

BUILDING HOMES AND RESILIENCE: VENEZUELA'S ROLE IN THE RISE OF PORTMORE, JAMAICA, THE LARGEST HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN (1970S-2000S)

AIEKA YASHEVA SMITH*

Abstract

Many Small Island Developing States (SIDS) grapple with significant housing deficits, often exacerbated by economic constraints and limited resources. In the case of Jamaica, strategic partnerships, particularly with Venezuela, historically, one of its greatest allies in South America, played a transformative role in addressing these challenges. This paper investigates the evolving relationship between Jamaica and Venezuela from the 1970s to the 2000s, framed within the broader context of South-South Cooperation (S-S C). Focusing

on the development of Portmore, the largest urban community in the English-speaking Caribbean, the study explores how shared socio-economic goals facilitated collaboration, particularly in housing and urban development. Venezuela's influence, often recognized in the context of energy cooperation, extended to significant contributions to Jamaica's infrastructure, notably the expansion of Portmore. Drawing on newspaper reports and diplomatic records, the paper provides insight into how Venezuela's support played a key role in the growth of Portmore and its significance within Jamaica. The study situates these efforts within

* PhD Government. The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus. (Jamaica) W.I. Lecturer. Department of Government. The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus Kingston 7, (Jamaica) W.I. [aieka.smith02@uwimona.edu.jm]; [https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6529-188X]

Recibido: 16 de noviembre de 2024 / Modificado: 17 de marzo de 2025 / Aprobado: 27 de marzo de 2025

Para citar este artículo:

Smith, A. Y. (2025). Building homes and resilience: Venezuela's role in the rise of portmore, jamaica, the largest housing development in the english-speaking caribbean (1970s-2000s). *Opera*, 37, 231-267.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18601/16578651.n37.11>

the framework of regional cooperation and strategic South-South alliances that shaped Jamaica's urban landscape. It discusses how bilateral agreements and development programs, including the PetroCaribe Agreement, further cemented this South-South partnership between two ambitious countries.

This study suggests that such collaborative frameworks can serve as models for addressing pressing issues faced by SIDS, ultimately contributing to their long-term social and economic resilience.

Keywords: Jamaica-Venezuela relations; South-South Cooperation; Portmore; urbanization.

CONSTRUCCIÓN DE VIVIENDAS Y RESILIENCIA: EL PAPEL DE VENEZUELA EN EL AUGE DE PORTMORE (JAMAICA), LA MAYOR URBANIZACIÓN DEL CARIBE ANGLÓFONO (1970-2000)

Resumen

Muchos pequeños estados insulares en desarrollo (PEID) se enfrentan a importantes déficits de vivienda, agravados por las restricciones económicas y la escasez de recursos. En el caso de Jamaica, las asociaciones estratégicas—en particular con Venezuela—desempeñaron un papel transformador a la hora de abordar estos retos. Este documento investiga la evolución de las relaciones entre Jamaica y Venezuela desde la década de los setenta hasta la del 2000, en el contexto más amplio de la cooperación sur-sur (CSS). Centrándose en el desarrollo de Portmore, el estudio explora cómo los objetivos socioeconómicos compartidos facilitaron

la colaboración, especialmente en materia de vivienda y desarrollo urbano. La influencia de Venezuela se extendió a importantes contribuciones a la infraestructura de Jamaica, especialmente a la expansión de Portmore. A partir de informes periodísticos y registros diplomáticos, el documento ofrece una visión de cómo el apoyo de Venezuela desempeñó un papel clave en el crecimiento de Portmore. El estudio sitúa estos esfuerzos en el marco de la cooperación regional y las alianzas estratégicas sur-sur que configuraron el paisaje urbano de Jamaica. Analiza cómo los acuerdos bilaterales y los programas de desarrollo, incluido el Acuerdo PetroCaribe, cimentaron aún más esta alianza sur-sur entre dos países ambiciosos.

Este estudio sugiere que tales marcos de colaboración pueden servir de modelo para abordar los problemas a los que se enfrentan los PEID, contribuyendo en última instancia a su resiliencia social y económica a largo plazo.

Palabras clave: relaciones Jamaica-Venezuela; cooperación sur-sur; Portmore; urbanización.

INTRODUCTION

In the heart of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), where nations have long struggled with the legacy of colonialism and economic disparity, a bold dream for regional unity began to take shape—one that transcended borders and power dynamics. Inspired by Simón Bolívar's vision of a self-sufficient Latin America, a seemingly unlikely partnership between Jamaica and Venezuela transformed regional social and economic

landscapes¹. Over two centuries after writing the Jamaica Letter, nowhere are the fruits of Bolívar's dream more evident than in the rise of Portmore, Jamaica—the largest urban development in the English-speaking Caribbean—a testament to the enduring power of S-SC and shared commitment to resilience, independence, and social justice.

Bolívar's aim for a united, self-reliant LAC free from external dominance influenced Venezuela's foreign policy, guiding its partnerships with Jamaica and several Caribbean states from the 1970s into the 2000s (Braveboy-Wagner, 2018; Sanders, 2007)². Venezuela's partnership with Jamaica reflects Latin American regionalism and S-SC (Chodor & McCarthy-Jones, 2013; Shifter, 2012). S-SC fosters economic collaboration and shared development among Global South nations, providing alternatives to Western-led models. These frameworks have shaped Venezuela's posture towards Jamaica in infrastructure and urban development, advancing regional solidarity and sustainable

growth aligned with the priorities of developing nations.

Gaining independence in 1962 Jamaica prioritized bilateral cooperation to advance its development goals. Venezuela and Jamaica formally established diplomatic relations on March 17, 1965. Thereafter, they entered various trade, energy, and development agreements and partnerships like the San José Accord in 1980 and PetroCaribe in 2005³. Michael Manley defined housing as a human right, arguing that economic globalization worsened inequality and that adequate housing was crucial for social justice and national well-being (Davis, 2006). Jamaica's partnerships with Venezuela were part of its aspirations to become energy-secure, economically stable, tackle infrastructural projects, and build resilient communities to improve the lives of its citizens (Mycoo, 2022)⁴.

This paper examines Jamaica-Venezuela relations (1970s–2000s), highlighting their collaboration in addressing Jamaica's hous-

¹ Latin America's first great liberator, Simón Bolívar, envisioned a region defined by independence, unity, and a self-sustaining development model. After fleeing to Jamaica and regrouping in Haiti, Bolívar led the charge against Spanish colonial rule, eventually inspiring nations, including Bolivia, named in his honour. Simon Bolívar's Jamaica Letter, written in Kingston on September 6, 1815, while being in exile, laid the foundation for Jamaica and Venezuela's long-standing partnership. The two countries share a strong history of friendship and cooperation and are both members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)

² During the 1960s Venezuela, which became a donor member of the Caribbean Development Bank, contributed to the development of many Caribbean Community (CARICOM) states, and established diplomatic missions and Venezuelan Institutes of Culture in almost all CARICOM countries. It also explored opportunities to expand trade in CARICOM.

³ The San José Accord was an agreement to provide 11 Caribbean and Central American countries with 160,000 barrels per day of oil at a subsidized cost. Almost 20% of the world price for oil was available as low-interest development loans (Serbin, 1991). The agreement was renewed annually and was one of the most outstanding examples of S-SC. Another example in Jamaica of San José investments is the National Stadium.

⁴ At various times, Venezuela's keen aspirations to function as a regional power in the Caribbean Sea caused some rivalry with other aspirants, mainly Cuba.

ing crisis resulting in the rise of Portmore. Venezuela's influence on Jamaica is often associated with energy cooperation, particularly through initiatives like PetroCaribe (Harrison & Popke, 2018; Sanders, 2007). While a burgeoning scholarship exists on the Venezuela-Jamaica energy partnerships, Venezuela's impact on Jamaica's housing and infrastructural development is underexplored. The study examines how S-SC drove Portmore's growth, emphasizing Jamaica and Venezuela's shared socio-economic goals bridging micro-level (Portmore) and macro-level (SIDS) analyses⁵. It fills a gap in Caribbean Political Science and Urban Development literature on regional partnerships in housing solutions. It contributes to understanding how cross-border cooperation can address developmental challenges in the Global South. It also enhances the knowledge of population mobility, providing policymakers with insights on addressing urbanization and developing effective housing and infrastructure policies to give citizens a better quality of life.

The study is framed within the context of regional cooperation and South-South diplomacy, drawing on diplomatic communication, and media reports to analyze Venezuela's contribution to Jamaica's urban development. It is guided by four (4) research questions:

1. How did Venezuela's partnership with Jamaica contribute to the development of Portmore?
2. What role did the San José Accord and later agreements, such as PetroCaribe, play in fostering S-SC in housing and infrastructure development?
3. How did Venezuela's housing aid to Jamaica reflect its broader regional objectives and foreign policy during the late 20th century?
4. In what ways has the rise of Portmore impacted Jamaica's socio-economic landscape, and what can it tell us about the efficacy of South-South partnerships in addressing housing shortages in SIDS?

⁵ This study aims to bridge micro-level analyses of specific communities, such as Portmore, with macro-level frameworks that address the broader challenges faced by SIDS. Portmore, as Jamaica's largest planned urban community, represents a microcosm of the infrastructural and socio-economic dynamics that are central to the development struggles of SIDS. With a rapidly growing population and increasing demand for affordable housing, Portmore exemplifies the challenges that many SIDS face in dealing with urban growth. By examining Portmore's evolution—particularly in the context of Jamaica-Venezuela collaborations—this study connects local realities with the overarching challenges faced by SIDS in securing energy resources, managing sustainable urban growth, and fostering economic resilience. On the macro level, the housing needs in Portmore reflect broader regional challenges, such as the scarcity of affordable housing, resource limitations, and the need for sustainable infrastructure in SIDS. The study offers valuable lessons on how SIDS can navigate geopolitical shifts, address resource constraints, and build long-term infrastructural solutions. It illustrates how localized experiences can inform global strategies for sustainable development, highlighting the interconnectedness of micro and macro-level analyses in the context of small island nations. By examining Portmore's housing development, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how SIDS can address urbanization in the face of shifting geopolitical and economic pressures.

LAC countries face persistent housing challenges entrenched in rapid population growth, economic constraints, and environmental vulnerabilities, further compounded by colonial legacies that have left inadequate infrastructure and uneven development in their wake. This “politics of infrastructure” perpetuates inequality, often depriving urban residents of access to essential services like water, sanitation, and other basic amenities (Altink, 2024). The patron-client model skews housing distribution, bypassing transparency and equal access, especially in public/subsidized housing. It reinforces inequality, as housing access becomes contingent not on need/merit but on personal/political ties (Sives, 2002; Gray, 2004). Therefore, local governments are encouraged to adopt codes of conduct and ethical policies for officials overseeing housing programs.

Kingston, Jamaica's smallest parish, is its most densely populated city. Named capital in 1872, its population grew 86% from 1943 to 1960, reaching 379,600—about a quarter of the nation's total (Clarke, 2006). This strained the labor market, worsened housing shortages, and fueled informal settlements. By the 1960s, Kingston's infrastructure was overwhelmed, deepening urban marginality (Davis, 2011). The government expanded housing in Portmore to address neglect and post-independence housing needs. By the late 20th century, Portmore became the English-speaking Caribbean's largest housing project,

easing overcrowding in West and Central Kingston (Horst, 2008).

In the 1970s, Prime Minister Michael Manley pursued ties with Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, emphasizing non-alignment and S-SC. This positioned Jamaica as a leader in the push for a new world order but drew criticism for straining relations with Western allies (King, 2003). At the other end of the spectrum in Latin America, Jamaica and countries like Brazil and Colombia shared a mutual interest in expanding trade. These three countries were part of regional cooperation frameworks, like the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), participating in discussions on regional development, economic collaboration, and political issues⁶. While Brazil and Colombia's relationship during that period did not enjoy the same high-profile collaboration as Jamaica's partnership with Venezuela, a country that would become Jamaica's strongest ally in South America, it was significant within the context of Caribbean-Latin American relations and S-SC.

