

## Article

# The Incorporation of the 2030 Agenda in the Design of Local Policies for Social Transformation in Disadvantaged Urban Areas

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**Abstract:** According to the United Nations, the current COVID-19 crisis is threatening decades of development gains. This situation is aggravated in disadvantaged urban areas where 25% of the world's population lives. Such concentration has aggravated the multidimensional problem that requires an integrated policy approach. Internationally, this approach has materialized in the formulation of global policies such as the 2030 Agenda. However, many doubts remain about the extent to which global policy such as the 2030 Agenda is able to inspire the formulation of local policies from the multidimensional perspective proposed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To answer this question, in this contribution we rely on a comparative case study of two public policies aimed at promoting the social inclusion of the most vulnerable groups in the urban context: the "Andalusian Regional Strategy for Social Cohesion and Inclusion. Intervention in disadvantaged areas" (ERACIS) and the "Barcelona Strategy for Inclusion and Reduction of Social Inequalities 2017–2027". The results show how the government sphere, the logic of intervention, and other aspects of policy design influence the incorporation of the principles of the 2030 Agenda in local policies, highlighting both risks and potentials of such policy transfer, crucial to the effective achievement of the SDGs.

**Keywords:** inclusive and sustainable urban development; public policy; social policy; policy transfer; design policy; multidimensionality approach; social exclusion; social transformation; disadvantaged urban areas; 2030 Agenda



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## 1. Introduction

According to the Report on the 2021 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, the current crisis caused by COVID-19 threatens decades of progress in development, further disrupting the progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [1]. Inequalities have increased considerably worldwide [1–3], not only in terms of health but also in social and economic spheres, which has turned COVID-19 into a syndemic [4]. Cities, where more than half of the world's population lives [2], have become the epicenters of COVID-19. This has aggravated the situation regarding disadvantaged neighbourhoods that were already affected by urban fragmentation and social segregation that occur in urban areas. The people who live in these neighborhoods, currently 24% of the world's population [1,2], have seen their situation worsen because of the impact of the pandemic on low-income households and on people who work in the informal sector [1].

This situation has given a renewed impetus to existing global efforts to address the challenges derived from the increase in social inequalities, especially in cities. New Urban Agenda-Habitat III (United Nations, 2017) was approved in 2016 with the objective of addressing urban segregation and social exclusion at the local level. Additionally, the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015) [5],

which was approved in 2015, set the objective of achieving inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urbanization, supported directly by SDG 11 “sustainable cities and communities” and in an integrated manner by the other SDGs.

These international policies are clear examples of global solidarity wherein the world is transformed, together. However, to make these policies effective, they must be implemented at the regional, national, and local levels. At these levels, public policies can truly materialize and directly influence the reduction in social inequalities in each specific context because they can be used to direct resources more efficiently [6]. However, as the academic literature has highlighted, the localization of transnational policies is a difficult challenge to achieve, especially at the regional and local government levels [7].

With the aim of shedding light on this debate, this article sets the following objective: to analyze how two Spanish policies aimed at promoting social inclusion have been adapted to the comprehensive mandate of the 2030 Agenda to improve the situation in disadvantaged neighborhoods. For this, two policies formulated after the approval of the 2030 Agenda in different territorial contexts of the Spanish state, i.e., Andalusia and Catalonia, were selected: the Andalusian Regional Strategy for Cohesion and Social Inclusion (ERACIS) [8], which was approved in 2018 as a strategy aimed at improving the social inclusion of disadvantaged neighborhoods at a regional level; and the Strategy for Inclusion and Reduction of Social Inequalities of Barcelona 2017–2027 (Barcelona Strategy) [9], a strategy aimed at reducing territorial inequality at a local (city) level.

### *1.1. Social Inequality and Urbanism: Disadvantaged Urban Areas*

Social inequality is not a new phenomenon, nor does it affect only those countries that have historically been affected by processes of exclusion [10]. In fact, this phenomenon has re-emerged in recent years with greater force in countries with more advanced economies, such as the OECD countries [3]. In these countries, social inequality has increased, especially since the financial crisis of 2008, a situation that has been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These events have led to the loss of public confidence in the government [3] and in the increasingly incipient fragmentation of society [11–19], marked by a multipolarity, where multiple centers of political and corporate power, housing markets, etc., exercise social predation from a systemic relationship, configuring diverse realities of social inequality, which are accentuated in cities all over the world [12,20–25].

The concern for the progressive formation of this dual and unequal society is not new [6,19,26–31]. Authors such as David Harvey [29,31] and Manuel Castells [30] have already noted how cities, responding to the capitalist mode of production, have been built based on urban planning conceived in a relational way, where the urban center is defined in relation to a periphery without which it cannot exist [12,16,19,29,31,32]. This configuration of spatial forms influences the social processes that occur in cities, where the characteristics of urban planning have created both physical and social barriers that individuals cannot overcome, providing an environment for social injustice [12,16,19,23,29–31,33].

Urbanism is configured as a heterogeneous and dynamic process of social, economic, political, and material division and fracture, which lands in different ways in each context, varying geographically not only between cities but also within them [13–18]. This fragmentation configures in cities urbanism of exception [34], where wealth concentrated in different political and economic powers generates zones of impoverishment and neglect, allowing elites to carve out new urban areas where life can develop separately from the vast majority of people living in the city [13–15,17–19,24,25,35].

Metropolitan systems are increasingly articulated as a range of production and consumption, revaluing processes and life. Relationships, characterized by competition and distinction, disarticulate places and lives that are devalued [17,18,24,25]. This is shaping new privileged zones and new urban identities and at the same time a shadow world [15,24].

Thus, these processes of urban fragmentation and social segregation are carried out based on an unequal distribution and a lack of interaction between different social groups in an urban space [6,18,19,29,31], generating so-called disadvantaged urban ar-

eas [15,17,24–27,29–31,36]. When talking about social and urban fragmentation and segregation, two different approaches are used: a sociological approach, in which segregation is defined as the lack of interaction between individuals from different social groups; and a geographical approach, the most commonly used, which refers to the unequal distribution of different social groups in the urban space [6,12,23,33]. Thus, urban fragmentation and social segregation give way to the monopolization of some to the detriment of others, based on two dimensions: a drawing of physical boundaries and a restriction to valuable resources considered by society to be able to participate in the benefits of urban life that attenuate inequality [17,19,35,37,38]. This segregation of cities conditions the lives of people residing in disadvantaged urban areas, where they experience low quality of life indices and have fewer life opportunities than the inhabitants of other areas of the city [6,15,17,28,39].

In addition to the general characteristics of unequal distribution in cities that facilitate functional segregation, disadvantaged urban areas are affected by specific characteristics that hinder the development of these areas and the people who inhabit them [6,18,27,39–41]. As identified by Arias and later other authors, due to the temporary persistence of social exclusion in these areas, there are several factors that influence the process of exclusion and segregation in disadvantaged neighborhoods [6,26,27,41,42], various factors influence the process of exclusion and segregation of disadvantaged neighborhoods. These are physical factors, inadequate housing, and urban layout or deficient services; socioeconomic factors, low levels of education, unemployment or proliferation of illegal activities; and political factors, little attention from public administrations, real estate policies that negatively affect the sociodemographic profile of the inhabitants or social inclusion policies characterized by uncoordinated or unintegrated sectorial actions that have not managed to transform the exclusionary reality of these neighborhoods.

This triple gap weakens the social fabric of disadvantaged neighborhoods, with differentiating characteristics according to each specific context, by maintaining over time the urban fragmentation and social exclusion that affects the life expectations of the young population and increasing unstructured families. Exclusion favors the constant arrival of new vulnerable populations, such as the working poor, ethnic minorities, or immigrant populations, who cannot access other spaces in the city due to the fragmentation caused by urbanism of exception, leading to a concentration of social groups with similar characteristics [15,17,33,34]. All these factors weaken coexistence and social cohesion, generating a stigma that deepens and continues the spiral of social exclusion [6,19,26,27,36,39,41].

An increasing number of authors argue that addressing this multidimensional and dynamic problem of disadvantaged urban areas requires a comprehensive approach [6,26,27,41–44]. Urban problems and social segregation are complex and multidimensional, where various problems interact in a systemic way that is not only physical, economic, or material, but also problems that hinder the social participation of citizens with equal rights, such as coexistence in safe environments, education, or health [6,32,42,45]. Urban space and the way in which the population is distributed is not a neutral scenario; it is a reflection of the interaction between different economic and social agents that contribute to making a city at any given moment. To address the social inequality that is generated in this interaction that fragments society, a combination of different policy instruments is needed to improve the urban space and the social situation [15,34,44]. The policies implemented in these neighborhoods should be based on the specific characteristics of each neighborhood and should encourage the participation of the population in their own development process [17,26,27,29,31,32,39,42]. It is therefore necessary to generate policies that are comprehensive and inclusive to fight against the social inequality and segregation that characterize urban areas today [17,27,42,44].

