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Assessment of the Governance Dimension in the Frame of the 2030 Agenda: Evidence from 100 Spanish Cities

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Abstract: The 2030 Agenda highlights the importance of governance to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). However, we observe that there is an underestimation of the governance dimension in the SDG indices. The reasons are twofold. Firstly, indices assign a lower weight to governance compared to the other dimensions of sustainability. Secondly, most governance indicators do not measure the relational dynamics that underlie sustainable development policies. The aim of this study is thus to provide alternative methods for a more accurate assessment of the governance dimension in the frame of the 2030 Agenda. With this purpose, we examine the performance of 100 Spanish cities on the SDGs included in the first report elaborated by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network Spain in 2018. Using this data, we first develop a methodology to rebalance the current underestimation of the governance dimension, comparing its impact on the SDG performance of these cities. Secondly, we build a new indicator of 'Strategic Culture' to get a more accurate measure of governance in urban contexts. As a result, the study validates the proposed methods and provides evidence that better performance on sustainable development is favored by the implementation of strategic planning processes.

Keywords: sustainable development; governance; SDG index; policy evaluation; strategic planning processes; Spanish cities

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1. Introduction

There is a prolific debate about the core meaning of 'sustainable development' (SD) and 'governance', and how to measure them [1–3]. On the one hand, SD has been defined as "the development that meets needs of current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" [4]. However, despite this definition constituting an important milestone, it is rather vague in terms of policy development. On the other hand, there is no universally agreed upon definition of governance. This notion is based on the idea that the nature of the state has changed [5,6], so 'governance' differs from 'government', but it is a central component of it. The latter refers to the institutions and actions of the state, while the former goes further and stresses the relational dynamics between different stakeholders that underlie policymaking processes [7].

The manner in which SD and governance are defined within a policy frame (e.g., the 2030 Agenda) has important consequences in terms of evaluation. Complex concepts like these need to be decomposed into different dimensions, which are assessed by means of an assigned set of indicators. In this sense, SD has traditionally been operationalized in three dimensions (society, environment, and economy). However, 'governance' as a fourth dimension has gained importance over time, becoming part of the concept of SD itself [8,9]. In fact, the five pillars of the 2030 Agenda correspond to the four dimensions of SD, namely:

society (people), environment (planet), economy (prosperity), and governance (peace and partnership). Nevertheless, when these dimensions are translated into composite indices, the governance dimension usually appears underestimated and oversimplified.

As regards indicators, Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Sustainable Development Solution Network (SDSN) compile most of the indicators tied to the 2030 Agenda in a 'SDG Index' that is published annually [10]. SDSN is the body supported by the UN Secretary-General to mobilize global scientific and technological expertise to promote the implementation of the SDGs. The Spanish branch of SDSN is 'REDS' (Spanish Sustainable Development Network), which oversees the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda at the city level in this country. Despite their effort to identify suitable indicators, however, those assigned to the governance dimension usually represent a narrow interpretation of the term that is primarily conditioned by data availability. Therefore, most relevant SDG indices at the country level [11–13] appraise governance in a simplified manner.

Against this backdrop, we develop a four-step method to assess the governance dimension in the context of the 2030 Agenda upon the data collected from the first REDS report on the achievement of the SDGs for 100 Spanish cities [14]. Our main purpose is to empirically demonstrate the underestimation of this dimension in SDG composite indices using this data. Firstly, we test different methods to measure governance and compare their impact on the SD performance of the 100 Spanish cities. Secondly, we evaluate the set of governance indicators selected by REDS taking as reference the operational definition of governance proposed by Glass and Newig [3].

The comparison of cities allows us to check our hypothesis and methods empirically, leading us to propose a correction of the weighting factor assigned to the governance dimension in the REDS-SDG Index, and to build a new governance indicator called 'Strategic Culture' (*Icu*). This new indicator provides information about the governance dynamics that underlie SD policies in cities and that are usually missing in the set of governance indicators included in composite indices. Hereby, the analysis advances significant results regarding the measurement of the governance dimension in terms of coherence and consistency within the REDS-SDG Index, but also about the relationship between governance and performance on SD.

The article presents the theorical framework in Section 2 and introduces the methods developed to assess the SDG and the governance dimension. Our methodology to improve the actual proposals of indices and compare the performance of the 100 Spanish cities is in Section 3. Section 4 presents the results regarding (a) influence of methods employed to measure governance in the ranking of cities in terms of SDG performance; (b) adequacy of the governance indicators; and (c) validity of the governance indicator 'Strategic Culture'. Advantages of the multidimensional analysis compared to the approach used by SDG indices and the pertinence of considering strategic planning processes as governance indicators are discussed in Section 5. The main contributions of this research and future development are summarized in the last section.

2. Theoretical Framework

Our theoretical framework has been built upon several studies on integrated urban sustainable development policies from different fields of knowledge. In the following subsections, we particularly focus on the literature about governance, policy integration, strategic planning, and indicators of sustainable development, with particular attention to the relation among them.

2.1. Governance, Policy Integration, Strategic Planning, and Sustainable Development

Governance, policy integration, strategic planning, and SD are interrelated notions. SD is considered a 'wicked problem' [15], namely, a particularly challenging problem that transcends the borders of traditional policy domains, involves a wide variety of actors at different scale levels, and is reluctant to be solved. The more 'wicked' the issue, the more policy integration is needed in terms of collaboration, cooperation, and coordination of

actors and actions. All these elements are embedded in the notion of governance, and strategic planning (SP) is explicitly aimed at managing all of them.

The literature emphasizes the relational nature of governance by providing a broad definition as "the totality of interactions, in which government, other public bodies, private sector and civil society participate, aiming at solving societal problems or creating societal opportunities" [16] (p. 12198). In this regard, the implementation of SD policies has traditionally been supported by strategic planning processes such as the Local Agenda 21, Urban Strategic Plans, and so on, which foster both policy coherence and stakeholder participation according to a comprehensive and holistic approach towards SD [16–18].

Policy integration is determined as a prerequisite of policy success in the frame of SD policies and the 2030 Agenda represents an ambitious effort to achieve it [18], alongside the Integrated Sustainable Urban Development (ISUD) approach adopted by the European Union (EU) [19–21]. Del Castillo and Haarich [21] state that the principle of 'integrated' urban development is mainly referred to the planning and management aspects, while the 'sustainable' is linked to objectives, topics, and areas of intervention towards urban development. However, both concepts go together in practice, as SD does not just happen in an automatic way, but needs to be carefully discussed, openly debated, and planned [22,23].

In this vein, the aim of SP is to mobilize a plurality of actors with different or even competing interests towards a common vision of development [24,25]. SP is related to the establishment of networks of cooperation through integrated planning [26], and seeks to provide an effective working method to achieve coherence and drive the 'organizing capacity' of a territory, which is defined as the ability to convene stakeholders to jointly generate new ideas, formulate and implement policies for achieving community goals, and create the conditions for SD [27].

According to Healey [28], three concepts run through discussions of urban governance and into SP, namely: multi-level governance, partnership, and participation. In fact, SP moves away from the idea of government as a mobilizer of the public sector and provider of solutions to problems, towards an idea of governance through the mobilization of a plurality of actors. This planning approach is becoming mainstream in the urban development policy domain [29], and a standard across Europe [30,31]. This approach was proposed at the informal meeting of the European Ministers of Urban Development, held in the German city of Leipzig in 2007 [32], but it was already widely used before [33–35]. Nowadays, SP constitutes one of the three core elements—together with scale and stakeholders—that structure the OECD Principles of Urban Policy [36,37]. The main objective of SP is thus to address the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of urban development through a multistakeholder participatory process that integrates technical, environmental, political, social, and economic interests in the same territory [38].