In the early 2000s, as U.S. influence and assistance in the Caribbean waned, China and Venezuela seized the opportunity to engage CARICOM on warmer/softer terms. Envisioning the Caribbean as a “sea of resistance” to U.S. influence, Venezuela leveraged an ambitious oil loan scheme to deepen its ties with Anglophone Caribbean nations, positioning

⁶ In terms of the OAS, Brazil and Colombia were founding members in 1948, while Jamaica joined in 1969, shortly after gaining independence.

itself as a dependable ally (D'Agostino, 2003; Ellner, 2007; MacDonald, 2024). By September 2005, Jamaica became the first Caribbean nation to join Venezuela's PetroCaribe program, securing oil at preferential rates—paying 50% upfront and financing the rest over 25 years at 2% interest. This strategy expanded Venezuela's influence while highlighting CARICOM's voting power in the OAS and its role in the UN's LAC Group. PetroCaribe sheltered Jamaica from rising oil costs while funding housing, and infrastructure, and promoting renewable energy⁷.

Caribbean states have routinely made the case that achieving their developmental targets requires international support. PetroCaribe funding helped Jamaica stay afloat when access to traditional financial sources was scarce. The former Chief Executive Officer of the PetroCaribe Development Fund, Wesley Hughes, in an interview with the Caribbean Investigative Journalism Network, on December 1, 2019, mentioned:

There was no directive from Venezuela saying you must invest in that [or] must do that. The only requirement was that after the two years of grace, you start paying back the loan at one percent or two percent per annum...

None of the multilaterals were lending to us. The financial markets were closed doors. The only real source of funding for Jamaica was Venezuela. And during the period, US\$2 billion flowed into Jamaica and what we got from the multilateral and bilateral and all the others amounted to less than US\$900 million. So, Venezuela became the most important source of bilateral assistance in Jamaica through the PetroCaribe arrangement and that literally saved Jamaica financially.

Likewise, a government official hailed PetroCaribe as a “model for public-sector management, proof that Jamaicans can administer and manage huge assets in the public sector and do so efficiently ... it was a huge contributor to Jamaica's survival and recovery, and for this, Jamaica will be forever in the debt of the people of Venezuela” (Jamaica Gleaner, 2019).

Venezuela's diplomacy offers a lens to understand its relationship with Jamaica. Venezuela's diplomacy is shaped by its geography, spanning 3 key dimensions: *Andean*, *Caribbean*, and *Global South*. In the Andean region, Venezuela engages with Colombia and Ecuador through the Andean Community (CAN) to promote economic and regional cooperation. Its northern coast links it to the Caribbean, where Venezuela is involved in

⁷ Located in Rosehill, Manchester, Jamaica, Wigton Windfarm Limited (Wigton), the largest in the English-speaking Caribbean with a 63MW capacity, was primarily financed by the PetroCaribe Development Fund (PCDF) in three stages, totalling nearly US\$90 million. Wigton repaid these loans in 2018, facilitating its divestment and enabling the Jamaican government to access additional financing through special dividend payments. In 2012, the PCDF Wigton invested several million dollars in funding and training as part of a renewable energy initiative at the Munro College in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica. PetroCaribe funded key infrastructure projects in Jamaica, including Highway 2000, a major toll highway in Jamaica that connects the capital, Kingston, with various parts of the island, including the southern coast and Montego Bay. The highway is part of Jamaica's broader infrastructure improvement efforts. The Jamaican Government had closed the PCDF by March 31, 2019.

CARICOM and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), focusing on energy cooperation and economic development.⁸ As part of the Global South, Venezuela aligns with developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, participating in multilateral forums like the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Group of 77 (G77) to advocate for economic reform, social justice, and sovereignty while challenging Western dominance (Braveboy-Wagner, 2018; Cole, 2016; Ewell, 1996).

The Caribbean Basin remains strategically vital due to geography and shared interests. Venezuela's foreign policy, shaped by sovereignty, regionalism, security, and anti-imperialism, reflects its geopolitical stance, economic priorities, and ideology. These themes have guided its regional and global influence, adapting to domestic and global shifts (Akinsanya *et al.*, 2018).

Portmore's growth offers lessons in urban planning and sustainable development. The focus on affordable housing, infrastructure development, and socio-economic integration can help other countries develop long-term strategies for urban expansion while addressing housing shortages. This study finds that the Jamaica-Venezuela partnership contributed to the development of Portmore, bringing lasting socio-economic benefits. It offers key lessons for SIDS on housing deficits, resource mobilization, and strategic diplomacy. It provides actionable insights into current urban planning challenges in SIDS. This study adds to the

limited discourse on S-SC within Caribbean Political Science, International Relations (IR), and Public Administration, emphasizing how initiatives like the Jamaica-Venezuela alliance can support developmental and regional goals.

BACKGROUND

The Rise of Portmore: A Model for Urban Development

Portmore, in southeast St. Catherine, Jamaica, emerged as a dormitory town for Kingston in the 1960s (Archer & Jackson, 2022). Covering 17,866 hectares, with 76% government-owned land (Jamaica Gleaner, 2021), its low-lying coastal terrain—mostly under 16m, except for the 240m Port Henderson Hills—shapes its growth and disaster risk (STATIN, 2014).

Portmore, 15 miles from Kingston, was sparsely populated until the 1960s. Growth began with Independence City in 1969 (2,000 residents) (Clarke, 1966), followed by Edgewater Villas, Bridgeport, and Passage Fort in the 1970s (See Table 1). The population grew from 5,000 in 1975 to over 77,000 by the 1980s, 160,000 by the mid-1990s, and 182,153 in 2011 (Archer & Jackson, 2022; Gordon *et al.*, 1997; Dodman, 2009, 2021). By 2022, it reached 200,000 (STATIN, 2024) (See Figure 1).

⁸ Founded in 1994, the ACS focuses on areas such as sustainable development, disaster response, trade, tourism, and the protection of the Caribbean Sea. Venezuela was one of the founding members and played a notable role in the organization due to its geographical location, economic influence, and interest in regional cooperation.

TABLE 1. MAJOR HOUSING SCHEMES IN PORTMORE (1969-2000)

Housing Scheme	Year Built	Characteristic
Independence City	1969	Portmore's first housing scheme, built by West Indies Home Contractors (WI-HCON) in a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) with the Jamaican government, included 1,000 2 & 3-bedroom houses. ^a
Edgewater Villas	1972	Portmore's second housing scheme.
Bridgeport (Phases 1,2 &3)	1972 1974 1976	Working-class demographic. Many initial home buyers benefitted from the National Housing Trust (NHT). Bridgeport High, Portmore's first high school, opened in 1974.
Passage Fort	1974	Large housing project. Proximity to major transportation routes, enhancing accessibility to Kingston. Attracted a mix of young families and individuals.
Waterford	1975	Established to accommodate the growing population. Resource Centre opened in 2014. First recreational park built in 2015 Prevalence of gangs.
Portsmouth	1978	Gradual residential development
Southborough	1979	Beneficiary of programs to build environmental consciousness.
Cumberland (Phases 1 & 2)	1980s	Developed in multiple phases.
Westchester	1980s	Experienced improvements in basic infrastructure (roads, schools, & utilities), to accommodate the growing population.
Westbay (Phases 1,2,3 3)	1980s-1990s	Part of the broader trend of Portmore's rapid growth.
Greater Portmore	1991	Completed in 1996. Largest community in Portmore.
Bridgeview	1990s	Strategically located close to town center.
Phoenix Park Village II	2000s	Diverse residents.
Sandown Palms	2000s	Gated community.

^a WIHCON developed most of Portmore's housing schemes between 1959 and the early 2000s, constructing over 35,000 homes. Portsmouth, Southborough, Westchester, Westbay, and Cumberland contributed 4,500 housing units combined.

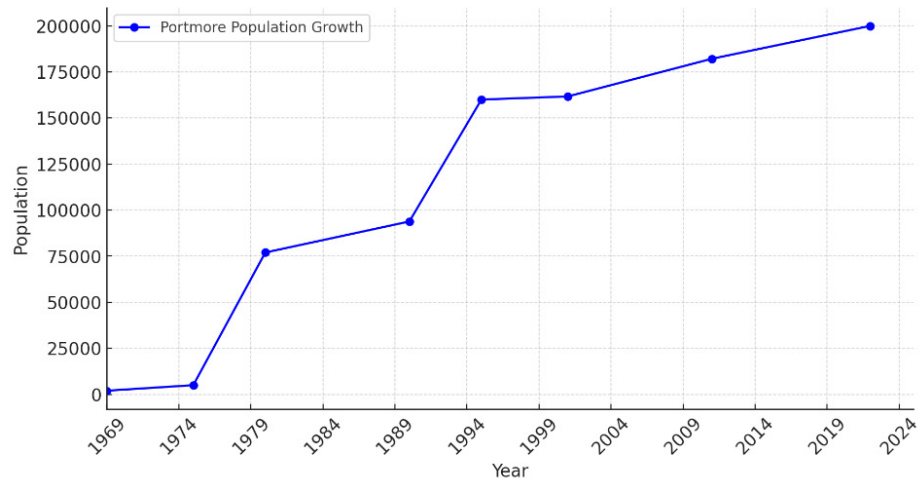
Source: Own work.

Portmore's Housing Schemes, launched in 1969, rapidly expanded through the 1980s and 1990s (Buddan, 2004)⁹. In 1991, the Greater Portmore Scheme aimed for 14,000

units, completing 10,000 with funds from the San Jose Accord (Buddan, 2004). Jamaica invested \$7 billion, with contributions from the Accord, NHT, and the Commonwealth

⁹ This was mainly due to the partnership between Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley and Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez that provided oil price concessions for development.

FIGURE 1. POPULATION GROWTH OF PORTMORE (1969-2022)



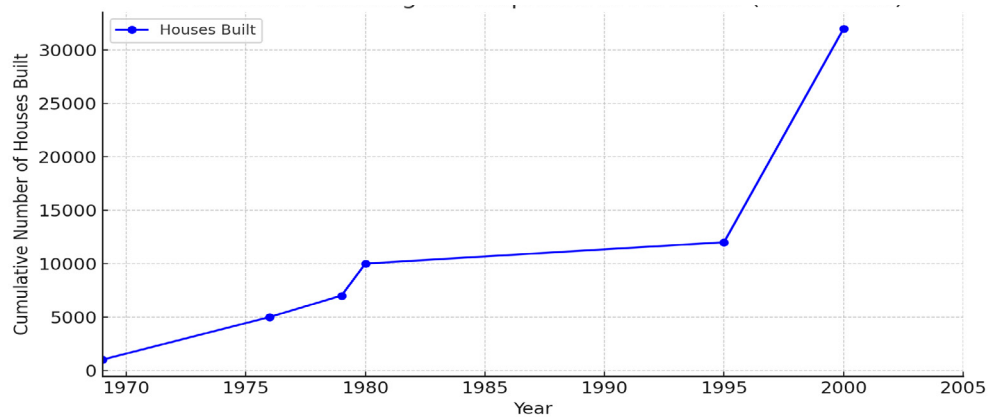
Sources: Archer & Jackson (2022); Gordon *et al.* (1997); Dodman (2009); STATIN (2014).

Development Corporation (Spaulding, 2013). Portmore's communities grew from 22 in 1991 to 40 by 2001 (Jamaica Gleaner, 2020; See Figure 2). The construction of a 3-mile causeway bridge in the early 2000s connected Port-

more to Kingston, wooing potential residents and igniting a debate on resilience.

Resilience refers to the ability to adapt and transform in response to challenges like housing shortages, economic constraints, and

FIGURE 2. THE EVOLUTION OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN PORTMORE (1969-2000)



Sources: STATIN (2014); WIHCON (2019).

climate hazards (Berkes & Ross, 2013). With PetroCaribe funding, economic resilience was arguably achieved through affordable housing, access to NHT mortgages, and job creation.¹⁰ Portmore's disaster recovery depends on emergency response time, community networks, and resource access. Social resilience is enhanced by addressing housing shortages and reducing informal settlements. Non-financial indicators, such as social networks and cultural practices, also contribute to residents' well-being (Bailey, 2004). Reinforced roofs and flood mitigation measures strengthened disaster resilience (Clarke & Howard, 2006).

Portmore's infrastructure—supported by Venezuelan investment—contributed to its economic, social, and disaster resilience. Roads, schools, health facilities, and other public services were integrated into its development, enabling Portmore to function as a self-sustaining community. This enhanced residents' quality of life and reduced dependency on Kingston, creating a model for decentralized urban residences. The integrated public services fostered a sense of community identity and self-sufficiency (Dodman, 2009)¹¹.

