalities
- 11.Sustainable Cities
- 12.Responsible Consumption and Production
- 13.Climate Action
- 14.Life below Water
- 15.Life on Land
- 16.Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- 17.Partnership for the Goals

The preamble of the resolution states, that the SDGs "are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental" (United Nations, 2015). The SDGs are based on a 'System Dynamics approach', which makes them all interconnected with each other on the levels of economics, social and environment. At first glance, they seem to be adopted to make society more sustainable, on closer analysis, however, the goals reveal the basic orientation that was intended with their establishment, which is a strong growth focus. A brief overview of goals 12 and 13 deflects this conflict and how they interact with and influence each other. Both goals cannot be reached without affecting the other. SDG 12 relies on indicators such as the GDP and more generally aims at waste reduction and education rather than less overall consumption. Fossil-fuels, for example, are mentioned in the targets of SDG 12, sustainable consumption and production not however in SDG 13, climate change, where it has a direct impact as well. This is described as policy coherence and needs more than just cooperation to achieve the goals. However, with governments and policymakers working in silos, where one ministry is responsible for one topic, difficulties can arise (Nilsson et al., 2016). Similar to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the SDGs should be viewed as a complex whole, where there are internal connections that can call short-term decisions into question. In other words, the SDGs can be seen as a basic text, but, must be interpreted as a framework (Collste et al., 2017).

5.3 NGOs and the SDGs

Seeing sustainable development and the SDGs as a complex framework of goals, targets and corresponding indicators it is obvious that not only governments can be in charge of achieving these goals. Sustainable development is a A far wider set of actors and stakeholders is necessary when it comes to the SDGs. Especially the negotiation process was open to all stakeholders through the OWG, which were not bound to the General Assembly, and delivered a transparent negotiation process (Caballero, 2019, p. 139).

The CSD further supported thematic groupings of CSOs, so called Major Groups, which were specifically for different stakeholders to participate in (Hemmati, 2002, p. 3). To join one of the eight Major Groups they had to go through special screening process for accreditation (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 4). Business and Industry, Children and Youth, Farmers, Indigenous Peoples and Communities, Non-governmental Organizations, The Scientific and Technological Community, Women, Workers and Trade Unions, Aging, Education and Academia, Local Authorities, Persons with Disabilities, Volunteers (United Nations, 2020d).

On local level, it is often, where NGOs come into play by localising action for the SDGs (ACSC, 2016, p. 3). NGOs have access to local knowledge and are therefore in a position to create a database on regional level about the status of SDG action. They engage with local communities and authorities to assimilate information and make it available for other organisations and stakeholders (Walker, 2016, p. 60).

6. Case Study

Understanding NGO coalitions as platforms with a higher degree of organisation and more long-term goals, this chapter will lay out the SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe. SDG Watch Austria are considered as coalitions and are the base of the case study.

6.1 SDG Watch Austria

In early 2017 more than 140 organisations drafted an open letter to the Austrian government and demanded more transparency and participation in the process of implementing the SDGs in Austria. Later that year more than 80 organisations decided to form the platform SDG Watch Austria, based on the model of SDG Watch Europe. In their mission statement they declare:

"SDG Watch Austria is the civil society platform in Austria that advocates for the realisation of the 2030 Agenda and the UN Sustainable Development Goals" (SDG Watch Austria, 2018)

For NGOs in Austria, it was not the first time working together, some years previously *there used to be a group that dealt with the predecessors of the SDGs, the MDGs* (Int1) as stated by a member organisation of SDG Watch Austria. However, at the time the group existed of *mostly organisations [dealing with] international development and cooperation between countries of the Global South* (Int1), as this was the main aim of the MDGs. In 2015 with the publication of the SDGs Austrian NGOs *had seen that basically no one was really interested but there were a couple of civil society organisation, that had on their mind to kind of monitor what Austria as a state is going to do and how the implementation [of the SDGs] is going to work* (Int2). At the time the NGOs started as a loose working group, which *has grown quite a lot in the last two years* (Int1) with over 200 civil society organisations involved by 2020. Together they can roughly be categorised in 15 different segments (SDG Watch Austria, 2020):

- Urban development
- Human rights

- Global justice & development cooperation
- Environment, climate, agriculture & animal welfare
- Animal protection
- Health
- Peace, justice & strong institutions
- Sustainable economy
- Education
- Disabilities & mobility
- Youth & children
- Social welfare
- Gender equality
- Anti-corruption & transparency

With other words, the coalition *represents civil society organisations in Austria that work on the SDGs* (Int2). They are the main counterpart for all different actors where civil society and NGOs should be involved in topics around the SDGs in Austria. Being able to act as a reliable and constructive partner has manifested the relationship between SDG Watch Austria and the government. An advantage that comes into play for them as a coalition, is their diversity of organisations (Int8). The increasing number and broad variety of NGOs gives the coalition extensive competence and credibility (Int4), seen as they have a widespread knowledge.

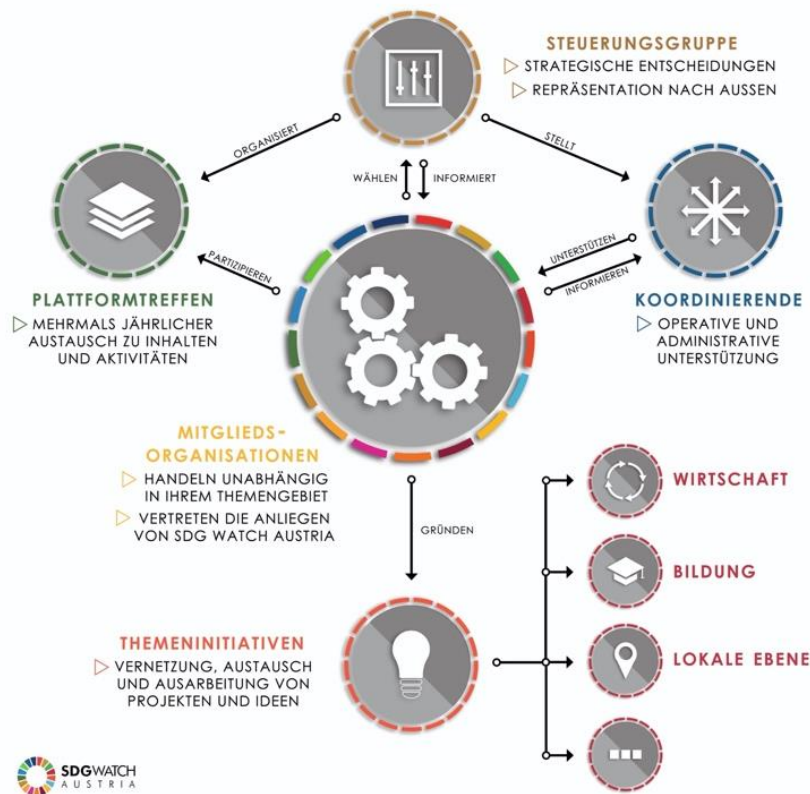


Figure 5: Structure SDG Watch Austria (SDG Watch Austria, 2020)