2.2. Composite Indices to Measure Sustainable Development

Settings of indicators for SD have become a fertile ground for evaluation studies on different disciplines [39–41]. The assessment of SD policies can be deemed a multi-criteria decision-making problem that requires composite indices to be addressed. The use of composite indices by global institutions during the last decades has increased their acceptance and their interdisciplinary nature [42]. Their benefit is that they can summarize the data and concentrate a large group of dimensions and indicators into a sole number, facilitating comparison, transparency of knowledge and decision-making [43]. However, they should be interpreted with extreme caution [44]. As Greco et al. state, "each approach in every single step has both its benefits and its drawbacks", and it is essential to understand the methodological framework to better design the weighting, aggregation, and robustness steps. There are several methods to build these composite indices [42,45–47], even to measure the SDG [48–50], but all of them have strengths and weaknesses. For this reason, we focus our analysis on the SDG Index methodology, created by independent scientists and endorsed by the United Nations for its consistency, 'dynamic' distance-to-target assessment, and the possibility to be applied at national, regional, and

local levels [51]. The advantages of this methodology compared to those of OCDE [52], Eurostat [53], or ASviS [54] are analyzed in Lafortune et al. [48].

Regarding SD composite indices, most of them include the economic, social, environmental, and governance dimensions [2,55–57] through the application of normalization, weighting, and aggregation methods [42,44]. However, the governance facet reflects certain specific features in comparison to the other three dimensions. For instance, the Global Indicator Framework (GIF) proposed in 2015 by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDG) only encompasses 20% of the indicators to measure SDG16 and SDG17, which are related to the governance dimension. This percentage decreased up to 12% in the E-Handbook on SDG Indicators [58]. Similarly, the weighting factor of indicators in the SDG Index connected to the governance dimension ranges 11–14% in country-level SDG reports, and 7–9.5% in city-level SDG reports [59].

3. Materials and Methods

Different sources provided data used in this research. First, the baseline of our study is the information included in the report on the achievement of the SDG at city level elaborated by REDS in 2018 [14]. REDS applies the same methodology to evaluate the SDG performance of Spanish countries and cities. The report covers a sample of 100 medium-sized cities (municipalities with more than 80,000 inhabitants) that represent almost half of the Spanish population and provides information on 85 SDG indicators. Alas, the report does not show single values for each city. Therefore, it has been necessary to conduct several methodological steps to rank each city in terms of SD performance and analyze variations depending on the weight allocated to the governance dimension.

Secondly, the accuracy of the REDS governance indicators was appraised by adopting the operational notion of governance proposed by Glass and Newig [3], which is aligned to the Sustainable Governance Indicators published by the Bertelsmann Stiftung since 2017. This proposal includes the indicator 'Strategic Planning', which was omitted in the REDS report. Herein, we have built the indicator 'Strategic Culture', which accounts for the strategic planning processes carried out in the 100 Spanish cities. Needed information to feed this indicator was gathered from (i) the Inventory of Urban Strategic Plans in Spain (1996–2016) elaborated by Ebrópolis [60]; (ii) two studies conducted in 2003 and 2005 about implementation of the Local Agenda 21 in Spain [61]; and (iii) the repository of the Spanish Network of Urban Initiatives (RIU) that embeds EU-funded programs on Integrated Sustainable Urban Development (2007–2020) [62]. All this information has been merged in an Excel spreadsheet.

The methodological sequence followed to conduct the research is shown in Figure 1, and is based on four operational steps aimed at developing a series of assessment tools to be described in the next subsections.

3.1. Constrution of the REDS-SDG Index (IR)

In the first stage, a value is assigned to each one of the 100 cities to elaborate a 'baseline' ranking. The REDS report provides values for each SDG, but not at the city level. We have therefore elaborated a composite index named REDS SDG Index (IR) that assigns a synthetic value of the performance on SDGs to each city to overcome this issue.

IR is fed by the normalized data of REDS and aggregates the 17 SDG in an arithmetic mean. The same methodology developed by SDSN in the SDG Index and Dashboard Reports [63–68] was implemented to normalize and aggregate the 17 SDG. Consequently, the same weighting factor (1/17) has been applied to each one to define IR_i as a normalized index associated to each city i according to Equation (1). The number of cities i ranges from 1 to 100, where 1 is the lowest value and 100 is the highest score. For each goal j, $j \in \{1, 2, \ldots, N_j\}$ and for each indicator k, $k \in \{1, 2, \ldots, N_k\}$.

$$IR_i\left(N_j,\ N_k, I_{ijk}\right) = \frac{1}{N_i}\sum_{j=1}^{N_j}\frac{1}{N_{ij}}\sum_{K=1}^{N_k} I_{ijk} \quad (1)$$

where:

N_j is the number of the goals $_j$ for which data in cities $_i$ are available.
N_k is the number of indicators $_k$ for goals $_j$ of each $_i$ city.
I_{ijk} is the normalized score for the city $_i$ for goals $_j$ and indicators $_k$.

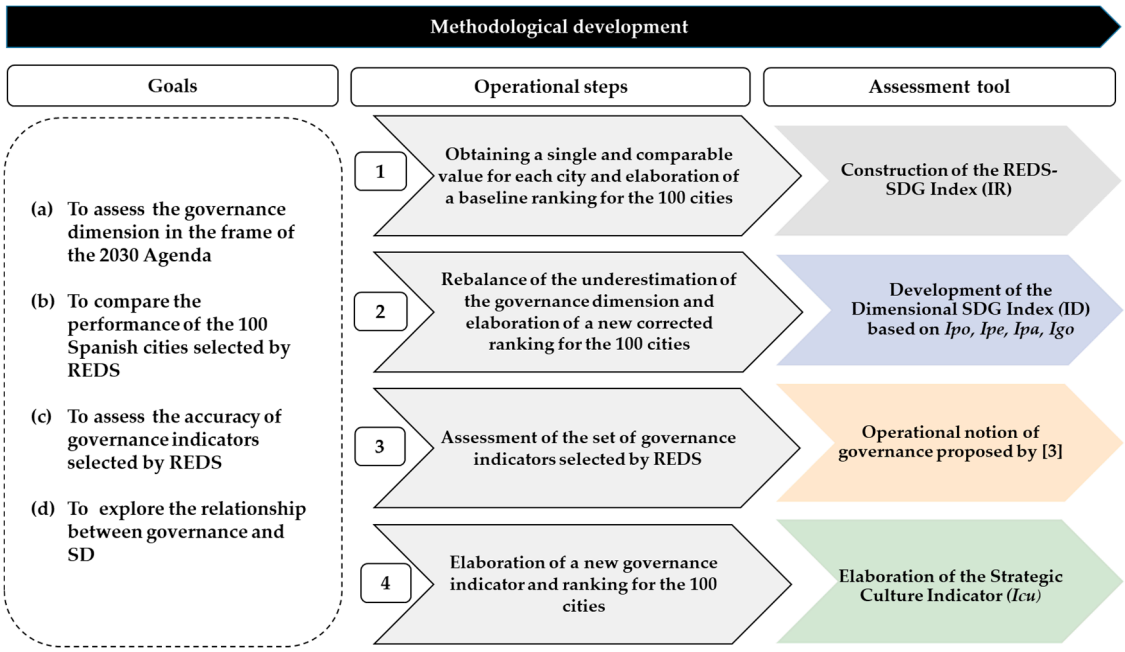

Figure 1. Research methodology.

3.2. Development of the Dimensional SDG Index (ID)

The second step consists of elaborating a 'corrected' ranking of the 100 cities to address the disparity revealed in the assignment of weight values to the SDGs linked to the governance dimension. Whilst the 2030 Agenda allocated a value of 2/17 for SDG 16 and SDG 17, each of the other three sustainable dimensions received a weight of 5/17. This assumption is contradictory to the balanced importance of all four dimensions [69] and confirms the underestimation of the governance dimension in the SDG indices. A second composite index called Dimensional SDG Index (ID) was designed to correct this imbalance and to enable comparison among the performance of SD dimensions by city, unlike IR. ID is built upon IR values that have been regrouped into four sub-indices: *Ipe* (Social), *Ipa* (Environment), *Ipo* (Prosperity), and *Igo* (Governance), as reflected in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the SDG between the four-dimensional sub-indices.