In April 1994, Prime Minister P.J. Patterson set up a Municipality Task Force to examine the political implications of making Portmore a municipality and to advise the Ministry of Local Government on policy. Achieving municipal status in 2003, Portmore became

the Caribbean's largest residential area, with the highest concentration of young people in Jamaica and the region (Jamaica Observer, 2022). Portmore serves as a model for urban planning, demonstrating how well-planned developments can manage growth, support economic stability, and enhance residents' quality of life in developing regions.

Portmore has the highest concentration of university graduates in Jamaica (Smith, 2022) making it attractive to Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) companies. BPOs contribute US\$780 million to Jamaica's economy (Smith, 2021). Some JA\$1 billion was recently spent on Portmore's Public wi-fi access (Williams, 2024) and JA\$935 million on sewage management (Mathison, 2022). Prime Minister Andrew Holness plans to position Portmore as Jamaica's "Silicon Valley" and a Caribbean tech hub (Jamaica Gleaner, 2024). Proposals to designate Portmore as the 15th parish underscore its economic potential.

Portmore's growth offers key lessons in designing housing initiatives that address both immediate and long-term needs. It provides a replicable model for SIDS, showing how strategic partnerships can tackle housing shortages and enhance resilience in resource-limited environments (UNCTAD, 2022). Its integrated approach to housing and essential services embodies how planned communities can improve citizens' welfare, and meet housing needs and

¹⁰ Schools, clinics, and commercial centres in Portmore, funded through PPPs, enhanced self-sufficiency. Despite poor conditions in some areas, many residents enjoy a relatively high standard of living, explained by "non-financial indicators of a structural gap" (Bailey, 2004).

¹¹ Portmore is also home to Jamaica's only horse racing track.

social goals, offering a framework for future urban development.

Portmore has emerged as a highly sought-after place to live, appealing to a diverse demographic due to its proximity to Kingston and attractive residential options. However, this rapid growth has placed a significant strain on its infrastructure. As a coastal city, it faces climate change risks like rising sea levels and extreme weather. These realities necessitate policies focused on sustainable urban planning, infrastructure development, and climate resilience. Key measures should include effective land use management, expanded affordable housing, and enhanced disaster preparedness.

The section below outlines the methodology employed in this study.

METHODS

This study utilized qualitative content analysis of newspaper articles and diplomatic records (N = 178) to examine Jamaica's bilateral relations with Venezuela and the development of housing in Portmore, guided by the literature on S-SC, housing, and urban de-

velopment¹². No qualitative analysis software was used. The manual approach allowed the researcher and independent coders to maintain flexibility in interpreting the data, which might not always be possible with automated software. The analysis focused on how these topics were framed in Jamaica's media and diplomatic communications. It also considered the meanings conveyed through words and phrases used in the articles to represent and discuss the Jamaica-Venezuela relationship.

The sampled articles were published between January 1, 1970, and December 31, 2020¹³. The 1970s marked the beginning of an era of heightened geopolitical engagement in the Caribbean, a period when both countries as part of the wider LAC landscape began to strengthen their foreign relations. The study aims to capture the dynamics of the evolving partnership, from early diplomatic exchanges to more recent engagements tied to regional development projects and S-SC. The 1970s-2020s period enables an exploration of how the Jamaica-Venezuela relationship has been portrayed in the media, highlighting changing narratives, and shifts in political ideologies and public perceptions.

¹² This manual approach was deemed appropriate for the specific focus of the study, which required a careful, context-sensitive analysis of diplomatic language and media portrayals.

¹³ The period selected for this study was chosen to capture significant historical and diplomatic developments between Jamaica and Venezuela. The 1970s - mid-2000s period had the most significant developments in Jamaica-Venezuela relations and the establishment of agreements impacting housing and urban infrastructure. It captures the fizzling out of the Petro-Caribe agreement and when Jamaica closed its embassy in Caracas. This timeframe also coincides with the formation of key initiatives, such as the PetroCaribe agreement, signed in 2005, and the San José Accord, which played pivotal roles in shaping the bilateral relationship between the two nations.

Newspapers

Newspapers provide information on a wide array of topics. They are also sites of shared meaning and social thinking about issues that can be deconstructed through content analysis (Deacon, 2007). Social elaborations found in the contents of communication like newspapers, can influence group or individual behavior (Carroll & McCombs, 2003). A large corpus of articles spanning nearly 52 years was analyzed from the Jamaica Gleaner. This analysis assumes that all references in these newspapers about the Jamaica-Venezuela relationship during this timeframe are part of the shared understanding in the debates about this issue, which contributes to shaping the broader public discourse on development and the role of government.

A sample of 157 newspaper articles (news stories, opinion columns, letters to the editor, and editorials) was selected from the online edition of the Jamaica Gleaner. This is Jamaica's leading and oldest daily newspaper, founded in 1834. The Jamaica Gleaner was selected given its role as a primary source of information and commentary on social, economic, and political issues, and its regular coverage of topics like housing in Portmore and Jamaica-Venezuela relations. It was also selected due to its status as a staple in many Jamaican households, enjoying the largest circulation in the country. This wide reach makes it a significant source of public discourse, reflecting the diverse perspectives of the Jamaican population. Additionally, the Gleaner provides comprehensive and consistent coverage of critical issues such as housing and urban development render-

ing it an invaluable resource for examining the Jamaica-Venezuela partnership in these areas. Its extensive reporting on governmental policies, infrastructure projects, and social issues, particularly concerning urban growth and housing, makes it especially suited for exploring Venezuela's involvement in Jamaica's development.

Procedures: Newspapers

Using the Jamaica Gleaner's online archives, keyword searches of the terms "Venezuela-Jamaica relations" and "Portmore housing" were conducted. These searches generated 188 articles, of which 157 met the inclusion criteria: they had to mention one or more of the specified keywords and be published between January 1, 1970 and December 31, 2020. Selected articles were repeatedly read to identify and assign codes to the emerging themes. The sample of newspaper articles (n=157) was distributed as follows: 52% news stories, 18% opinion columns, 14% letters to the editor, and 16% editorials.

The coding process in this study identifies themes, language, and perspectives on the Jamaica-Venezuela partnership through a manual analysis of articles. Key categories include *Diplomatic and Economic Cooperation*—covering South-South initiatives like PetroCaribe and the San José Accord—and *Venezuela's Foreign Policy Objectives*, which highlight motivations like regional security and social justice. To develop a coding frame, newspaper articles (n=157) were divided into batches of 30 to facilitate a comprehensive analysis/ interpretation. This approach also

helped identify themes, and recurrent narratives, allowing for a richer understanding of how Venezuela's involvement in Jamaica's development was portrayed in the media. The coding frame, informed by established literature on urban development, housing deficits, and S-SC, helped ground the analysis in theoretical frameworks and reduce personal interpretation/subjectivities. The researcher and two independent coders conducted a thematic analysis of the articles. Themes like *public discourse on housing initiatives*, were identified, coded, and evaluated, achieving intercoder reliability scores of .84, .86, and .87, indicating high agreement among the coders¹⁴.

Diplomatic Records

Diplomatic correspondence contains the agreements, policy discussions, and actions that underpin the Jamaica-Venezuela partner-

ship. Diplomatic records often include confidential discussions, internal memos, and correspondence that capture the nuances of foreign policy and the behind-the-scenes dynamics, enriching the analysis and ensuring a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the Jamaica-Venezuela partnership, for instance. Diplomatic records/correspondence offer a valuable source of information about the intentions, decisions, and exchanges that shape a country's engagement with another. This can shed light on the official position of countries on issues like migration, housing, trade, and development (Connelly *et al.*, 2021).

A total of 21 diplomatic records, consisting of correspondence, government memoranda, meeting minutes, and policy documents, were obtained from Jamaica's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (MFAFT)¹⁵, the Jamaica Archives and Records Department (JARD), and the National Library of

¹⁴ To ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis, several measures were implemented. First, keyword searches for "Venezuela-Jamaica relations" and "Portmore housing" were conducted in the Jamaica Gleaner's online archives, using clear inclusion criteria to ensure consistency and relevance. Articles were selected based on their mention of at least one of the keywords and publication within the timeframe: from January 1, 1970, to December 31, 2020. This structured approach to data collection enhanced the study's validity by ensuring a focused and replicable sample. The manual coding process involved repeated readings of the selected articles (n=157), enabling the identification and consistent application of themes related to diplomatic and economic cooperation, as well as Venezuela's foreign policy objectives. To further ensure reliability, the coding process was conducted by the researcher and two independent coders, with a coding frame informed by literature on urban development, housing deficits, and South-South cooperation. The analysis was done in batches of 30 articles to facilitate comprehensive interpretation and reduce cognitive overload. Additionally, the study incorporated triangulation, cross-referencing newspaper content with diplomatic communications and academic literature, which helped reduce bias and enhance credibility. This multi-faceted approach to coding and analysis ensured that the study's findings were reliable and valid, providing an accurate and consistent portrayal of the Jamaica-Venezuela partnership.

¹⁵ A request was made to the Public Relations and Communications Department, MFAFT, to access diplomatic records on the Jamaica-Venezuela relationship. In Jamaica, access to diplomatic communication is governed by established procedures and legal considerations, including provisions that may fall under the Official Secrets Act, 1920. To facilitate the request for access to information, I applied under the Access to Information Act (2002).

Jamaica (NLJ)¹⁶. The records selected for use in this present study span the 1970s – 2000s period. Some records were digitized, while others were not, requiring on-site access. To access all materials, the researcher defined the scope of interest around key areas such as the San José Accord, PetroCaribe, and Portmore’s housing development, and infrastructure projects. Communication with staff from the MFAFT, JARD, NLJ confirmed the availability of these records and the procedures to access them. The researcher systematically reviewed relevant files within the MFAFT, JARD, and the Special Collections Division at the NLJ, which required specific permissions due to the sensitive nature of the documents. Key materials included correspondence and agreements highlighting Jamaica’s geopolitical partnership with Venezuela. Where copying restrictions applied, the researcher took detailed notes, carefully summarising and citing each document’s content, date, and relevance to the study.

Procedures: Diplomatic Records

The manual coding approach facilitated a thematic analysis that identified core priorities and diplomatic objectives while capturing the strategic language shaping the evolution and portrayal of the Jamaica-Venezuela partnership. The coding of 21 diplomatic communications revealed themes such as *mutual economic benefits* and *regional solidarity* within the category of *Diplomatic Cooperation and Agreements*, highlighting ties strengthened by initiatives like PetroCaribe and the San José Accord. Communications were systematically reviewed for references to these formal agreements, and instances discussing economic benefits or regional solidarity were coded accordingly¹⁷. Additionally, content related to economic assistance, infrastructure, and resilience-building was identified and categorized, focusing on specific mentions of aid in construction, urban planning, and financial resilience for Jamaica. Themes such as *com-*

¹⁶ The Jamaica Archives and Records Department had its beginnings in the Island Secretary’s Office (ISO) established in 1659 as the administrative and record-keeping arm of the Colonial Government. The Jamaica Archives remained a part of the Island Records Office until 1982 when it became a department, following the passage of the Archives Act, 1982. The Department is the main repository in Jamaica for the preservation of government records in paper, audiovisual, and electronic formats.

¹⁷ The analysis categories were defined through a structured thematic coding approach, ensuring that key diplomatic priorities and strategic objectives were systematically identified and categorized. The coding process involved both deductive and inductive approaches, meaning that some categories were pre-established based on existing literature and theoretical frameworks, while others emerged from the data itself. Since diplomatic communications are carefully crafted, this category focused on how language was used to shape the perception of the Jamaica-Venezuela partnership. It included analyzing rhetoric around “solidarity,” “shared prosperity,” “regional integration,” and “S-SC” to understand the underlying diplomatic narratives. This helped identify patterns in how the partnership evolved and was publicly represented. In terms of economic assistance and infrastructure development, this category was defined to capture references to financial aid, development projects, and investment in infrastructure. Instances where communications mentioned Venezuela’s role in Jamaica’s housing initiatives, urban planning support, or economic relief mechanisms were included.

munity development and *resilience-building* were applied to passages discussing direct aid for Jamaican development projects, including housing initiatives. This structured coding process provided valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of the Jamaica-Venezuela partnership.

