

Article

The Influence of the Organizational Culture of Andalusian Local Governments on the Localization of Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract: Local governments are key to establishing public policies linked to the 2030 Agenda. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), public innovation is essential, and one of the essential pillars is transversality and partnerships (internal and external). This implies a transformative political, technical, and institutional culture that some authors have called, in the case of Andalusia, Spain, a “culture of solidarity”, as many of the elements of the 2030 Agenda are established within local organizations. This article aims to answer the question: Do Andalusian local authorities have an organizational culture and structure that facilitates the localization of the SDGs? To do so, it analyzes the conditioning factors, facilitators, and barriers that exist in local governments to advance in the mainstreaming of the localization and development processes of the 2030 Agenda in their territories. A study has been carried out on the perception of local technicians and the assessment of their own organization aligned with the 2030 Agenda. The results obtained indicate that local governments in Andalusia have made efforts to establish social actions and policies against poverty. The 2030 Agenda is perceived as an opportunity to transform local entities, with more open, collaborative, transversal, and interconnected institutions.

Keywords: public policies; local development; decentralization; 2030 Agenda; human development; multilevel governance; organizational culture; culture of solidarity



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1. Introduction

Territorial and local governments are essential organizations for generating local development processes [1] but they are not the only administrations within the territory, which is why multilevel articulation between the different levels of government ensures that local government is not isolated and invisible to national or international administrations, allowing for the proper localization of development processes and the 2030 Agenda [2].

This 2030 Agenda approved by the United Nations and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [3] represent an opportunity for local governments to incorporate solidarity and sustainability policies into their development plans and their own internal structures, emphasizing the importance of local governments through the localization concept of the SDGs.

“Localization relates both to how the SDGs can provide a framework for local development policy and to how local and regional governments can support the achievement of the SDGs through action from the bottom up and to how the SDGs can provide a framework for local development policy” [4].

This article will address the case of local governments in Andalusia. This region in southern Spain is the most populated in the country [5] but it is also recognized for

its involvement in decentralized international cooperation and active participation in international platforms of local governments [6]. These international platforms prioritize the 2030 Agenda among their actions, thus allowing Andalusian local governments to be especially sensitive to the Agenda itself. This can be seen in some examples of localization of the SDGs carried out by Andalusian territories such as the Provincial Council of Huelva or the City Council of Palma del Río [6,7].

However, this article aims to develop a deeper understanding of how the 2030 Agenda has also entered the organizational structures of local governments in this region, in other words, how local governments that are sensitive to the Agenda are in turn organizational structures that internally have the values of the SDGs. This issue has already been addressed theoretically by the Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International Solidarity (FAMSI), which published a study on the existence of a “culture of solidarity” [8] on the part of the Andalusian territories, which allows the generation of more supportive and just institutions and territories.

To carry out this research, the key informants have been the technicians who are part of some local administrations of Andalusia, which are the main agents of the territory. This will favour an initial perception that will allow the proposal of strategies for the mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda by local governments.

Therefore, the key question of this research is the following: Do Andalusian local authorities have an organizational culture and structure that facilitates the localization of the SDGs? As basic cross-cutting elements of an institution’s internal structure, communication, and innovation enable institutions to be strengthened in order to address the fight against poverty as a first-level strategic challenge. As this is a perception study, this question will be answered through the perception of local technicians in their own organizations. The result will allow us to assess whether the 2030 Agenda is an opportunity to innovate and promote a culture of solidarity that allows local governments to be more open and collaborative. To answer this question, a study was carried out on the perceptions of technicians from 35 local governments from different provinces of Andalusia. This study focuses on exploring these technicians’ assessments of their organizations’ alignment with the 2030 Agenda. This analysis is based on three fundamental elements: (1) innovation in the management of local governments as a strategic element to increase effectiveness and efficiency in the SDG localization processes; (2) communication, both internal and external to local entities, as an articulating axis of SDG localization, exploring the perception of the need to change the communication model that is being implemented; (3) the fight against poverty as a central challenge of the 2030 Agenda in the territorial context of Andalusia.

1.1. Sustainable Development: 2030 Agenda and Public Policies

The 2030 Agenda, which was approved by the United Nations Assembly in 2015 with the title “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, consists of an action plan that is specified in 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 specific goals “in favour of people, the planet and prosperity” [3].

The SDGs that comprise the Agenda are characterized by being (a) universal, since to achieve their goals, the collaboration, coordination, and work of governments, the private sector, civil society, and citizens are necessary; (b) multidimensional, since they will address the interconnected elements of sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion, environmental protection, and the necessary political-institutional response. The preamble of the Agenda itself recognizes that social development and economic development depend on the sustainable management of the Earth’s natural resources [9]; (c) having a comprehensive approach that allows analysis and seeks answers from different areas; (d) leaving no one behind, which involves working on initiatives that promote integration and ensure that all inhabitants can live in cities and human settlements that are fair, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient, and sustainable; (e) measurable, since it is essential to analyze and evaluate the degree to which the goals are fulfilled [3]. As established in previous studies, it will be impossible to implement the SDGs without the

work of local governments [10], as they are a fundamental space for meeting with the rest of the local actors within the territories. As such, local governments could develop their capacity to catalyze and coordinate the SDGs at the local level, supporting, strengthening, and empowering other territorial actors in their efforts and ensuring that the 2030 Agenda is addressed in a collaborative and pluralistic manner [11].

The fight against poverty has special relevance in the Agenda, as pointed out by the network of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). The Agenda asserts that poverty is the greatest problem facing humanity and that the SDGs must therefore prioritize the eradication of poverty and hunger, placing people “at the centre of sustainable development”. However, it warns that this will depend on a true “global partnership for sustainable development”, involving governments, society, the private sector, and multilateral agencies [12]. These interrelationships represent a strategy that must be supported by all actors in society and is important for the sustainable management of urban ecosystems [9]. In this study, this is particularly emphasized, since for Andalusian local governments, ending poverty is the main challenge of the Agenda, given that, as mentioned above, Andalusia is a region with a high level of inequality compared to the European context. SDG 1 addresses poverty from a multidimensional point of view and, therefore, requires multiple coordinated responses beyond the sector. Local governments have a leading position in identifying the reality on the ground and assessing the resources and services that are available and necessary for addressing this complex and multifactorial reality in a complex and innovative way. They should provide collaborative and coordinated leadership of territorial actors using strategies and initiatives for local economic development that allow the creation of jobs and increase income through a commitment to decent work; additionally, they should raise awareness and generate capacities to increase their communities’ resilience to shocks and disasters [13].

To work on this universal roadmap, territorial and especially local governments must take a central role in the proposal; at the same time, they should take a broader perspective that considers the consequences of actions in the medium and long term [3].

These actions should bring together all social, cultural, educational, economic, and political agents and provide an opportunity to design frameworks of action that are adapted to each local reality in a participatory way, “without leaving anyone behind and endowing all public actions and policies with a transversal vision of sustainability in a triple economic, social and environmental dimension” [13].

1.2. The Articulation of Governance for Sustainable Development. New Perspectives on Management in Local Governments and the Inclusion of Citizenship in These Decisions

Among the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals (the antecedents of the SDGs), it should be noted that many of the expected results were not met because the role of local governments, essential actors for development, was instrumental [1]. In other words, they served to be used as channels for external universal development, without taking into account their capacities and their own territorial, social, and cultural context. To achieve the SDGs, there is a sine qua non condition, which is the design of stable institutions and structures capable of guaranteeing their development, as stated in SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Solid Institutions). The role of local and regional governments and their associations in achieving the SDGs is crucial; it is at this level that one of the guiding principles of the Agenda, the equality approach or its slogan “Leave no one behind” can be preserved for implementation at the national level, since all of the SDGs are related to competencies and responsibilities of the local sphere, mainly in the provision of basic services and in the promotion of endogenous, inclusive, and sustainable territorial development [14]. In this regard, it is essential that local governments address the institutional and political barriers to Agenda developers while reflecting on the experiences of previous initiatives (such as Local Agenda 21) [11] and being encouraged to generate innovations.

