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Can Differing Opinions Hinder Partnerships for the Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals? Evidence from Marginalized Urban Areas in Andalusia

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Abstract: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) were set up under the idea that no one—and no place—be left behind. Today, the tendency for population growth concentrates in cities, causing social segregation and the proliferation of marginalized urban areas. In this global context, SDG 11, which addresses the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda, is becoming crucial. To achieve inclusive and sustainable development, especially in disadvantaged urban areas, collaborative partnerships have been suggested as essential to building habitable spaces where life is worth living. However, the literature reveals how the commitment to multistakeholder partnerships depends on many factors, such as the perceptions the participants have about their reality and the problems they face. In this study, we rely on the information collected from 118 surveys conducted among the leaders of private, public, and civil society organizations already collaborating in six disadvantaged neighborhoods in Andalusia. The results show how and where their perceptions about their own neighborhoods differ and the intersectional reasons behind these differing opinions. This is a critical starting point to elucidate how to enable and sustain local collective actions to start the process of fighting for human dignity.

Keywords: 2030 Agenda; Sustainable Development Goals; SDG 11; urban development; partnerships; local collective action; social segregation; marginalized urban areas; perception survey

1. Introduction

1.1. Global Trends in Urban Growth and Social Segregation: A Challenge to Social Justice

In recent decades, there has been a clear tendency for population growth to increasingly concentrate in cities. Today, approximately 56% of the world's population is currently considered to be living in cities, and this figure should increase to 66% before 2050 [1]. This is not only a reality for developing countries. In Europe, almost 75% of the population lives in urban areas, and this figure is likely to edge past the 80% mark by 2050 [2].

A derived consequence for this unprecedented growth of cities has been residential polarization and the social segregation derived from it. The concentration experienced in many cities worldwide has led to the proliferation of marginalized urban areas. Only a couple of years ago, approximately 900 million urban residents were estimated to live in slum-level conditions [3]. Specifically, in Europe, 32% of the urban population live in disadvantaged urban areas [4]. These figures highlight why urban segregation and social exclusion are depicted today as one of the most chronic challenges for social justice and global development [5].

As a consequence of these global trends, in recent years, there has been an emerging interest at the international level to address the situation of these marginalized neighborhoods [6] that, despite the potential levels of development reached by the cities they are located in, seem ignored by this process and remain stuck in a deprived socioeconomic situation. Their situation not only hinders the possibility of access to a decent life for their inhabitants but also hampers the natural and mutually beneficial coexistence with other realities within the urban area they are located in. Finally, international agreements on development and social justice have responded accordingly.

1.2. The Incorporation of the New Urban Agenda into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [7] is considered a remarkable milestone in the history of humanity, as it represents the most ambitious, comprehensive, and far-reaching international political agenda approved to date. The 2030 Agenda embraces its willingness to address most of the societal challenges that the world is currently facing, not only globally but also at the national, regional, and local levels.

This broad vision was promoted thanks to a convergence of actors from both the sphere of development and the sphere of environmental sustainability, who shared their scopes and approaches from the initial stages of the discussion [1]. During subsequent rounds of negotiation, this vision ended up acquiring a holistic character when other actors joined the debate, such as those focused on the New Urban Agenda [8].

In the years prior to the official establishment of the 2030 Agenda, a campaign led by international organizations such as UN-Habitat, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), strongly advocated for the incorporation of a separate objective for urban areas and human settlements [8,9]. Their argument was that such an objective would help increase the political attention given to and the awareness of urban challenges, thereby giving cities a greater advocacy capacity to mobilize their financing [3]. Their demands were met when the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were approved, particularly when SDG 11 on "sustainable cities and communities" was officially adopted as one of the goals.

Since cities produce more than three-quarters of the air pollution and for decades have been considered a privileged area for addressing issues such as recycling or the use of renewables [10], the initial fear was that SDG 11 could be limited to the mere technological and environmental aspects of urban development. However, this fear was soon dissolved. Not only is SDG 11 not limited to these objectives due to its explicit incorporation of social issues, but other SDGs clearly mention urban goals from a social point of view, e.g., SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 16, and 17.

A substantial part of these urban development goals refers to the residential polarization and social segregation that is spreading in most cities across the world. This tendency is generating huge slums and marginalized urban areas, whose challenges must be locally addressed to effectively accomplish the 2030 Agenda.

1.3. Addressing Social Exclusion in Urban Areas under the Light of the 2030 Agenda: The Importance of Collaborative Partnerships

Despite the growth experienced in recent decades, marginalized urban areas are no new reality either in northern or southern countries. Their existence is not only an issue for countries; marginalized urban areas cross borders and have implications in the international arena. In fact, for more than four decades now, UN-Habitat has been the United Nations agency dedicated to promoting transformative change in cities and human settlements through international guidance and support [3,11].

However, the evolution of data shows how the social policies implemented in these urban areas have proven generally ineffective in reversing the deep and multidimensional situation of exclusion experienced by their inhabitants [12]. The solutions proposed to date have generally suffered from the same deficits studied for decades in the field of international development

interventions, i.e., fragmentation and a deficit of alignment and harmonization [13,14]. The reasons are multiple, including the distribution of competences between local, regional, and national public administrations [15]; the certain inertia to work in silos, even within the same administration level [16]; or the one we are exploring in this paper, namely, the difficulties in reaching collaborative partnerships to set up a local collective action [17,18].