Limitations

This study provides direct evidence of the Venezuela- Jamaica partnership's dynamics, decisions, and public narratives. Access to certain diplomatic records was restricted, hindering a complete understanding of the full scope of discussions between Jamaica and Venezuela. Although newspaper analysis offers several key benefits for research, particularly in understanding public sentiment, media framing, and the broader socio-political context, these sources may exhibit editorial biases, amplifying some voices while marginalizing others. A more in-depth analysis could be achieved by incorporating interviews with key actors, like government officials, community leaders, and Portmore residents. Interviews with representatives from Jamaica's Ministry of Housing, the Venezuelan Embassy, and local community leaders, could provide additional perspectives. Triangulating data from diplomatic records, newspapers, and interviews could strengthen the validity of the findings. Expanding the analysis to include public policy documents—such as urban development plans and project evaluation reports—plus survey and census data on housing and living conditions in Portmore, could further enrich the study. This present study's line of inquiry

lends itself to further research and refinements, offering opportunities to deepen our understanding of South-South partnerships and their local impacts. By employing alternative methodologies/ sources/perspectives, future research can build on its findings to provide a deeper analysis of Jamaica-Venezuela relations.

The theoretical framework below provides a structured lens through which the research problem is examined, offering a foundation for analyzing and interpreting the data generated from newspaper articles and diplomatic records/ communication used in this study

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Against the backdrop of low investment in housing, LAC is currently 75.5% urbanized and is projected to reach an urbanization rate of 85% by 2030 (Bredenoord & Van Lindert, 2010; Irazábal, 2024; Ianchovichina, 2024). This study is anchored on S-SC which emphasizes solidarity, mutual benefit, and collective self-reliance among developing countries. It is based on a development assistance model of S-SC, specifically a resource-for-development approach in which energy wealth supports infrastructure and social programs. Beyond economic assistance, it reinforced diplomatic ties and positioned Venezuela as a key development actor in the Caribbean. As global energy geopolitics shifts and Jamaica faces increasing urbanization pressures, this model offers critical insights into the strengths and limitations of S-SC in addressing housing challenges in SIDS.

The origins of S-SC can be traced to the 1955 Bandung Conference, where newly independent states convened to address mutual development challenges (Timossi, 2015). S-SC seeks to enhance collaboration between nations in the Global South to address shared challenges through coordinated action (United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, 2019). South-South alliances can provide alternatives to traditional dependency paradigms, offering developing nations pathways for collective advancement (Berrios, 2001). By leveraging this cooperative model, Jamaica and Venezuela have contributed meaningfully to each other's development. This framework offers a valuable lens for understanding the cooperation between Jamaica and Venezuela—two

countries with distinct political and economic systems, yet united by their commitment to development goals within the Global South¹⁸.

In Political Science, IR, and Public Administration, a South-South approach to addressing the housing deficit underlies the principles of solidarity and shared development among developing countries. This approach prioritizes collaborative solutions tailored to the unique social, economic, and cultural contexts of the Global South, emphasizing mutual support, resource-sharing, and sustainable development strategies that can reduce dependency on Western aid models (Steel *et al.*, 2017)¹⁹. Drawing on the developmental state theory, which examines how states actively intervene in the economy to promote

¹⁸ Although this is not the main theoretical framework, there are useful insights that can be drawn from the Dependency theory. It explores how traditional North-South aid can reinforce imbalances. It also highlights the structural imbalances between the core and the periphery, where poorer nations often depend on wealthier ones for trade, technology, and capital (Velasco, 2002). While the Jamaica-Venezuela partnership through PetroCaribe sought to provide an alternative to traditional North-South models of development by fostering S-SC, it reflects some of the key concerns of Dependency theory: reliance on external resources, and vulnerability to shifts in the global economic system. The eventual financial strain on Venezuela, compounded by its domestic issues, ultimately reduced its ability to continue supporting Caribbean countries. This demonstrates the limitations of relying on external, sometimes volatile, sources of support for development. However, in the S-SC framework, the Jamaica-Venezuela (1970s-2000s) partnership exemplified a reciprocal relationship, fostering joint progress without reinforcing dependency or asymmetry. Venezuela's role in this partnership included providing financial resources and technical expertise, which bolstered Jamaica's efforts to build a modern residential and commercial hub in Portmore.

¹⁹ The Venezuela-Jamaica housing partnership under PetroCaribe embodies key dimensions of sustainable development, particularly economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Economically, the concessional oil financing model enabled Jamaica to redirect savings toward affordable housing, reducing reliance on international lenders and strengthening regional economic cooperation (Girvan, 2010). Socially, the initiative expanded housing access for low- and middle-income communities, contributing to poverty reduction and urban stability, while also intensifying grassroots activism in local governance, as seen in Portmore's campaign for municipal status (Schoburgh, 2007). However, environmental sustainability challenges have intensified, as rapid urbanization in low-lying areas like Portmore has increased vulnerability to flooding and sea-level rise, necessitating greater investment in climate resilience and disaster mitigation. As shifting geopolitics and energy market volatility threaten the viability of such agreements, future SSC models must integrate climate adaptation, diversified financing, and community-driven urban planning to ensure long-term sustainability.

growth, industrialization, and social welfare, is central to this analysis. Singh and Ovadia (2018) highlight the state's role in fostering economic development through strategic interventions. Jamaica's approach to the development of Portmore, now a bustling urban centre, epitomises a developmental state model, as Jamaica actively sought partnerships to resolve its housing challenges. By pursuing international collaboration, Jamaica adopted a developmental state approach to address its housing deficit symbolizing how foreign alliances can complement state-driven development efforts and enhance social welfare in the context of urbanization.

S-SC has benefits and limitations. Jamaica's reliance on Venezuela for concessional oil financing highlighted the risks of depending on a single partner. Venezuela's political instability and economic decline disrupted the partnership, exposing the challenges of financial and institutional instability. Asymmetries in power and resources between partners may lead to unequal benefits, where the smaller/less resource-rich country becomes overly dependent on the more powerful partner, as seen with Jamaica's reliance on Venezuela for energy and housing financing (Santos & Cerqueira, 2015). Limited integration with global markets can restrict the scalability of S-SC initiatives.

The literature review below lays the groundwork for the topic, offering a critical analysis of existing research from the fields of Political Science, IR and Public Administration, specifically addressing S-SC, housing, and urban development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

By 2030, the world must build 96,000 affordable homes daily to meet the housing needs of three (3) billion people (UN-Habitat, 2025). Rapid urbanization across Africa, Asia, and Latin America intensifies the demand for secure housing (Bredenoord & Van Lindert, 2010). Some governments struggle to provide adequate housing for people living in poverty in urban areas, relying on public-private partnerships, international aid, S-SC, and innovative financing models.

Jamaica faces chronic housing shortages shaped by colonial legacies, limited resources, and population growth (Scobie, 2019; Panwar *et al.*, 2024). These disparities hinder the governments' ability to meet developmental and democratic goals, causing a disconnect between aspirations, urban planning, and available resources. Pioneering urban theorists of the early 20th century, like Howard (1902) and Le Corbusier (1929), introduced key concepts in city planning. Their work focused on balancing industrial expansion with creating livable and sustainable urban spaces. These ideas remain foundational in the design and development of modern cities, including Portmore. Portmore experiences urban sprawl, overcrowding, and the strain on infrastructure. The city's development must grapple with the tensions between rapid population growth, limited resources, and the need for sustainable development. Using Howard's vision of the garden city, Portmore can integrate green spaces, residential areas, and industrial zones to enhance economic growth and quality of

life²⁰. Le Corbusier's (1929) emphasis on the importance of well-planned, functional cities with efficient transportation networks provides valuable insight into Portmore's future. By adopting these principles, Portmore can address its immediate housing, and infrastructure needs and create a sustainable city.

Community-driven governance involves recognizing and addressing power imbalances, fostering participatory decision-making, and ensuring that governance structures are inclusive and responsive to the needs and desires of local populations. Putnam (2000) examines how strong community networks and relationships contribute to effective governance and democratic participation. Gaventa's (2006) research on participatory governance and power dynamics highlights how marginalized communities can influence decision-making processes through civic engagement, creating more inclusive and responsive governance structures. Their work contributes to a deeper understanding of how local-level participation can create more equitable and sustainable governance outcomes.

Achieving municipal status for Portmore was a crucial step in addressing power imbalances, as it allowed citizens to have a more direct voice in the political process and decision-making. By establishing local governance structures, including an elected mayor, Portmore's citizens gained the ability to influence policies that directly affect their daily lives, like infrastructure, housing, and public services. Municipal status empowered

the community to address its unique needs more effectively, fostering more responsive and accountable governance. This shift provided greater autonomy and ensured that Portmore's growth and challenges were tackled with local priorities at the forefront, making governance more inclusive and equitable.

The literature on housing in developing countries highlights the complex interplay between rapid urbanization, economic challenges, and the provision of affordable housing. With urban areas generating over 80% of global GDP, financial systems must support their investment needs (UN Habitat, 2025). While PetroCaribe funding supported Portmore's growth, continued financing is needed for infrastructure, flood mitigation, transportation, and public services to accommodate its expanding population. Bredenoord and Van Lindert (2010) observe that government responses to the housing crisis often fall short due to limited financial resources and weak institutional capacity. Additionally, Pugh (2001) suggests that informal housing, while seen as a suboptimal solution, plays a role in accommodating the people facing poverty in urban settings, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. Similarly, Moser (2009) stresses the need for policies that address not only the physical provision of shelter but also the social dimensions, such as community participation and tenure security. Kinyanjui (2012) and Ogu (2002) advocate for a more inclusive approach to housing that integrates local knowledge and priorities into urban plan-

²⁰ This is part of the idea behind the Government of Jamaica's recent plan to construct the Portmore Resilience Park.

ning, aligning development with the needs of marginalized communities. These studies collectively reinforce the importance of adopting integrated and sustainable housing policies to address the growing urban housing challenges in developing countries.

Venezuela, under President Rómulo Betancourt, promoted the Betancourt Doctrine to strengthen ties with the Caribbean, including Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Barbados (Rabe, 1996)²¹. Jamaica's diplomatic support for Venezuela, based on shared democratic values, laid the foundation for lasting economic collaboration (Atkins, 2018; Rabe, 1996). Venezuela's partnerships with Caribbean, African, and Asian nations were based on shared principles of social justice and anti-imperialism, with leaders like Hugo Chávez expanding influence through political and financial support to leftist governments²². These efforts, including involvement in UN initiatives in the 1970s, strengthened Venezuela's regional and global presence, with its foreign policy evolving in response to domestic changes and global geopolitical shifts (Braveboy-Wagner, 2018; Sanders, 2007).

In 1977, Venezuela deepened its Jamaican alliance, offering economic support and political alignment. Venezuela was one of the richest countries in Latin America with low levels of inequality and stood firmly among two stable democracies (Colombia and Costa Rica) (Spanakos, 2014). Venezuela's late-20th-

century Caribbean policy focused on regional integration, security, and anti-imperialism, promoting social justice and resistance to external dominance. Through South-South alliances, Venezuela strengthened its leadership in LAC relations, advancing shared goals of growth and equity (Ortiz, 2015).

The 1980 San José Accord between Mexico and Venezuela provided discounted oil and financing to Caribbean and Central American nations, marking the first formalized partnership between Venezuela and the Caribbean. In the 1990s, it supported the construction of over 10,000 homes in Portmore under Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley and Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez (Davis, 2011). The CARICOM-Venezuela Free Trade Agreement, effective January 1, 2000, granted CARICOM products duty-free access to Venezuela, reinforcing Venezuela's commitment to regional development and collaboration. While Venezuela's partnerships with the Caribbean, especially through agreements like the San José Accord and the CARICOM Free Trade Agreement, offered significant benefits, the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of these arrangements are subject to critical questions. The dependence on oil, political motivations, and the limitations in other areas of development highlight the complexities and potential shortcomings of these collaborations.

The 2000s commodities boom, driven by rising demand for oil, metals, and agricultural

²¹ Venezuela Signed fishery and maritime delimitation accords with Trinidad in the 1960s. Also, with a UN envoy (a Commonwealth Caribbean national, Alister McIntyre), Venezuela and Guyana signed the Port-of-Spain Protocol: an agreement to suspend for 12 years their territorial dispute.