SD Dimension	Social	Economic	Environmental	Governance
2030 Agenda pillar	People	Prosperity	Planet	Peace & Partnership
Distribution of the SDG	1–5	7–11	6,12–15	16,17
Dimensional SDG Index (ID) Sub-indices	*Ipe*	*Ipo*	*Ipa*	*Igo*

Hence, ID seeks to statistically correct the underestimation of the governance dimension attributing the same weighting factor (1/4) to each of the four dimensions. Under this premise, ID aggregates the values of its four sub-indices (*Ipo, Ipe, Ipa, Igo*) by applying the same SDSN methodology. Equations (2)–(6) show how ID_i has been elaborated for each goal j, $j \in \{1, 2, \ldots, N_j\}$ and for each indicator k, $k \in \{1, 2, \ldots, N_k\}$ in cities i, $1 < i < 100$:

$$ID_i\left(N_j,\ N_k,\ I_{ijk}\right) = \frac{1}{4}Ipe + \frac{1}{4}Ipa + \frac{1}{4}Ipo + \frac{1}{4}Igo \quad (2)$$

Where,

$$Ipe = \frac{1}{N_j}\sum_{j=1}^{5}\frac{1}{N_k}\sum_{K=1}^{N_k} I_{ijk} \quad (3)$$

$$Ipa = \frac{1}{N_j}\left(\sum_{j=6}^{6}\frac{1}{N_k}\sum_{K=1}^{N_k} I_{ijk} + \sum_{j=12}^{15}\frac{1}{N_k}\sum_{K=1}^{N_k} I_{ijk}\right) \quad (4)$$

$$Ipo = \frac{1}{N_j}\sum_{j=7}^{11}\frac{1}{N_k}\sum_{K=1}^{N_k} I_{ijk} \quad (5)$$

$$Igo = \frac{1}{N_j}\sum_{j=16}^{17}\frac{1}{N_k}\sum_{K=1}^{N_k} I_{ijk} \quad (6)$$

In addition,
N_j is the number of goals $_j$ for which the cities $_i$ have data of each SDG subgroup.
N_k is the number of indicator $_k$ for goals $_j$ of each city $_i$.
I_{ijk} is the normalized score of indicator $_k$ under goals $_j$ for cities $_i$.
Ipe is the index of goals *j* related to social development (persons)
Ipa is the index of goals *j* related to environmental development (planet)
Ipo is the index of goals *j* related to economic development (prosperity)
Igo is the index of goals *j* related to governance development (peace and partnerships).

3.3. Operational Notion of Governance

In the third step, we examine the suitability of the governance indicators selected by REDS, since the underestimation of the governance dimension can be also related to the type of indicators. REDS measures governance through the following indicators:

(a) Money laundering and drug trafficking
(b) Homicides and murders
(c) Municipal transparency index
(d) Electoral participation
(e) Violence against minors
(f) Cooperation and development projects
(g) National networks
(h) Solidity and autonomy of the municipal institution

To assess the accuracy of these indicators, we contrast them with those embedded in the operational notion of governance proposed by Glass and Newig [3] in Table 2. The aim is to evaluate the correspondence between them. For example, (c) Municipal transparency index matches with 4.2. Access to information.

Table 2. Operational definition of governance and indicators proposed by Glass and Newig [3].

Variable	Description	Indicators
1. Participation	The capability of economic and non-economic interest groups to propose and assess relevant policy measures and their implementation.	1.1. Association competence (business) 1.2. Association competence (others)
2. Policy coherence	The extent to which the institutional structure fosters coherent and coordinated policy making and implementation	2.1 Inter-ministerial coordination 2.2. Coherent communication 2.3 Institutional coherence for implementation
3. Reflexivity and adaptation	The degree of reflexivity and adaptation of institutional arrangements including self-monitoring, capacity for reform, the influence of strategic planning units, and regulatory impact assessments.	3.1. Organizational reform 3.2. Adaptability 3.3. Strategic Planning 3.4 Evidence-based instruments
4. Democratic institutions	The quality of democratic institutions including electoral process, media freedom and access to information, civil rights, and political liberties, as well as rule of law.	4.1. Electoral process 4.2 Access to information 4.3. Civil rights and political liberties 4.4. Rule of law

3.4. Elaboration of the Strategic Culture Indicator (Icu)

In the search for more accurate governance indicators, the fourth phase is focused on developing a new governance indicator. Since strategic planning processes support SD policies, we assume they can provide information about the relational and organizational dynamics of territories, particularly at the local level. Furthermore, there is a long tradition of implementation of strategic planning processes in Europe. Based on those assumptions, we build the indicator 'Strategic Culture' *(Icu*). *Icu* measures the variety of urban strategic processes that have taken place in a territory over time according to the Integrated Sustainable Urban Development (ISUD) approach. Besides, this metric is especially suitable in the case of Spain, where cities have put into practice those processes since the 1990s [38,61].

A new ranking of cities based on this new indicator was devised. Furthermore, *Icu* allows clustering of the 100 cities depending on two parameters: duration (years) and variety of instruments (*n*). For the duration, we have established 13 years of experience in strategic planning as the cut-off value, which corresponds approximately to the middle point of a term of 30 years, the average time taken by European strategic planning initiatives. In this vein, the sample was divided into two groups. The variety of instruments (*n*) comprises the local strategic planning processes in the 100 cities such as (1) Local Agenda 21 [38,61], (2) Urban Strategic Plans [37,60], (3) URBANA Initiative 2007–13, and (4) EDUSI 2014–20 [39,62]. They are scored in a range from 0 to 4 processes. The combination of both parameters allows clustering the 100 Spanish cities in 7 groups that reflect the value of 'Strategic Culture' from 1 to 7, as represented in Table 3.

Table 3. Values of the Strategic Culture indicator (*Icu*).

	Icu		
Group	**Value**	**Duration (years)**	**Instruments (*n*)**
1	7	>13	4
2	6	>13	3
3	5	>13	2
4	4	<13	3
5	3	<13	2
6	2	<13	1
7	1	<13	0

4. Results

In this section, we summarize the main results according to the methodological sequence previously described.

4.1. Baseline Ranking of 100 Cities upon IR: SD Performance Is Midway

The baseline ranking of SD performance for the 100 Spanish cities is based on the values provided by IR as illustrated in Table 4. The higher IR value (60.54) corresponds to the first position, whilst the lower value (40.95) is assigned to the last position. The average IR is 50.12.

4.2. Corrected Ranking of 100 Cities upon ID: Better Governance Triggers Better SD Performance

The dimensional index ID ranks the 100 Spanish cities by assigning the same weighting factor to the four SD dimensions. As a result, the arithmetic mean (50.58) remains almost the same, but the range of values increases (63.09 to 39.36). The position of cities (P) with respect to IR (Table 5) is amended.

The positive relationship between the values of the governance dimension (measured by subindex *Igo*) and the variation of cities' position (cities with better values in *Igo* improve their position much more compared to those ones with lower values of governance) are the most outstanding findings. Data by indices and subindices are summarized in Table A1 of the Appendix A.

Table 4. Baseline ranking of 100 cities according to IR values.