Understanding public innovation from a broad perspective covers not only the “products” and/or services that are provided but also the processes, approaches, methodologies,

and results (expected and contingent). It also contemplates the learning and knowledge that are generated and are sometimes unforeseen, even in an area where the systematization and transfer of knowledge is not very frequent. In short, public innovation is understood as changes that are not always disruptive and that have been shaping new approaches and working methods in local entities and have generated new visions of the role of local management in response to the needs of people and territories [15].

These initiatives involve the generation of organizational innovations that move from hierarchical, closed, compartmentalized organizations that are accustomed to communicating unidirectionally with citizens (which generates silos, bottlenecks, excess bureaucracy, authoritarian leadership, etc.) towards institutions that “learn, that think of themselves as networks and introduce rhizome dynamics into their architectures (opening and allowing spaces for the free circulation of ideas, where creativity is encouraged)” [16].

It is a matter of addressing global and local challenges that are complex, “wicked” problems [17] through collective and multidimensional contributions and designing poly-centric governance systems based on decentralized and shared decision-making processes (diversity, participation) that are coordinated with each other (connectivity, feedback) [18].

From the municipal perspective, the local governance approach highlights the encounters of people and citizens with the public services that are provided in the territory and that seek to respond to the needs with the greatest impact on their daily life [19].

To this end, the collaborative governance experiences of community management systems that comprise intersectoral teams of public–private and citizen networks that address the problems and challenges of the territory in a systemic way that values collective intelligence [20].

This concept not only broadens the systems’ radius of action and their external connectivity but also reactivates their internal strengths, reveals hidden leadership, multiplies the social value produced, and maximizes the efficient use of resources in a time of limitations [16].

This is especially significant given the need to generate new critical perspectives, effective responses, and social innovations in the local fight against poverty in a way that considers the multidimensional, systemic, complex nature of this structural challenge in Andalusian society.

Social and public innovation efforts involve focusing on the opportunity provided by the mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda. It implies a new culture, a way of being and doing things that involves the “weaving” of relationships, learning, and complicities, advancing from knot to knot until a common, open, and diversified space is formed in which new initiatives, proposals, and endeavours are added [8].

Mainstreaming the SDGs into local management goes beyond interdisciplinarity and mere processes of consultation or dialogue (which are always necessary), since interdisciplinarity does not imply new points of view or new objectives that differ from those of a sectoral nature. In contrast, it requires planning, commitment, shared responsibility, and the full capacity to implement actions. It obeys a paradigm of public governance in which co-responsibility and teamwork prevail. It involves focusing the attention of local governments on localized universal objectives and goals and improving the consistency and coherence of the implemented strategy to achieve the intended purposes [8].

Previous studies on innovation management in public entities anticipate barriers to this process [21]. Such barriers include those who support a hierarchical, bureaucratic, compartmentalized, and disconnected organizational design with excessively departmentalized, siloed services that sometimes feed into a “not my job” logic [22]. Under such conditions, there is little transversality or capacity for anticipation and planning. Additionally, internal and external communication lack a transversal nature and adequate bottom-up flows [21].

Authors such as Cristina Sala Valdés [23] dismiss the weight placed on communication and information in the 2030 Agenda as irrelevant. For experts, little importance is given to communication processes. Communication for development is not mentioned, although this concept was present in the previous Millennium Development Goals [23].

The current SDGs focus mainly on a more instrumental conception of communication and are especially linked to information and communication technology (ICT). SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) cites the improvement of infrastructure, including digital infrastructure, as an essential element to guarantee inclusive, equitable, and sustainable socioeconomic development. Similarly, this objective focuses on the need to reduce the digital divide. As indicated in target 9.c, access to information and communication technology should be significantly increased, and universal and affordable access to the internet should be sought in the least developed countries by 2020. As indicated by the United Nations, more than 4 million people, 90% of whom are located in developing countries, do not have internet access [24]. This gap, which was aggravated by the COVID-19 crisis, is increasing among the most vulnerable groups in society. To the same extent, as recalled by Jones, Wyin, Hillier, and Comfor [24], this effort to expand and improve digital accessibility is of interest to large technology companies, which view this objective as a new business opportunity. For Van Deursen [25], a vicious circle is being fed in which the most vulnerable groups are being even more marginalized in times of crisis. However, it is necessary to turn to SDG 16 (Promote Just, Peaceful and Inclusive Societies), which, in its goal 16.10 (Guarantee Public Access to Information and Protect Fundamental Freedoms, In Accordance with National Laws and International Agreements) references the role of the media as information channels and the right of citizens to be informed and, therefore, moves away from the broad, transversal and co-responsible approach of communication for development, social change, or transformative work.

Additionally, it is important to note the commitment to construct, in a participatory way, an agenda led by multistakeholder representatives of society, administrations, and the academic and business world. Participation is granted such relevance that it is an essential element of a new governance proposal specified in some of the SDGs (see Table 1).

Table 1. SDG goals with references to participation.

SDG	GOAL	Reference to Participation
5	5.5	Ensure the full and effective participation of women and equal leadership opportunities at all decision-making levels in political, economic and public life.
6	6.b	Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.
11	11.3	By 2030, increase inclusive and sustainable urbanization and the capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable planning and management of human settlements in all countries.
16	16.7	Guarantee the adoption at all levels of inclusive, participatory and representative decisions that respond to needs.
17	17.7	Encourage and promote the establishment of effective alliances in the public, public–private and civil society spheres, taking advantage of experience and strategies for obtaining resources from these alliances.

Source: Own elaboration.

The United Nations [26] recognizes the importance of citizen participation to the extent that for the Agenda to be carried out, the adoption of new behaviours and a reconfiguration of new social practices, values, and laws is required.

On the other hand, it is equally interesting to note the Agenda's initial concern regarding citizens' lack of knowledge of the purposes of the 17 SDGs. This concern was manifested in the declaration that "a citizenry committed to the tools to effect change—especially for groups that are at greater risk of being left behind—is an essential force for the advancement of sustainable development [...] Encouraging people to contribute, individually or collectively, expands resources for development and fosters human ingenuity for innovation" [26]. However, in 2019, the company IPSOS, in collaboration with the World Economic Fund, assessed the degree of knowledge of the 2030 Agenda in an adult population aged

16 to 74 years in 28 countries [27]. One of the results of this survey was that Spain was at the forefront of Europe in terms of knowledge of the Agenda, at 80% (only Sweden was ahead, with 86%).

The United Nations [26] notes that “individuals make decisions for many reasons and considering multiple sources of information. They are more likely to base their actions on firm evidence if it is communicated in a clear, interesting, and easy-to-understand way that stimulates action”. This statement demonstrates the importance of communication and information as instruments for achieving the objectives and goals of the Agenda. It cannot be forgotten that this proposal is a roadmap towards models of more just, supportive, and sustainable societies with a clear aim to transform socioeconomic behaviours and practices towards a model of socioecological transition that guarantees well-being within the framework of the limits of the planet. In short, it means a change in attitude and aptitude that can only come from conviction and knowledge. For this purpose, it is necessary to resort to new communicative and informative models that favour this learning and these changes. As Blanca Miedes points out [28], this process involves learning to connect with the agency itself, with the capacity for transformation, and with other people, so that we finally believe that are capable of enacting transformation. To this end, a pluralistic communicative model is necessary and must be open to different voices and new narratives in which ICT provides assistance and tools for change.

1.3. Our Field of Study: Andalusia and the Organizational Culture for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda

The political changes in Spain, especially in local governments, as a result of various elections since 2015 and the agreements reached in the framework of the 2030 Agenda at the end of 2015 have had an impact on the commitment of local and regional governments to the localization of the SDGs [29].

Andalusia is a region in southern Spain that is divided into 8 different provinces with a total of 785 municipalities and a population of 8,465,236 [30]. Andalusia is the most populated region in Spain, with an average density of 97 inhabitants per square kilometre [30]. Social inequality is a much more pressing problem in Andalusia than in the rest of Europe [31]. Thirty-five percent of the population of Andalusia is at risk of poverty or exclusion, a rate that is above the Spanish average [31] (see Figure 1).

This level of poverty and inequality, however, has not prevented Andalusia from decentralizing cooperation in official development aid data; that is, the economic amounts transferred by local governments in Andalusia for official development aid for impoverished countries or for humanitarian aid sometimes exceed the funds transferred from countries with higher incomes [6].