²² See the cases of Bolivia and Nicaragua, for example.

goods, enabled resource-rich Latin American nations like Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, and Venezuela to expand social programs, reduce poverty, and strengthen ties with Global South countries (Grugel & Ruggirozzi, 2012; Muhr, 2016). Leveraging this economic growth, left-leaning governments focused on development strategies centered on economic independence, social equity, and regional solidarity, seeking to reduce dependence on Western markets (Ayllón & Ojeda, 2013; Michelutti, 2012). However, this growth was often tied to volatile commodity prices, making these economies vulnerable to fluctuations. While social programs have positive short-term effects, their reliance on unstable revenue streams raise concerns about their long-term sustainability, and internal inequalities remain largely unaddressed.

Founded in 1965, Jamaica's Urban Development Corporation (UDC) managed 27,000 acres, shaping Portmore's growth. As the main landowner, it balanced residential, commercial, and recreational spaces. Established in 1976, the National Housing Trust (NHT) filled funding gaps, providing affordable housing for low- and middle-income families²³. The Jamaica-Venezuela partnership was facilitated through several public policy mechanisms, agreements, and institutional frameworks. A cornerstone of this cooperation was the Petro-

caribe Energy Cooperation Agreement, signed in 2005. Jamaica became the first Caribbean nation to secure a PetroCaribe agreement with Venezuela, providing regional access to discounted oil. This agreement allowed countries to buy up to 185,000 barrels daily, with flexible repayment options, including goods and services (Girvan, 2010).

While primarily focused on energy, the agreement had broader implications for social and infrastructure projects, including housing. The PetroCaribe Development Fund (PDF), established by the Jamaican Parliament in 2006, managed the financial resources accrued from the agreement, managing around US\$5 billion by 2018, supporting infrastructure, social programmes, and debt refinancing. In 2008, Venezuela acquired a 49% stake in Jamaica's Petrojam Refinery. As Chávez remarked, PetroCaribe was not merely charity but "the call of conscience," reflecting Venezuela's commitment to regional solidarity (British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Caribbean, 2005).

The PDF financed social and infrastructural projects, with a portion of the proceeds used for housing development. The NHT, Jamaica's main public housing agency, accessed PetroCaribe funds to expand its housing programs, offering low-interest mortgages and financing affordable housing projects,

²³ The NHT also introduced policies for persons with disabilities to access housing (Morris, 2020). Various housing initiatives were created, including the housing component of the 1977/78 emergency production plan, the 1987 Shelter sector strategy, the housing component of the 1990-1995 development plan, and the Programme for Resettlement and Integrated Development Enterprise, Operation Pride. The latter was part of a broader strategy to provide affordable housing solutions and regularize informal settlements, helping residents gain formal ownership of land they occupied.

particularly in urban areas like Kingston, Spanish Town, and Portmore. The NHT also used the funds for land acquisition and PPPs. The Urban Development Corporation (UDC) directed resources into urban renewal projects, like the Downtown Kingston and Port Royal Redevelopment integrating recommendations into the National Environment and Planning Agency's Development Order for controlled growth. the PetroCaribe Development Fund Act (2006) and the NHT Act (1979, with amendments) facilitated the effective allocation of resources for housing initiatives.

PetroCaribe strengthened Jamaica-Venezuela relations by providing financing for community and social projects, marking a shift from traditional aid to a strategic partnership. However, the partnership faced challenges post-2018, as Jamaica, responding to Venezuela's political crisis, reclaimed its shares in Petrojam, closed its Caracas embassy, and refused to recognize Nicolás Maduro's presidency in 2019. These shifts underscore the complexities of international alliances, where geopolitical tensions and national interests can reshape long-standing collaborations. For instance, the U.S. has consistently maintained influence in Latin America, as demonstrated by its opposition to Chávez, notably during the 2002 coup attempt.

S-SC on housing between Latin America and Africa has grown as both regions face similar urbanization challenges (Amanor, 2013). A notable example is the Brazil-Mozambique partnership, where Brazil's Minha Casa, Minha Vida program, launched in 2009, has influenced Mozambique's housing initiatives, particularly in cities like Maputo (Nganje, 2016).

Cuba has also contributed to S-SC, especially through the South African Cuban Technical Support Programme (SACTSP), established in 2004, enabling Cuban advisors to assist in sustainable housing development, focusing on knowledge sharing for engineers and architects (Mukhadakhomu, 2016). While the Brazilian and Cuban cases emphasize specific technical knowledge sharing and large-scale housing programs, the Venezuela-Jamaica partnership is unique in its integration of social and political dimensions, such as energy cooperation (via PetroCaribe) and the geopolitical solidarity between the two nations. Additionally, the level of community engagement and the role of shared socioeconomic goals in the Portmore development set it apart as a model of sustainable urban growth rooted in regional cooperation. The shared goal of enhancing social mobility and economic resilience is a common thread across all these partnerships but is pronounced in the Portmore example, where infrastructure and community development were tightly interwoven.

Criticism of traditional Northern aid models for misalignment with local realities (Mosse, 2005) has fueled interest in S-SC. Rooted in shared colonial histories, S-SC fosters resource, technology, and knowledge exchange, reshaping North-South dynamics (Mawdsley, 2012; Tickner *et al.*, 2017). The Jamaica-Venezuela alliance exemplifies S-SC's potential, driven by geopolitical alignment and mutual economic interests. While promoting collaborative, people-centered growth (Ofodile, 2011), S-SC faces sustainability and transparency challenges. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and India's Lines of Credit

(LOCs) underscore debt risks, as seen in Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port, ceded to China due to unsustainable debt (Zhou, 2020).

Foundational ideas about capabilities, freedom, and participatory development are frequently referenced in studies on human development and social inclusion (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011; Chambers, 1997). Sen's (1999) approach to development emphasizes expanding freedoms and ensuring access to essential services like education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. The Jamaican Senate's passage of the Counties and Parishes (Amendment) Act on February 28, 2025, to grant Portmore parish status marks a significant political shift. However, many residents felt excluded from the decision-making process, underscoring a disconnect between governance and community needs. Without substantial investment in social infrastructure, parish status alone may not improve conditions for low-income communities. Similar to Sen (1999), true development should prioritize inclusive growth, ensuring all residents benefit from Portmore's expansion rather than focusing solely on administrative changes. Sen's (1999) framework of *development as freedom* foregrounds the expansion of individual capabilities and the removal of structural barriers, which aligns with this study's emphasis on sustainable urban planning. Nussbaum's (2011) *Capabilities Approach* builds on this perspective, underscoring that development should be assessed by the capabilities individuals have to function fully in society. This includes ensuring their access to opportunities for participation in community life, which is particularly relevant to the study's focus

on urban spaces like Portmore, where infrastructure, governance, and social integration are key to enhancing people's capabilities. Chambers' (1997) advocacy for participatory development highlights the necessity of local engagement in shaping development pathways. Together, these contributions offer a lens through which S-SC, exemplified by the Jamaica-Venezuela partnership, can be understood as a mechanism for advancing both infrastructural development and social equity within rapidly urbanizing contexts.

The Jamaica-Venezuela partnership demonstrated the potential of regional alliances to address housing shortages and promote inclusive urban development. Research indicates that such collaborations foster resilient, cohesive, and economically diverse communities (Foster, 2022), crucial for tackling climate challenges and maintaining stability in SIDS (Robinson, 2017). This model highlights the impact of foreign policy on domestic urban planning, showing how international partnerships can align with national development goals, directing resources toward sustainable housing, infrastructure, and social programs.

While the housing and infrastructure aspects of the Jamaica-Venezuela relationship are under-researched, Venezuela's investments in Jamaica were strategic, aimed at strengthening regional alliances and countering the influence of developed nations (Ramírez, 2016). Through this collaboration, Jamaica secured resources to advance housing and urban development, integrating national policies with community resilience (Davies, 2018).

The next section reports the data gathered from primary sources to serve as evidence to

support claims /analyses, providing a foundation for conclusions.

RESULTS

The development of Portmore exemplifies the impact of Jamaica-Venezuela bilateral cooperation. Venezuela's support highlighted the power of solidarity over dependency, demonstrating how regional alliances can tackle shared challenges through collective resources and tailored solutions, independent of Western models.

This section reports the data collected from diplomatic records (n=21) and newspaper articles from the Jamaica Gleaner (n=157). The findings are categorized into 3 key themes:

Theme 1: Public Discourse on Housing Initiatives

Public discourse on Jamaica's housing initiatives reflects a complex interplay of socio-economic and political factors, focusing on accessibility, urban planning, and strategic partnerships.

Agencies like the NHT and the National Land Agency (NLA), supported by international partnerships, have advanced urban planning and infrastructure development, making affordable housing more accessible in Portmore with significant population pressure and economic activity. There were concerns about housing affordability, particularly for low-income residents grappling with high land costs and bureaucratic hurdles. In the 1970s, rapid urban population growth in Jamaica led the

government to implement housing initiatives to address these challenges. However, limited resources hindered their overall effectiveness. A letter to the editor reflects the foundational role of 1970s housing policies:

... we have come a far way from wattle-and-daub, thatch laths and bamboo homes... In the 1970s Michael Manley sought to motivate and mobilise Jamaicans to become home-owners. It was then that the National Housing Trust (NHT) was established. This gave birth to developments across the nation, Portmore was signature to this venture so was Catherine Hall, Montego Bay. People called the houses then "matches box", but it was a start and some motivation. The rest is history. These two referenced projects are now sought-after places in their respective locations. (Jamaica Gleaner, 2022)

By the 1980s, funding shortages led to greater reliance on external financing, with Venezuela playing a key role. Through agreements like the San José Accord, Venezuelan resources supported projects, including the Greater Portmore Scheme, which *delivered 10,000 units* and was deemed *a success*.

Venezuela contributed financial aid, technical expertise, and materials to build thousands of homes in Portmore. Some reports hailed Manley as a "visionary" noting that *"His administrations, especially those of the 1970s, initiated diplomatic and economic relations with Venezuela when it was not popular to do so"* (Jamaica Gleaner, 2009). Carlos Andrés Pérez, Hugo Chávez, and Nicolás Maduro were recognized for supporting Jamaica: "As Chávez did in recent years, Carlos Andrés Pérez extended a helping hand to Jamaica that transformed the Greater Portmore Scheme into

reality... Since then, both sides of the political divide..., have benefited from the generosity of Venezuela” (Jamaica Gleaner, 2013).

Jamaica’s partnerships with Venezuela underscored the significance of international collaboration in addressing Jamaica’s housing challenges, shaping public discourse on the need for continued alliances to achieve social housing goals.

Theme 2: Community Development and Social Impact

Some 30% of newspaper reports indicated that the construction of over 30,000 homes in Portmore improved the living conditions and economic stability of Jamaican citizens.

Upgraded transportation, infrastructure, and a modern sewage system were described as *transformational*. A local politician noted that the developments brought “*opportunities for employment, opportunities to own homes, opportunities for businesses and the expansion of existing businesses in and around that area; it is a game changer*” (Jamaica Gleaner, 20.12.2018). A civil servant explained:

Housing prices are lower in St. Catherine, so young professionals and other persons try to buy into St. Catherine to get a start... The inhabitants of the municipality [Portmore] are strategically placed to access employment opportunities in Kingston, Spanish Town, and Old Harbour. Portmore... is tending towards a regional centre more than a regional subcentre. (Jamaica Gleaner, 2011)

Portmore is regarded as “the blueprint towards the advancement of other parishes in

the country... in 2001, the number of communities increased from 22 in 1991 to 40 communities, with the introduction of the Greater Portmore housing developments along the western boundaries...” (Jamaica Gleaner, 2020). Celebrating the Portmore Pines community, which won the NHT Best Schemes competition for 2013-2014, a government official remarked, “No matter how small, every positive act by a community member strengthens leadership at the grassroots level, builds national pride, and makes the society better... We have witnessed families emerge from landlessness and dependency to property ownership and economic and social independence” (Jamaica Gleaner, 2015).