Figure 5 describes the organisational structure of SDG Watch Austria. It is designed as a platform for its members to network and exchange information and is led by a steering committee (Steuerungsgruppe). The steering group members have a representational task, and the committee *makes the strategic decisions (Int1)*. The three to five people of the steering committee are voted into office every two years by the General Assembly and usually come from the management level of member organisations. At regular meetings the members, with the steering committee, decide on the joint approach and direction of SDG Watch Austria. Big decisions, such as *the direction the whole platform is going or if the steering group has to be voted again* will lead to a meeting of the General Assembly (Int1). The steering committee is also supported by three coordinators, *which is one* representative from the KOO, AG Global Responsibility and Ökobüro (Int1), who organise meetings for the steering committee and do their administrative work (Int2). Part of the coordinators office also is to organize meetings with the ministries, especially the chancellery, but also the Foreign Ministry and or the Health Ministry (Int2).

Furthermore, they are responsible for project coordination, event organisation and internal policies. On day-to-day level, however, the members are the most important part of the coalitions. They act independently, although their general activities have to be in line with the agenda of SDG Watch Austria (SDG Watch Austria, 2020). Networking is essential for the platform and *once or twice a year it offers the members internal meetings [...] where [they] can exchange on the topics but also on structural things* (Int2). Additionally, once a year SDG Watch Austria organises the SDG Forum, which is open to all organisations and individuals and serves as an event to discuss the progress on the SDGs in Austria (SDG Watch Austria, 2020). Even though the steering committee offers certain *guidelines SDG Watch Austria doesn't have a lot of formal structures and the thematic initiatives have even lesser formal structures* (Int4). This makes it hard to keep a balance between active and inactive members.

SDG Watch Austria has four *topic initiatives which are concerned with peace, education, local level, and economy* (Int1). The topics for the thematic initiatives were brought forward by members and they are responsible for the work on the themes themselves, however the steering committee gives them strategical guidance of which topics are most important for the work of SDG Watch Austria (Int2). As one interview partner mentioned with the initiatives *there's still the possibility to shape it yourself, [however always] depending on resources and possibilities* (Int8). The topic initiatives are there for the members to be actively involved with SDG Watch Austria and implement their own ideas and proposals (Int8).

Each initiative has a leading organization, who sets up meetings, agendas, speaks to the General Assembly or writes letters. For the members of the steering committee active involvement is mostly only possible through administrative tasks and guidance on *the political or strategical level*. So, the members of the steering committee are involved with the initiatives, but they do *not [work] on the thematic issues themselves* (Int2). The involvement of member organisations depends on their active engagement in the steering committee or topic initiatives. A non-steering-group member described it as following:

There is this a small group of organisations that are connected to the coordination people and steering committee. There are also

other organisations they are quite active and are involved in these thematic initiatives [...] then there is the biggest number of organisations that only show up to the events SDG Watch organises. (Int4)

Members further use the topic initiatives for regular exchange with other NGOs about SDGs in Austria and local initiatives and projects (Int8). Working as independent groups the topic initiatives are given the authority to decide themselves what kind of action they pursue and how they communicate with each other but also the government or the public sphere. The education initiative for example drafted an open letter to the Minister of Education in 2019, which was signed by SDG Watch Austria as a coalition (Int2). Communication to the outside, therefore, varies between the initiatives and the whole platform:

The platform itself does not communicate concerning certain topics. We only communicate concerning the structural framework. [...] The problem with the topic initiatives is that they don't communicate as SDG Watch Austria. (Int1)

For public communication the steering committee as well as the thematic initiatives mainly use joint position papers, press statements, blog posts on their website and social media and the before mentioned SDG Forum (SDG Watch Austria, 2020).

Exchange and communication with the government and ministries is context specific and depends on the situation. For special occasions SDG Watch Austria would draft an official letter, signed by the steering group. Later on, communication will change to email-conversations and personal meetings. For drafting the VNR, for example, the Austrian government established the IMAG an interministerial working group for the implementation of the SDGs situated between chancellor's office and the foreign ministry (Int2). SDG Watch Austria was in close exchange with the IMAG for the VNR.

SDG Watch Austria has different types of membership, with different advantages. For members the advantages are an active communication and exchange with other NGOs, possibilities for cooperation of initiatives, increased visibility and a strong joint public approach (SDG Watch Austria, 2020). Membership is divided into full members and associate members. Any CSO or initiative dedicated

to or supporting the SDGs can become a full member and have access to decision-making and appointing the steering committee. Associated members are any other interest groups, extracurricular educational and scientific institutions, institutes and networks or, business networks and entrepreneurial actors. They also have to commit to the SDGs and support the platforms agenda. Excluded are, however, companies from the oil, gas, tobacco and defence industry and individuals (SDG Watch Austria, 2020). Further, the platform itself *only has small funding* (Int4) and it is rather the member organisations providing project-based funding or have allocated money of their budget towards SDG Watch Austria. They do not take any funding from political parties or private donations, in order to stay independent (SDG Watch Austria, 2020).

In terms of cooperation SDG Watch Austria has *always supported the work of SDG Watch Europe, however, there is not always the time and work power available to really work on the work strands SDG Watch Europe has* (Int1). With relying on the work power of member organisations SDG Watch Austria has to use most its resource for themselves and can only send people to join SDG Watch Europe meetings but cannot join campaigns actively (Int1). The cooperation is limited to *forwarding and using social media to promote certain documents that SDG Watch Europe writes* (Int1), further is the communication limited to updating general info about membership and important events (Int1). More often there is bilateral communication between member organisations from both SDG Watch Austria and Europe on individual projects, for example the "Make Europe Sustainable For All" project, which was developed on European level but supported by national NGOs (Int1).

The higher level of commitment, permanent staff and membership as well as a secretariat lead to the understanding of SDG Watch Austria as a self-contained organisation, even though it does not have a legal status as such (SDG Watch Austria, 2020) and therefore also understood as a NGO coalition.