Despite the fact that many disadvantaged areas in the cities of Andalusia have been the focus of different strategies and local initiatives to combat poverty through European, national, and regional funding, social vulnerability persists, and the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic has created a situation of increased social conflict [32].

Currently, Andalusia faces the challenge of addressing public innovation at the local level through the promotion of open government initiatives, innovation plans, and digital transformation. This challenge is motivated by the attempts to make administrations more democratic and efficient through political programmes aimed at configuring a new social, green, and digital contract within the framework of the 2030 Agenda [16].

The regional strategy for localizing the SDGs is led by the Andalusian Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AACID) [33]. However, from the data provided by the FAMSI, we also see that some municipalities, mainly partners of this fund, have very specific strategies for the localization of the SDGs; examples include the municipality of Palma del Río [34] and the provincial council of Huelva [7]. As such, these localities promote and develop specific communication, awareness, and training actions for technical bodies, local politicians, and citizens in general that value the Agenda and promote collaborative governance among territorial actors to achieve the proposed objectives and goals.

In the public space, the Agenda is proposed as an opportunity to adapt the administration and its services to citizens' demands with greater effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency. The transformation of local entities as agents of a paradigm shift in the administration in the face of the challenges and objectives that the 2030 Agenda proposes has made these organizations references for innovation due to their wide range of experiences, the diversity of their themes, and their results [15].

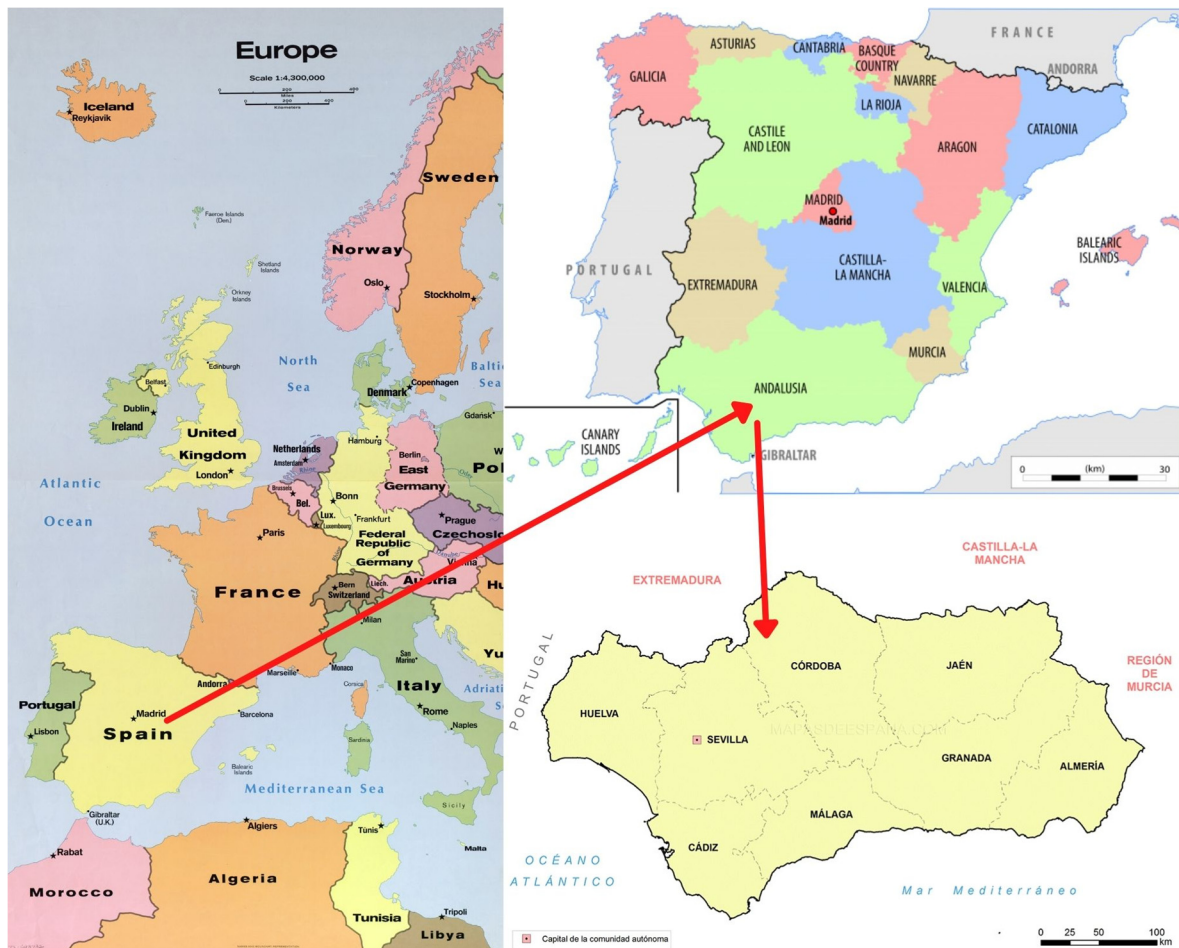


Figure 1. Andalusia map in Europe and provinces.

2. Materials and Methodology

The results presented in this study were obtained through a perception study conducted using two research techniques: a questionnaire and a focus group. As for the focus group, this qualitative technique allowed for the collection of data from the discussion and the subsequent qualitative analysis of the results obtained through a summative content analysis [35,36], used in other studies such as that of Pineda-Escobar [37]. These results are analyzed according to four questions (see Appendix B), in which participants' responses are grouped. With respect to the questionnaire, the data obtained through this quantitative technique were analyzed following the following steps, (1) coding, focusing on the assessment of the questions through the Likert scale [38], (2) analysis of the data once obtained and reviewed, and (3) qualitative analysis of the results obtained from the theoretical framework of the article [39].

Thirty-five local technicians from Andalusia, with a special focus on the provinces of Seville, Malaga, Huelva, Granada, and Cádiz, completed the questionnaire between January and September 2021. Questionnaires have been used in previous studies aimed at analyzing participants' perceptions on the topic of study [32]. The represented organizations are

essentially the elected councils of local governments. Most of the people who completed the questionnaires were local government technicians, but some were local politicians.

The questionnaires were administered virtually through the FAMSI virtual platform for specific training on the localization of the SDGs in local governments.

The questionnaire comprised 20 questions, of which 10 focused on SDGs and organizational structure, 5 focused on organizational communication, and 5 focused on poverty and local governments (see Appendix A).

The people in the sample were not required to identify themselves in the questionnaires, which established anonymity that would not interfere with their ability to answer the questions.

The questionnaire began with several questions regarding the participants' sociodemographic data that took into account not only information about the institutions to which they belonged but also factors such as their gender or whether they worked in the same place that they lived. The intention of these questions was to obtain information about the participants as citizens, not only as technicians. Each item was presented as a statement followed by a Likert response scale on which 0 indicated total disagreement with the statement, and 5 indicated total agreement [38].

The questionnaire focused on three dimensions of mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda:

- **Organizational culture and governance:** This section was the broadest because it involves elements related to the internal functioning of local organizations, thereby establishing a broad vision of their functioning. This section included questions 1 to 10 of the proposed questionnaire, which were divided into three blocks: Block 1: knowledge, leadership, and commitment to the localization of the SDGs, Block 2: SDGs as public innovation, and Block 3: territory and alliances.
- **Internal and external communication:** This section pertained to the communication processes and tools that local organizations propose to generate a more supportive institution that promotes fluidity of communication both within the organization and between the organization and the citizens of the territory in question. Items 11 to 15 addressed this issue.
- **Local governance and poverty:** This section focused on how local governments establish or prioritize public policies to combat poverty that promote the generation of processes for overcoming social exclusion or marginalization within their own territories. Items 16 to 20 of this questionnaire focused on this issue. The results of these 5 questions were divided into three blocks: Block 1: poverty and public policies, Block 2: poverty and influence of the organization on poverty situations, and Block 3: relevance Agenda 2030 with respect to poverty.