Portmore’s development shaped Jamaica’s urban planning. A 2020 headline from the Jamaica Gleaner read, “MoBay needs Portmore-style housing development” (2020). A housing developer interviewed in the article emphasized, “It is going to take a new approach to address the need for housing in Montego Bay, and we believe the Portmore model would suit us well.” Despite these accolades, some Portmore residents criticized the proposal for Portmore to become Jamaica’s 15th parish.

The Venezuela-Jamaica partnership has had a profound impact on community development in Portmore. Public administration played a key role in managing and implementing these programs, with government policies shaping their execution to ensure the benefits were felt across communities. The social impact of these initiatives is evident in improved living conditions and economic stability for many Jamaicans, as the partnership provided access to affordable energy and funding for

development projects. Despite the challenges faced by Venezuela, the enduring legacy of this collaboration continues to influence Jamaica's public policies and contribute to long-term social and economic progress.

Theme 3: Foundations of Bilateral Partnerships and Strategic Alliances

The Jamaica-Venezuela relationship and its impact on local development were framed positively. Newspaper reports (n=72) described Venezuela as a *"friend of Jamaica,"* highlighting its role as a supportive ally in tackling social and economic challenges through S-SC. A diplomatic note dated September 9, 2015, affirmed the *"long friendship between Jamaica and Venezuela,"* while a Jamaica Gleaner (2009) headline praised Venezuela's *"helpfulness to its Caribbean and Latin American neighbours"*. Similarly, on March 24, 1975, Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley described his discussions with Pérez as *"fruitful"* stating they had *"dealt with a number of subjects and made some progress towards a common understanding on them"* (Diplomatic Records, 1975). Venezuela's commitment to Jamaica continued with the PetroCaribe agreement in the 1990s, offering preferential financing for energy and infrastructure projects—critical support that symbolized the promise of S-SC.

In the 1980s, Manley and Pérez focused on collaborative projects, especially the San José Accord, which aimed to improve Jamaica's housing infrastructure. A 1991 diplomatic record stated, *"Both governments reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen bilateral ties through concrete actions in housing and in-*

frastructure development." Reports also noted, *"Jamaica and Venezuela are the best of friends. They have had formal diplomatic relations for 50 years. But their friendship rests on far more than that... PetroCaribe has proved an important lifeline to Jamaica..."* (Jamaica Gleaner, 2015).

The relationship between Jamaica and Venezuela grew from the late 1960s to the 2000s, driven by initiatives like the San José Accord and PetroCaribe. The Manley-Pérez partnership initially focused on addressing Jamaica's housing and energy needs, laying the groundwork for later expansion into sectors like oil, bauxite, and infrastructure. A political scientist, emphasized the importance of bilateral development partnerships, stating, *"Sometimes it is governments and not people who take critical initiatives in development."* In the case of Portmore, he explained, *"The development plans of successive governments have made Portmore into the largest and most developed community in the English-speaking Caribbean"* (Jamaica Gleaner, 2004).

Chávez's approach to foreign policy prioritized partnerships with many Caribbean nations, framing Venezuela as a steadfast ally to countries like Jamaica in their pursuit of development goals. As described in a diplomatic communication on September 26, 2015, *"The dream of Chávez to improve the social, economic and overall quality of life of the people of the region is being fulfilled through the ongoing PetroCaribe Agreement. This enduring legacy of Hugo Chávez has made major contributions to improving the socio-economic development of states through investments totalling just under US\$4 billion in 432 social projects."*

Chávez recognized South-South solidarity within PetroCaribe. In a diplomatic communication, he expressed:

God speaks through mathematics and if you take this figure of 200,000 barrels we will be providing per day, PetroCaribe countries will pay US\$60 per barrel instead of US\$80 per barrel over the next 10 years. A total of US\$17 billion dollars will be saved... So you can easily see the difference in impact. ... Our strategy is to offer financing from Venezuela to countries much more vulnerable and in need. You do not have to thank us; it is a call of our conscience. (26.08.2005)

PetroCaribe provided Jamaica with an economic buffer during periods of high oil prices, contributing to the country's economic stability and energy security. Undoubtedly, *"Jamaica survived because of the discount price agreement we enjoy with Venezuela under PetroCaribe,"* (Jamaica Gleaner, 2009). An economist said ending the agreement would cost Jamaica *"... US\$50 million per month"* (Jamaica Gleaner, 2012). Jamaica's Prime Minister, Portia Simpson Miller, via diplomatic communication in September 2015, echoed that: *"A fundamental objective of the partnership is to promote higher levels of development in order to fulfill the needs and aspirations of our peoples and improve their quality of life."* Venezuela strengthened Caribbean alliances, boosting its influence in international decision-making.

Venezuela's generosity was widely recognized, with one columnist calling Chávez a *"helping friend to neighbouring countries in the region..."* (Jamaica Gleaner, 2013). However, there were reservations about his leadership style. An attorney in a Gleaner column wrote:

Despite the overall positive impression I have of Hugo Chávez, I have a lingering suspicion that something wasn't altogether well, and that he was better to look at than live with... So, he was kind with Venezuela's wealth. We are, therefore, predisposed to hold him in high regard... Who, after all, despises the benefactor who could easily, and without reproach, have ignored your need? Nobody does. (Jamaica Gleaner, 2013)

Venezuela's generosity is encapsulated in a comment made by a politician: *"you owe a man \$3 billion and he takes \$1.5 billion and tells you that 'everything's cool'.* This friendly gesture, perhaps more than any other single action, brought Jamaica's debt to GDP ratio down" (Jamaica Gleaner, 2019).

With Venezuela's assistance, Jamaica invested in various social programs. However, political tensions and claims of electoral irregularities in Venezuela's 2018 elections led to Jamaica's controversial vote in the OAS. This vote aligned with the United States and other Western nations that questioned Maduro's legitimacy. Jamaica's opposition spokesperson on Foreign Affairs described the decision as *"reprehensible,"* stating, *"This is certainly not the way to treat the people or government that has been a hemispheric partner for Jamaica through PetroCaribe, the debt buy-back, through periods of national disaster"* (Jamaica Gleaner, 2019).

While political and economic shifts have influenced some aspects of the Jamaica-Venezuela partnership, the transformation of Portmore's urban landscape remains a legacy of both countries' commitment. Venezuela's support of housing initiatives, played a crucial role in shaping Portmore's development,

helping to address Jamaica's housing needs. By positioning itself as a leader in S-SC, Venezuela strengthened its geopolitical presence in the Caribbean and created a stable market for its oil exports, benefiting both parties.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the evolving relationship between Jamaica and Venezuela from the 1970s to the 2000s. By drawing on newspaper reports ($n = 157$) and diplomatic records ($n = 21$), the study explored how Venezuela, through initiatives like the San José Accord and PetroCaribe, played a central role in shaping Jamaica's urban landscape. A striking outcome was the rise of Portmore, the largest housing development in the English-speaking Caribbean. In LAC, one of the largest regions of developing states, the challenge of designing effective public policies has often revolved around critical questions of alliances and partnerships. As these nations navigate complex socio-economic landscapes marked by historical inequalities, political instability, and external pressures, the formation of strategic alliances becomes essential. Policymakers must consider regional alliances, such as those formed under organizations like CELAC/ALBA, and partnerships with global powers and neighboring countries. These alliances can influence policy design and implementation by providing access to resources, technology, and shared knowledge. Furthermore, collaboration can foster a collective approach to addressing pressing challenges like poverty and climate change. The effectiveness of these policies

hinges on the ability of countries within the region to align their interests and coordinate efforts, demonstrating that alliances are not just a matter of diplomacy but vital to the region's progress and resilience in an interconnected world. Thus, as LAC grapples with the development agendas of individual states, the question of how to forge and maintain alliances will remain central to their pursuit of sustainable and inclusive growth.

The Venezuela-Jamaica collaboration accelerated Jamaica's housing development efforts, fostering the growth of a new urban center integral to the country's socio-economic structure. The housing initiatives in Portmore were aligned with Jamaica's goals to improve its socio-economic situation and Venezuela's foreign policy objectives, which sought to counter U.S. hegemony in the Caribbean and promote an alternative model of development based on solidarity and social justice. The study finds that by supporting housing projects in Portmore, Venezuela advanced its regional agenda, promoting development and addressing social needs in Jamaica while aligning with its socialist-oriented policies. This finding corresponds to Ortiz (2015), Braveboy-Wagner (2018) and Sanders (2007). The study suggests that the success of these partnerships can also be attributed to effective government leadership, public policy decisions, and the political system in both countries, which enabled the implementation of these development programs.

Portmore's growth into a major urban center highlighted rising demands for local governance. Establishing local governance with an elected mayor gave Portmore's citizens

a direct say in policies affecting their lives, like infrastructure, housing, and public services. Municipal status empowered the community to address its needs more effectively, ensuring governance was responsive, accountable, and aligned with local priorities, making it more inclusive and equitable. Such findings are consistent with Putnam (2000) and Gaventa (2006) who emphasize the importance of community participation in governance.

Public perception of governance and political legitimacy may be impacted by partnerships that countries develop. By prioritizing social development and delivering tangible outcomes like housing, citizens may gain more trust in their government's ability to address critical needs. This could improve political stability, increase civic participation, and strengthen democratic practices.

For Jamaica, the partnership with Venezuela was critical in addressing its housing deficit. The development of Portmore serves as a case study of successful S-SC. The success of the Jamaica-Venezuela partnership in Portmore reflects the financial sustainability of the projects undertaken and the lasting/transformational impact of the collaboration. The initiatives resulted in notable improvements in housing quality, and expansion of the housing stock, business community, and key infrastructure, including transportation. Additionally, qualitative factors such as residents' satisfaction, social mobility, and community cohesion underscore the broader social benefits of the partnership.

The success of the Jamaica-Venezuela partnership in Portmore can be attributed to other factors including political leadership, community involvement, land availability, and strategic investments in infrastructure and housing. Political leadership played a crucial role in driving the partnership forward. Strong political commitment from both the Jamaican and Venezuelan governments facilitated policy alignment, secured funding, and ensured effective coordination between local authorities and international stakeholders. This commitment was instrumental in overcoming challenges and ensuring the timely delivery of the housing and infrastructure projects.

Community involvement is a main ingredient in Portmore's success. Engaging local communities in the planning and implementation phases fostered a sense of ownership and pride, which enhanced the sustainability of the development. Residents' feedback was essential in shaping the housing projects and public services to better meet their needs, ensuring that the developments reflected the aspirations of the people they were meant to serve. Town hall meetings and community organizations gave residents a voice, empowering them and aiding Portmore's transition to a municipality, boosting its autonomy and governance. The involvement of residents ensured that the development was both physically transformational and socially inclusive. Land availability coupled with a well-thought-out approach to development, also facilitated the housing expansion and infrastructure projects in Portmore²⁴.

²⁴ The strategic land-use planning and zoning policies, overseen by the Portmore Municipal Council's Planning Department enabled large-scale development, minimizing conflicts over land rights and facilitating the rapid growth of the urban area.

The lessons from Portmore's success offer valuable insights for replicating and scaling similar housing initiatives in other SIDS. Key success factors from Portmore—strong political leadership, community involvement, land availability, financial sustainability, and infrastructure development—are transferable to other contexts. However, each context will require specific adaptations. For instance, political landscapes, governance structures, and community dynamics may differ across regions, necessitating tailored approaches to engage stakeholders effectively. Similarly, land availability and access to financing mechanisms will vary by region, and creative solutions, such as public-private partnerships, may be required to ensure scalability. PPPs and regional cooperation models are instrumental in securing the resources necessary for large-scale housing and infrastructure projects. Moreover, strengthening local capacity is essential for successful replication. Building local expertise in urban planning, project management, and community engagement ensures that projects remain sustainable and culturally appropriate. Training and empowering local stakeholders to assume key functions within these projects is vital for fostering long-term resilience and self-sufficiency.

To inform housing policy formulation in SIDS, some policy recommendations can be derived from the Portmore case. Governments should adopt integrated housing strategies concentrating on housing quality, economic development, infrastructure, and social welfare, ensuring housing projects support overall community well-being. Fostering PPPs can help share the financial burden

of large-scale housing projects and promote knowledge exchange. Community-led development should be prioritized, to shape housing projects around local needs and aspirations. Early engagement of residents can increase the social sustainability of the projects. Additionally, supporting financial models for housing affordability through subsidies, low-interest loans, and land grants can ensure that quality housing remains accessible to low- and middle-income families. Finally, prioritizing infrastructure development alongside housing projects is crucial for creating cohesive, resilient communities that can thrive in the long term. Infrastructure (transportation, utilities, education, and healthcare services) should be integrated into housing strategies to provide a holistic living environment.