6.2 SDG Watch Europe

A short time after the SDGs came into force in September 2015 a group of NGOs met on European level to found SDG Watch Europe *a network of NGOs across all 27 member states* (Int6). It was their goal *to monitor the commission and the parliament and make sure that they fulfil their promises and commitments around the SDGs* (Int6). Later in March 2016 six members (GCAP, EEB, World Vision, Plan Int, 11.11.11., IISD) published the "Governance arrangements for the functioning of SDG Watch Europe" which state in the beginning:

"The SDG Watch Europe Alliance is an EU-level cross-sectoral CSO alliance, currently comprising approximately 100 NGOs from development, environment, social, human rights and many other constituencies and sectors. Its goal is to hold EU institutions and the governments of EU Member States to account for the commitments they made when they adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The alliance aims to ensure a central role for civil society in the implementation of the SDGs." (SDG Watch Europe, 2016a)

SDG Watch Europe concentrates its action on the EU institutions and is hosted by European CSOs, which offer personnel and funding for the network (Int6). To become a member organisation, they should either be a

1. Brussels-based CSOs/CSOs working at EU level [focusing] on influencing EU processes and policy, awareness raising, citizen mobilisation, and knowledge and capacity-building
2. EU level CSO umbrella organizations [...] or
3. Nationally-based CSO platforms working on any of the four dimensions of sustainable development in a Member State, or any umbrella organizations (SDG Watch Europe, 2016a)

In other words, *the only criteria [is] that it is an SDGs driven organisation* (Int6). Organisations, which fit into this category are allowed one vote in the decision-making process. Other EU or national organisations working on the SDGs are permitted to join, however, do not have the right to vote. Looking at the membership

it is important to note that all members are required to an annual membership fee, which is fixed at a minimum amount. The membership of an organisation can be revoked, should it breach the networks principles and values (SDG Watch Europe, 2016a).

Later in June 2016 the first action of SDG Watch Europe was an open letter to Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the EC at the time, signed by 35 CSOs. The letter criticises the lack of action and low progress made on European level by then. They further demanded an overarching strategy of internal and external affairs on the one side and across policy areas on the other side to break out from the linear and rigid silo system in policy making (SDG Watch Europe, 2016b).



Figure 6: Signatories of the first letter to President Juncker

The internal structures of SDG Watch Europe are defined in the governance agreement, which states the steering group or steering committee as the leading body with six to ten members (SDG Watch Europe, 2016a). The *steering group is made up of member organisation. They're voted in at the annual general assembly. Anyone can apply, they're seconded and voted in and the same with the work strand facilitators* (Int6). Elections take place in January every year and positions are

appointed for two years. To reflect sustainable development properly, members of the steering group come from the four dimensions of the SDGs environment, social, economic and governance. Individuals elected should also be able to draw on expertise or experience in one of these fields. Further they strive for a balance in NGOs working on national and EU level, within or outside of the EU, as well as gender equality for the steering committee. Among the steering group's task of leading the network and informing the General Assembly, is to oversee the membership process and supervise the work strands. The latter should anticipate incoherence and/or potential conflict of the work strand's activities and advise members on what action is necessary and which steps should be taken (SDG Watch Europe, 2016a). Currently SDG Watch Europe is hosted by the EEB, however they *have not had a secretariat for some months now due to [a lack of] funding* (Int6), which can become problematic. Together with the *high turnover of staff in NGOs* there is always a risk of *[building] institutional knowledge and then what happens is, someone leaves and all the institutional knowledge [is gone as well]* (Int6).

Besides the steering group most of the work is done within the four work strands, which are:

1. Joint high-level policy & coordination for ambitions and integrated EU SDG implementation
2. Monitoring, accountability, & review of European SDG Implementation across all sectors
3. Engaging CSOs & Citizens at local, national and EU level
4. Reflection, innovation, experimenting & learning together

Each work strand has two to three facilitators, who coordinate at least four annual meetings and represent the work strand at the plenary meetings and the General Assembly meeting. Similar to the steering group, the facilitators should represent the four dimensions of sustainable development and the organisations take on the mandate for at least one year. Their responsibilities include ensuring the achievement of the work plan, which is agreed on every December for the following year. Further, they need to inform the steering group on their activities, especially when doing so under the SDG Watch Europe name. To communicate with the members of the strand the governance arrangement also foresees a mailing list for

each strand. Within a work strand sub-groups can be established for specific topics or action. (SDG Watch Europe, 2016a).

The third body is the General Assembly, it has its annual meeting in January, with representation of all members. Additionally, the steering group and work strand facilitators participate to present a report on their activities and the workplan for the upcoming year, and to answer questions and receive feedback from individual members (SDG Watch Europe, 2016a). The General Assembly meeting, therefore, is an important basis for exchange and source of information for members. Additionally, to the General Assembly plenary meetings take place at least four times a year and should encourage exchange between members. The work strands have to report on their activities and similar to the General Assembly members have the possibility to ask questions and provide them with feedback (SDG Watch Europe, 2016a).

Even with the large number and diverse background of members, general decision-making for the network is consensus-based. Therefore, SDG Watch Europe supports discussions and negotiations to come to a common understanding and reach a decision, only, if necessary, a majority voting will be conducted, *everything is done very democratically* (Int6). Only governance or representation issues, financial issues and the overall direction of the network are always decided by majority vote (SDG Watch Europe, 2016a). When it comes to working together and making decisions the coalition tries to actively include all its members, as is shown in the example of their involvement in the EC's staff working document:

We have all these campaigns and we're inviting members to participate in our statements and sign up for our statements. Then also to participate in the debate on the staff working document and put forward their own organisation's positions on the staff working document. So, then we kind of gather things together and they sign on to that. It's very much a kind of collaborative process. (Int6)

However, being inclusive and engaging all members to join in discussions, revisions of statements, participating at meetings and workshops can be challenging at times. Even though SDG Watch Europe does a lot of work online and [are] *really good with working online* (Int6) *finding time is a constant kind of difficulty or challenge or*

constraint (Int6). The individual members have *to carve out time from their professional work to also support the work of SDG Watch Europe. So, it's another job on top of their already overloaded plate* (Int6). The self-organisation of CSOs as a coalition makes them more impactful, by organising and coordination their work. SDG Watch Europe has therefore, drafted a five-year-strategy about where they want to be in 2030. The development of the five-year-strategy offered the opportunity for the coalition to take a step back and to really look at their vision, mission, and objectives (Int6). It also includes a roadmap and milestones, what the coalition wants to achieve within the next five years.

7. Empirical Analysis

As outlined in the introduction the purpose of this thesis is to answer the research question by following the Global Governance approach and NGOs and analysing empirical interviews with members of NGO coalitions:

*Why do NGOs participate in NGO Coalitions?
A Case Study of SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe*

7.1 Complementary resources

Active communication between members of a coalition is essential for a coalition or network to succeed, following the credo "information binds" (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Warleigh, 2000). Formal and informal information flows between members, non-members and decision-makers legitimizes the coalition itself, as well as their purpose. In this case it is sustainable development on a local, regional, and European level. Communication takes many different forms, and the content is decisive for its importance. Within the coalition communication is subdivided into formal or informal exchange and the nature of the communication, such as SDG related information or organisational issues. As mentioned by one interviewee *communication with all the other members is mainly through platform meetings where once a year all of them [members] have to show up* (Int2). However, even if *there is a global agenda and a common base* (Int5) for the SDGs and the work done by NGOs, it does not mean, that participation in coalitions comes without conflict.