In order to deepen and discover the perception of the technicians responsible for the strategic and operational management of local governments regarding what generates or prevents a new perspective in local management to work on the 2030 Agenda analyzed in the organizational cultural dimension. Two focus groups were carried out with eleven people in each group made up of direct actors from local governments with experience in the process of localizing the SDGs at the territorial level in the eight provinces of Andalusia. These focus groups were held at the International University of Andalusia (UNIA) as part of a university postgraduate course on municipal international cooperation organized by FAMSI. In this research, Andalusian universities as territorial agents are important for their production of socially relevant knowledge [40]. With an understanding of the focus group as "an informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics" [41], the topics were grouped into four open questions (see Appendix B), which allowed a deeper examination of two elements: mainstreaming and networking.

The focus group technique [42] allows us to stimulate the obtaining of a group response to a series of questions, thanks to the cooperation of those gathered to carry out a definite, clear, and consensual task. The aim was to gather the expert and well-founded opinions of a group of technical people directly linked to the strategic and operational management of

local entities. It was clear to us that the analytical point of view should prevail over the hermeneutic point of view.

The two focus groups were conducted simultaneously on the same day by two members of the research team with experience in the technique. The duration of the working session was 2 hours, distributed in 30 min periods for each question put to the group. All the participants belonged to different entities and the assignment to the focus group (1 and 2) was random.

The time allotted for each question was distributed among the actions of the proposal and clarification of the question by the moderator, time for individual analysis, compilation of the different answers, group discussion, and debate, agreement by consent of the answers, and the recording of the answers.

A diagram of this research process is presented in Figure 2.

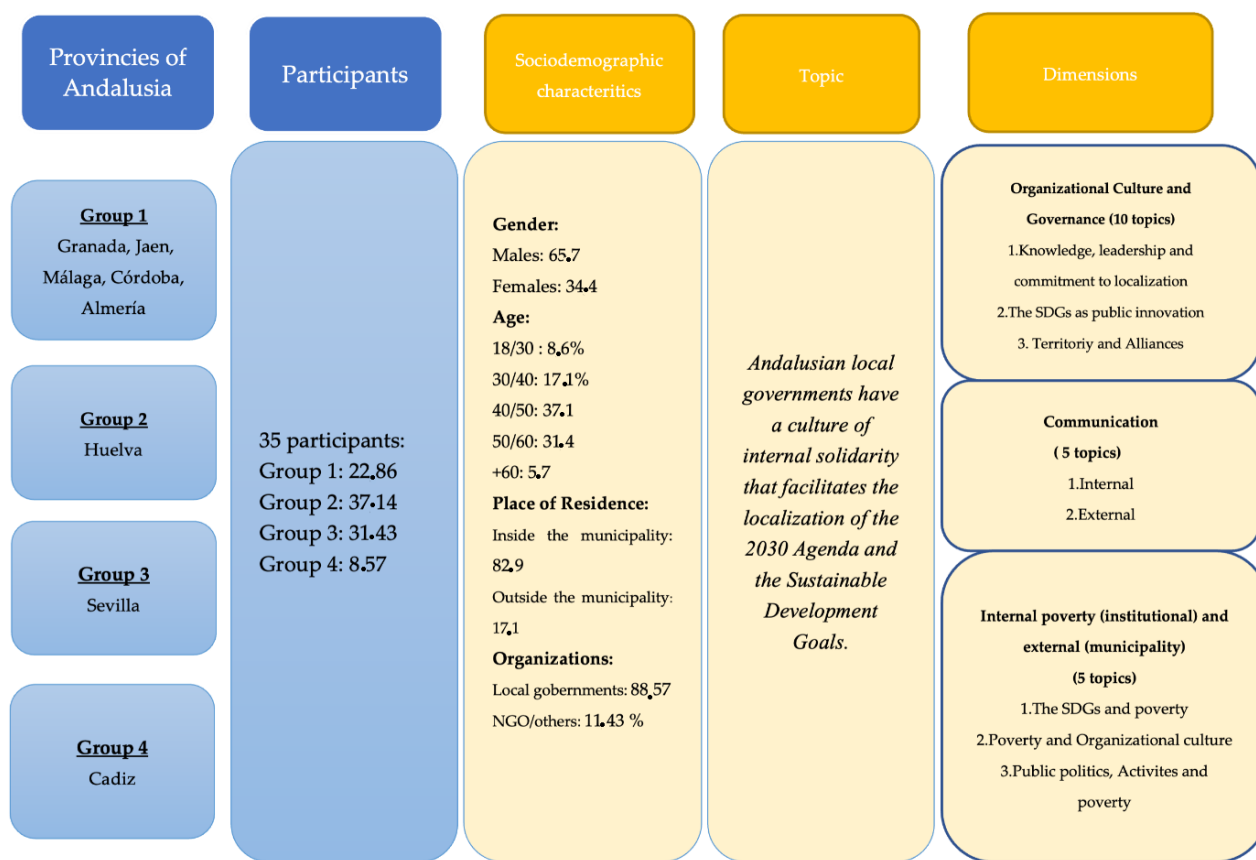


Figure 2. Chart diagram of the research design.

The results of the questionnaires and focus groups allowed an analysis of the perceptions of the technicians responsible for implementing local government policies aimed at sustainable development and the fight against poverty.

3. Results

3.1. Sociodemographic Profile of the Local Technicians

The results were analyzed taking into account the different responses for each territory. Andalusia has eight provinces, each of which comprises different municipalities. The majority of the municipalities of Eastern Andalusia (Granada, Jaen, Málaga, Córdoba, Almería) were treated as a single group since they had a lower number of responses than the rest of the provinces.

Regarding the sociodemographic profile of the participants, the majority were middle-aged men, which establishes a masculinized, adult profile. Women comprised 34.3 of the participants. The age range was 40 to 60 years.

In terms of the participants' area of residence, the majority lived in the municipality where the local organization where they worked was located. This allowed the results to be considered on a dual level: from the perspective of the participants as local agents as citizens.

Regarding the participants' duration of work at the local organization, 40% of the interviewees had been there for less than 5 years, while 25% had been there for more than 20 years. These large differences distinguished among the profiles of local technicians (see Table 2).

Table 2. Sociodemographic characteristics.

Sociodemographic Characteristics			
Provincie of origin	Group 1: Málaga, Jaén, Granada, Córdoba y Almería 23%		Group 2: Huelva 37%
	Group 3: Sevilla 31%		Group 4: Cádiz 9%
Participants' ages	+ 60 5.8%		50–60 31.4%
	40–50 37.1%	30–40 17.1%	18–30 8.6%
Years in local organizations	+20 25.7%		10–20 11.4%
	5–10 22.9%		0–5 40%

As the previous point indicates, this study focused on exploring local government experts' assessment of the alignment of their organizations with the 2030 Agenda. This analysis is based on three fundamental elements: first, exploring whether the implementation and localization of the SDGs requires a new organizational culture and innovative processes; second, determining how the internal and external communication of local entities is articulated to achieve the SDGs and exploring the perceived need to change the model of communication, and finally, identifying how the structure of the organization directly influences the fight against poverty. Below, the questionnaire results are discussed according to these three dimensions.

3.2. Results for the Organizational Culture and Governance Dimension

Regarding the results obtained for the organizational culture and governance dimension (Questions 1 to 10), for the first block, which was linked to “knowledge, leadership and commitment to localization” (Questions 1, 2, 3, 6, and 10), we can state the following:

1. For the most part, the organizations know the SDGs, and there is interest in and commitment to the 2030 Agenda. The average response to these items was 3.71 out of 5 points, with 80% of the responses ranging from 3 to 5 and 60% ranging from 4 to 5.
2. There is clear team leadership in the local entities for the promotion of the 2030 Agenda. The average score for related items was 3.74 out of 5 points, with 82.9% of the responses ranging from 3 to 5 and 60% ranging from 4 to 5.
3. Although a 71.4% majority of the people surveyed affirmed that the SDGs are part of the design, planning, management, and evaluation of policies, programmes, and

budgets for their territory, there was a significant 28.6% rate of negative responses (0 and 1).

