

# The 2030 Agenda: When Global Norms Meet Local Realities

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## Which SDG does your project relate to?

This thesis engages with all 17 SDGs and their contribution to the United Nations' perception of sustainability as expressed in Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In other words, the individual goals are not singled out, but are seen as an integral part of the collective Agenda. In addition, our thesis includes the themes of the 2030 Agenda, which we pinpointed as the following: three-fold approach to sustainable development (economic, environmental, and social sustainability); the Leave No One Behind-Pledge; and Partnerships to achieve the SDGs.

## What is the concrete problem you have worked with?

Beginning with the assumption that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) must be translated to fit the national and local contexts of the nations for the Agenda to succeed, we investigated how the United Nations' SDGs are translated into local contexts in Denmark and New Zealand. Three levels of governance were analyzed: national, regional, and local. The translation takes place through a process of localization in which the global goals and their sub-targets and indicators are interpreted and modified to reflect the specific context of the respective governmental institution, while simultaneously, modifying their beliefs and practices to accommodate those of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

As a part of the research, we evaluated 10 municipal cases in Denmark and New Zealand to determine best and worst practices in localizing the 2030 Agenda. We identified Upper Hutt and Sønderborg as best cases and Thames-Coromandel and Ballerup as worst cases. We found that both best cases directly engage with the SDGs and the Agenda in their localization, while the worst cases presented a more diluted approach to the localization. For example, neither Thames-Coromandel nor Ballerup selected any SDGs to use in their policies or strategies and they only implicitly referenced the themes of the Agenda.

## What is your conclusion and/or solution that can be applied in the 'real' world?

Our research revealed the importance of local engagement with the SDGs to further the global Agenda. That is, national, regional, and local (municipal) governments should prioritize the localization process by translating the global goals into their specific contexts. Although resulting in numerous different local processes, we expect that this practice will see the local contributions culminate in a more successful and unified global process. We met with representatives from Sønderborg, Rebild, and Ballerup to test and build upon our analytical findings. We inquired about their respective motivation to work with the SDGs and the Agenda and the processes they have undergone to get to where they are in their work with the SDGs today. Moreover, we found that our analytical findings and the experiences of the representatives corresponded well. Finally, we inquired about the future plans of the municipalities' work with the SDGs, discovering that continued work with these is prioritized highly in Sønderborg and Rebild in particular.