Internally the first level of communication is always formal communication through regular meetings and official letters. SDG Watch Austria has *around three regular member meetings per year, one is usually a bit more informal and one of them is the general assembly* (Int1). The meetings in person are the coalitions *main communication channel* (Int2) and a platform for exchange. In addition to the regular meetings the steering group has smaller organisational meetings with individual members or ministries (Int5). Parallel to personal meetings SDG Watch Austria has a monthly newsletter filled with *political and strategical issues and everything that [they] are working on* (Int2). On European level formal communication is very similar

with four annual meetings, and a general assembly held in January. As well as online communication through a monthly newsletter for members. There is also a clear structure for how decisions have to be made:

It, first of all, gets reviewed by the steering group and then once the steering group makes their decision, we then put it out to the members. And say this is what the motion, what the steering group thinks about it and we want to know what you all think about it. Then basically it's a democratic vote. (Int6)

Seen as SDG Watch Austria has the four topic initiatives, they have their own schedule for meetings, which take place around two to four times a year (Int8). Analogous to the meetings of all members, the topic initiatives' meetings are mainly for *exchanging thoughts and discussing topics* (Int7) on each topic initiative's theme. Depending on how structured the topic initiative is these meetings are used for making strategic decisions if such decisions need to be made (Int4) or plan *actions which can be taken* (Int1). The leaders of the topic initiatives are furthermore the contact person at annual platform meetings to inform all members what they are working on and to provide different input from the initiatives members. Their leaders also speak to the steering group at least once a year (Int2).

Informal information is as essential to a coalition as formal communication. Especially done through *bilateral conversations* and *phone calls* (Int8) between members of the coalition. When it comes to the steering group, it is *always possible to contact [them] personally* (Int1). They are also there to give the topic initiative feedback on papers, positions or letters and encourage members to find new cooperation (Int1). Especially with allies outside the NGO community, such as members of parliament, trade unions or in politics (Int5). Platform meetings are further there for bi-lateral conversations between members of the topic initiatives (Int5), finding a community which deals with sustainable development (Int7) and discussing daily business (Int4).

A big part of the steering committee's communication – both SDG Watch Austria and Europe – revolves around organisation of meetings, either for the coalition itself, the topic initiatives and even meetings with government and ministry officials. The steering group further informs their members about upcoming meetings of

governing bodies on SDG related meetings. On the other hand, them communication with their members is important to find the best expertise and knowledge within the member organisations:

First of all, we discuss within the steering committee and coordination team. If it's a very specific topic we just take a look at where the expertise in our network is. Then we get in touch with this expertise and the staff of these organisations. (Int5)

More issue related communication takes place around the topic initiatives, as for SDG Watch Austria they are the ones working on themes, events and workshops related the SDGs. Strategic decisions are then discussed at a personal meeting and afterwards all members are informed.

Decisions would have to be made in between meetings we sent an update to all the members of the initiative and proposed what to do next. And asked them for their veto or their confirmation (Int4)

The topic initiatives further act as a space to bring organisations together outside of the coalition.

Working on some specific other topics or projects. We then share that information. For example, at the beginning of last year one member had a project idea and was asking for people who would like to join. He found some people who joined the project, and they meet and do this project separately. But inform the group what's going on. (Int7)

Communication on European level looks similar, but with a stronger focus on administrative information. SDG Watch Europe mentioned, there are *always issues, there are reports, there are conferences, there are events going on* (Int6) which is worth sharing with the members.

With over 200 members the level of participation of organisations varies. To become a member NGOs have to be in line with the SDGs and most of them promote the SDGs and explicitly mention them throughout their advocacy work. These members are seen as having an active involvement with the coalition. Further on active

members are engaged with the topic initiatives (Int1) and *communicate in quite a short interval* (Int4) with each other. Being an active member in the coalition additionally depends on the resources:

If an initiative or an idea in SDG Watch Austria comes up and wants to be active, you'll always need an organisation that has the resources to do so, because SDG Watch Austria only has small funding – I would say only for overall coordination. (Int4)

A main concern of the founding members was the openness of the coalition towards any SDG related topics and events. Any member NGO has the possibility to *participate as actively as possible* (Int8) in an atmosphere where everyone is *working together, discussing, and confronting each other* (Int5). With the sheer number of members and different background, they do have different positions on issues.

Certainly, it is an advantage having many actors with varying goals, however, this does not come without problems. It can be really hard to work in the platform because it is so divers, and everyone has a different focus and structure and desires or wishes. (Int5)

Another example was working on the VNR with the government: *some members saw this as a cooperation with the government and thought that we are on the governments side* (Int1). However overall, the interviewees came to the conclusion that there were *no significant conflicts* (Int8) and that *it's good to have a different position* (Int5).

On the other side there are members who do not engage with the coalition, they *just passively receive information but not really get involved* (Int1). Organisations either do not have the time and resources to join in on meetings and events, however, still support the SDGs and therefore the coalition SDG Watch itself. Some organisations will only join in for a specific topic or action: *They just work together for a while ... they work on a position like the thematic initiative on education. They worked on a position paper specifically SDG 4.3* (Int5).

7.2 Increased credibility and legitimacy

The SDGs being a framework with 17 goals and more than 160 targets within economic, social, ecological and environmental dimensions. In addition to them being pursued on a global level and by different types of actors it only seems logical to also look into the interdisciplinary aspects of the goals. To follow up with the SDGs no single actor can focus on all goals and targets, as the interconnections between them are too complex. Therefore, the framework itself triggers interdisciplinary exchange on global and regional level as well as governments and stakeholders (Soria Morales, 2018). Most actors work towards single goals and their issues but do not have the capacity to work for every goal, however, they will also support the achievement of other goals and increase legitimacy. This kind of support and exchange is offered by platforms and coalitions. Besides the general interdisciplinary between the individual goals, members of the platforms would join to broaden their own horizon and seek exchange with other members, and to be seen as one strong coalition with a single voice. By doing so they increase their credibility.