4. Regarding knowledge about the localization of the SDGs in local entities, there was a significant negative response rate of 22.9%.
5. More than 37% of the respondents stated that they do not work comprehensively with the 17 SDGs but focus more on some than others, while 37.1% indicated that they work with all of the SDGs without emphasizing some over others (indicated by scores of 4 to 5, inclusive) (see Figure 3).

Knowledge, leadership and commitment to localization



Figure 3. Knowledge leadership and commitment to localization.

In terms of items related to “SDGs as public innovation”, 100% of the respondents affirmed that to achieve the SDGs, it is essential to have more innovative, open, connected, and transparent entities. This affirms the view of the SDGs as an opportunity to work in a different way internally and promote collaborative and transversal work processes among different areas and/or units of local governments (see Figure 4).

SDGs as public innovation

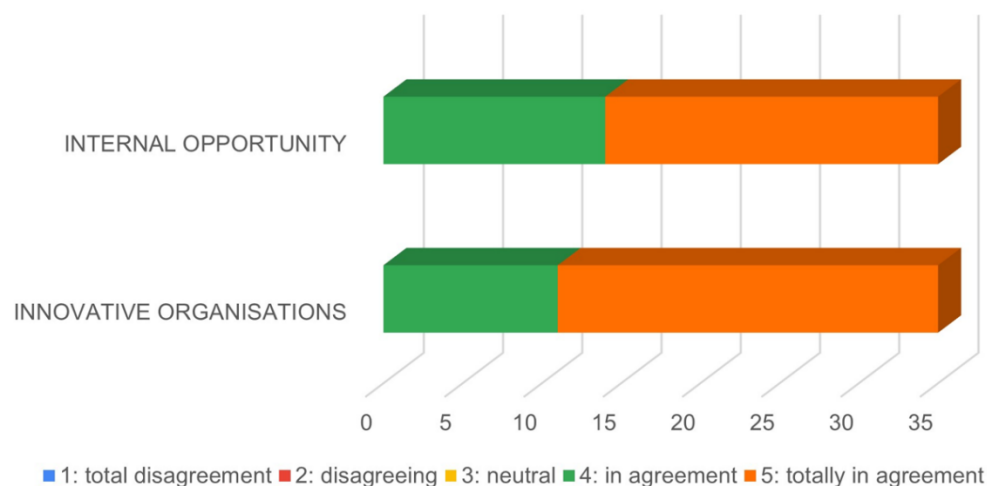


Figure 4. SDGs as public innovation.

From the analysis of Block 2, “territory and alliances” (questions 7, 8, and 9), we can affirm the following findings:

- (1) Slightly more than half of the respondents (54.3% who responded with scores ranging from 4 to 5) affirmed that their work takes the state and regional programmatic framework on the localization of the SDGs into account, but 25.7% stated that they do not work under this contextual premise (as indicated by scores of 0 and 1).
- (2) There was a significant diversity of responses regarding the alignment of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda with the instruments and tools of local planning, representing differences in realities and approaches. We observed responses throughout the range from 0 to 5, with 54.3% of the respondents providing positive responses and 28.6% providing negative responses.
- (3) Only 14.6% of the representatives of local entities stated that they do not interact or establish alliances with other key local agents, such as companies, social organizations, universities, etc., for the purpose of localizing the SDGs. The majority of the respondents (31.4%) claimed to occupy an intermediary position (3) (see Figure 5).

Territory and Alliances

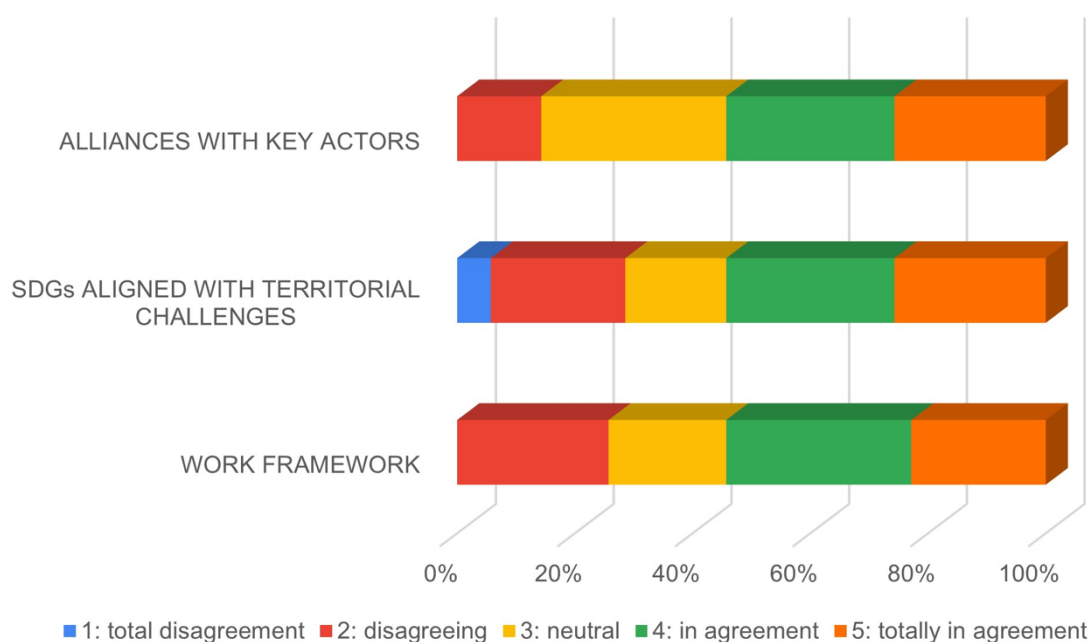


Figure 5. Territory and alliances.

These results were contrasted with the information obtained from the two focus groups of localization and local governance experts from local Andalusian governments.

3.3. Results for the Internal and External Communication Dimension

Regarding local organizations and communication, that is, in communicative terms, most of the participating Andalusian actors held the conviction that internal and external communication is necessary. The results can be observed in Figure 6.

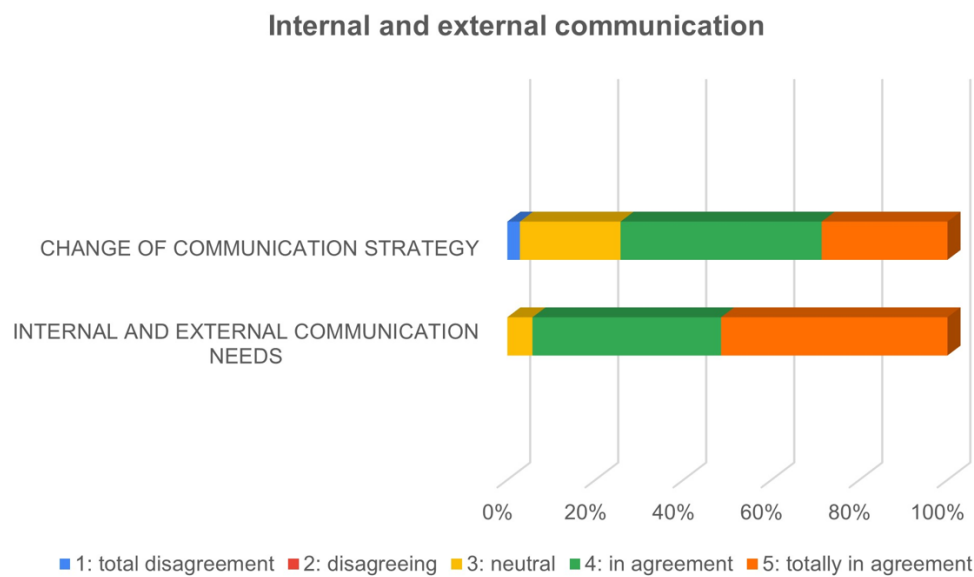


Figure 6. Internal and external communication.

3.4. Results for the Poverty and Local Governments Dimension

The responses to the questions related to poverty and local governments showed results similar to those of the other two dimensions. The scores were uneven with an upwards trend; that is, the location technicians from different provinces of Andalusia indicated that there has been a slight increase in the establishment of public policies that favour the 2030 Agenda and, more specifically, the fight against poverty. However, the result was not clear, and the degree of appreciation for this goal appears to be moderate, as Figure 7 shows.