Venezuela's support was not charity but a strategic effort to foster regional solidarity and economic integration, offering financial reprieve and expertise to aid Jamaica's housing efforts, consistent with a S-SC framework and a developmental state approach (Timossi, 2015; Berrios, 2001).

PetroCaribe's deferred payments freed resources for Jamaica to invest in housing, infrastructure, healthcare, and education, showcasing its ability to leverage international agreements for social development. The flexibility offered by this agreement allowed for policy decisions that prioritized social development. Therefore, by diversifying their international relations strategies through S-SC, SIDS can secure vital resources for their development and transform their role in the global political landscape. This proactive approach to diplomacy allows SIDS to reshape

the terms of engagement with both traditional and emerging powers, fostering more inclusive and equitable governance structures (domestically and internationally).

Western-led development models tend to prioritize market-driven solutions and top-down approaches that may not align with the social, cultural, or environmental realities of SIDS. In contrast, the expansion of Portmore stands as a testament to the potential of S-SC, driven by the shared commitment of Venezuela and Jamaica to regional resilience and self-sufficiency. Portmore's story highlights the importance of financial resources, political will, and technical expertise in overcoming developmental challenges. It also offers useful lessons for communities across Jamaica, reinforcing how strategic partnerships can drive economic and social progress. The Jamaica-Venezuela partnership empowered Jamaica to maintain greater sovereignty over its development choices, unlike traditional models with external conditions. S-SC allows nations to address local priorities with greater autonomy. Bolívar's dream for a more just and united future for the region materialised through housing, energy, and infrastructure initiatives, continues to shape the region's approach to development, offering a model for how LAC nations can collaboratively address their unique challenges.

Jamaica's collaboration with Venezuela, emphasizes shared knowledge, mutual support, and tailored solutions that address local needs and foster sustainable, inclusive development. To enhance its urban landscape and provide greater access to housing and community development, Jamaica should improve coordi-

nation between national, regional, and local governments to ensure housing and development policies are effectively implemented and aligned with national objectives. Investment in essential infrastructure like roads, water, and sanitation systems should be prioritized to support new and existing urban communities. Urban development plans must also address the needs of vulnerable groups, including low-income families, by prioritizing social housing, public spaces, and community facilities. Additionally, integrating environmentally sustainable practices, like energy-efficient buildings, renewable energy sources, and waste management systems, should be a key focus to ensure long-term resilience and sustainable growth.

Jamaica's relationship with Venezuela remains highly relevant in the current geopolitical landscape, particularly as shifting U.S. policies under Trump 2.0 reshape global economic and political dynamics. Renewed sanctions on Venezuela reduce the likelihood of reviving initiatives like PetroCaribe. Jamaica must carefully navigate its diplomatic position against heightened U.S.-Venezuela tensions to maintain strategic partnerships without jeopardizing economic opportunities/ international standing. This delicate diplomatic balancing act carries potential risks, as shifts in allegiance could impact trade relationships, and investment flows. Additionally, regional migration patterns may shift as U.S. immigration policies tighten, potentially affecting Jamaica's labor markets and social dynamics. As Jamaica continues to expand its urban infrastructure, the absence of Venezuelan-backed financing may necessitate new approaches, such as strengthening ties with alternative

international partners / increasing domestic investment in affordable housing.

Jamaica-Venezuela relations remain crucial for broader issues of diplomatic strategy, and regional stability. This study has implications for policymakers seeking to improve access to affordable housing. It highlights the need to integrate housing into human security frameworks, recognizing its role in reducing inequality, social unrest, and migration pressures. The findings may not be generalizable to other countries or regions. It suggests future research on the impact of economic sanctions on Venezuela's partnerships with traditional allies like Jamaica and smaller nations like Saint Lucia. Since 2021, under Prime Minister Philip J. Pierre, Saint Lucia has worked to re-establish ties with Venezuela, renewing a relationship that began in 1979. This offers a unique opportunity to explore how micro-states navigate shifting alliances while pursuing their development goals. A follow-up study could investigate the long-term financial/ social/ environmental sustainability of housing initiatives incorporating local stakeholders to give voice to policy beneficiaries.

CONCLUSION

In the period between the 1970s and the 2000s, Venezuela and Jamaica pursued diverse paths to achieve their development goals, with

their partnership showcasing how developing nations can pool resources and expertise to address critical challenges like housing. This study emphasizes the value of South-South partnerships, setting the stage for a deeper analysis that considers the political culture, the influence of charismatic leaders, and the policy agendas of key decision-makers. Recent tensions between Venezuela and CARICOM nations reflect the challenges of U.S. hegemony in the region.

The evolution of Jamaica's relationship with Venezuela occurred in 2 stages, since the late 1960s.²⁵ Venezuelan support provided Jamaica with preferential financing for infrastructure, symbolizing a model of S-SC that emphasized both practical development goals and community-oriented frameworks. This partnership demonstrated that as Portmore grew, so did the importance of devolving authority to meet local needs more effectively. In this way, Jamaica and Venezuela's cooperation reflected an economic alliance and an alignment toward community-based development, supporting a foundation for "community democracy" alongside physical expansion. The study suggests that local government reform is essential to effectively manage the challenges and opportunities created by large-scale housing and urban development projects, like those seen in Portmore.

The case of Jamaica's partnership with Venezuela underscores the potential of in-

²⁵ Stage one laid the foundation of diplomatic and economic ties (late 1960s-1980s). In the second stage, there was the consolidation of bilateral cooperation through PetroCaribe (1980s-2000s). The relationship deepened with the signing of the San José Accord and the PetroCaribe agreement, which provided Jamaica with favourable oil terms and financial support for infrastructure and housing projects.

ternational collaborations to drive growth, provided they include reforms that empower local authorities. Decentralizing authority and strengthening local governance would improve responsiveness to community needs, sustain social and infrastructural benefits, and support “community democracy” alongside economic progress. Local government and bilateral cooperation, particularly in the context of Jamaica and Venezuela’s partnership, intersect especially in areas of urban development and infrastructure. The PetroCaribe initiative provided the financial and technical resources needed to implement large-scale projects, like housing development in Portmore. These agreements, however, are most effective when local governments are empowered to manage and implement the initiatives in ways that align with community needs.

Venezuelan aid allowed for the construction of affordable housing in Portmore, and local governments had to play a central role in coordinating, managing, and ensuring the sustainability of these projects. As urban areas expand and demand for more local governance increases, bilateral cooperation can support local governments by advocating for / assisting in decentralization.

The intersection of local government and bilateral cooperation is pivotal in ensuring that international partnerships lead to meaningful, sustainable development that is responsive to local needs and can be managed effectively at the community level. Local governments, as closer representatives to the people, are critical in ensuring that bilateral cooperation projects are inclusive and beneficial to the local population. The study of Portmore’s development

underscores that as urban areas grow, the local government must be actively involved in fostering community participation, ensuring that development is not just top-down but also considers the voices and needs of residents.

REFERENCES

- Akinsanya, A. A., Avwunudiogba, A., Bombom, L. S., Dung, E. J., Erhunmwunsee, P., Gill, B. I. ... & Mba, J. C. (2018). *Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean: The case for bilateral and multilateral cooperation*. Lexington Books.
- Altink, H. (2024). The politics of infrastructure in inner-city communities in Kingston, Jamaica, from 1962 to 2020. *Journal of Urban History*, 50(1), 165-184.
- Amanor, K. S. (2013). South–South cooperation in Africa: Historical, geopolitical and political economy dimensions of international development. *Ids Bulletin*, 44(4), 20-30.
- Archer, C. & Jackson, A. (2022). Urban agglomeration and the geo-political status of the municipality of Portmore, Jamaica. In A. Battisti & S. Baiani (Eds.), *Sustainable Development Dimensions and Urban Agglomeration*. IntechOpen. doi: 10.5772/intechopen.94779
- Atkins, G. P. (2018). *Latin America and the Caribbean in the international system*. Routledge.
- Ayllón, B. & Ojeda, T. (2013). *La cooperación sur-sur y triangular en América Latina*. Catarata.
- Bailey, S. J. (2004). *Strategic public finance*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Berkes, F. & Ross, H. (2013). Community resilience: Toward an integrated approach. *Society & natural resources*, 26(1), 5-20.

- Berrios, R. (2001). Japan's economic presence in Latin America. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 43(2), 147-161.
- Braveboy-Wagner, J. A. (2018). Introduction: Caribbean public policy issues in the 1990s. In J. A. Braveboy-Wagner & D.J. Gayle (Eds.), *Caribbean Public Policy* (pp. 1-12). Routledge.
- Bredenoord, J. & Van Lindert, P. (2014). Affordable housing in the developing world: The role of housing finance. *Habitat International*, 34(3), 327-335.
- British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Caribbean (2005, August 24). Venezuela signs Jamaica oil deal. *BBC*. https://www.bbc.co.uk/webarchive/https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bbc.co.uk%2Fcaribbean%2Fnews%2Fstory%2F2005%2F08%2Fprintable%2F050824_jamaicachavez.shtml
- Buddan, R. (2004, August 8). Paying for progress in Portmore. *Jamaica Gleaner*. <https://old.jamaicagleaner.com/gleaner/20040808/focus/focus2.html>
- Caribbean Investigative Journalism Network (2019, December 1). PetroCaribe country report: Jamaica. <https://www.cijn.org/petrocaribe-country-report-jamaica>
- Carroll, C. E. & McCombs, M. (2003). Agenda-setting effects of business news on the public's images and opinions about major corporations. *Corporate reputation review*, 6, 36-46.
- Chambers, R. (1997). *Whose reality counts? Putting the first last*. Intermediate Technology Publications.
- Chodor, T. & McCarthy-Jones, A. (2013). Post-liberal regionalism in Latin America and the influence of Hugo Chávez. *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research*, 19(2), 211-223.
- Clarke, C. G. (1966). Population Pressure in Kingston, Jamaica: A Study of Unemployment and Overcrowding. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 38, 165-182.
- Clarke, C. (2006). From slum to ghetto: Social deprivation in Kingston, Jamaica. *International Development Planning Review*, 28(1), 1-34.
- Clarke, C. & Howard, D. (2006). Contradictory socio-economic consequences of structural adjustment in Kingston, Jamaica. *Geographical Journal*, 172(2), 106-129.
- Cole, M. (2016). Imperialism and racialised world capitalism or intercultural twenty-first century socialism. *Knowledge Cultures*, 4(06), 228-248.
- Connelly, M. J., Hicks, R., Jervis, R., Spirling, A. & Suong, C. H. (2021). Diplomatic documents data for international relations: the Freedom of Information Archive Database. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 38(6), 762-781.
- Davis, C. E. (2011). Michael Manley: Some visions that still remain relevant. *Caribbean Quarterly*, 57(2), 51-74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00086495.2011.11672402>
- Davis, M. (2006). *Planet of slums*. Verso.
- Davies, S. (2018). *Housing and urban development in Jamaica: Lessons from the Portmore experience*. University of the West Indies Press.
- Deacon, D. (2007). Yesterday's papers and today's technology: Digital newspaper archives and 'push button' content analysis. *European journal of communication*, 22(1), 5-25.
- Dodman, D. (2009). The creation of community? Citizen action, social movements, and the Portmore toll controversy. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 28(3), 364-380.
- Dodman, J. (2021). The best glass? Equitable access to quality education in inner-city Kingston, Jamaica. *Environment & Urbanization*, 33(1), 83-98.
- D'Agostino, T. J. (2003). Caribbean politics. In R. S. Hillman & T. J. D'Agostino (Eds.), *Understan-*