Following the interdisciplinarity of the SDGs and the wide range of topics covered by the 17 goals, NGOs strive to broaden their own horizon by joining a coalition and starting discussions with other NGOs. The MDGs and predecessor of the SDGs mainly focused on development issues, with six out of eight goals. This changed substantially with the SDGs. On the other side the NGOs initiating SDG Watch Austria had a *mainly environmentally orientated focus* (Int1) and they wanted to interact with other NGOs working on the SDGs, so *from that point on the idea developed that a bigger platform could be started* (Int1). This is an important step, because *in Austria if you talk about sustainability most of the people and many of the member organisations have the ecological part mind* (Int4). SDG Watch Europe also made sure, when it was founded, *there was an equal number of environmental organisations plus social organisations* (Int6). With the SDGs being interdisciplinary exchange with others on these topics, should have priority. Another interviewee emphasized the working together and finding synergies between each other:

The organisations that are working on that (topic initiatives) they can connect, they can really get together and maybe find synergies

between their work and they can also work on different positions and papers. (Int2)

Even though the members of SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe are NGOs, discussions not only take place with members. SDG Watch Austria organizes the annual event called SDG Forum, where they encourage active interaction with different people. Civil society, governments and academia (UniNetz Austria) are invited, as *are private sector companies to talk about sustainability* (Int2). Members describe it as a strength of the coalition, that it brings together small and large organisations from the environmental and ecological sector and development cooperation. They expect to *network with people who are working on the same topic* (Int7) and *see how others do work* for the SDGs (Int4). And there are differences between organisations. Ökobüro for example has their focus on environmental topics and the Austrian National Youth Council emphasises the social part of sustainability. Overall, this interdisciplinary of the SDGs and therefore of the coalition helps build expertise on various topics within the coalition.

Coalitions can increase their legitimacy and power by speaking with one voice. They have the benefit of multiple member organisations, who all have different specialisations, which helps the coalition to save resources and money, and in return have the support of many other NGOs (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 95). SDG Watch Austria has around 200 and SDG Watch Europe around 80 member organisations covering the entire spectrum of the SDGs. This was also one of the main reasons for organisations to join the coalition.

If we go together with different other platform organisations and also other civil society organisations that are working in different fields, for example in the environment sector or in the social sector then we can basically bundle our energy together and have greater impact. (Int2)

It seems most important for members to emphasize '*we are part of SDG Watch Austria*' (Int4) and being a member of a coalition with so many organisations working for the SDGs and their implementation. In the interviews many different reasons for working together were mentioned such as reaching the goals *greater/bigger than*

if we only raised these demands as one organization (Int4), creating some kind of credibility (Int7), using the strength ... that organisations from different sectors of society come together and work together (Int8) and find synergies between their work (Int2). Together they were emphasizing that SDG Watch Austria is one of the first representation bodies for societal groups (Int4). Up until 2017 there has not been a coalition or network within Austrian civil society, where so many different organisations have worked together, on one issue or agenda (Int8) and they found it very remarkable that international, environmental, social etc. organisations are pulling together (Int8) and working together.

Acting as a single voice also requires having trust in other members and relying on the work they do as an individual organisation for the coalition. Members will work on grassroot level, while coalitions campaigns usually act on the next level up, this being national or international level (Yanacopulos, 2005, p. 96). For SDG Watch Austria it has the consequence, that *members are not always as active because they mostly focus on the environmental aspects of the SDGs and some of them also don't have the SDGs as their main focus (Int1)*. So, their goal is to work with the people on local level, create understanding for the SDGs and build awareness around them. Other members *focus more on economy and businesses* and let *other people ... focus on the political parts (Int7)*. It is outstanding, that everybody has a different focus, *but in the end it's all connected (Int7)*. For members this means participating in a coalition brings them a widespread recognition as well.

7.3 Enhanced access

Coalitions are cause driven and work together to leverage governments and be taken into account (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). As part of civil society, they take up advocacy work, which connects to disseminating and sharing information among their members. By building an informed civil society and gaining credibility they then are in the position to get access to governments and international organisations and hold them accountable for their action.

NGOs aim to exert political influence on governments by setting agendas or shifting interests for decision-making, however compared to other actors they possess little power in a traditional sense. So, by joining a coalition they are able to take a more

active political role (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 16). Being part of SDG Watch Austria or SDG Watch Europe has different meanings for the NGOs. They all want the coalition to have a *politically active role and that it wouldn't only be an expert group that does research on the topics but also publicly sends letters and is politically involved* (Int1) or to *keep an eye on the political agenda* (Int7). This was described by one interviewee through the example of working with the interministerial working group (IMAG) for the SDGs installed by Federal Chancellery (BKA) and the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs (BMEIA) together:

We've got a standing that we are a constructive, productive partner, that one can rely on... when we say we take part in this working group or committee one can count on us that we show up and bring our contributions within deadlines and so on. I think they like working with us and they know what they can get from us. (Int4)

Their standing with the government also grew over time with an increasing number of members and the more active the coalition became. NGOs had the feeling of being *seen as a constructive partner* (Int2) by their political counterparts and that ministries were impressed of the *huge, broad platform* (Int5), that SDG Watch Austria has become. Starting with mainly lobbying for the SDGs and getting in touch with the people in charge, SDG Watch Austria has quickly positioned itself as a reliable partner and they *can always have personal and political meetings* (Int2) with members of parliament or political parties. Being associated with the coalition help member organisations to establish good relationships and communication with government officials. The exchange also goes both ways, if a ministry or the IMAG has topics to discuss involving the SDGs they know who to contact for a civil society perspective and use and learn from their *experience and positions* (Int5).

On the European level SDG Watch Austria is a member of SDG Watch Europe to support the European coalition but without having to do the same work on European level. Local organisations are therefore able to fully focus on their sphere of influence and let others do the job on a different level.

SDG Watch Europe mainly works on the European Union issues in Brussels. For us this is a win-win situation, because we do not have lobby tasks and talks with people in Brussels on the European Union's position of the 2030 agenda, but we can hand it over to

SDG Watch Europe, to take care of that and that is really good.
(Int2)

Getting access to the government or ministries can be difficult for a coalition such as SDG Watch Austria. Well-established NGOs then bring in their contacts to reach out to the government, which can be done through an official letter or by gaining the media's attention (Int4). In Austria this happened with the topic initiative education and a letter they sent to the Ministry for education:

First there was this official letter and then afterwards the communication was more via email and phone calls and setting up the concrete date for meetings and so on. It was a bit more on the practical side, not as spectacular as this big letter to BM Fassmann.
(Int4)

An action like this gets their foot in the door and sets the coalition up for an active exchange with the ministry and they are able to bring the SDGs into many different committees and councils of the parliament (Int2). The difficulty, however, was the differentiating level of interest in the SDGs, some ministries and political parties or members of parliament were very aware of the SDGs and others not at all (Int1), also because it just was not part of their competencies (Int8). After building a relationship with the ministry, one of the coalition members stated: *we have quite good contact to the ministries working on the agenda. I think we are kind of experts for them* (Int5). After providing the ministry with valuable input, the ministry saw SDG Watch Austria as a constructive and productive partner. The interviewee further describes the relationship between them and the ministry as *working quite well* (Int4).