Position IR	City	IR $\geq$ 50	Position IR	City	IR < 50
1	Vitoria-Gasteiz	60.54	50	Parla	49.95
2	Pozuelo de Alarcón	58.69	51	Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	49.85
3	Las Rozas de Madrid	57.11	52	Sabadell	49.62
4	Alcobendas	56.74	53	Córdoba	49.60
5	Madrid	56.66	54	Granada	49.60
6	Alcorcón	56.31	55	Orense	49.55
7	Getafe	55.76	56	Toledo	49.54
8	Logroño	55.75	57	Badajoz	49.27
9	Soria	55.60	58	Segovia	49.22
10	San Cugat del Vallés	55.45	59	Cuenca	49.06
11	Rivas-Vaciamadrid	55.44	60	Hospitalet de Llobregat	49.04
12	Fuenlabrada	55.35	61	Cádiz	49.00
13	Donostia/San Sebastián	55.23	62	Jaén	48.91
14	Burgos	54.80	63	León	48.80
15	San Sebastián de los Reyes	54.75	64	Badalona	48.69
16	Leganés	54.63	65	Salamanca	48.66
17	Ávila	54.52	66	Marbella	48.16
18	Alcalá de Henares	54.31	67	Valencia	48.07
19	Huesca	54.18	68	Alicante	47.97
20	Santander	53.94	69	Pontevedra	47.82
21	Coslada	53.85	70	Vigo	47.76
22	Móstoles	53.54	71	Reus	47.58
23	Zaragoza	53.34	72	Telde	47.46
24	Pamplona/Iruña	53.28	73	Santa Coloma de Gramanet	47.45
25	Girona	53.06	74	Huelva	47.44
26	Cáceres	52.92	75	Valladolid	47.36
27	Albacete	52.83	76	Mataró	47.35
28	Bilbao	52.63	77	Cartagena	47.02
29	Palma	52.48	78	La Coruña	46.89
30	Lugo	52.12	79	San Fernando	46.85
31	Gijón	52.01	80	El Puerto de Santa María	46.53
32	Guadalajara	51.93	81	Málaga	46.44
33	Santiago de Compostela	51.93	82	Zamora	46.24
34	Oviedo	51.73	83	Ceuta	45.71
35	Palencia	51.73	84	Algeciras	45.33
36	Tarrasa	51.73	85	Melilla	45.33
37	San Cristóbal de La Laguna	51.63	86	Chiclana de la Frontera	45.32
38	Ciudad Real	51.47	87	Murcia	45.31
39	Torrejón de Ardoz	51.33	88	Sevilla	45.30
40	Castellón de la Plana	51.29	89	Jerez de la Frontera	45.07
41	Lleida	51.27	90	Roquetas de Mar	44.81
42	Tarragona	50.94	91	Almería	44.62
43	Avilés	50.76	92	Lorca	44.61
44	Baracaldo	50.69	93	Vélez-Málaga	44.44
45	Cornellá de Llobregat	50.56	94	Torrent	44.20
46	Barcelona	50.49	95	Elche	43.96
47	San Baudilio de Llobregat	50.47	96	Dos Hermanas	43.77
48	Santa Cruz de Tenerife	50.15	97	Talavera de la Reina	43.47
49	Arona	50.01	98	Teruel	42.06
			99	Torrevieja	41.85
			100	El Ejido	40.95

Table 5. New ranking of the 100 cities' SD performance position (P) according to ID.

P IR	City	Value ID	P ID	Variation P IR-P ID	P R	City	Value ID	P ID	Variation P IR-P ID
1	Vitoria-Gasteiz	63.09	1	0	50	Parla	47.29	78	−28
2	Pozuelo de Alarcón	59.59	2	0	51	Las Palmas de G.C	49.06	61	−10
3	Las Rozas de Madrid	57.51	6	−3	52	Sabadell	49.60	56	−4
4	Alcobendas	57.18	9	−5	53	Córdoba	51.90	42	11
5	Madrid	57.77	4	1	54	Granada	50.31	51	3
6	Alcorcón	56.70	11	−5	55	Orense	49.81	54	1
7	Getafe	56.58	2	−5	56	Toledo	51.25	47	9
8	Logroño	58.72	3	5	57	Badajoz	48.58	65	−8
9	Soria	57.58	5	4	58	Segovia	52.41	40	18
10	San Cugat del Vallés	56.79	10	0	59	Cuenca	50.53	50	9
11	Rivas-Vaciamadrid	55.28	16	−5	60	Hospitalet de Llobregat	49.97	53	7
12	Fuenlabrada	54.48	25	−13	61	Cádiz	48.58	66	−5
13	Donostia/San Sebastián	57.44	7	6	62	Jaén	47.64	75	−13
14	Burgos	57.25	8	6	63	León	50.64	49	14
15	S.S. de los Reyes	54.87	19	−4	64	Badalona	48.24	67	−3
16	Leganés	54.95	18	−2	65	Salamanca	49.49	58	7
17	Ávila	55.70	15	2	66	Marbella	48.76	64	2
18	Alcalá de Henares	54.10	28	−10	67	Valencia	47.80	74	−7
19	Huesca	55.04	17	2	68	Alicante	49.56	57	11
20	Santander	56.15	13	7	69	Pontevedra	48.90	63	6
21	Coslada	52.62	38	−17	70	Vigo	49.40	59	11
22	Móstoles	53.11	33	−11	71	Reus	47.83	71	0
23	Zaragoza	56.03	14	9	72	Telde	42.89	95	−23
24	Pamplona/Iruña	54.43	26	−2	73	Santa Coloma de Gramanet	46.98	80	−7
25	Girona	54.12	27	−2	74	Huelva	48.04	69	5
26	Cáceres	53.60	30	−4	75	Valladolid	50.14	52	23
27	Albacete	54.56	22	5	76	Mataró	47.38	76	0
28	Bilbao	54.54	23	5	77	Cartagena	47.80	77	5
29	Palma	52.41	41	−12	78	La Coruña	47.80	73	5
30	Lugo	52.94	35	−5	79	San Fernando	44.90	87	−8
31	Gijón	53.76	29	2	80	El Puerto de Santa María	45.65	83	−3
32	Guadalajara	54.53	24	8	81	Málaga	47.11	79	2
33	Santiago de Compostela	52.63	37	−4	82	Zamora	47.31	77	5
34	Oviedo	54.78	20	14	83	Ceuta	42.75	96	−13
35	Palencia	54.65	21	14	84	Algeciras	43.07	94	−10
36	Tarrasa	52.67	36	0	85	Melilla	40.77	99	−14
37	S. Cristóbal de La Laguna	51.87	43	−6	86	Chiclana de la Frontera	44.55	88	−2
38	Ciudad Real	52.99	34	4	87	Murcia	48.07	68	19
39	Torrejón de Ardoz	49.76	55	−16	88	Sevilla	46.93	81	7
40	Castellón de la Plana	53.33	32	8	89	Jerez de la Frontera	43.71	91	−2
41	Lleida	53.38	31	10	90	Roquetas de Mar	45.12	85	5
42	Tarragona	52.44	39	3	91	Almería	43.67	92	−1
43	Avilés	51.72	44	−1	92	Lorca	45.00	86	6
44	Baracaldo	49.35	60	−16	93	Vélez-Málaga	43.53	93	0
45	Cornellá de Llobregat	51.20	48	−3	94	Torrent	45.35	84	10
46	Barcelona	51.40	46	0	95	Elche	46.32	82	13
47	San Baudilio de Llobregat	51.65	45	2	96	Dos Hermanas	42.62	97	−1
48	Santa Cruz de Tenerife	49.01	62	−14	97	Talavera de la Reina	44.10	90	7
49	Arona	47.86	70	−21	98	Teruel	44.13	89	9
					99	Torrevieja	41.61	98	1
					100	El Ejido	39.36	100	0

Negative values (in red) lose positions in the ranking in contrast to positive values (in blue).

Figure 2 shows this relationship and the changes in the position of cities in relation to IR and ID when values are sorted after updating the governance dimension sub-indice (*Igo*). Bars in the chart represent the distance between each city when converting the IR synthetic value into ID. The cities with higher values of governance (*Igo*) have significantly

improved their ranking in comparison to the ones with lower values as shown in Table A2 of the Appendix A.

