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Distil Sustainability Indicators (DISTINCT)

International organizations, such as the United Nations, periodically list a series of goals to be reached by the member states and the international community in a specific period. These goals touch themes such as “poverty”, “hunger”, “child mortality”, and “environmental sustainability”. A large consensus exists that these goals are priorities to substantially improve human well-being. Each goal is achievable by complying with a series of concrete targets. In order to quantify countries’ progress towards these targets, a series of measures are needed. Once a measure has been associated with each target, and values for these measures have been calculated for each country, a very large amount of information is produced. For example, the ongoing UN Sustainable Development Goals framework is composed of a total of more than 230 measures that need to be calculated (or estimated) for hundreds of countries.

Such a large number of measures is necessary as wellbeing depends on many different interacting aspects, such as the quality of the environment, the quality of social relationships, money, health, food, and others. On the other hand, when the measures are too many, it is not easy to understand the overall progress of the countries towards the goals.

Many of these measures are, however, not independent from each other. Improvement in one of the aspects of wellbeing can generate improvements in the others. The aim of this project is to identify these relationships in order to understand which subset of measures is able to explain most of the overall set of measures. This can be done through the use of advanced statistical methods and will be useful to better direct similar initiatives and to implement policies for reaching the goals that are easy to be monitored.

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