Austria had submitted and presented the VNR it at the UN in July 2020. Therefore, the government appointed the IMAG to oversee the drafting of the report and gave them more responsibility. In the process the IMAG also reached out to SDG Watch Austria and thus opened up a dialog for civil society stakeholders, making SDG Watch Austria the *linking factor between civil society and administration and politics* (Int1). Besides integrating the IMAG in the SDG process on Austrian level, it has been one of their key demands to integrate parliament into the implementation process as well. SDG Watch Austria therefore worked towards

informing the members of parliament about the SDGs (Int2). Further demands were also to introduce SDG checks for new bills and SDG budgeting. NGOs *were concerned and it was important for [them] to know what is written, what is in the text* (Int5) and so they pushed to be involved and get their demands for the goals in as well.

Joining the IMAG was one of the greatest successes for SDG Watch Austria. Before they started working together the coalition feared, they would be used for *some kind of green washing and to have the stamp of civil society organisations* (Int1) on the final version of the VNR. This success stems back to the reason of many NGOs teaming up and *being more influential in relation to the federal government* (Int8). However, all interviewees saw their involvement with the VNR as a great success. Working this closely together forged a new level of trust between the government and SDG Watch Austria and its members, after they presented the VNR they had *a different standing with the government* (Int2). Leading to greater access to the government by being invited to the government's events or *putting someone from the [NGOs] on the podium* (Int4).

On European level SDG Watch Europe has started different campaigns to reach out the various EU institutions. They have started the campaign "MEPs of SDGs" to get the members of parliament more aware of the SDGs and running round tables on the SDGs at the EP (Int6). Moreover, they have reached out to the 27 commissioners by sending them letters and asking to meet and get more involved with the SDGs (Int6). This was important for the staff working document the EC was working on.

Our whole mechanism is to say look. We are very happy you've done this and thank you for doing it. But at the same time we really feel, we've been calling on this for 5 years and we still don't see any concrete evidence of your plan for the staff working document. (Int6)

The fact that SDG Watch Europe is so involved in reaching out to all EU institutions and the willingness and desire of the EC to promote the SDGs has made their campaigns so successful. SDG Watch Europe has made themselves a respectable partner in recent years by being critical on the EC's and EP's work and showing them the importance of civil society.

Credibility comes from and with participation of NGOs in the policy-cycle of agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation and evaluation (Jann and Wegrich, 2007) and an active role in knowledge creation, collection, assimilation and distribution (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002, p. 18). SDG Watch Austria got involved in drafting the Agenda 2030 for Austria early on, it is their goal *to improve the political understanding and awareness and influence the strategies [...] the government is using to implement the SDGs* (Int2). Because of the far-reaching and high impact of the SDGs it is not only necessary for them to monitor the process of drafting the Agenda 2030 but also the structures created for the implementation of the SDGs (Int5).

One of these structures was the demand that parliament itself should have a role in the implementation process (Int4). SDG Watch Austria spoke to the members of parliament and informed them about the SDGs and their importance, as well as inviting them to events of SDG Watch Austria. This effort paid off, as the SDGs are discussed in many of the committees of the parliament (Int2). Alongside monitoring comes the accountability and following up with what the government promised. Therefore, SDG Watch Europe *produces an annual SDG report on SDG progress from the commission* (Int6).

7.4 Coherence of Values

NGO coalitions in contrary to policy coalitions or networks strive for long-term goals and transformation and not only short-term policy changes. They have a clear focus on what they want to achieve in regards to structural frameworks (Warleigh, 2000). A main aim is to build awareness and engage in discussions with stakeholders, governments, and policymakers to strengthen their credibility and promote mutual interests. Especially with the SDGs being an interdisciplinary framework, the need for coherence of NGO values is even higher. Overall, the coalition has the goal to *make the SDGs better known [and use the goals'] opportunities for new cooperation or alliances* (Int8). But also *give smaller groups a voice and to unite everybody to put pressure on the parliament or the commission* (Int6). These goals for both coalitions reach from structural goals, to creating more visibility and awareness for the SDGs, to specific action and monitoring of the implementation.

During the negotiation process and adoption of the SDGs they have been highly praised for their ambitious challenge to synergize an even broader range of issues and stakeholders than the MDGs (Le Blanc, 2015, p. 176). However, this does not come without problems:

Well, this is kind of a problem because the SDGs should be interlinked goals. They should be seen as a whole and not only focused on a single goal. I think that some of the members also focus on single SDGs and maybe lose track of the whole, the bigger picture. But on the other hand, it is quite hard for an organisation focussed on gender equality for example to stress all the other aspects of the SDGs. The division of the sectoral aspects but at the same time looking at the bigger picture it's not always that easy.
(Int1)

For acting on the interdisciplinary of the goals it is necessary to create coherence between policies, which seems to be an difficult tasks for governments and stakeholders (Soria Morales, 2018). On Austrian level the coalition tries to *create a bit more coherence and also a sense of identity concerning the whole platform* (Int1). They are not only focusing on creating coherence for the SDGs but also aligning their own work and targets towards the SDGs. In doing so one interviewee mentioned that they have been *successful, [in] working together with different platform organisations and with different NGOs in Austria, concerning social, environmental, ecological, economic development issues* (Int5). Working together with organisations from other thematic backgrounds and fields of activity was a valuable experience for all members. They highlighted that the *interdisciplinary approach is a very important thing in this alliance* (Int8). Considering the *complexity that they also bring with them, [...] negative reaction or challenges to the SDGs are recognized* (Int8).

Considering target 17.14 "enhance policy coherence for sustainable development" SDG Watch Europe is *also doing something on policy coherence for sustainable development [PCSD]* (Int6). Defined by the OECD PCSD is an "approach and policy tool to systematically integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development at all stages of domestic and international policy making" (OECD, 2018, p. 83). PCSD has three main objectives,

which are (1) fostering synergies and minimise trade-offs, (2) reconciling domestic policy objectives with internationally agreed objectives and (3) addressing the transboundary and long-term effects. SDG Watch Europe has the opportunity to intervene since there are eight points of contact at the institutional level, called building blocks: Political commitment, Policy integration, Long-term planning horizons, Policy effects, Policy coordination, Subnational and Local involvement, Stakeholder engagement, Monitoring & reporting (OECD, 2018, p. 83f).