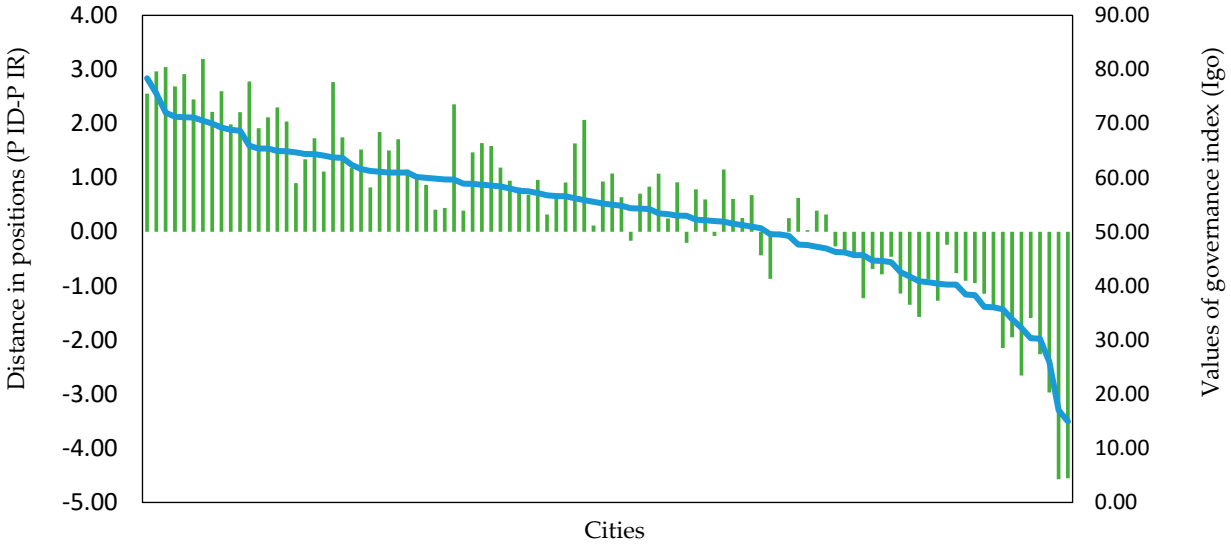

Figure 2. Relation between Governance index (*Igo*) and changes of position in cities ranking (ID and IR).

4.3. Assessment of Governance Indicators Used by the REDS: Better Than Others but Still Incomplete

The set of governance indicators selected by REDS are more adequate than those used by other international reports focused on cities. REDS proposes a greater number of governance indicators (9.52%) compared to them, as seen in Table A3 of the Appendix A. However, according to Glass and Newig [3], even if metrics cover a broad range of variables, the governance indicators tied to Policy coherence and Reflexivity and adaptation are lacking. Table 6 displays the results of the assessment performed.

Table 6. Correspondence between indicators proposed by Glass and Newig [3] and indicators of REDS.

Variable	Description	Glass and Newig Indicators	REDS Indicators
1. Participation	The capability of economic and non-economic interest groups to propose and assess relevant policy measures and their implementation.	1.1. Association competence (business) 1.2. Association competence (others)	1.2.1. National networks 1.2.2. Cooperation and development projects
2. Policy coherence	The extent to which the institutional structure fosters coherent and coordinated policy making and implementation	2.1 Inter-ministerial coordination 2.2. Coherent communication 2.3 Institutional coherence for implementation	None
3. Reflexivity and adaptation	The degree of reflexivity and adaptation of institutional arrangements including self-monitoring, capacity for reform, the influence of strategic planning units, and regulatory impact assessments.	3.1. Organizational reform 3.2. Adaptability 3.3. Strategic Planning 3.4. Evidence-based instruments	None
4. Democratic institutions	The quality of democratic institutions including electoral process, media freedom and access to information, civil rights, and political liberties, as well as rule of law.	4.1. Electoral process 4.2 Access to information 4.3. Civil Rights and Political Liberties 4.4. Rule of Law	4.1.1. Electoral participation 4.2.1. Municipal transparency index 4.3.1. Solidity and autonomy of the municipal institution 4.4.1. Violence against minors 4.4.2. Money laundering and drug trafficking 4.4.3. Homicides and murders

4.4. Ranking of 100 Cities upon Icu: More Experience in Urban Strategic Planning Accelerates SD Performance

The new indicator Strategic Culture *(Icu)* fills the gaps showed in Table 6. As such, the 'Reflexivity and adaptation' dimension corresponds to *3.3. Strategic Planning*, whilst *Icu* can be also extended to the 'Policy coherence' domain since strategic planning was originally conceived as a management tool in the private sector.

To validate the indicator, we have analyzed the relationship between the *Igo* values for the 100 cities and their performance on IR and ID by clustering the cities according to *Icu*. IR results are inconsistent, since there is no correspondence between Groups 1–3 (cities more experienced in urban strategic planning processes) and IR performance. However, the correspondence increases when governance is better weighted in ID. With regard to *Icu*, cities with more experience in urban strategic planning processes (higher *Icu* value), significantly enhance their position. As the improvement has been measured in percentages, Group 1 cities boost their position in 71.43% of cases, while cities of Groups 6 and 7 worsen it, by 52.94% and 55.56%, respectively (Table 7).

Table 7. Worse/better % change of ID ranking.

Icu	Cities	Worse	Better
Group 1	Alcobendas; Alicante; Almería; Barcelona; Málaga; Palencia; Sevilla	28.57%	71.43%
Group 2	Albacete; Badajoz; Bilbao; Burgos; Cádiz; Córdoba; Elche; Getafe; Hospitalet de Llobregat; Jerez de la Frontera; La Coruña; Madrid; Murcia; Oviedo; Pamplona/Iruña; Santa Coloma de Gramanet; Santa Cruz de Tenerife; Santander; Santiago de Compostela; Talavera de la Reina; Torrent; Valencia; Vélez-Málaga; Vitoria-Gasteiz	37.50%	62.50%
Group 3	Ceuta; Donostia/San Sebastián; Gijón; Lugo; Zaragoza	40.00%	60.00%
Group 4	Granada; Huesca; Jaén; Logroño; Roquetas de Mar; Toledo; Torrejón de Ardoz	28.57%	71.43%
Group 5	Alcalá de Henares; Algeciras; Arona; Badalona; Baracaldo; Cartagena; Castellón de la Plana/Castelló de la Plana; Ciudad Real; Cuenca; Girona; Huelva; Las Palmas de Gran Canaria; Leganés; León; Lorca; Mataró; Melilla; Móstoles; Palma; Pontevedra; Sabadell; Salamanca; San Baudilio de Llobregat; San Cristóbal de La Laguna; Tarragona; Telde; Teruel; Valladolid; Zamora	48.28%	51.72%
Group 6	Alcorcón; Ávila; Avilés; Cáceres; Cornellá de Llobregat; Coslada; El Ejido; El Puerto de Santa María; Guadalajara; Marbella; Parla; Reus; Rivas-Vaciamadrid; San Cugat del Vallés; San Fernando; Segovia; Soria; Tarrasa; Vigo	52.94%	47.06%
Group 7	Chiclana de la Frontera; Dos Hermanas; Fuenlabrada; Las Rozas de Madrid; Lleida; Orense; Pozuelo de Alarcón; San Sebastián de los Reyes; Torrevieja	55.56%	44.44%

The cities of Group 1 and a great number of those of Group 2 have long experience in strategic planning and governance processes linked to urban development. For instance, Barcelona, Malaga, and Alcobendas are flagship cities that have experienced a substantial improvement on sustainable development due to these processes. Consequently, it is not surprising that a greater number of cities strengthen their position in the global ranking when referring to ID after rebalancing the governance dimension. On the contrary, cities of Group 7 have barely implemented strategic planning processes over the years.