Local governments and the fight against poverty in the 2030 Agenda

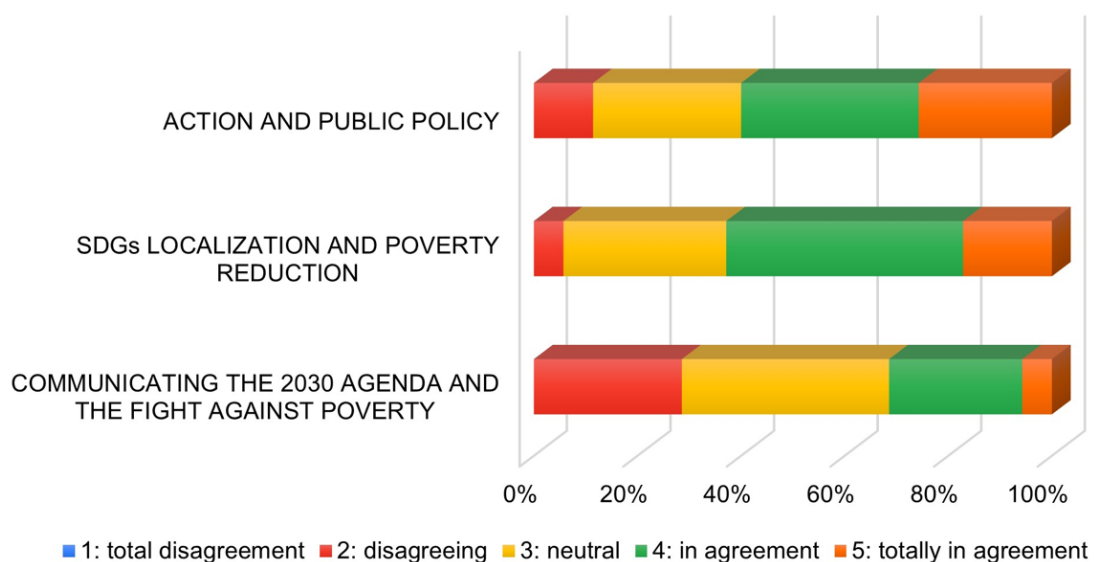


Figure 7. Local governments and the fight against poverty in the 2030 Agenda.

The results regarding the local technicians' perceptions of their organizations' influence in situations of poverty were also diverse. No clear positive or negative perception was evident, as Figure 8 shows.

Organisational structure and poverty

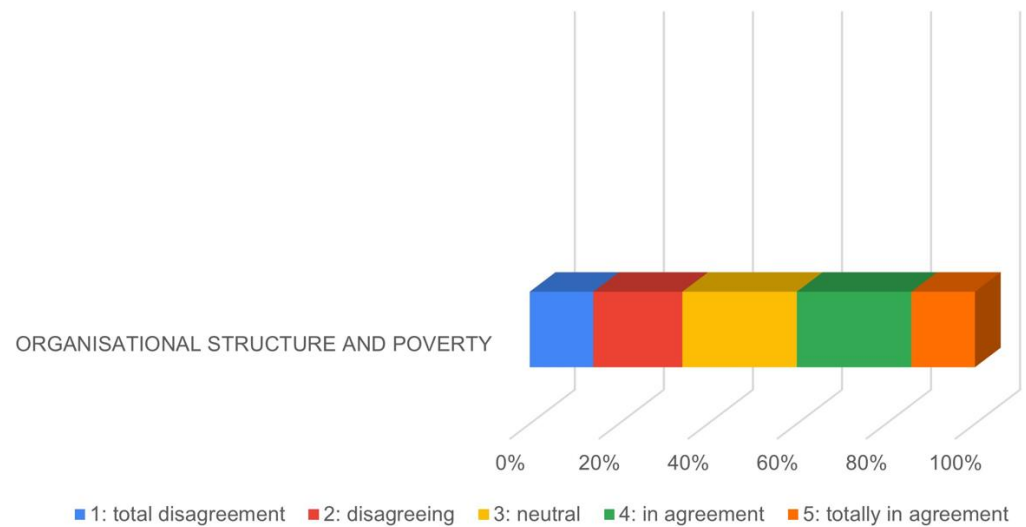


Figure 8. Organizational structure and poverty.

To conclude this section on poverty and local governments, the local technicians' perception of the relevance and adequacy of territories' actions to alleviate local poverty was established. The trend was similar to those of the previous dimensions of this block; that is, there was no clear direction of the local technicians' responses, but they were slightly favourable. The results of the responses for this section are presented in Figure 9.

Social actions and policies to combat poverty

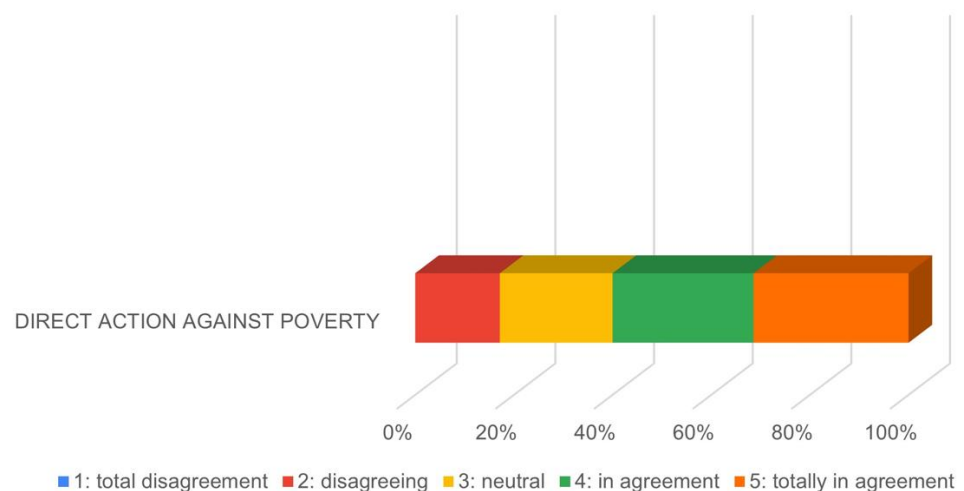


Figure 9. Social actions and policies to combat poverty.

4. Discussion

In this article, several local governments representing the provinces of Andalusia were approached to determine technicians' perceptions regarding their organizations' localization of the 2030 Global Agenda.

On the one hand, regarding the sociodemographic aspect of the sample, it is interesting to note that most of the local technicians were men, and a minority were women, which establishes a lack of equality within the organizations themselves.

In terms of age, a high percentage of the local technicians in Andalusia were older than 40 years, which prompts a generational analysis of the results.

4.1. Organizational Culture and Public Innovation

Regarding the results obtained for Dimension 1, regarding organizational culture, the analysis of Block 1 affirmed that the SDGs are known by local entities. There is a certain interest in and commitment to the 2030 Agenda among the people who comprise the organization, and it is promoted by both political and technical leadership. Localization processes are known, although not all of the SDGs are addressed. The Agenda is considered in the design, planning, management, and evaluation of policies, programmes, and budgets for the territory and its citizens, in line with the contributions that have been made by the theory [43]. However, there was a degree of dispersion in the results that was not linked to the size of the locality, the type of entity (city council, county council), the function of the participant (political, technical), or the participant's seniority in the entity. Individual and motivational aspects may explain the differences in the knowledge of localization and the synergy among territorial planning processes. These results allowed the conclusion that the Andalusian local entities acknowledged the SDGs as a roadmap for the development of the territory and an opportunity to design and develop training and awareness actions to expand the radius of action and the impact of the SDGs. Within the same block, the responses to the questions related to the SDGs as public innovation showed that there is practically a consensus acceptance of this role as a *sine qua non* condition that allows Andalusian local entities to achieve the SDGs and to generate, promote and sustain these processes and public innovation initiatives. To this end, innovative, open, connected, and transparent local entities are needed, in line with those proposed in SDG 16. To advance these goals, working with and localizing the SDGs presents an opportunity to promote collaborative and transversal work processes among different units and/or areas. In this sense, Beck [44] proposes that the public sector must transform itself in terms of both its modes of internal organization and its relations with the other actors involved, to lead these processes. This commitment to mainstreaming as a public innovation implies a new culture, a new way of being and doing things in the local administration that is not exempt from difficulties, conditioning factors, barriers, and facilitators, as was previously pointed out in the contributions of Cerezo, F. [21] and by the focus groups conducted in the research. Hence, this article aims to delve into some of these elements from the perspective of the organizational praxis of local Andalusian entities.