### *1.2. A Global Political Framework to Comprehensively Address the Challenge of Disadvantaged Urban Areas*

Aware of the growing social inequality that is facilitating the proliferation of increasingly fragmented and segregated societies, the international community is designing global

political frameworks focused on providing a multidimensional and comprehensive perspective to address such challenges.

In the field of urban development, two global policies stand out at the international level: New Urban Agenda-Habitat III [2] and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [5]. Both frameworks are based on international commitment to generate regional, national, and local policies that comprehensively favor inclusiveness and sustainability in cities. However, while the New Urban Agenda focuses on promoting inclusive and sustainable urban development in cities [2], the 2030 Agenda reinforces the promotion of such urban development, specifically in SDG 11 and with a comprehensive approach involving all 17 SDGs, which also incorporate other challenges that more broadly affect cities today [45–47].

The 2030 Agenda is designed as a comprehensive policy that highlights the challenges faced today by all countries in the world and the interconnection among these challenges. The academic literature has widely identified how all SDGs and targets are interconnected [46–50], which favors a multidimensional approach when addressing social exclusion in the context of disadvantaged urban areas [42]. SDG targets can be achieved collaterally as a result of policies and social interventions that can be carried out in disadvantaged urban areas. For example, if education improves in these areas, employment opportunities would improve [44,51]. Similarly, focusing on a territorial policy with a bottom-up participatory approach could reduce social segregation by improving social cohesion and coexistence [36,45].

This comprehensiveness and interdependence posed by the 2030 Agenda require a global effort to address the challenges facing today's societies; therefore, most governments are aligning their policies to the 2030 Agenda, referencing relevant SDGs for each type of policy. However, the policies that most need to incorporate the comprehensive and inclusive approach of the 2030 Agenda are those aimed at fighting poverty and social exclusion. These policies must take into account the multidimensionality involved in addressing this issue, especially with regard to combating the urban fragmentation and social segregation faced by cities, in which disadvantaged neighborhoods are the greatest exponent of social inequality [15,17,19,24,27,42–44].

### *1.3. The Necessary Localization of the 2030 Agenda at the Regional and Local Levels*

The academic literature echoes the need to analyze the incorporation of the 2030 Agenda into specific policies. Thus, recent studies such as that by García Serrano [52], which analyses how evaluation policies in Costa Rica integrate the 2030 Agenda, or that by Spinazzola [53], which analyses the integration of the 2030 Agenda into the departmental policies of several countries, can be highlighted. These studies indicate that to analyze the extent to which global efforts such as the 2030 Agenda are materializing in local public policies, it is necessary to have an analytical framework. Only in this way will it be possible to evaluate the extent to which policies are being designed that comprehensively address the generation of inclusive and sustainable cities and settlements consistent with the mandates of the 2030 Agenda.

Previous analyses that have tried to identify the influence of the 2030 Agenda on local policies have chosen to perform a general evaluation of policies as a whole [46,47]. Notably, the literature has identified the need for other frameworks of analysis to truly determine if local policies adapt to and implement the 2030 Agenda because many times, the references in the design of a policy remain declarative and normative and are not based on instruments, implementation structures, or in the shaping of the beneficiaries of the policies themselves [54–57].

To achieve this objective, we rely on models previously developed by academia. Authors such as Salamon [58], Peters [59–61], Curley [57], and Schneider and Ingram [62], have developed methodologies for analyzing policy design to test the effectiveness of its implementation. The literature has emphasized the need to pay attention to where and how policies are designed, as this design will affect the success of the policy. They

point to certain elements that need to be taken into account, such as understanding the dynamics of the social problem to be addressed, the importance of the design of the policy implementation itself, as well as the instruments used to implement it [59,60]. Authors such as Schneider and Ingram [62] and Curley [57] point out the need to take into account the beneficiaries of the policies, and the social construction that is made of them [62], as well as the design of the instruments that can determine who participates in policy and how [57,62]. Any policy design is based on assumptions about citizens' behavior, which can lead to an overly simplistic understanding of their reactions to policy [60]. There is therefore a proposal from academia for a more participatory and collaborative policy design, where the flexibility of institutions, from a systemic approach, can actually respond effectively to the problem it is intended to solve [59,60].

In this contribution, the model of Schneider and Ingram will be utilized [62] to analyze whether the design of public policies is truly aimed at generating democratic societies that solve the challenges facing societies, and that other authors such as Jones et al. [63] or Kash [64] have used to analyze the design of health or environmental policies. Democracies are sustained by the participation of a universal subject with equal rights to participate in public life [32]. Urban fragmentation and social segregation have an impact on relational poverty where multidimensional economic, political, and cultural processes, which converge at different geo-historical conjunctures, lead many people to be in a daily struggle for survival, leaving little time and limited access to spaces for participation, deliberation, and social inclusion [32]. This reality leads to the need for the design of comprehensive policies that democratically guarantee the participation of all citizens in the urban sphere, effectively reversing these multiple situations of exclusion derived from fragmented urbanism that has increased social inequalities [19,32,42,44].

Schneider and Ingram point out in their proposal that public policies have recognizable designs in the text and in the practices through which policies are transmitted and have consequences [62]. Policymaking is a human action, and its design aims to fulfill objectives. This design arises from a context in which different agents are involved in a given social construction of reality and of the target populations to which the policy is directed [62]. From this social construction, the elements of the policy are organized to serve certain purposes, where the ideas included have real consequences [62]. They also point out that policy analysis requires great sensitivity to the context in which it is applied, since an excellent design in one context may not be very useful in another [62].

To assess the impact of policy design on democratic values such as justice, citizenship, democratic institutions, or problem solving, the authors argue that there are a number of basic observable empirical elements found in all policies [62]. To this end, Schneider and Ingram offer an analytical framework based on the analysis of the architecture of any policy. Through the analysis of this structure, information can be obtained on whether a certain policy is truly inclusive and on the consequences derived from its design to address the challenge in question [62].

In their proposal, these authors identify six elements of this architecture present in the design of any policy: goals or problems to be solved, target populations, agents and implementation structures, tools, rules, rationales, and assumptions [62]. Goals refer to what the policy aims to accomplish and what should be modified or achieved as a result of the policy. Target populations are the recipients of the policy. Agents and implementation structures refer to those who will develop and enact a policy. Tools refer to how the policy will be created, and the instruments and methods required to support the planned changes. Rules specify the procedures for political action and the guidelines that establish who should do what, when, and with what resources. Finally, rationales and assumptions refer to the reasons for the policy, justifying the design of the policy as a whole [62].

The application of an analytical framework such as that of Schneider and Ingram will allow us to examine the way in which local policies are designed to address social exclusion and segregation and to what extent they do so from the integral and participatory perspective that indicates the global commitment to the 2030 Agenda.

#### 1.4. Case Study: Spanish Policies for Social Inclusion

Spain presents an alarming situation with respect to poverty and social exclusion. In 2020, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, concluded, after his visit to Spain, that it has one of the highest rates of poverty and social exclusion in Europe, approximately 26% [65]. In his report, he highlights the serious situation in certain urban areas of the country, where the living conditions of the population are surprisingly marginal, and reports that these populations have reasons to feel abandoned by political leaders [65]. The report highlights the existence of deep structural problems that keep Spain from meeting objectives with regard to the effectiveness of social protection programs, as indicated in the 2020 Report on Efficacy and Equity of Social Spending of the International Monetary Fund [66].

In his report, the United Nations Special Rapporteur indicates the key challenges that Spain must address in order to promote a country that guarantees social rights [65]. These challenges are mostly aimed at the socially excluded population living in disadvantaged urban areas [65]. Among the challenges that Spain must face are those related to social protection, which does not have an impact on reducing social inequality; education, where 72% of students in vulnerable situations study in segregated schools; health care, despite being one of the countries with an excellent health system, there are significant gaps in access for the most vulnerable population; and housing, where urban planning has not been able to reduce social inequality; housing, where urban planning has meant that the population has serious difficulties in accessing affordable housing, with a socio-demographic profile characterized by poverty concentrated in deprived urban areas; or climate change, which will have devastating consequences for people living in poverty and a strong impact on policies to support them [65].

To address these challenges, Spain has developed various policies at the state level aimed at reducing social inequality. A notable example is the National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2019–2023 [67], which, under the 2030 Agenda, in particular SDGs 1 and 10, aims to meet the needs of citizens, especially those who are the most vulnerable. At the regional and local levels, there are also numerous policies that promote social inclusion based on the mandates of the 2030 Agenda, at both the autonomous community and city levels. The design of social inclusion policies at the regional and local level can address more concretely the particular problems of the territories, especially in disadvantaged urban areas [68]. The tendency in the design of social inclusion policies has revolved around responding to sectoral problems, without incorporating the territorial and comprehensive dimension in order to respond to the situation that cities face today with the increase in social inequalities [68,69]. In Spain we can find some policies that address territorial inclusion from a comprehensive and community-based approach, although so far, they have presented some limitations in practice [68]. Given this situation, it is necessary to make an effort to design social inclusion policies that truly incorporate the comprehensive and participatory approach proposed by the 2030 Agenda, taking into account the specific contexts to respond effectively to the challenges presented by the territories [59].