5. Discussion

Many authors argue that the evaluation of multidimensional concepts such as SD through composite indices entails an oversimplification of the aspects to be appraised [44,70], whilst others consider them as the most appropriate instruments to make decisions and visualize the evolution and the impacts of policies [43,71,72]. Multi-Criteria Decision-Making techniques (MCDM) arise as highly suitable in multidimensional frameworks such as SD [73–75]. They enable one to analyze (rank, classify, choose) a series of possible alternatives and take into account different criteria simultaneously. These methods illustrate the complexity in wide-ranging fields, such as competitiveness, governance, environment, press, development, peacefulness, tourism, economy, universities, and so on. El Gibari et al. [42] conducted a literature review of papers published after 2002 in leading inter-

national journals and classified the MCDM methods into five categories: the elementary methods, the value- and utility-based methods, the outranking relation approach, the data envelopment analysis-based methods, and the distance-functions-based methods. Most maintain that the methodological design of indices, especially in the normalization, aggregation, and robust analysis phases, requires the decisions of policy makers to be reliable [47].

However, since the United Nations and other international organizations have chosen this assessment process for the evaluation of the 2030 Agenda, the selection of the dimensions to be examined, the indicators to be defined, and the methodology for constructing indices must be considered carefully [50,76]. In this sense, the work carried out by Lafortune et al. [48] is interesting, comparing the four most recent reports used to measure national progress on the Agenda 2030 elaborated by SDSN, OECD, Eurostat, and ASviS. All underline the need for better data to increase the accuracy of their assessment, but also the necessity of involving experts and 'policy trackers' (entities seeking alternative sources of information) to provide more fine-grained and timely appraisals.

Besides, our empirical analysis shows that the governance dimension is underestimated in SDG composite indices because of two main reasons. On the one hand, governance is not equally weighted in comparison to the other three SD dimensions. On the other hand, the selected governance indicators do not accurately reflect relational dynamics of SD policies, which are inherent to the notion of governance.

To correct this, we propose two methodological stages. Firstly, the aggregation of the 17 SDG of the 2030 Agenda into four sub-indices that embody the four SD dimensions (*Ipe, Ipa, Ipo, Igo*) by assigning each of them the same weighting factor (1/4). After applying this method to data from REDS, we disclosed that the relationship between governance (*Igo*) and SD is positive once the underestimation of the governance has been corrected (Figure 2). Hereby, cities with the highest values in *Igo* notably improved their position on ID with respect to IR compared to those cities with the lowest values.

It could be argued that, statistically, the greater weighting of governance in the synthetic index automatically implies an improvement in the position of those cities with higher values, but this correlation is not certain when referring to *Igo*. Results show that governance exponentially increases the SD performance of cities.

Secondly, we point out the need for selecting appropriate governance indicators. According to our evaluation in Table 6, most indicators proposed by REDS are rather government-related, and even if government and governance are interrelated, both notions are distinct. As a prerequisite for successful SD policies [77], the integrated approach implies a mode of governance that benefits partnership and network governance for the mobilization and participation of different actors in collaborative processes [78]. Adequate governance indicators should grasp these relational dynamics that are embedded inter alia, in the frame of strategic planning processes. Therefore, we propose a new governance indicator that accounts for Strategic Culture (*Icu*) of territories.

The analysis shows that *Icu* is an adequate indicator that works well. It is built upon three types of strategic planning processes (urban strategic plans, the 21 Local Agenda, and ISUD projects) that have been considered a good example of an integrated approach towards SD at urban level [79]. Furthermore, those processes were also implemented in other European cities [80]. The application of *Icu* in other contexts is thus viable, but it requires a standardized collection of data to increase reliability and comparability among cases. Finally, *Icu* demonstrates that cities with higher levels of strategic culture, namely, with more years of experience and strategic planning processes, highly enhance their position regarding SD performance [81]. In this vein, governance can be considered a trigger for both the localization of the 2030 Agenda and Integrated Sustainable Urban Development in the EU zone.

6. Conclusions

The academic literature related to SD policies amounts to a great deal of discursive 'smoke' but little in the way of 'empirical fire' [1]. Therefore, the purpose of our study was to empirically assess the way in which the governance dimension of SD is addressed in the frame of the 2030 Agenda, particularly through the SDG Indices. Using the data provided by the REDS report for 100 Spanish cities, we demonstrated our initial hypothesis about the underestimation of the governance dimension due to two main reasons: firstly, the lower weight assigned to the governance dimension within SDG Indices compared to the other dimensions of sustainability (society, economy, and environment); secondly, a selection of governance indicators that do not grasp the relational dynamics inherent to this notion.

After developing a series of operational steps and specific assessment tools such as IR, ID, and *Icu*, we can conclude that:

(i) The underestimation of the governance dimension in SDG composite indices is inconsistent with the relevance of governance at the conceptual level in the frame of the 2030 Agenda, since all the four SD dimensions are equally important. As such, a rebalance of the governance dimension is needed when measuring the achievement of the SDGs.

(ii) Although the governance indicators should properly account for the relational and organizational dynamics of territories, indicators that assess both aspects are usually lacking. To correct this, we propose a new indicator of Strategic Culture (*Icu*) based on the experience of cities in strategic planning processes. The new metric can be included in further REDS reports and also applied to other geographical areas different from Spain.

(iii) The relationship between better governance and SD is positive. Higher values in governance lead to better SD performance. This highlights the relevance of governance in the transition to SD. Governance thus arises as a trigger of urban SD.

We also point out that reports on the analysis of the progress towards the SDGs should not be limited to appraise individually each of the 17 SDGs by discarding the complexity of the governance dimension. In this sense, data availability and an accurate understanding of the notion of governance should be addressed to this end. This research provided empirical evidence about consequences of a misleading definition of governance at the operational level. In addition to 'sustainable development', 'governance' is a multidimensional concept as well.

Finally, alongside the refinement of the proposed methods and their application to other contexts in a standardized manner, the results open future research developments such as the integration of expert opinion and 'policy trackers' in the construction of the SDG Index regarding the limits or thresholds of sustainability for each indicator, to ensure their suitability to different territorial scales. In any case, we expect that our findings are useful not only to strengthen REDS methodology, but to promote a higher consistency in SDSN approaches in accordance with the 2030 Agenda.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Synthetic indices built for the 100 Spanish cities.