To this end, focus groups were conducted to allow experts to contrast the results obtained regarding the articulation of networks and the mainstreaming of the SDGs. From the analysis of the contributions of the local management and cooperation experts who participated in the focus groups, we determined that mainstreaming the SDGs into Andalusian local governments necessitates the following steps:

- a. Publicize and recognize the 2030 Agenda as a framework for all sectoral areas and for all work teams and raise awareness of its impact and scope, relating the work of the different areas or services (structures, procedures, etc.) with the Agenda itself and the objectives, goals, and indicators aligned with the 5 "Ps" (Planet, People, Prosperity, Peace, Partnership).
- b. Identify with the local community (via a social map) its different and shared interests, achievable goals, and challenges (territorial missions) and integrate them into local work on the SDGs.
- c. Work on the coherence and integration of the strategic planning of the entity and the territory.
- d. Focus the organization's attention on a clear and shared purpose.
- e. Embrace the participatory nature of localization, being respectful of proposals that are made and agreed upon by the different areas. This guarantees the commitment of those who must manage these proposals since it reduces the likelihood of discrepancies in the goals, the means, and opportunities to achieve them.

The main barriers and facilitating elements that were considered to have the greatest relevance and impact by the group of local management technicians after validation and grouping are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Barriers and facilitating elements.

Barriers	Facilitators
Resistance to change among the members of the local entity (due to a lack of information, knowledge, motivation, sense of purpose, and shared vision)	Comprehensive conception of citizenship (Global Citizenship)
The difficulty of localizing an Agenda that is extensive and complex	A shared assessment that allows the identification and understanding of the content and the areas' needs
Inflexible and innovative legislative frameworks and administrative procedures	Commitment and institutional leadership that is open to change and learning
Poor work culture and horizontal participation.	A (cross-sectional) SDG organization team that promotes, manages, monitors, and communicates
Exclusiveness of municipal areas and delegations	Economic, technical, human, and time resources
Lack of management policy and resources for dynamization and transversal cooperation between areas	Continuous evaluation, ongoing periodic monitoring, and the establishment of simple, measurable, and optimal indicators
Lack of economic, technical, human, and time resources	Shared learning of technical staff and political representatives
Lack of methodology that favours collaborative work	A decentralized organization and organizational culture of networking
Lack of coordination among institutions (local, regional, state)	Communication and transparency as a means of involving the entire organization
	Visibility of commitments and results
	Communication, awareness, and knowledge of local organizations and citizens regarding the municipality's 2030 Agenda

Source: Own elaboration.

The analysis of Block 2, “territory and alliances” showed that local entities in coherence with the SDGs are aware that forming territorial and global alliances and working in a collaborative and coordinated way [45] with other local agents are keys to the successful localization of the SDGs and that it is necessary to advance the design and development of multilevel and multi-actor governance [46] within the state and regional programmatic framework on the localization of the SDGs.

There is an awareness, although it is not yet generalized among the study participants, of the need to articulate and align the SDGs with the other instruments and tools of territorial planning using well-founded indicators that are aligned with the objectives and goals of the 2030 Agenda.

4.2. The Importance of Communication in Local Governments

In the dimension focused on internal and external communication, the responses occupied a middle ground, probably because there was no alignment of communication strategies with the objectives for implementing the Agenda in the territories. In some way, communicative strategies continue to be oriented towards generating information to be shared by media and informative channels rather than towards communication.

This approach clashes with the idea that the Agenda involves a process of transformation that guarantees development and a clear commitment to promoting a new model of governance. This echoes Bordenave's [47] idea that to reach another possible world (the slogan of social movements in the summits and forums of the Millennium Development Goals), another communication model is necessary, one that is based on the hybridization of the knowledge and contributions of experts, academics, theorists, and professionals who have endowed communication and information with eco-social, edu-communicative and transformative values for social change, etc. We refer to the vision and educational action and dialogue of Freire [48]; of communication as an instrument for development, as proposed by Alfonso Gumucio [49] and Rosa María Alfaro [50], and the eco-social commitment argued in the communicative models of Manuel Chaparro [39,40] and Alejandro Barranquero [51].

Therefore, the question is whether transformative communication can contribute to the achievement of objectives and goals for the transformation of our world? Some previous studies have addressed this issue. Javier Erro [52] considered that communication with a social focus is a space that allows confluence and collective construction. Feijoo [53] discussed communication strategies for generating awareness and encouragement. The

Food and agriculture organization of the United Nations itself [54] endorsed the document known as the Rome Consensus, which stated that communication for development is a social process based on dialogue that uses a wide range of instruments and methods. It has to do with seeking change at different levels, which includes listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, establishing policies, debating, and learning, with the aim of achieving sustained and significant change. This argument reinforces the idea of positioning communication as an essential factor in guaranteeing sustainable human development in terms of social and economic aspects [54].

It is proven that the 2030 Agenda goes beyond the spaces of international negotiation. It is a proposal that affects people and their territories. That forces an individual, collective response, from the local but without ceasing to be part of the global effort to solve the current challenges. That is why the importance of making the SDGs local and that they are present in the sphere of municipal politics and the daily life of citizens. This collective effort obliges in communicative terms to break its functional practice associated exclusively with disseminating content, mostly unidirectional, to move to environments that promote the participation and co-responsibility of citizens in the design and execution of sustainable development.

4.3. Local Governance and the Fight against Poverty

The last part of the analysis examined the dimension related to the fight against poverty. For the 2030 Agenda, poverty is the greatest problem facing humanity and that is why the SDGs prioritize the eradication of poverty and hunger, placing people “at the centre of sustainable development” [12], hence the importance of establishing this dimension within the organizational structures of local governments, linked to the localization of the SDGs, especially if we take into account the context of Andalusia where it is a central problem if we compare it with the rest of European countries. Moreover, despite the guaranteed income policies, the results in terms of escaping poverty have been satisfactory [55]. Three questions were established to focus on three aspects. First, we examined the relationship between the internal communication of the organization and the 2030 Agenda. Second, we considered the localization of the SDGs in relation to poverty. Finally, we considered the territories’ and organizations’ actions and social policies regarding poverty. It is worth highlighting the importance of SDG 1, “end poverty”, which is perfectly related to SDG 11, “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” [56].

As we have previously shown, the organizational structure is an element of relevant importance in the present investigation. However, from this point of analysis, the aim was to develop a vision that is more closely linked to how organizations influence strategies to combat poverty. In Spain, and specifically in Andalusia, poverty and social exclusion face a triple challenge: multilevel governance, the fragmentation of social policies, and the diversity of the network of actors involved in the fight against poverty [57]. In these three complex spaces, local governments have a presence through their role in multilevel governance, as those responsible for social policies and as part of the network of actors fighting poverty.

The results obtained in this study indicate that local governments in Andalusia have made slight efforts to establish social actions and policies for fighting poverty in the territory and within the organization, for their own workers and citizens. It must be noted that sampling was performed during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period in which social policies have a greater role than in the past. There is an emergence of policies during this period of post-COVID-19 recovery, policies have emerged that aim to reduce poverty and fight inequality and thus allow a future marked by territorial and social development [58].

5. Conclusions

In this article, local technicians’ perceptions regarding their organizations and the 2030 Agenda were analyzed along three dimensions. The sample comprised technicians from Andalusian local governments that were familiar with the SDGs and showed an initial

political and technical will to work with them as a roadmap for sustainable development through their commitment to localizing these goals.

The results were analyzed to answer the research question “Do local technicians (technical staff) perceive that their organizations work transversally on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as an opportunity to innovate and promote a culture of solidarity that allows entities to be more open, collaborative, transversal and interconnected (within and among entities)?” The answer is certainly yes, since the SDGs and, therefore the 2030 Agenda, are perceived as an opportunity to transform local entities, with the understanding that localization requires a commitment to public innovation that allows entities to be more open, collaborative, transversal, and interconnected.