SDG Watch Austria as a coalition showed a clear focus on long term goals, and according to Eilstrup-Sangiovanni (2019, p. 380) those are mostly moderate and inside strategies, as they would work with governments to raise their awareness of their responsibilities for the SDGs. A great emphasis was therefore put on highlighting *the structural part of the whole process of implementation* (Int1). The coalition does not primarily push for specific policy changes but rather *demand that the general conditions and the political framework is available, so the SDGs can be reached* (Int1). A general commitment without going too far into details would certainly lead to higher acceptance and less conflict within the coalition (Int8). The structural focus was also necessary for action aiming towards the government and their responsibilities:

The whole government was not really aware of its responsibilities so we have to take it step by step and start with the structural processes and at the same time the members should work in their own field and push their topics. (Int1)

The coalition decided to do so by joining the governments VNR working group and bring in their political and structural recommendations which, at the end, also ended up in the VNR (Int2). On the other side it is the purpose of individual members to *focus more on the topics themselves and the sectoral gaps in SDG implementation* (Int1). Which is in line with the NGO coalition and supports achieving the SDGs directly. Working towards structural goals, however, does not work at the same pace as isolated events and impact takes longer to be recognised. Members do not always agree with the coalition's structural goals. They have been *disappointed with the structural work [and] demand that more topics are pushed* (Int1). Members, however, *may not see the importance of the political framework* (Int1) and they

thought that *things are moving too slowly* (Int1). Others also disagreed on the working group for the VNR, seeing working with the government as a cooperation:

Some of our members saw this as a cooperation with the government and thought that we are now on the governments side. Which is not true, but it is simply a more difficult process to change a political structure. (Int1)

However, structural goals need inside strategies such as capacity building and cooperation with local authorities (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2019, p. 381). And SDG Watch Austria builds upon those long-term goals with its structural focus.

Structural goals are long term goals and ultimately need changes enforced by the government. However, to put pressure on a government for change an issue frame needs to be created by the coalition, to put policies and structures in perspective and discuss them in public (Joachim, 2003, p. 251). Bringing the SDGs into the public sphere changes the coalitions engagement to more outside strategies. Commonly this is done by using mainstream and independent media, letters to governing bodies or petitions (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2019, p. 381). In other words, to *communicate the SDGs more loudly* (Int8). SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe as well as the topic initiatives did so by sending public letters to the EC, government or ministries demanding the SDGs *get more visibility and that the impact would be greater and bigger* (Int4). Public perception, besides raising awareness is one of the coalitions goals. They aim to be *publicly active and not just an expert group* (Int1). Both coalitions organise *activities in public space to gain consciousness, to raise awareness* (Int4) and use the coalition as an umbrella for members to multiply awareness for the SDGs.

SDG Watch Austria with the aim of, basically not only being like the SDG Watch, what is Austria doing as the government, but also to see how we can further the awareness of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda within our member organisations. (Int2)

By forming a coalition and gaining a wider audience not only member organisations learn about the SDGs but also a wider part of society and the *more they hear about them the bigger the SDGs get* (Int4). SDG Watch Austria has been successful, if

they mention the SDGs to any member and people understand *what they stand for and how important the process was to gain such an important agenda* (Int5). Awareness further extends to engaging private companies with the SDGs as well (Int7). NGOs have shown that their values are based on the SDGs and they follow up on raising awareness on political and societal side, as this is one of the prerequisite for SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe.

Besides structural goals and awareness rising individual members or topic initiatives decided to take action in the name of the coalition for specific projects or aims. In the tradition of the coalition projects are mostly based on the foundation of *connecting people, inspiration, and ideas* (Int7). SDG Watch Austria therefore organises the annual SDG forum, a conference with participants from all sectors involved in sustainable development. Participants can join panel discussions and workshops on the SDGs and exchange ideas, opinions and projects (SDG Watch Austria, 2020). The coalition supports the EU DEAR-Project (Development Education and Awareness Raising), a programme that supports EU citizens "to promote global justice, human rights, sustainable development and democratic participation" (DEAR Support Team, 2021). One part of the topic initiative's outreach to the ministry for education was to *influence the reform process for the curricular for secondary school* (Int4). On European level the coalition is more policy driven in terms of working with members to shape policies. In the past SDG Watch Europe worked closely with the European Semester by SDG proofing and greening it (Int6). Further they produced an annual report "Time to reach for the moon" which had an impact on the staff working document (SDG Watch Europe, 2020b). Even though those are all different projects, they are all in line with the SDGs and therefore in line with the coalition's and NGOs believes.

8. Conclusion

The research was led by the question, of why NGOs participate in NGO coalitions in the field of the SDGs. An NGO coalition is the result of organisations working together to achieve long-term goals and has a higher degree of organisation compared to a network. In other words, they have more organisational structures and for example a headquarter or administration office and permanent membership. This is necessary as coalitions are based on a certain belief system, in this case the SDGs and promoting social change. Social or policy change does not happen overnight but takes time, hence it is more long-term. This work argues there are four main objectives that lead to NGOs successfully participating in a coalition. These are complementary resources such as sharing information and expertise between members. Second, the increase of credibility and legitimacy as an NGO and be seen as a reliable partner. Third enhanced access for NGOs to governments or international organisation and last a coherence of NGO's core values.

Complementary resources primarily comes back to sharing information and expertise by communication between members, governments, international organisations and other stakeholders. SDG Watch Austria basically shares information about the SDGs between its members and disseminates it within society. Either through projects NGOs are doing on a local and regional level, but also by pushing the agenda with the government. Within the coalition the topic initiatives give the members a more specific focus to work on the topic of their choice, discussing it with other NGOs and exchanging ideas or organising projects. This can be activities that are done under the name of SDG Watch Austria but also outside of the coalition. Furthermore, sharing resources also means sharing organizational resources. This was important for the Austrian NGO community when working with the government on the VNR, as SDG Austria was the main counterpart on the side of civil society for the government. In other words, individual NGOs did not have to make resources available to communicate and discuss the SDGs with the government, but they could do that through the coalition.

By participating in the coalition member NGOs can reduce their costs. They focus on their own topics but support the bigger picture of the coalition. As members they sign on official letters, support decisions made by the steering committee or use the coalitions contacts at ministries or parliament. SDG Watch Europe

furthermore reached out to the MEPs to inform them about the SDGs, the coalition itself and the work they are doing. The members would furthermore share research done on the SDGs with the coalition and helping others to pick up where they started. Overall, NGOs are more likely to participate in NGO coalitions that provide them with complementary resources in terms of information, expertise, and organizational resources. This allows them to promote their objectives more effectively and at lower costs.

Understanding the SDGs as a global framework with an interlinked agenda makes room for transdisciplinary and cooperation. A single NGO cannot promote or have expertise on all 17 goals, as they are too extensive. A coalition therefore offers an active exchange with like-minded organisations and as said above members share their expertise with others. Furthermore, as part of civil society they mainly do advocacy work or lobby with governments. To do so, however they need legitimacy and credibility. As an accomplished coalition with members trusting each other, NGOs, which are members of SDG Watch Austria or SDG Watch Europe enhance their overall legitimacy and standing with the government, EU institutions and international organisations alike. The advantage for SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe is, that they have members with different backgrounds such as environment, ecology, social, developmental, or educational and all of the SDG related topics.

Furthermore, SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe have a strict governance arrangement when it comes to membership. Only organisations that support and promote the SDGs are allowed to become a member and in the case of SDG Watch Europe they also need to be active on European level. With this selection process and the wide spectrum of topics covered, NGOs get a wider recognition, and their credibility will be increased by joining an NGO coalition.