This article aims to analyze how two Spanish policies have been adapted to the mandates of the 2030 Agenda to combat the social exclusion present in many cities in Spain that is facilitating the proliferation and worsening of social inequality in disadvantaged urban areas. Specifically, this study examines policies implemented in Andalusia and Catalonia, where comprehensive urban policies in favor of inclusive and sustainable development have been enacted, paying special attention to disadvantaged neighborhoods [43].

For Andalusia, the Andalusian Regional Strategy for Cohesion and Social Inclusion (from now on “ERACIS”) will be examined [8]. Approved in 2018, the aim of ERACIS is to socially transform disadvantaged urban areas of Andalusia, with an emphasis on SDGs 1 and 11. For Catalonia, the Strategy of Inclusion and Reduction of Social Inequalities of Barcelona 2017–2027 (from now on “Barcelona Strategy”) will be examined [9]. The aim of this strategy is to reduce territorial inequalities in the city of Barcelona based on all SDGs.

The reason for selecting these two policies as references is that both address territorial inequality in disadvantaged urban areas. Furthermore, one policy is designed to address the issue from the regional level and has a territorial approach (ERACIS), and the other policy is designed to address the issue from the local level and has an individual-centered approach (Barcelona Strategy).

An analysis of these two policies will not only allow an assessment of the effective incorporation of the 2030 Agenda in regional/local but will also contribute to shedding light on some of the numerous debates that exist in social research regarding the design of public policies to generate effective social transformation in disadvantaged urban areas. There is profuse debate on the level of government (regional or local) responsible for designing these policies [6,42]. Additionally, there is debate on whether these policies should focus on the specific needs of territories as the context that generates social exclusion [6,70–72] or focus on individuals in situations of social exclusion and on minimizing the factors that limit life opportunities [73,74].

To address these objectives, a three-step analysis is carried out. First, the SDGs that address the challenges of disadvantaged urban areas are identified. Second, through the policy design structure proposed by Schneider and Ingram [62], the elements of both policies that best reflect the mandates of the 2030 Agenda are identified. Third, a comparative analysis of the design of the two policies and the presence of the SDGs that affect disadvantaged urban areas in the policies is conducted to identify how and to what extent both policies incorporate the mandates of the 2030 Agenda. The comparative analysis concludes by discussing the extent to which the level of government (regional/local) and the policy approach (territories/individuals) may be favoring or hindering the incorporation of the comprehensive and participatory approach of the 2030 Agenda.

## 2. Materials and Methods

To achieve the identified objectives, a comparative case study was conducted. Specifically, two regional and local Spanish public policies aimed at the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the urban environment were selected as study materials: the Andalusian Regional Strategy for Cohesion and Social Inclusion (ERACIS) [8] and the Inclusion Strategy and Reduction of Social Inequalities in Barcelona 2017–2027 [9]. The method used to analyze these policies was conducted in three steps.

Step 1. To analyze the sensitivity of the 2030 Agenda with regard to addressing the challenges in disadvantaged urban areas, the first step was to identify the relevant SDGs that influence the dimensions that can generate social inclusion in these areas. The breadth of the 2030 Agenda has encouraged numerous authors to elucidate which SDGs apply to a particular issue, for example, Medina Rey et al. (human right to food) [75], Ramírez-Rubio et al. (urban health) [47], Maes et al. (urban ecosystems) [48], Seifollahi-Aghmiuni et al. (wetland ecosystems) [49], Farnia et al. (urban level) [50], or Sisto et al. (local administrations Budget) [55]. This study did the same by identifying SDGs that affect disadvantaged urban areas. However, given the nature of these territories, apart from identifying the relevant SDGs, a distinction was made between them: SDGs that address general urban problems that are aggravated in disadvantaged urban areas are referred to as general SDGs, such as poverty reduction or ensuring women's equal participation, which affect society in general but are aggravated in these areas; and SDGs that address urban problems that are specific to disadvantaged areas are referred to as specific SDGs, such as school failure, which specifically affects the life opportunities of a large part of the population living in these areas, the need to promote cities that reduce the existence of these marginal neighborhoods by promoting inclusive urbanization or improving coexistence and social cohesion within these areas characterized by insecurity and lack of habitable spaces.

Step 2. To determine if the 2030 Agenda can be found in the justifying, normative, or instrumental elements of these policies, an analysis was carried out using the policy design structure described by Schneider and Ingram [62]. These authors propose a framework to analyze the design of public policies, arguing that policies contain an architecture that can

be observed through a series of empirical elements, i.e., goals or problems to be solved, target populations, agents, and implementation structures, tools, rules, rationales, and assumptions. This policy design structure has been used to analyze sectorial policies in different countries by authors such as Jones et al. and Kash [63,64].

Step 3. To facilitate locating SDG targets in both policies, each policy will be searched for a list of keywords, which have been selected by highlighting those words that summarise the purpose of each SDG target. For example, SDG target 1.3. Implement nationally adequate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and achieve by 2030 substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable corresponds to the keyword “social protection”. This will allow locating, in each policy, the general and specific SDGs, an approach used in other studies [53,56,76]. The identification of SDG targets will allow a qualitative evaluation of the inclusion of the principles and objectives of the 2030 Agenda into the structure of each of the two policies analyzed, which have been organized according to the proposed policy design structure. For example, in Goals, the text of each policy is unified in terms of the objectives it pursues, and in Tools, the same is done by unifying the text that includes the instruments designed by the policy for its implementation. This qualitative assessment of the presence of SDG targets in each policy was carried out to distinguish between the appearances of these keywords in an explicit form, when the keyword appears the same in the policy text, implicit form, even if the keyword does not appear in the text literally, but the context refers in other words to its inclusion, or it simply does not appear in the text of the policy. This is a common practice in studies that analyze the presence of the 2030 Agenda in certain policies, for example, the study by Ilieva [46] on the explicit presence of SDGs in food strategies of ten large cities in North America or that by Birner [76] on the influence and integration of the SDGs in the institutional framework of governance in Germany.

Carrying out these three steps will allow the discussion to focus on evaluating to what extent each of the two policies analyzed incorporated the mandates of the 2030 Agenda, in what elements of the policy the mandates are included, and to what extent the level of government (regional/local) and structuring approach (territories/individuals) may be facilitating or hindering the effective incorporation of the 2030 Agenda.

### 3. Results

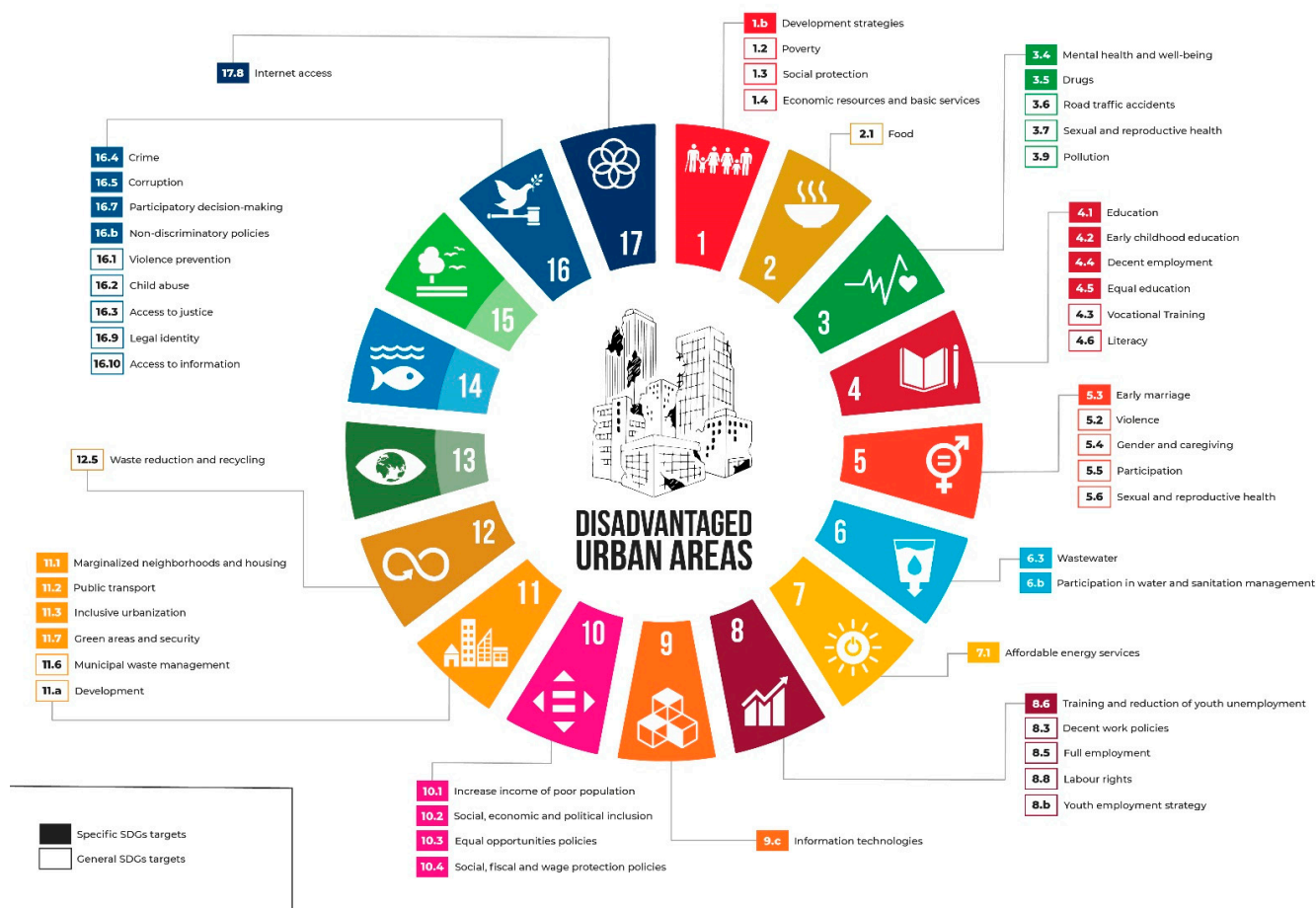
#### 3.1. Step 1: 2030 Agenda and Disadvantaged Urban Areas