- ding the contemporary Caribbean* (pp. 87-132). Lynne Rienner.
- Ellner, S. (2007). Toward a 'multipolar world': using oil diplomacy to sever Venezuela's dependence. *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 40(5), 15-22.
- Ewell, J. (1996). *Venezuela and the United States: from Monroe's hemisphere to petroleum's empire*. University of Georgia Press.
- Foster, S. R. (2022). Infrastructure sharing in cities. *Yale L&J*, 132, 440.
- Gaventa, J. (2006). Finding the spaces for change: A power analysis. In *IDS Working Paper 260* (pp. 1-43). Institute of Development Studies.
- Girvan, N. (2010). The Caribbean in a turbulent world. In G. Mace, A. F. Cooper, & T. M. Shaw (Eds.), *Inter-American cooperation at a crossroads* (pp. 45-62). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230294837_4
- Gordon, D., Anderson, P. & Robotham, D. (1997). *The Urban Caribbean: Transition to the New Global Economy*. In A. Portes, C. Dore-Cabral & P. Landolt (Eds.), *The Urban Caribbean: transition to the new global economy* (pp. 190- 233). Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Gray, O. (2004). *Demeaned but empowered: The social power of the urban poor in Jamaica*. University of the West Indies Press.
- Grugel, J. & Riggirozzi, P. (2012). Post-neoliberalism in Latin America: Rebuilding and reclaiming the State after crisis. *Development and change*, 43(1), 1-21.
- Harrison, C. & Popke, J. (2018). Reassembling Caribbean energy? Petrocaribe, (Post) plantation sovereignty, and Caribbean energy futures. *Journal of Latin American Geography*, 17(3), 212-234.
- Horst, H. A. (2008). Planning to Forget: Mobility and Violence in Urban Jamaica. *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie sociale*, 16(1), 51-62.
- Howard, E. (1902). *Garden cities of tomorrow*. Swan Sonnenschein & Co.
- Ianchovichina, E. (2024). *The evolving geography of productivity and employment: Ideas for inclusive growth through a territorial lens in Latin America and the Caribbean*. World Bank Publications.
- Irazábal, C. (2024). Latin American perspectives on the urban century: Planning challenges and opportunities. *Latin American Perspectives*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X241257500>
- Jamaica Gleaner (2004, August 8). Jamaica Gleaner In Focus. <https://old.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20040808/focus/>
- Jamaica Gleaner (2009a, February 22). Michael Manley: The spirit of 1969. <https://mobile.jamaica-gleaner.com/20090222/focus/focus5.php>
- Jamaica Gleaner (2009b, November 16). Troubling column from Rapley. <https://mobile.jamaica-gleaner.com/20091116/letters/letters4.php>
- Jamaica Gleaner (2011, March 13). No more room in Portmore – Municipality nears residential limit. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20110313/lead/lead7.html>
- Jamaica Gleaner (2012, August 31). PetroCaribe election fallout. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20120831/business/business5.html>
- Jamaica Gleaner (2013a, March 7). Venezuela and Jamaica - the ties that bind. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20130307/lead/lead4.html>
- Jamaica Gleaner (2013b, March 7). Chávez dies, legacy lives on. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20130307/cleisure/cleisure2.html>
- Jamaica Gleaner (2015, September 4). Editorial: Jamaica and Venezuela: talk frankly as friends. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/commentary/20150906/editorial-jamaica-and-venezuela-talk-frankly-friends>

- Jamaica Gleaner (2019, January 11). Colin Campbell. Slapping Venezuela in the face. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/commentary/20190112/colin-campbell-slapping-venezuela-face>
- Jamaica Gleaner (2019, January 12). Reprehensible! Hanna blasts gov't over OAS vote. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20190112/reprehensible-hanna-blasts-govt-over-oas-vote-0>
- Jamaica Gleaner (2019, April 1). PetroCaribe Development Fund closure, Wigton IPO and lessons for Jamaica. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/commentary/20190401/editorial-petrocaribe-development-fund-closure-wigton-ipo-and-lessons>
- Jamaica Gleaner (2020, December 16). Wheatley leads committee into Portmore parish deliberations. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20201216/wheatley-leads-committee-portmore-parish-deliberations>
- Jamaica Gleaner (2020, February 24). MoBay needs Portmore-style housing development – Kerr-Jarrett - Developer says western city needs over 30,000 new houses. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20200224/mobay-needs-portmore-style-housing-development-kerr-jarrett-developer-says>
- Jamaica Gleaner (2021, February 25). High-rises for Portmore. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20210225/high-rises-portmore>
- Jamaica Gleaner (2022, July 22). Letter of the Day | Affordable housing should be top priority. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/letters/20220722/letter-day-affordable-housing-should-be-top-priority>
- Jamaica Gleaner (2024, October 28). Portmore set to become Jamaica's 'Silicon Valley' amid push for parish status. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20241028/portmore-set-become-jamaicas-silicon-valley-amid-push-parish-status>
- Jamaica Observer (2022, May 17). Portmore: The Silicon Valley of Jamaica. <https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/2022/05/17/portmore-the-silicon-valley-of-jamaica/>
- King, C. L. (2003). *Michael Manley and democratic socialism: Political leadership and ideology in Jamaica*. Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Kinyanjui, M. (2012). Housing and urbanization in Kenya: Policy implications for the future. *Urban Studies Journal*, 49(8), 1705-1721.
- Le Corbusier. (1929). *The city of tomorrow and its planning*. The Architectural Press.
- MacDonald, S. B. (2024). Geopolitics in the Caribbean: Changing waters. In Z. Cope (Ed.), *The Palgrave handbook of contemporary geopolitics* (pp. 243-264). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mathison, R. (2022, October 4). Government invests \$935 million in sewage management. *Jamaica Gleaner*. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/esponsored/20221004/government-invests-935-million-sewage-management>
- Mawdsley, E. (2012). The changing geographies of foreign aid and development cooperation: contributions from gift theory. *Transactions of the Institute of British geographers*, 37(2), 256-272.
- Michelutti, L. (2012). *Small-scale farmers under socialist governments: Venezuela and the ALBA People's Trade Agreement*. IIED.
- Morris, F. (2020). Accessible and inclusive city: Can Kingston Jamaica measure up? *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 40(2).
- Moser, C. (2009). A conceptual framework for the understanding of housing and social exclusion. *International Development Planning Review*, 31(3), 315-336.

- Mosse, D. (2005). Cultivating development. *An ethnography of aid policy and practice*. Pluto Press.
- Mycoo, M. A. (2022). Caribbean island cities: Urban issues, urbanization processes and opportunities for transformation. In J. M. González-Pérez, C. Irazábal & R. C. Lois-González (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Urban Studies in Latin America and the Caribbean* (pp. 579-602). Routledge.
- Muhr, T. (2016). Equity of access to higher education in the context of South–South cooperation in Latin America: A pluriscalar analysis. *Higher Education*, 72, 557-571.
- Mukhadakhomu, A. (2016). Increasing housing beneficiaries involvement: a lesson from the Cuban community architecture programme. *AFFRIKA Journal of Politics, Economics and Society*, 6(2), 157-165.
- Nganje, F. (2016). Brazilian Cities in Mozambique: South-South Development Co-operation or the Projection of Soft Power? *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 42(4), 659-674.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. Harvard University Press.
- Ofodile, U. E. (2011). South-South Trade and Investment Relations: Harmony and Disharmony—African Perspectives. *Proceedings of the ASIL Annual Meeting*, 105, 521-524.
- Ogu, V. I. (2002). Housing and urbanization in developing countries: Theoretical, policy and practical perspectives. *Urban Studies*, 39(10), 2075-2090.
- Ortiz, D. G. (2015). State repression and mobilization in Latin America. In P. Almeida & A. C. Ulate (Eds.), *Handbook of social movements across Latin America* (pp. 43-59). Springer.
- Panwar, V., Wilkinson, E., Arora, A. & Bishop, M. (2024). *Islands at the edge: How climate shocks shape poverty in Small Island Developing States*. ODI.
- Portmore Municipal Council (2016). *The Council*. Government of Jamaica. <https://portmoremc.gov.jm/about/council>
- Pugh, C. (2001). The theory and practice of housing sector development for developing countries, 1950-99. *Housing studies*, 16(4), 399-423.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster.
- Rabe, S. G. (1996). The Caribbean Triangle: Betancourt, Castro, and Trujillo and US Foreign Policy, 1958–1963. *Diplomatic History*, 20(1), 55-78.
- Ramírez, A. (2016). Strategic alliances and regional diplomacy: Venezuela's foreign policy in the Caribbean. *Latin American Politics Journal*, 25(3), 45-60.
- Robinson, S. (2017). Climate change adaptation trends in small island developing states. *Mitig Adapt Strateg Glob Change*, 22, 669-691. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11027-015-9693-5>
- Sanders, R. (2007). Venezuela in the Caribbean: Expanding its sphere of influence. *The Round Table*, 96(391), 465-476.
- Santos, R. D. F. & Cerqueira, M. R. (2015). South-South Cooperation: Brazilian experiences in South America and Africa. *História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos*, 22(1), 23-47.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Knopf.
- Serbin, A. (1991). The CARICOM States and the Group of Three: A New Partnership Between Latin America and the Non-Hispanic Caribbean? *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 33(2), 53-80.
- Schoburgh, E. D. (2007). Local government reform in Jamaica and Trinidad: a policy dilemma. *Public Administration and Development: The International Journal of Management Research and Practice*, 27(2), 159-174.

- Scobie, M. (2019). *Global environmental governance and small states: Architectures and agency in the Caribbean*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Shifter, M. (2012). The shifting landscape of Latin American regionalism. *Current History*, 111(742), 56-61.
- Sives, A. (2002). Changing patrons, from politician to drug don: Clientelism in downtown Kingston, Jamaica. *Latin American Perspectives*, 29(5), 66-89.
- Singh, J. N. & Ovadia, J. S. (2018). The theory and practice of building developmental states in the Global South. *Third World Quarterly*, 39(6), 1033-105
- Smith, A. (2021, July 18). Jobs increased by 15% in BPO sector. *Jamaica Information Service*. <https://jis.gov.jm/jobs-increase-by-15-in-bpo-sector/>
- Smith, A. (2022, May 6). More BPO Offices Open in Portmore. *Jamaica Information Service*. <https://jis.gov.jm/more-bpo-offices-open-in-portmore/>
- Spanakos, A. (2014). Venezuela before Chávez: Anatomy of an economic collapse. *Americas Quarterly*, 8(3), 129.
- Spaulding, G. (2013, March 7). Venezuela and Jamaica - The ties that bind. *Jamaica Gleaner*. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20130307/lead/lead4.html>
- Statistical Institute of Jamaica (Statin) (2014). *Population and housing census 2011: Jamaica*. Statistical Institute of Jamaica. <https://statinja.gov.jm/Census/PopulationHousing.aspx>
- Statistical Institute of Jamaica (Statin) (2024). Preliminary data. *Population and housing census 2022: Jamaica*. Statistical Institute of Jamaica.
- Steel, G., van Noorloos, F. & Klaufus, C. (2017). The urban land debate in the global South: New avenues for research. *Geoforum*, 83, 133-141.
- Thorburn, D. (2019). *Mayer Matalon: Business, politics and the Jewish-Jamaican elite*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Timossi, A. J. (2015). Revisiting the 1955 Bandung Asian-African Conference and its Legacy. *South Bulletin*, 85, 15.
- Tickner, A. B., Bergamaschi, I. & Durán, J. (2017). Going south to reach the north? The case of Colombia. In *South-South Cooperation Beyond the Myths: Rising Donors, New Aid Practices?* (pp. 245 - 269). Palgrave Macmillan US.
- UN-Habitat (2025, February 18). Strategic Plan for the period 2026-2029. https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2025/03/strategic_plan_for_the_period_2026-2029_corr_rf.pdf
- United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (2019, December 5). Potential of South-South triangular cooperation. <https://unsouthsouth.org/2019/12/05/potential-south-south-triangular-cooperation/>
- UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2022, January 31). Building-resilience-small-island-developing-states. <https://unctad.org/publication/building-resilience-small-island-developing-states>.
- Velasco, A. (2002). Dependency theory. *Foreign Policy* (133), 44-45.
- West Indies Home Contractors (WIHCON) (2019). Our history. <https://wihcon.com/our-history/>
- Williams, R. (2024, February 3). USF launches Portmore public Wi-Fi service in St. Catherine. *Jamaica Information Service*. <https://jis.gov.jm/usf-launches-portmore-public-wi-fi-service-in-st-catherine/>
- Zhou, J. (2020). A new multilateralism? A case study of the Belt and Road Initiative. *The Chinese Journal of Comparative Law*, 8(2), 384-413.