City	IR	*Ipe*	*Ipa*	*Ipo*	*Igo*	ID
Vitoria-Gasteiz	60.54	58.07	61.99	53.93	78.37	63.09
Pozuelo de Alarcón	58.69	59.59	68.71	45.37	64.68	59.59
Las Rozas de Madrid	57.11	53.35	66.41	50.46	59.83	57.51
Alcobendas	56.74	55.91	62.02	51.11	59.67	57.18
Madrid	56.66	54.47	60.13	52.40	64.06	57.77
Alcorcón	56.31	53.54	63.95	50.40	58.91	56.70
Getafe	55.76	54.41	60.63	50.04	61.22	56.58
Logroño	55.75	51.50	51.63	56.58	75.51	58.72
Soria	55.60	37.86	69.55	54.09	68.83	57.58
San Cugat del Vallés	55.45	54.15	56.56	52.06	64.37	56.79
Rivas-Vaciamadrid	55.44	51.68	60.99	54.10	54.34	55.28
Fuenlabrada	55.35	52.05	62.43	53.88	49.54	54.48
Donostia/San Sebastián	55.23	50.08	60.47	49.23	69.99	57.44
Burgos	54.80	45.01	55.98	56.90	71.10	57.25
San Sebastián de los Reyes	54.75	52.82	60.02	51.11	55.53	54.87
Leganés	54.63	52.11	61.98	48.95	56.75	54.95
Ávila	54.52	47.64	62.41	50.37	62.36	55.70
Alcalá de Henares	54.31	51.13	56.80	55.54	52.94	54.10
Huesca	54.18	45.97	61.67	52.58	59.96	55.04
Santander	53.94	42.89	59.76	53.30	68.67	56.15
Coslada	53.85	51.08	58.89	54.84	45.67	52.62
Móstoles	53.54	54.11	56.68	51.01	50.64	53.11
Zaragoza	53.34	48.61	52.24	52.02	71.25	56.03
Pamplona/Iruña	53.28	49.27	56.19	51.32	60.93	54.43
Girona	53.06	55.61	50.78	49.97	60.12	54.12
Cáceres	52.92	47.55	57.33	52.05	57.47	53.60
Albacete	52.83	49.06	52.19	52.64	64.35	54.56
Bilbao	52.63	54.45	46.42	51.92	65.37	54.54
Palma	52.48	49.69	59.33	48.64	51.97	52.41
Lugo	52.12	38.94	59.06	56.20	57.57	52.94
Gijón	52.01	44.28	54.74	52.36	63.65	53.76
Guadalajara	51.93	47.27	55.79	45.81	69.24	54.53
Santiago de Compostela	51.93	49.29	51.52	53.10	56.60	52.63
Oviedo	51.73	46.90	48.08	52.11	72.01	54.78
Palencia	51.73	44.29	52.17	50.97	71.15	54.65
Tarrasa	51.73	50.30	49.93	52.45	58.02	52.67
San Cristóbal de La Laguna	51.63	47.02	64.84	42.37	53.25	51.87
Ciudad Real	51.47	51.33	50.12	48.89	61.60	52.99
Torrejón de Ardoz	51.33	47.52	60.30	50.38	40.85	49.76
Castellón de la Plana	51.29	46.03	52.51	49.91	64.86	53.33
Lleida	51.27	45.37	49.42	53.38	65.37	53.38
Tarragona	50.94	49.04	49.34	50.44	60.95	52.44
Avilés	50.76	47.67	49.23	52.84	57.15	51.72
Baracaldo	50.69	54.18	50.48	51.01	41.71	49.35
Cornellá de Llobregat	50.56	49.76	48.17	52.03	54.81	51.20
Barcelona	50.49	57.51	40.35	51.18	56.55	51.40
San Baudilio de Llobregat	50.47	50.29	44.93	53.02	58.38	51.65
Santa Cruz de Tenerife	50.15	46.21	63.69	43.59	42.55	49.01
Arona	50.01	39.37	71.02	45.36	35.69	47.86
Parla	49.95	48.26	56.22	52.43	32.25	47.29
Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	49.85	47.27	60.40	43.96	44.61	49.06
Sabadell	49.62	46.65	50.24	52.00	49.50	49.60
Córdoba	49.60	45.45	53.92	43.31	64.92	51.90
Granada	49.60	51.19	52.40	43.33	54.30	50.31

Table A1. *Cont.*

City	IR	*Ipe*	*Ipa*	*Ipo*	*Igo*	ID
Orense	49.55	40.43	59.07	48.48	51.25	49.81
Toledo	49.54	51.95	50.58	41.54	60.94	51.25
Badajoz	49.27	45.73	53.62	50.29	44.67	48.58
Segovia	49.22	39.27	50.49	49.39	70.51	52.41
Cuenca	49.06	42.98	47.36	52.93	58.84	50.53
Hospitalet de Llobregat	49.04	47.61	44.08	52.96	55.23	49.97
Cádiz	49.00	53.58	52.43	42.10	46.19	48.58
Jaén	48.91	47.46	55.28	47.40	40.42	47.64
León	48.80	44.65	50.04	46.80	61.09	50.64
Badalona	48.69	51.20	41.29	54.78	45.70	48.24
Salamanca	48.66	41.88	55.37	46.50	54.21	49.49
Marbella	48.16	37.91	60.88	44.11	52.14	48.76
Valencia	48.07	49.53	47.07	48.33	46.27	47.80
Alicante	47.97	45.33	46.25	48.12	58.53	49.56
Pontevedra	47.82	45.30	45.54	49.77	55.00	48.90
Vigo	47.76	45.67	46.08	47.14	58.69	49.40
Reus	47.58	43.73	48.85	49.48	49.24	47.83
Telde	47.46	46.16	65.58	42.84	16.99	42.89
Santa Coloma de Gramanet	47.45	49.22	45.34	49.00	44.37	46.98
Huelva	47.44	48.02	48.33	44.34	51.48	48.04
Valladolid	47.36	46.40	36.11	52.18	65.88	50.14
Mataró	47.35	46.79	42.78	52.41	47.56	47.38
Cartagena	47.02	44.59	49.28	45.10	52.25	47.80
La Coruña	46.89	43.55	49.33	45.35	52.98	47.80
San Fernando	46.85	52.02	51.58	42.16	33.86	44.90
El Puerto de Santa María	46.53	46.33	54.40	41.21	40.68	45.65
Málaga	46.44	48.80	44.68	44.03	50.94	47.11
Zamora	46.24	37.91	49.02	48.92	53.39	47.31
Ceuta	45.71	50.33	52.21	42.52	25.92	42.75
Algeciras	45.33	48.42	51.02	42.59	30.25	43.07
Melilla	45.33	45.06	55.94	47.13	14.97	40.77
Chiclana de la Frontera	45.32	47.40	55.19	35.39	40.24	44.55
Murcia	45.31	45.73	42.68	40.14	63.73	48.07
Sevilla	45.30	47.52	40.07	43.96	56.17	46.93
Jerez de la Frontera	45.07	46.93	52.62	39.27	36.03	43.71
Roquetas de Mar	44.81	34.66	56.06	42.86	46.92	45.12
Almería	44.62	41.18	50.00	45.20	38.29	43.67
Lorca	44.61	39.23	50.76	42.79	47.21	45.00
Vélez-Málaga	44.44	39.05	57.14	39.55	38.40	43.53
Torrent	44.20	41.38	47.46	40.67	51.87	45.35
Elche	43.96	37.63	42.64	45.34	59.65	46.32
Dos Hermanas	43.77	48.78	40.05	45.52	36.13	42.62
Talavera de la Reina	43.47	39.79	50.38	38.58	47.64	44.10
Teruel	42.06	41.26	27.22	52.20	55.84	44.13
Torrevieja	41.85	35.31	49.99	40.88	40.25	41.61
El Ejido	40.95	32.60	55.55	38.96	30.34	39.36

Table A2. Changes of city ranking positions (P) according to *Icu*, *Igo*, IR and ID values.

Cities	*Icu*	P *Igo*	*Igo*	P IR	IR	P ID	ID	P IR-ID	% P Change
Palencia	Group 1	5	71.15	35	51.73	21	54.65	+14	28.57% (worse) 71.43% (better)
Alcobendas		33	59.67	4	56.74	9	57.18	−5	
Alicante		38	58.53	68	47.97	57	49.56	+11	
Barcelona		46	56.55	46	50.49	46	51.40	0	
Sevilla		47	56.17	88	45.30	81	46.93	+7	
Málaga		66	50.94	81	46.44	79	47.11	+2	
Almería		90	38.29	91	44.62	92	43.67	−1	