As in other analogous studies that analyze the influence of the 2030 Agenda on certain issues [47–50,75], the first step was to identify which SDGs influence the reality of social exclusion in disadvantaged urban areas. Based on previous studies that address the dimensions that affect social exclusion in disadvantaged urban areas [6,26,27,41,42], 51 of the 169 SDG targets were selected [77]. These 51 targets, which represent 30.18% of the total, corresponding to 14 SDGs. Consistent with previous studies that have investigated relevant SDGs for urban areas [47], the SDGs corresponding to combating climate change (SDG 13), conserving the oceans (SDG 14), and protecting terrestrial ecosystems (SDG 15) were included.

Because disadvantaged urban areas are territories within cities, various authors have distinguished between shared urban problems and endogenous urban problems [6,27,29,30,36,41–43,50,78–81]. Similarly, this study distinguishes between general SDG targets, i.e., those that address general urban problems that are aggravated in disadvantaged urban areas, and specific SDG targets, i.e., those that address problems specific to disadvantaged urban areas. Of the 51 selected targets, 25 were general SDG targets, and 26 were specific SDG targets.

Figure 1 provides the list of SDG targets that promote inclusive and sustainable development in disadvantaged urban areas, with the general SDGs (unshaded box) distinguished from the specific SDGs (shaded box).





**Figure 1.** General and specific SDGs to impact disadvantaged urban areas.

The general SDG targets were contained in SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 11, 12, and 16. SDG 1 includes 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4, which address the reduction in the population living in poverty in cities, guaranteeing their access to social protection, economic resources, and basic services. SDG 2 includes 2.1, which refers to access to adequate food for the vulnerable population. SDG 3 includes 3.6, 3.7, and 3.9, which refer to access to sexual and reproductive health and the prevention of death due to traffic accidents and pollution, situations that are becoming increasingly worrisome in cities [82]. SDG 4 and SDG 8 cover two of the most common challenges in disadvantaged urban areas: education and employment [51]. SDG 4 includes 4.3 and 4.6, which address literacy and technical and higher training, and SDG 8 includes 8.3, 8.5, 8.8, and 8.b, which address the promotion of employment, safe work environments, and employment strategies for young people. SDG 5 includes SDGs 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6, which are related to eliminating all forms of violence against women, recognizing and valuing care work, ensuring the full participation of women, and ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health. SDG 11 includes 11.6 and 11.a, which aim to strengthen economic and social links between urban areas and reduce the environmental impact of cities, a situation that is aggravated in disadvantaged urban areas [36,81]. SDG 12 includes 12.5, which is related to waste reduction through recycling. SDG 16 includes 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.9, and 16.10, which focus on the prevention of violence and abuse and access to justice, information, and legal identity.

The specific SDG targets were contained in SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, and 17. SDG 1 includes 1.b, which refers to creating development strategies for the poor, one of the challenges that characterize policies developed for disadvantaged urban areas [81]. SDG 3 includes 3.4 and 3.5, which refer to the prevention and treatment of mental health disorders, well-being and the consumption of addictive substances, situations of risk that

affect the population of these areas [51]. SDG 4 includes specific targets 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, and 4.5, which refer to facilitating access, permanence in education, and technical training of the most vulnerable groups, such as children and youth. SDG 5 includes 5.4, which is considered typical of these areas, referring to the prevention of early marriage, sometimes accompanied by adolescent pregnancy [83,84]. SDG 6 and SDG 7 include 6.3, 6.b, and 7.1, which aim to improve wastewater treatment and access to energy services and community participation, issues that in recent years have received special attention in disadvantaged urban areas [85,86]. SDG 8 includes 8.6, which refers to the promotion of employment of young people who do not work or study, a population characteristic of disadvantaged urban areas [51,81]. SDG 9 and SDG 17 include 9.c and 17.8, which address the digital divide [87]. SDG 10 and SDG 11 have the most direct relationship with disadvantaged urban areas insofar as they are oriented to a reduction in social inequalities (targets 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, and 10.4) and inclusion and sustainability of cities (targets 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, and 11.7). Finally, SDG 16 includes 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.9, and 16.10, which are related to the reduction in illegal activities and insecurity and the promotion of citizen participation in decision-making, issues that are relevant when seeking to promote processes of social inclusion in these disadvantaged urban areas [36,45,88].

### 3.2. Step 2: Policy Design of ERACIS and the Barcelona Strategy

The theoretical review has demonstrated that the policies that are inspired by the 2030 Agenda tend to have declarative and normative structures, without the inclusion of instruments and structures of implementation. To investigate this possible misjudgment, this analysis will follow the model of Jones et al. [63], coding each policy, i.e., ERACIS and the Barcelona Strategy, based on the six elements of policy design proposed by Schneider and Ingram [62]: goals, target populations, agents, tools, rules and rationales, and assumptions. This analysis of policy design will allow for a comparative analysis of the architecture of the two policies. Table 1 summarises each of the elements of policy design in ERACIS and the Barcelona Strategy.

**Table 1.** Comparing policy design elements in ERACIS and Barcelona Strategy.

| Schneider and Ingram's Policy Design Structure | ERACIS  | Barcelona Strategy  |
|--|---|---|
| Goals  | Improve the living conditions of people living in disadvantaged areas of Andalusia favouring their participation and access to the social protection system, specifically to the labour market.                               | To transform the city of Barcelona into a European and Mediterranean benchmark of a city by 2027, that guarantees the social rights of all citizens, eliminating stigmatization and segregation and reducing territorial inequalities.                      |
| Target Populations                             | 99 Identified Disadvantaged Areas of Andalusia.   | The population of the city of Barcelona in a situation of social inequality.  |
| Agent(s) and Implementation Structures         | The Regional Government of Andalusia promoted and designed ERACIS. The municipalities implement, coordinate, monitor and evaluate the community development process, with the participation of the public and private agents. | The strategy is promoted and designed by Barcelona City Council and more than 700 organizations that have signed the Citizens' Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona. 167 social organizations and municipal bodies implement the strategy through projects. |

Table 1. Cont.

| Schneider and Ingram's Policy Desing Structure | ERACIS  | Barcelona Strategy  |
|--|---|---|
| Tools  | The main instrument for the implementation of the strategy is the Local Zone Plans, designed in participatory way as a intervention tool with a community approach.   | The main instrument for the implementation of the strategy is the Structuring Projects that provide the necessary transversality and coordination to the 892 sectoral projects  |
| Rules  | Policy with a regional policy framework. 12 guiding principles provide the framework for the incorporation of different stakeholders in the process of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation through Local Zone Plans. Only some of the operational objectives and targets are mandatory. | Policy with a local policy framework. Two lines of action are regulated: a sectoral one, which includes the plans and programs already underway, and a transversal action through the Structuring Projects.   |
| Rationales and Assumptions                     | The segregating tendency of contemporary societies has led to the existence of socially excluded neighborhoods. A comprehensive and community intervention model is the key to reversing inequality and social exclusion in these areas.  | Barcelona has become a more unequal and unjust city since the 2008 crisis, with 12,904 people currently living in residential exclusion. To reverse this situation of social inequality, the strategy aims to be a benchmark in transformative urban policies, from the promotion of proximity policies implemented by local governments with a territorial approach. |

### 3.2.1. Goals

The main objective of the ERACIS policy is to improve the living conditions of people living in disadvantaged areas of Andalusia, emphasizing the population's access to the labour market. The main objective of the Barcelona Strategy is achieving a city model that guarantees social rights by reducing territorial inequalities.