Although the answer to the research question is affirmative with respect to the technicians’ perceptions, weaknesses were perceived in the mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda within local organizations. These conclusions can serve to guide local governments in two ways. On the one hand, the importance of knowing the perception of the technicians in charge of implementing international policies, such as the 2030 Agenda; and on the other hand, the need to address a transformation of the organizational model of local governments for an efficient integration of the 2030 Agenda.

To ensure the robust mainstreaming of the Agenda within local governments with an emphasis on communication processes and the fight against poverty, the following key points are proposed:

1. Training and awareness: There is significant room for the awareness and training of technical and political teams (“without leaving anyone behind”) of the Andalusian local entities to guarantee the sustainability of this process, driven by the talent of the people of Andalusian public entities from the inside out.
2. The 2030 Agenda as a local strategy: Given the difficulties of localizing an Agenda that is extensive and complex such as the 2030 Agenda, this could be the strategic and programmatic umbrella that would give a sense of shared purpose to all initiatives of a more regional and/or local, sectoral, or conjunctural nature. There is a need and opportunity to connect the global, universal, and multidimensional Agenda with the rest of the initiatives and tools for planning, management, and evaluation that have historically been developed at the local level, such as strategic plans, sector plans, local economic development projects like Agenda 21, etc. In the current context, such efforts involve connecting the 2030 Agenda with strategies to combat rural depopulation, the fight against climate change, the Next Generation EU European recovery programme, and the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan of the government of Spain, which is structured around 10 leverage policies, including a commitment to an “administration for the 21st century”. It would be interesting to focus on territorial missions that are sustained by powerful public–private alliances with broad citizen participation to address current and future challenges. This innovative proposal implies an important transformation of state and local administrations to open up and connect with territorial actors to focus on generating value.
3. Efficiency and strengthening of local capacities: Now is an appropriate time to generate and apply new ideas or significant improvements for public services and public organizations, especially local ones, within the framework of a new contract with citizens (starting with a comprehensive conception) based on ethics and the value of the public sphere. It is necessary to test new organizational models in public management that respond more effectively and coherently to the complex challenges of our societies and the needs and aspirations of a citizenry that is global and local, with open, socially innovative cultures and organization practices of lifelong learning. Andalusian local public entities must strengthen their capacities and generate knowledge, learning, and creativity in the service of the necessary transformations, despite having legislative frameworks and administrative procedures that are not very flexible or innovative.
4. Strengthen networking: There is awareness among local governments of the study of the need to network with territorial actors to provide more collaborative, democratic,

and connected governance for development that is aware of territorial challenges and includes citizens as co-creators and co-designers of innovative and effective responses and solutions to the problems experienced, among which poverty and inequality occupy a central place. It is important to enhance long-term visions, leadership and commitment, coordination, transversality, fluidity, and learning as key factors associated with institutional recognition and commitment, the exchange and permeability of experiences, and the sustainability of processes of necessary change. According to the experts who participated in the group interviews, it is necessary to design economic and fiscal incentives for networking and SDG alliances to ensure the transparency of the entities that make up the SDG ecosystem and to create plural and lasting spaces in which to build consensus.

5. Encourage participatory tools: Efforts to achieve the objectives set in the 2030 Agenda would involve strengthening the capacities of the local governments of Andalusia, including the development of participatory, innovative, and sustainable tools that guarantee transparency, good governance, participation, and citizenship as keys to promoting open governance that allows shared sustainable development and co-creation with citizens. Additionally, it would imply a commitment to transversal leadership that can mobilize the sectoral departments and does so from a comprehensive perspective.
6. A culture of solidarity as a foundation: We are facing an opportunity, if local and provincial government administrations in Andalusia understand the need to establish solidarity as a priority within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, and to prioritize solidarity and cooperation as central to their institutional purpose. Despite the resistance to change within these entities, the challenge is to generate innovative local administrations and establish powerful alliances to develop a transformative agenda, as anticipated in the 2030 Agenda and its well-intentioned title: “Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.
7. Improvement of communication processes: Communication and information cannot be relegated or have a minor influence or scarce resources without being planned or evaluated. Access to quality content contributes to generating critical and co-responsible citizenship with actors who promote a change in the development model that aims to place people and the environment at the centre of progress and comply with the maxim of “leave no one behind”. The digital divide cannot be fought exclusively with an instrumental approach to ICT. These have to be allies for sustainable development, and for this, it has to be accompanied by edu-communicative processes.
8. Poverty as a fundamental issue in Andalusia: The variety of responses to the questions related to the fight against poverty show the importance of the diversity of local governments, and future research should examine why some municipalities received very favourable scores and others received very unfavourable ones. The diversity within the participating local organizations demonstrates the rich institutional variety in the region of Andalusia. However, despite this variety, poverty remains a common element among the territories and must be made a territorial priority.

There is a need for future research based on comparative studies that explore the diversity of perceptions of different local governments, in different national and international territories, on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as the organizational innovation carried out for an effective integration of the challenges proposed by the Agenda.

The 2030 Agenda assumes a new global pact among multiple actors to collectively address the challenges of our hyperconnected societies. These challenges may be related to health, such as those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; the environment, such as climate change; social inequalities; factors that condition urban planning, such as mobility; or they may be transverse factors, such as education or equality. Local administrations must necessarily match their implementation and localization processes with the rhythms of communication and participation.

It is necessary to recover space and presence in the 2030 Agenda to guarantee the focus on communication and information as keys to the sustainable development of the territories. To this end, a hybrid strategy is necessary, in which communication and information change from being considered transmitters of messages to processes that generate change and social transformation.

Additionally, poverty is established as a fundamental element of SDG 1 and a critical issue in Andalusia. The responses of a more efficient, interconnected, and innovative local administration within the framework of the 2030 Agenda will promote improvements in the quality of life of the people living in territories that are committed to the transformation.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. Questions asked in the questionnaire.

Questions Included in the Questionnaire. Scores Range from 0 (Total Disagreement) to 5 (Total Agreement)
1. The SDGs are known to our entity, and there is interest in and commitment to working on the 2030 Agenda.
2. The people and teams that lead the entity (politically and technically) promote the knowledge and development of the 2030 Agenda as part of their work, acting as an example for others.
3. The SDGs and the 2030 Agenda are clearly present in our work of designing, planning, management and evaluation of policies, programmes and budgets for the territory and its citizens.
4. We understand that to achieve the SDGs, it is essential to have more innovative, open, connected and transparent local entities.
5. We understand that the SDGs provide an opportunity to work internally in a different way; they allow the promotion of collaborative and transversal work processes between different units and/or areas as a way of developing more appropriate responses to the challenges we face.
6. In our organization, there is a clear idea of what it means to localize the SDGs.
7. Our organization takes into account the status and the autonomous programmatic framework of the localization of the SDGs.
8. We work in line with the local strategic plan (if it exists) or with known and clear strategic objectives that have well-founded indicators and are aligned with the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.
9. Our organization interacts with and establishes alliances with other local key agents for the localization of the SDGs.
10. The organization establishes and works on the 17 SDGs without emphasizing any objective over another.
11. Communication (internal and external) is a priority for my organization.
12. Do you consider that you have adequate human/technical resources to develop your communication?
13. Do you consider that your organization positions communication as a strategic area/service?
14. To what extent do you consider communication key to achieving your goal of localizing the SDGs?
15. Do you think your communication model/strategy should change to achieve the objective of localizing the SDGs?
16. The communication from your organization that is being carried out regarding the 2030 Agenda is generating spaces to fight poverty.
17. The structure of the organization directly affects poverty situations in the territory.
18. The localization of the SDGs by your organization will reduce the level of poverty in the territory.
19. Your organization develops actions that are directly linked to the fight against poverty.
20. The social action and social policies of your organization are aligned with SDG 1 to fight poverty.

Appendix B

Table A2. Questions asked in the focus group.

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1. What does it mean to work on mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda in your organization?
 2. What are the barriers to mainstreaming?
 3. What would be the facilitators working on mainstreaming?
 4. How can we strengthen partnerships to work on the 2030 Agenda?
-

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