Table A2. *Cont.*

Cities	*Icu*	P *Igo*	*Igo*	P IR	IR	P ID	ID	P IR-ID	% P Change
Oviedo		1	72.01	34	51.73	20	54.78	+14	
Burgos		3	71.10	14	54.80	8	57.25	+6	
Santander		6	68.67	20	53.94	13	56.15	+7	
Bilbao		11	65.37	28	52.63	23	54.54	+5	
Córdoba		13	64.92	53	49.60	42	51.90	+11	
Albacete		15	64.35	27	52.83	22	54.56	+5	
Madrid		19	64.06	5	56.66	4	57.77	+1	
Murcia		20	63.73	87	45.31	68	48.07	+19	
Getafe		21	61.22	7	55.76	12	56.58	−5	
Pamplona/Iruña		25	60.93	24	53.28	26	54.43	−2	
Elche		29	59.65	95	43.96	82	46.32	+13	37.50% (worse) 62.50% (better)
Santiago de Compostela	Group 2	34	56.60	33	51.93	37	52.63	−4	
Hospitalet de Llobregat		45	55.23	60	49.04	53	49.97	+7	
La Coruña		50	52.98	78	46.89	73	47.80	+5	
Torrent		58	51.87	94	44.20	84	45.35	+10	
Talavera de la Reina		63	47.64	97	43.47	90	44.10	+7	
Valencia		71	46.27	67	48.07	74	47.80	−7	
Cádiz		75	46.19	61	49.00	66	48.58	−5	
Badajoz		76	44.67	57	49.27	65	48.58	−8	
S. Coloma de Gramanet		79	44.37	73	47.45	80	46.98	−7	
Santa Cruz TF		81	42.55	48	50.15	62	49.01	−14	
Vélez-Málaga		82	38.40	93	44.44	93	43.53	0	
Jerez de la Frontera		89	36.03	89	45.07	91	43.71	−2	
Vitoria		92	78.37	1	60.54	1	63.09	0	
Zaragoza		4	71.25	23	53.34	14	56.03	+9	
San Sebastian	Group 3	8	69.99	13	55.23	7	57.44	+6	40.00% (worse) 60.00% (better)
Gijón		22	63.65	31	52.01	29	53.76	+2	
Lugo		41	57.57	30	52.12	35	52.94	−5	
Ceuta		98	25.92	83	45.71	96	42.75	−13	
Logroño		2	75.51	8	55.75	3	58.72	+5	
Toledo		28	60.94	56	49.54	47	51.25	+9	
Huesca		31	59.96	19	54.18	17	55.04	+2	28.57% (worse) 71.4% (better)
Granada	Group 4	54	54.30	54	49.60	51	50.31	+3	
Roquetas de Mar		74	46.92	90	44.81	85	45.12	+5	
Torrejón de Ardoz		84	40.85	39	51.33	55	49.76	−16	
Jaén		86	40.42	62	48.91	75	47.64	−13	
Valladolid		12	65.88	75	47.36	52	50.14	+23	
Castellón de la Plana		16	64.86	40	51.29	32	53.33	+8	
Ciudad Real		24	61.60	38	51.47	34	52.99	+4	
León		26	61.09	63	48.80	49	50.64	+14	
Tarragona		27	60.95	42	50.94	39	52.44	+3	
Girona		30	60.12	25	53.06	27	54.12	−2	
Cuenca		36	58.84	59	49.06	50	50.53	+9	
Vigo		37	58.69	70	47.76	59	49.40	+11	
S. Baudilio de Llobregat		39	58.38	47	50.47	45	51.65	+2	
Leganés	Group 5	44	56.75	16	54.63	18	54.95	−2	48.28% (worse) 51.72% (better)
Teruel		48	55.84	98	42.06	89	44.13	+9	
Pontevedra		51	55.00	69	47.82	63	48.90	+6	
Salamanca		55	54.21	65	48.66	58	49.49	+7	
Zamora		56	53.39	82	46.24	77	47.31	+5	
S. Cristóbal La Laguna		57	53.25	37	51.63	43	51.87	−6	
Alcalá de Henares		59	52.94	18	54.31	28	54.10	−10	
Cartagena		60	52.25	77	47.02	72	47.80	+5	
Palma		62	51.97	29	52.48	41	52.41	−12	
Huelva		64	51.48	74	47.44	69	48.04	+5	
Móstoles		67	50.64	22	53.54	33	53.11	−11	

Table A2. *Cont.*

Cities	*Icu*	P *Igo*	*Igo*	P IR	IR	P ID	ID	P IR-ID	% P Change
Sabadell		69	49.50	52	49.62	56	49.60	−4	
Mataró		72	47.56	76	47.35	76	47.38	0	
Lorca		73	47.21	92	44.61	86	45.00	+6	
Badalona		77	45.70	64	48.69	67	48.24	−3	
Las Palmas de G.C.		80	44.61	51	49.85	61	49.06	−10	
Baracaldo		83	41.71	44	50.69	60	49.35	−16	
Arona		93	35.69	49	50.01	70	47.86	−21	
Algeciras		97	30.25	84	45.33	94	43.07	−10	
Telde		99	16.99	72	47.46	95	42.89	−23	
Melilla		100	14.97	85	45.33	99	40.77	−14	
Segovia	Group 6	7	70.51	58	49.22	40	52.41	+18	52.94% (worse) 47.06% (better)
Guadalajara		9	69.24	32	51.93	24	54.53	+8	
Soria		10	68.83	9	55.60	5	57.58	+4	
San Cugat del Vallés		18	64.37	10	55.45	10	56.79	0	
Ávila		23	62.36	17	54.52	15	55.70	+2	
Alcorcón		35	58.91	6	56.31	11	56.70	−5	
Tarrasa		40	58.02	36	51.73	36	52.67	0	
Cáceres		42	57.47	26	52.92	30	53.60	−4	
Avilés		43	57.15	43	50.76	44	51.72	−1	
Cornellá de Llobregat		52	54.81	45	50.56	48	51.20	−3	
Rivas-Vaciamadrid		53	54.34	11	55.44	16	55.28	−5	
Marbella		61	52.14	66	48.16	64	48.76	+2	
Reus		70	49.24	71	47.58	71	47.83	0	
Coslada		78	45.67	21	53.85	38	52.62	−17	
El Puerto de Santa María		85	40.68	80	46.53	83	45.65	−3	
San Fernando		94	33.86	79	46.85	87	44.90	−8	
Parla		95	32.25	50	49.95	78	47.29	−28	
El Ejido		96	30.34	100	40.95	100	39.36	0	
Lleida	Group 7	14	65.37	41	51.27	31	53.38	+10	55.56% (worse) 44.44% (better)
Pozuelo de Alarcón		17	64.68	2	58.69	2	59.59	0	
Las Rozas de Madrid		32	59.83	3	57.11	6	57.51	−3	
S. Sebastián de los Reyes		49	55.53	15	54.75	19	54.87	−4	
Orense		65	51.25	55	49.55	54	49.81	+1	
Fuenlabrada		68	49.54	12	55.35	25	54.48	−13	
Torrevieja		87	40.25	99	41.85	98	41.61	+1	
Chiclana de la Frontera		88	40.24	86	45.32	88	44.55	−2	
Dos Hermanas		91	36.13	96	43.77	97	42.62	−1	

Table A3. Number of indicators (N_k) and weights (WD) assigned to sustainability dimensions by diverse SDG urban indexes in comparison to the 2030 Agenda [23,36,41,42].

SDG	Dimension	2030 Agenda		2018 Spanish SDG Urban Index (REDS)		2019 US SDG Urban Index		2019 European SDG Urban Index	
		N_k	WD	N_k	WD	N_k	WD	N_k	WD
1	Social	11		3		5		2	
2	Social	13		3		3		1	
3	Social	27	32.79%	12	34.52%	7	38.60%	6	33.93%
4	Social	11		5		4		7	
5	Social	14		6		3		3	
7	Economic	6		4		3		2	
8	Economic	16		5		3		3	
9	Economic	12	25.11%	5	35.71%	3	33.33%	6	39.29%

Table A3. *Cont.*

SDG	Dimension	2030 Agenda		2018 Spanish SDG Urban Index (REDS)		2019 US SDG Urban Index		2019 European SDG Urban Index	
		N_k	WD	N_k	WD	N_k	WD	N_k	WD
10	Economic	10		6		5		1	
11	Economic	14		10		5		10	
6	Environment	11		3		3		1	
12	Environment	12		4		3		4	
13	Environment	6	22.67%	3	20.24%	3	21.05%	1	17.86%
14	Environment	10		4		0		0	
15	Environment	12		3		3		4	
16	Governance	22	19.43%	5	9.53%	4	7.02%	5	8.92%
17	Governance	25		3		0		0	
Total	5	232	100%	84	100%	61	100%	56	100%

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