The two policies have similar axes or lines of action regarding the objectives to be pursued to reduce social inequalities in the urban environment. However, the axes of ERACIS focus on the community as a whole: Axis 1—Sustainable economic and community development; Axis 2—Public policies for well-being and social cohesion; Axis 3—Improvement of the habitat and coexistence; and Axis 4—Networking and innovation in community social intervention. The axes of the Barcelona Strategy focus on both the individual level (Line 1—Reduce inequality in income distribution and guarantee social rights, especially access to housing, quality employment, and basic needs; and Line 2—Increase educational equity and lifelong learning and cultural opportunities) and the community level (Line 3—Strengthen and articulate services and relational and community support networks that facilitate personal and collective empowerment; Line 4—Eliminate stigmatization and social segregation; and Line 5—Reduce territorial social inequalities).

### 3.2.2. Target Populations

Although both policies are aimed at populations in situations of vulnerability or social exclusion in urban areas, there is a nuance between the two when defining the target population. ERACIS defines 99 disadvantaged areas identified in municipalities of the eight provinces of Andalusia as its target population (914,103 inhabitants). These areas are identified based on five territorial criteria: high level of unemployment, immigrant population, public housing, problems of security and coexistence, and history of social intervention. The Barcelona Strategy defines its target population as the entire population of a city where social inequality has been identified, based on eight dimensions, in addition to a determination of the degree of territorial inequality at the city level, district level, and on some occasions the neighborhood level (e.g., at this sublevel, 12,904 people were

identified who are in a situation of residential exclusion). These individuals are identified based on eight personal dimensions: poverty and inequality, employment, education, health, housing, relational and community support networks, coexistence, and civility.

### 3.2.3. Agent(s) and Implementation Structures

The main difference between the two policies is that ERACIS is promoted and designed by a regional political body, and the Barcelona Strategy is driven and designed by a local political body. However, for the two policies, implementation is the responsibility of the municipalities, as these political bodies are closer to the reality of the citizenry. For both policies, such implementation must also be carried out together with other public and private entities as well as with organized civil society, which will not only execute the policies but also monitor and evaluate their implementation.

Both policies define, for each axis or line of action, the specific agents responsible for the execution of the different measures and actions. However, ERACIS only includes a list of public administration agents and private entities, without including citizen agents. The Barcelona Strategy includes the participation of 167 entities, of which 73% are social entities, 23% are municipal organizations and 4% are citizen action networks.

### 3.2.4. Tools

Both policies design tools to be implemented. For ERACIS, the Local Zone Plans include 129 measures that compose the four axes of the policy. Of these measures, only four address mandatory inclusion, related to labor insertion plans linked to the minimum insertion income and the hiring of professionals. In the Barcelona Strategy, the Structuring Projects coordinate 892 projects and sectorial actions distributed based on the objectives of each of the five strategic lines.

Although the tools for both policies are designed, implemented, and coordinated by all the agents involved, public, private, and civil organizations, there is a differentiating nuance in the typology of the tools proposed in the two policies. For ERACIS, the Local Zone Plans articulate and define the actions to be implemented in each disadvantaged area based on the objectives and measures proposed in the policy. For the Barcelona Strategy, the Structuring Projects provide transversality to different projects and sectorial actions that are already underway; that is, there is no definition of the projects to be implemented in different districts and neighborhoods of the city. Finally, the two policies establish a system of indicators for monitoring and evaluating the objectives of each strategy.

### 3.2.5. Rules

There are several differences in the regulatory framework of the two policies analyzed. ERACIS is a regional policy approved by the Official Gazette of the Junta de Andalucía with the status of a norm, with a regulatory framework and international (European Social Fund 2014–2020), national (National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2013–2016), and autonomous community (Law 9/2016, of 27 December, on Social Services in Andalusia) funding. The Barcelona Strategy is a local policy approved by the municipal Plenary of the Barcelona City Council, with a framework regulated by the City Council and more than 700 public and private entities within the framework of Citizens for an Inclusive Barcelona.

Regarding the regulation of financing for the two policies, ERACIS includes a budget and subsidy requirements to finance Local Zone Plans for both local and social entities. However, the Barcelona Strategy does not include a financing plan for actions that are already underway or for the Structuring Projects. Finally, the two policies provide a time frame for their actions. The term for ERACIS is 4 years, and that for the Barcelona Strategy is 10 years, i.e., 2017–2027.

### 3.2.6. Rationales and Assumptions

Both policies cite increasing social exclusion and segregation as justifications for their actions, arguing the need to implement urban policies that reduce social inequalities in cities.

ERACIS limits the scope of its interventions to the neighborhood level, with a territorial approach, through a characterization of the general situation in disadvantaged urban areas in each province of Andalusia. The Barcelona Strategy circumscribes its actions to the city level, more specifically the district level, with a person-centered approach, characterizing the population residing in each district using the aforementioned eight dimensions.

Both policies justify the implementation of community development approaches that promote the social participation of target populations in their own transformation processes. The objective is to minimize inequality in cities and neighborhoods under the protection of international and national policies that promote sustainability and social inclusion, e.g., the 2030 Agenda. The policies promote networking among different stakeholders in each neighborhood and area of intervention, emphasizing the importance of local governments in the implementation of these strategies because they are political bodies closer to social reality.

### *3.3. Step 3: Identifying the 2030 Agenda in Policy Design*

To identify the SDG targets in the two policies analyzed, a list of keywords was developed for searching each policy. Table A1 (in Appendix A) shows the relationship of the SDG and SDG targets, both general and specific, with their keywords. Here, an improvement is introduced based on other studies that locate SDGs in certain policies [53,56,76], i.e., the keywords used to refer to both the SDGs and each target SDG. This approach makes it possible to locate, in a more exhaustive way, which specific targets and SDGs are present in each policy analyzed.

The identification of each target SDG through the proposed keywords allowed locating targets in each element of the policy design structure proposed by Schneider and Ingram [62]. For the qualitative analysis of the presence of the 2030 Agenda in each policy, the systematization process used in other studies that investigated the degree of presence of the SDGs in certain policies was followed [46]. The presence of each general and specific SDG target was systematized based on whether the policy includes a target explicitly, implicitly, or not at all. This qualitative judgment was performed independently by all authors of this article. For 84% of the elements, the analysis was convergent, with the majority of authors agreeing on the value given. Finally, the cumulative percentages of the presence of each SDG in each element of the policy design were obtained by calculating the arithmetic mean, assigning a value of 100% if the inclusion of the target is explicit, 50% if the inclusion of the target is implicit, and 0% if a target is not mentioned. A consensus summary of the presence of general SDGs and specific SDG targets is provided in Tables 2 and 3, respectively.

Table 2. General SDGs in ERACIS and Barcelona Strategy.

| General SDGs Targets | ERACIS |                    |                       |       |       |                            | Barcelona Strategy |                    |                       |       |       |                            |
|----------------------|--------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------|-------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------|-------|----------------------------|
|                      | Goals  | Target Populations | Agents and Structures | Tools | Rules | Rationales and Assumptions | Goals              | Target Populations | Agents and Structures | Tools | Rules | Rationales and Assumptions |
| Total                | 60%    | 26%                | 18%                   | 60%   | 26%   | 66%                        | 58%                | 70%                | 56%                   | 72%   | 44%   | 64%                        |
| 1.2                  | ••     | •                  | •                     | ••    | ••    | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 1.3                  | ••     | •                  | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 1.4                  | ••     | •                  | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 2.1                  | •      | •                  |                       | •     |       | ••                         | •                  | ••                 |                       | ••    | ••    | •                          |
| 3.6                  |        |                    |                       |       |       |                            |                    |                    |                       |       |       |                            |
| 3.7                  | ••     |                    |                       | ••    |       | ••                         |                    | ••                 | •                     | •     |       |                            |
| 3.9                  |        |                    |                       |       |       |                            |                    |                    |                       |       |       |                            |
| 4.3                  | ••     | •                  |                       | ••    |       | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | •     | ••                         |
| 4.6                  | ••     | •                  |                       | ••    |       | •                          | •                  | •                  | •                     | •     | •     | •                          |
| 5.2                  |        | •                  |                       |       | •     | ••                         | •                  | ••                 | •                     | ••    |       | ••                         |
| 5.4                  | ••     |                    |                       | ••    | •     | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 5.5                  | •      | •                  | •                     | •     | •     | ••                         | •                  | ••                 | •                     | ••    | •     | ••                         |
| 5.6                  | ••     |                    |                       | ••    |       | ••                         |                    | ••                 | •                     | •     |       |                            |
| 8.3.                 | ••     | •                  | •                     | ••    | ••    | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 8.5                  | ••     | •                  |                       | ••    |       | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 8.8                  |        |                    |                       |       |       |                            | •                  | ••                 | ••                    | •     | •     | •                          |
| 8.b                  | ••     |                    |                       | ••    |       | ••                         | •                  | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | •     | ••                         |
| 11.6                 | ••     |                    |                       | ••    |       |                            |                    |                    |                       |       |       |                            |
| 11.a                 | ••     | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 12.5                 |        |                    |                       |       |       |                            |                    |                    |                       |       |       |                            |
| 16.1                 | •      | •                  |                       | •     |       | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | •                     | ••    | •     | ••                         |
| 16.2                 |        |                    |                       |       |       |                            |                    | ••                 | •                     | ••    |       | ••                         |
| 16.3                 |        |                    |                       |       |       |                            | ••                 |                    |                       | •     |       | •                          |
| 16.9                 |        |                    |                       |       |       |                            | •                  |                    |                       | ••    |       | •                          |
| 16.10                | •      |                    |                       | •     |       | ••                         | ••                 |                    | •                     | •     |       | •                          |