Gaining credibility with governments and international organisations comes along with better access to those institutions. A coalition that is productive and seen as a constructive partner is likely to be invited back to governments for further discussions. SDG Watch Europe has shown consistent outreach to MEPs and the EC and build up the credibility to be seen as a reliable partner. They then gave feedback on the staff working document the EC was working on, to bring in the civil

society perspective. In Austria the work the coalition was doing eventually led to their involvement in compiling the VNR in 2020. Their established credibility and constant outreach to the parliament provided SDG Watch Austria with the necessary trust from the government to closely work with the IMAG. That working group gave the members access to the government and being able to talk to ministry officials on eye-level. Therefore, member NGOs said, that their relationship to the government improved through their participation in SDG Watch Austria or SDG Watch Europe. By participating in a coalition NGOs get the opportunity to enhance their access to international organisations and governments alike.

Strong coherence within the coalition supports long-term goals rather than quick solutions. NGOs with the same values and goals are therefore willing to work together. SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe both appear to have a high level of trust between members. What makes those two coalitions outstanding, is the wide-ranging topics of the SDGs and therefore also the members. The ability to draw knowledge about any SDG from the membership base was a valuable experience for members of SDG Watch Austria. On European level it was the EU wide knowledge from different NGOs, that brought members together.

The problem with the SDGs is their extensiveness and interlinked goals, which makes it difficult for NGOs to work on everything. However, as they are such an extensive framework every NGO supporting one goal is also willing to support any other NGO working on a different goal. In other words, any organisation that works with the SDGs has the same beliefs as the next and their core values are aligned. The values of the members further are in line with the values and beliefs of SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe. Therefore, they can trust other organisation which are a part of SDG Watch Austria without knowing what their exact goals are and NGOs are more likely to participate under these circumstances. Concluding, that NGOs are more likely to participate in the coalition if they display coherence in terms of shared core values, objectives and beliefs.

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11. Appendix

Interview guideline

Introduction

1. Thank you very much for your time!
2. May I record the interview?
3. How long have you been working for NGO XY?
4. What are your tasks/responsibilities as XY (Job description)?

Main

5. How was SDG Watch Austria founded?
 - 5.1. Why did NGO XY participate in the foundation of SDG Watch Austria?
 - 5.2. Why did NGO XY decide to join SDG Watch Austria?
6. What benefits did you hope to gain at the time?
 - 6.1. Did these benefits materialise?
7. Did NGO XY have certain demands?
 - 7.1. Where the demands implemented/taken up?
8. How does the division of labour work within SDG Watch Austria? What kind of communication and exchanged do the members have with each other?
9. Does the cooperation run harmoniously and smoothly or are there things that are rather difficult and conflictual?
10. What are NGOXY's tasks within SDG Watch Austria?
11. Which campaigns do you support?
12. Are there specific responsibilities in your NGO and do you also work on the same issues?
13. Is there a consultation process within SDG Watch Austria and between the member organisations?
 - 13.1. How do you perceive this?
14. How is the exchange with SDG Watch Europe and other countries (joint demands, statements etc.)?
15. How is the cooperation with extraordinary members/political parties/ministries (chancellery)?
16. What do you see as successes of SDG Watch Austria so far?

17. What are the reactions of the population/your members on the issue of sustainability/sustainable development?

Conclusion

18. Can you maybe suggest other organisations or people as possible interview partners?
19. Do you have any questions about me or my research?
20. Thank you and finish.

Abstract (English)

This thesis analyses two NGO Coalitions – SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe – and its members on why they chose to participate in the coalition. With the adoption of the SDGs and their extensive framework, the cooperation of CSOs has become more important. To answer the research question eight interviews with member organisations of both coalitions were conducted and analysed. Drawing from transnational advocacy networks and advocacy coalitions four hypotheses were formulated around complementary resources, increased credibility and legitimacy, enhanced access to governments and international organisations, as well as coherence of values. The analysis shows that NGOs participating in SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe profit from sharing resources and information with other members. The wider recognition of the coalition further gives the individual NGO more credibility. NGOs improved their reputation with the government since they participate in the coalition. Furthermore, they use SDG Watch Austria to get access to the government, especially with the compilation of the VNR. At European level SDG Watch Europe grants greater access to Members of Parliament or the European Commission. Finally, all NGOs that are members of the coalition share the values and goals of the SDGs. This builds trust between members and makes them participate coalitions. SDG Watch Austria and SDG Watch Europe are successful coalitions with members actively participating and gaining from the coalition. Additionally, this research could be the basis for a deeper analysis of the role of coalitions in the implementation of the SDGs.

Abstract (German)

Diese Masterarbeit analysiert die zwei NGO-Koalitionen SDG Watch Austria und SDG Watch Europe sowie ihre Mitglieder, warum diese sich für die Teilnahme an der Koalition entschieden. Mit der Verabschiedung der SDGs und ihres umfassenden Rahmens hat die Zusammenarbeit von zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisationen an Bedeutung gewonnen. Zur Beantwortung der Forschungsfrage wurden acht Interviews mit Mitgliedsorganisationen der beiden Koalitionen durchgeführt und ausgewertet. Ausgehend von transnationalen Advocacy-Netzwerken und Advocacy-Koalitionen wurden vier Hypothesen rund um komplementäre Ressourcen, erhöhte Glaubwürdigkeit und Legitimität, verbesserter Zugang zu Regierungen und internationalen Organisationen, sowie Kohärenz der Werte formuliert. Die Analyse zeigt, dass NGOs, die an SDG Watch Austria und SDG Watch Europe teilnehmen, vom Austausch von Ressourcen und Informationen mit anderen Mitgliedern profitieren. Die breitere Sichtbarkeit und Wahrnehmung der Koalition verleiht der einzelnen NGO zudem mehr Glaubwürdigkeit. Die NGOs verbesserten ihren Ruf bei der Regierung, da sie Teil der Koalition sind. Außerdem nutzen sie SDG Watch Austria, um Zugang zur Regierung zu erhalten, insbesondere bei der Erstellung des VNR. Auf europäischer Ebene ermöglichte SDG Watch Europe einen besseren Zugang zu Mitgliedern des Parlaments und der Europäischen Kommission. Schließlich teilen alle NGOs, die Teil der Koalition sind die Werte und Ziele der SDGs. Dies schafft Vertrauen zwischen den Mitgliedern und führt dazu, dass sie sich an Koalitionen beteiligen. SDG Watch Austria und SDG Watch Europe sind erfolgreiche Koalitionen, deren Mitglieder aktiv teilnehmen und von der Koalition profitieren. Darüber hinaus könnte diese Arbeit die Grundlage für eine tiefergehende Analyse der Rolle von Koalitionen bei der Umsetzung der SDGs bilden.