•• General SDGs targets explicitly considered. • General SDGs targets implicitly considered.

Table 3. Specific SDGs in ERACIS and Barcelona Strategy.

| Specific SDGs Targets | ERACIS |                    |                       |       |       |                            | Barcelona Strategy |                    |                       |       |       |                            |
|-----------------------|--------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------|-------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------|-------|----------------------------|
|                       | Goals  | Target Populations | Agents and Structures | Tools | Rules | Rationales and Assumptions | Goals              | Target Populations | Agents and Structures | Tools | Rules | Rationales and Assumptions |
| Total                 | 79%    | 33%                | 37%                   | 81%   | 38%   | 62%                        | 69%                | 71%                | 62%                   | 87%   | 65%   | 77%                        |
| 1.b.                  | ••     | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 3.4.                  | ••     | •                  |                       | ••    |       | •                          | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 3.5.                  | ••     | •                  |                       | ••    |       | ••                         | •                  | ••                 | •                     | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 4.1.                  | ••     | •                  |                       | ••    |       | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 4.2.                  | •      | •                  |                       | •     |       | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 4.4.                  | •      | •                  |                       | •     | •     | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 4.5.                  | •      | •                  |                       | •     |       | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 5.3.                  |        |                    |                       |       |       |                            |                    |                    | •                     |       |       |                            |
| 6.3.                  | •      |                    |                       | •     |       |                            | •                  | •                  |                       |       |       |                            |
| 6.b.                  | •      |                    |                       | •     |       |                            | •                  |                    |                       |       | •     | •                          |
| 7.1.                  | ••     |                    |                       | ••    |       |                            | •                  | ••                 |                       | ••    |       | ••                         |
| 8.6.                  | •      | •                  |                       | ••    | •     | •                          | •                  | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | •     | ••                         |
| 9.c.                  | ••     |                    | ••                    | ••    |       |                            | •                  |                    |                       | ••    |       | ••                         |
| 10.1.                 | ••     | •                  |                       | ••    | ••    | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 10.2.                 | ••     | •                  | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 10.3.                 | ••     | •                  | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 10.4.                 | ••     | •                  | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 11.1.                 | ••     | •                  | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 11.2.                 | ••     |                    |                       | ••    |       |                            |                    |                    |                       | ••    |       | •                          |
| 11.3.                 | ••     | •                  | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 11.7.                 | ••     | •                  |                       | ••    |       | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 |                       | ••    | •     |                            |
| 16.4.                 | •      |                    |                       | •     |       |                            |                    |                    |                       | ••    | •     |                            |
| 16.5.                 | •      |                    |                       | •     |       |                            |                    |                    |                       | •     |       |                            |
| 16.7.                 | ••     | •                  | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 16.b.                 | •      |                    | •                     | •     | ••    | ••                         | ••                 | ••                 | ••                    | ••    | ••    | ••                         |
| 17.8.                 | ••     |                    | ••                    | ••    |       |                            |                    |                    |                       | ••    |       | ••                         |

•• Specific SDGs targets explicitly considered. • Specific SDGs targets implicitly considered.

### 3.3.1. General SDG Targets in ERACIS and the Barcelona Strategy

Among the 25 general SDG targets that address the challenges facing disadvantaged urban areas, the Barcelona Strategy incorporates more in its design than does the ERACIS in its design: the Barcelona Strategy incorporates five of the nine SDGs (1, 5, 8, 11, and 16), and ERACIS broadly incorporates only 1 (SDG 1).

Beginning with similarities between the two policies, both ERACIS and the Barcelona Strategy broadly incorporate the targets of SDG 1 (poverty) in their design. This result was expected because both policies promote a strategy focused on improving the lives of people in situations of social vulnerability, emphasizing a reduction in economic poverty. Similarly, the community dimension of SDG 11 appears strongly in both policies through target 11.a., as both policies promote strengthening the social and economic links of the urban areas to which they are directed.

In contrast, it is striking that neither policy includes dimensions oriented to guaranteeing the environmental sustainability of disadvantaged urban areas. This is observed in the lack of dissemination of environmental targets of the 2030 Agenda in the design of the two policies. Thus, neither of the two policies aims to improve the welfare of the population through a reduction in pollution (3.9.), a reduction in the negative environmental impact of poor air quality (11.6), or a reduction in waste through recycling (12.5).

The main divergences in the two policies can be seen in the incorporation of SDGs 4, 5, and 8. Although neither of the two policies includes, in a decisive or homogeneous way, SDG 4 (education) in its design, the Barcelona Strategy expressly incorporates the target 4.3 by promoting education and professional training as keys to overcoming social exclusion; similarly, implicit consideration target 4.6 (literacy) is observed throughout the policy, to the extent that the policy aims to promote access to education at all stages of life.

In relation to SDG 5 (gender), the Barcelona Strategy, in general, promotes a more gender-based approach than does ERACIS. However, this incorporation is not homogeneous at the target level. For example, in the Barcelona Strategy, the gender-based approach is evidenced through the incorporation of target 5.4, which is explicitly considered throughout the policy by decisively promoting the recognition of care work. Notably, neither of the two policies promotes a strategy of access to sexual and reproductive health (5.6).

With respect to SDG 8 (labor market), neither policy clearly incorporates the achievement of labor rights (8.8.), although the Barcelona Strategy considers this target implicitly. In general, SDG 8 is present in a more multidimensional way in the Barcelona Strategy because it guides the design of the policy towards the promotion of full employment (8.5), employment strategies for young people (8.b), and the promotion of a development-oriented policy of job creation (8.3). Target 8.3 is prominent in ERACIS because the entire strategy of this policy focuses on the creation of jobs for people living in disadvantaged urban areas.

Having analyzed the incorporation of general SDG targets in the two policies, we subsequently evaluated to what extent this presence occurs in each element of the policy design. Interestingly, despite being policies aimed at combating social exclusion in disadvantaged urban areas, the presence of the general SDG targets is relatively limited. Following the methodology described in the previous section, the coverage was 58% in the Barcelona Strategy and 60% in ERACIS.

There is a difference between the two policies regarding the target populations. The Barcelona Strategy incorporates the SDGs much more decisively (70%) than does ERACIS (26%). This can be explained by the fact that ERACIS diagnoses the situation of target populations, at the census section level, highlighting the general characteristics of 99 disadvantaged areas from a territorial perspective. The Barcelona Strategy, in addition to a territorial analysis of the city, incorporates an analysis of the situation of the populations at the city, district and neighbourhood levels based on eight dimensions, thus characterizing target populations with an individual approach.

There is also a significant difference between the policies regarding the degree of presence of general SDG targets at the level of agents and implementation structures,



with very little present in ERACIS (18%). Although this is not a prominent element in the Barcelona Strategy (58%), there is at least one integrative effort, among other aspects involving the 167 entities, public and private, that participate in its implementation. The identification of the participation of civil society organizations is scarce but higher than that for ERACIS, which at no time indicates the participation of citizen agents.

In relation to the design of tools, both policies incorporate, to a high degree, the general SDG targets: the Barcelona Strategy 72% and ERACIS 60%. Both policies carefully define the design of their main tools to be implemented. For ERACIS, the Local Zone Plans that municipal councils must design for each of the disadvantaged areas identified are already underway, as are the Structuring Projects of the Barcelona Strategy that will guide sectorial projects. The difference in weight can be explained by the fact that the Barcelona Strategy involves the coordination of 892 existing sectorial projects, and ERACIS leaves the responsibility of the design of Local Zone Plans to each municipality associated with the 99 zones.

Regarding the most normative aspects, with respect to rules, both policies present significant deficits when incorporating the perspective of the SDGs: the Barcelona Strategy 44% and ERACIS 26%. Regarding rationales and assumptions, the two policies are directed towards and justify the need to develop policies aimed at solving challenges facing urban areas, incorporating the SDGs into this reasoning. However, both are still far from having a comprehensive sustainability approach, as observed in the lack of targets that are aimed at promoting environmental sustainability in these areas.

### 3.3.2. Specific SDG Targets in ERACIS and the Barcelona Strategy

Regarding the 26 specific SDGs that address the challenges facing disadvantaged urban areas, the Barcelona Strategy incorporates more in its design than does the ERACIS in its design: the Barcelona Strategy broadly incorporates five SDGs (1, 3, 4, 8, and 10), and ERACIS cross-sectionally incorporates only 2 SDGs (1 and 10).

With regard to similarities, both policies homogeneously incorporate SDGs 1 and 10. Both policies create a solid framework of development strategies aimed at reducing inequality and favoring the socioeconomic inclusion of the poor population living in urban areas, specifically in disadvantaged urban areas.

In contrast, both share weaknesses regarding the inclusion of other targets. For example, neither of the two policies aims to empower women and girls through the prevention of early marriage (SDG 5, target 5.3), which occurs with high incidence among adolescent girls of certain ethnic groups [83,84]. They also do not promote the participatory management of water and sanitation (SDG 6, targets 6.3 and 6.b), a challenge facing these areas due to the deterioration of public housing [81]. Along these lines, the most surprising aspect of this study emerges—neither of the two policies incorporates, with sufficient and homogeneous weight, the targets of SDG 11, which focuses precisely on cities and urban settlements. Thus, throughout their design, the actions within the two policies focus on ensuring access to housing and basic services (target 11.1) and favoring inclusive and sustainable urbanization in a participatory manner (target 11.3); however, targets 11.2 and 11.7, aimed at promoting access to public transport, green areas, and safe public spaces, are not clearly present.

Among the differences in the design of the two policies, the main divergences are seen in the incorporation of SDGs 3, 4, 8, and 16. The Barcelona Strategy gives significantly greater weight to SDGs 3, 4, and 8 than does ERACIS by designing a policy that has a stronger focus on improving mental health, preventing and treating addictions (targets 3.4 and 3.5), ensuring equal access to education in all stages of life, promoting technical and professional skills of young people and adults for their insertion into the labor market (targets 4.1, 4.2, 4.4 and 4.5), and reducing the young unemployed population and those who do not study (target 8.6), especially those who are in a situation of social inequality.

Regarding SDG 16, the Barcelona Strategy is strongly and differentially designed with respect to ERACIS as a non-discriminatory policy in favor of sustainable development

(16.b). Likewise, both policies promote the participation of all stakeholders in decision-making to respond to the needs of the target population (target 16.7). However, targets 16.4 and 16.5, related to illegal activities and crime, are not present, challenges that are necessary to address in disadvantaged areas because they affect the creation of an environment of insecurity that impacts coexistence and social cohesion [36,81].

Having analyzed the incorporation of specific SDG targets into the policies, we subsequently evaluated to what extent this presence occurs in each element of the policy design. Regarding the goals, both policies give strong weight to the mandates of the 2030 Agenda, with the percentage being significantly higher for ERACIS (79%) than for the Barcelona Strategy (69%).

However, when defining target populations, the Barcelona Strategy incorporates specific SDG targets to a greater extent (71%) than ERACIS (33%). This is derived from the analysis performed at the micro level to diagnose the situation of the target populations at the city, district, and neighborhood levels.

In relation to agents and implementation structures, the Barcelona Strategy incorporates specific SDGs to a greater extent (62%) than ERACIS (37%) because the former defines those agents and structures and the latter only defines the agents and implementation structures for public administration, as indicated in the general SDG targets.

Both policies, when determining their tools, incorporate the mandates of the 2030 Agenda, i.e., through the Structuring Projects and Sectorial Plans in the Barcelona Strategy and the Local Zone Plans in ERACIS. These tools detail both content and operation and show a capacity to achieve the proposed objectives, covering a greater spectrum of topics coinciding with the SDGs.

With respect to the regulatory aspect of these policies, there is again a difference between the two policies. The Barcelona Strategy incorporates specific SDGs to a greater extent (65%) than ERACIS (38%). Although both policies seem to incorporate more than half of the specific SDG targets in their rationale and assumptions, the Barcelona Strategy incorporates these targets to a greater extent (77%) than ERACIS (62%).

#### 4. Discussion

The study framework has allowed us to determine to what extent the design of the two policies analyzed, i.e., ERACIS and the Barcelona Strategy, incorporate the different SDGs that address disadvantaged urban areas. The analysis allowed us to identify common patterns and observe substantial differences between the two policies; in general, the Barcelona Strategy incorporates the SDGs, both general and specific, in a more apparent way than does ERACIS. These similarities and differences revealed in the comparative analysis allow us to advance knowledge on this topic with respect to the previously existing literature.

Regarding goals, although both policies are aimed at combating social inequality in urban areas through a multidimensional approach to minimize social exclusion, their designs reflect policies aimed at fighting poverty in its most material sense, in line with SDGs 1 and 10. The core of the two policies, both in their regulatory and implementation aspects, is the generation of employment and economic resources for the people of these territories. It is expected that this bias will limit the impact of the policies for social inclusion because the literature has widely identified the need to simultaneously address physical, political, and socioeconomic gaps [6,26,27,36,41–43,79–81].

Despite this undeniable conclusion, other aspects that minimize social exclusion are incorporated, although with varying representation. Thus, certain efforts are observed in both policies that orient their actions toward the generation of more inclusive cities, focusing on the improvement of marginal neighbourhoods through access to education, training, housing, and basic services, challenges that are included in SDGs 4, 8, and 11. However, some of the most decisive targets of these same SDGs to combat exclusion in disadvantaged urban areas are omitted, for example, improving employment through a rights-based approach; promoting educational inclusion; improving security; promoting liveable and

safe spaces; and improving coexistence and social cohesion. Furthermore, neither of the two policies incorporates in its design a sustainability approach when facing the challenges of social inclusion of disadvantaged urban areas (SDGs 3, 6, 7, 9, 12, and 17), nor is there a determined effort in their design to address the challenges from a gender perspective (SDG 5). These deficiencies denote a lack of comprehensiveness when addressing the specific challenges facing disadvantaged urban areas, a requirement widely identified by the literature as essential to address the multidimensional and dynamic problems of these areas [6,26,27,41–44].

This deficit of transversality in the policy approach is partially corrected in the design of the tools. Both policies provide details regarding operations, i.e., the Structuring Projects in the Barcelona Strategy and the Local Zone Plans in ERACIS. In this sense, the Barcelona Strategy foresees an implementation structure through these Structuring Projects that provides transversality to the 892 sectorial projects in the five strategic lines of the policy. ERACIS offers a catalog of 129 local measures in four proposed axes. However, only four of these 129 measures are mandatory, and all of them are related to the implementation and monitoring of labor insertion plans linked to the minimum insertion income and with the hiring of professionals to carry out this work. The analysis carried out lays the foundations to contribute to the academic debate on whether social inclusion policies should design ad hoc tools or focus on coordinating existing projects through tools that provide them with transversality. However, and as will be evidenced when noting the limitations of the study, the analysis of policy design is a compulsory but insufficient step to answer this overarching question.

In its normative elements, there are substantial differences that shed light on the level of government most suitable to address the fight against social exclusion in the urban environment. ERACIS has a regional regulatory nature. Approved by the Official Gazette of the Junta de Andalucía, it incorporates a multi-year budget; therefore, to a certain extent, it transcends government political parties. The Barcelona Strategy was approved by the Plenary of the City Council and therefore is more dependent on the municipal and local governments because it does not have a multi-year budget and must be supported by sectorial projects in progress. Given the necessary feasibility and predictability that the literature has identified as indispensable for the success of social inclusion interventions [43,44,80,81], the evidence seems to confirm certain weaknesses in purely local regulatory frameworks.

The two policies give relatively limited weight to implementation agents and strategies, especially in the design of ERACIS, where the presence of civil society is barely mentioned in the design of the Local Zone Plans. This weakness can compromise the effective inclusion of the 2030 Agenda, whose implementation is based on a multi-actor approach. In addition, there is abundant empirical evidence regarding the need for policies aimed at these disadvantaged urban areas to be based on the specific characteristics of each area and that the impact of such policies depends on the effective participation of the population in their own development process [17,26,27,29,31,32,39,42].

If political commitment is weakened both in its normative dimension and in the actors in charge of executing policies, the focus should be placed on the rationality of such interventions. In this sense, there is a significant difference between the two policies. ERACIS has a territorial approach at the regional level, which, as has been demonstrated in the analysis, causes it to lose detail and depth in proposing and identifying the specific characteristics and needs of disadvantaged urban areas. The Barcelona Strategy, by focusing on a single municipality, details in a more concrete way the characteristics and needs of urban areas, in particular the most disadvantaged. In addition, with an individual-centered approach, the Barcelona Strategy can identify in greater detail the human problems experienced in each neighborhood. Therefore, when designing policies aimed at disadvantaged urban areas, an approach focused on individuals has a greater capacity to incorporate the comprehensive and inclusive mandates proposed by the 2030 Agenda. However, as the literature has repeatedly noted [6,26,27,29,30,36,41–43,45,81], if only the people are transformed and not the territories, the cycle of exclusion will be reproduced. People will leave neighborhoods,

again attracting vulnerable populations, deepening the social stigma and the loss of social cohesion. The analysis carried out highlights the need to generate in-depth knowledge about policies so that the 2030 Agenda does not deepen this tension between individuals and territories, especially in disadvantaged urban areas.

## 5. Conclusions

The 2030 Agenda is a regulatory framework aimed at favoring development processes through its 17 SDGs, with the goal of a more inclusive and sustainable world, under the premise of “leave no one behind.” Among these SDGs is a framework to address one of the most important challenges facing cities today: social segregation and marginalization of people living in disadvantaged urban areas. However, for this global framework to guide effective policies that transform territories, it is necessary to develop models that allow us to evaluate, first, and then guide the way in which these precepts are adapted at the local and regional levels.

To understand the mechanisms that favor this transfer of policies, this article has proposed a methodological approach, testing its application with two local Spanish policies for social inclusion: ERACIS and the Barcelona Strategy. The methodological framework began with the identification of SDGs associated with the challenges facing disadvantaged urban areas. Next, following the methodology of Schneider and Ingram [62], the policy designs were decomposed into elements. Previous analyses allowed for a qualitative evaluation of the extent to which each of the policies incorporates the mandates of the 2030 Agenda. This analysis allowed not only the extraction of findings from a comparative study of both policies but also advanced knowledge of the topic with respect to the previously existing literature on social exclusion and urban segregation.

Notably, the framework design was analyzed for each policy. This limitation provides an opportunity for future research, e.g., in-depth analyses of the implementation of these policies through their main tools in each specific territory. Only in this way can knowledge continue to be generated on how these policies ultimately incorporated the mandates proposed in the 2030 Agenda to address the challenges of disadvantaged urban areas. Importantly, some weaknesses have already emerged from the regulatory analysis. For ERACIS, it is anticipated that the comprehensiveness of its approach may be limited because only those measures aimed at promoting employment pathways linked to social provision and the hiring of professionals in community social services are mandatory. For the Barcelona Strategy, it will be essential to analyze how the Structuring Projects have been designed and to what extent they are adequate to ensure the transversality of the numerous sectorial projects that already exist.

Comparative case studies such as the present study represent a great opportunity for researchers to generate knowledge about the effective integration of the 2030 Agenda into the local context. However, for these studies to generate transferable, replicable, and scalable knowledge, these studies must be compatible with other existing studies worldwide. This body of literature has taken shape in recent years, but its development is still incipient. With detailed presentations of methodological processes and the demonstration of the generation of knowledge, these types of studies will be conducted more broadly throughout the academic community. Only in this way will it be possible to know, based on the evidence, the effective impact of the 2030 Agenda in different territories and on the most vulnerable people.

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## Appendix A

**Table A1.** Keywords SDGs Targets.

| SDGs  | Keywords Used in Spanish  | Equivalent in English  |
|---|---|--|
| SDG 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere  | Pobreza (target 1.2)<br>Protección social (target 1.3)<br>Recursos económicos y servicios básicos (target 1.4)<br>Estrategias de desarrollo (target 1.b)  | Poverty (target 1.2)<br>Social protection (target 1.3)<br>Economic resources and basic services (target 1.4)<br>Development strategies (target 1.b)  |
| SDG 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture                         | Alimentación (target 2.1)   | Food (target 2.1)  |
| SDG 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages  | Salud mental y bienestar (target 3.4)<br>drogas (target 3.5)<br>Accidentes de tráfico (target 3.6)<br>Salud sexual y reproductiva (target 3.7)<br>Contaminación (target 3.9)                                | Mental health and well-being (target 3.4)<br>drugs (target 3.5)<br>Road traffic accidents (target 3.6)<br>Sexual and reproductive health (target 3.7)<br>Pollution (target 3.9)                        |
| SDG 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all                 | Educación (target 4.1)<br>Educación primera infancia (target 4.2)<br>Formación profesional (target 4.3)<br>Empleo decente (target 4.4)<br>Educación igualitaria (target 4.5)<br>Alfabetización (target 4.6) | Education (target 4.1)<br>Early childhood education (target 4.2)<br>Vocational Training (target 4.3)<br>Decent employment (target 4.4)<br>Equal education (target 4.5)<br>Literacy (target 4.6)        |
| SDG 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls  | Violencia (target 5.2)<br>Matrimonio precoz (target 5.3)<br>Cuidados (target 5.4)<br>Género (target 5.4)<br>Participación (target 5.5)<br>Salud sexual y reproductiva (target 5.6)                          | Violence (target 5.2)<br>Early marriage (target 5.3)<br>Caregiving (target 5.4)<br>Gender (target 5.4)<br>Participation (target 5.5)<br>Sexual and reproductive health (target 5.6)                    |
| SDG 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all                                       | Aguas residuales (target 6.3)<br>Participación en gestión agua y saneamiento (target 6.b)   | Wastewater (target 6.3)<br>Participation in water and sanitation management (target 6.b)   |
| SDG 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all   | Servicios energéticos asequibles (target 7.1)   | Affordable energy services (target 7.1)  |
| SDG 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all | Políticas trabajo decente (target 8.3)<br>Pleno empleo (target 8.5)<br>Formación y reducción desempleo juvenil (target 8.6)<br>Derechos laborales (target 8.8)<br>Estrategia empleo jóvenes (target 8.b)    | Decent work policies (target 8.3)<br>Full employment (target 8.5)<br>Training and reduction of youth unemployment (target 8.6)<br>Labour rights (target 8.8)<br>Youth employment strategy (target 8.b) |

Table A1. Cont.

| SDGs   | Keywords Used in Spanish  | Equivalent in English  |
|--|---|--|
| SDG 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation   | Tecnologías información (target 9.c)  | Information technologies (target 9.c)  |
| SDG 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries   | Aumento ingresos población pobre (target 10.1)<br>Inclusión social, económica y política (target 10.2)<br>Políticas Igualdad de oportunidades (target 10.3)<br>Políticas protección social, fiscal y salariales (target 10.4)   | Increase income of poor population (target 10.1)<br>Social, economic and political inclusion (target 10.2)<br>Equal opportunities policies (target 10.3)<br>Social, fiscal and wage protection policies (target 10.4)  |
| SDG 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable   | Vivienda (target 11.1)<br>Barrios marginales (target 11.1)<br>Transporte público (target 11.2)<br>Urbanización inclusiva (target 11.3)<br>Gestión desechos municipales (target 11.6)<br>Zonas verdes (target 11.7)<br>Seguridad (target 11.7)<br>Desarrollo (target 11.a)   | Housing (target 11.1)<br>Marginalized neighborhoods (target 11.1)<br>Public transport (target 11.2)<br>Inclusive urbanization (target 11.3)<br>Municipal waste management (target 11.6)<br>Green areas (target 11.7)<br>Security (target 11.7)<br>Development (objective 11.a)   |
| SDG 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns   | Reducción y reciclaje desechos (target 12.5)  | Waste reduction and recycling (target 12.5)  |
| SDG 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts  | —   | —  |
| SDG 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development   | —   | —  |
| SDG 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss | —   | —  |
| SDG 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels            | Prevención violencia (target 16.1)<br>Maltrato niños (target 16.2)<br>Acceso a justicia (target 16.3)<br>Delincuencia (target 16.4)<br>Corrupción (target 16.5)<br>Decisiones participativas (target 16.7)<br>Identidad jurídica (target 16.9)<br>Acceso a la información (target 16.10)<br>Políticas no discriminatorias (target 16.b) | Violence prevention (target 16.1)<br>Child abuse (target 16.2)<br>Access to justice (target 16.3)<br>Crime (target 16.4)<br>Corruption (target 16.5)<br>Participatory decision-making (target 16.7)<br>Legal identity (target 16.9)<br>Access to information (target 16.10)<br>Non-discriminatory policies (target 16.b) |
| SDG 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development   | Acceso Internet (target 17.8)   | Internet access (target 17.8)  |

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