For future urban policies and strategies to be effective, the logic of the entire public policy process must be reexamined. First, the literature has already identified how critical effective locations will be to the success of the 2030 Agenda [19]. There is a common agreement that, in many of its aspects, the local level can better address the implementation of the 2030 Agenda [20]. Especially in regard to social aspects, among which are the proliferation of marginalized urban areas and the appearance of realities of social exclusion, local approaches are privileged because the processes of social inclusion are always localized and dependent on history [19].

Second, the identification, design, implementation, and evaluation of social policies should be addressed under the all-encompassing umbrella of the 2030 Agenda [19,21]. The 2030 Agenda establishes in targets 17.16 and 17.17 the need for effective public, public–private, and civil society partnerships to be encouraged and promoted, thereby building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships [17,22]. This framework will require a whole new institutional and social architecture to inform the different phases of the public policy process.

Regarding the implementation of social policies under the 2030 Agenda, the settlement of participatory mechanisms that facilitate multistakeholder governance will be especially crucial [23]. The nomination of representatives of the different stakeholders and their gathering within participatory partnerships will be a key success factor in the implementation of localized solutions, especially in urban initiatives [24]. However, this kind of collaborative partnership suffers from many challenges, as already identified by the literature.

1.4. Factors That May Promote or Hinder Collaborative Partnerships: The Role of Differing Perceptions

In recent decades, the literature on partnerships has received renewed interest from scholars and academic journals. A first proxy for this interest can be the multiple bibliometric analyses and systematic reviews performed in later years, either about partnerships, in general [25,26], or specific sectors [27,28] or contexts [29]. In this paper, we focus on the academic knowledge generated about the factors that have been deemed as hindering or enhancing to the constitution and maintenance of collaborative multistakeholder partnerships, from the pioneering works in the late 1990s [18,30] to the most current findings [31,32].

Among the factors generally recognized as contributing to partnership success, we can find partners' commitment to shared goals and values [17]; efficient communication and collaboration among partners [33]; recognition and respect for each partner's perspectives and experience [32,34]; and the inclusion of community members' expertise in local partnerships [35], which are especially critical in vulnerable environments [36,37]. Despite the growing body of literature, it remains controversial how the antecedents of stakeholder collaboration can influence a partnership by either facilitating or discouraging the commitment [38]. The participation of partnership facilitators or brokers is also deemed crucial to the success or such partnerships [39]. In the case study we introduce in this paper, there is a university playing the role of partnership facilitator, since an entity considered to be trusted actor is preferred to perform this role [40,41].

Regarding factors that hinder partnerships, scholars have recently systematized them in diverse classifications. On the one hand, Horan [23] identified five main causes that threaten the successful reach of partnerships: partnering capacity, compensation for losers, inadequate coordination mechanisms, short-time horizons, and misaligned incentives. On the other hand, Xion et al. [42] distinguished four main reasons: institutional issues such as a poor social environment; organizational issues such as trust, communication, and transparency; contractual issues such as inadequate risk allocation and distribution mechanisms; and managerial issues such as inefficient partnering capacity.

Regardless of those or other previous systematizations, the lack of clear aims and shared goals is often cited as a major cause of the failure of partnerships [43]. When partners fail to prioritize their common interest over the interest of the particular organizations, power struggles between partners emerge [32]. These dynamics disrupt the trust among partners, thereby hindering their ability to preserve a harmonious relationship [44].

The literature proves how an agreement on broad aims is not enough. If detailed goals remain unclear, or if the partners have different understandings of what the goals mean, this can lead to misunderstanding, lack of coordination, and possible conflict between the partners [18,45]. Unclear goals and unshared expectations of a partnership can also hinder the partners' ability to understand their role and ways to contribute to the project [32].

Differing opinions and perceptions play a crucial role in the determination of shared goals [43,46], especially when the links between the problems and their solutions are uncertain [47]. Social representation theory has been used as a theoretical framework to assess how particular psychological mechanisms underlay the understanding of socioeconomic phenomena [48]. For example, Gangl et al. [49] proved how people who occupy different positions do not interpret economic phenomena in the same way. Identifying these differing perceptions and the intersectional reasons behind them is a key step in anticipating and resolving stakeholder controversies [50], as a lack of clarity regarding goals may increase the perception of other partners who have a hidden agenda [18].

Although the positive outcomes of partnerships are well established by the literature, strategies for successfully developing collaborative partnerships are less clear [32]. Collaborative partnerships are still poorly documented; thus, scholars have called for the development of in-depth case studies to further explore the transformational potential of such partnerships [51]. The literature asks for the generation of more evidence about how partnerships actually work to persuade more actors to invest in partnering [52].

To enlighten potential partnerships and to provide information about their feasibility, in this paper, we propose a case study about six collaborative partnerships currently being developed in Andalusia (Spain). Their experiences could enrich the debate about how differing perceptions can coexist in active partnerships and to understand the intersectional reasons behind those conflicting opinions.

1.5. Our Case Study: Six Marginalized Urban Neighborhoods in Andalusia (Spain)

Urban segregation is a social reality that has been especially visible in middle-income countries such as China, India, or Brazil, as increasingly urban concentration within a short period of time has caused the coexistence of slums, where poor housing and hygiene conditions are the norm, while prosperous residential areas are highly securitized.

This image of social segregation is increasingly visible within most developed countries, with an endogenous adaptation to the reality of each urban configuration. In Europe, large cities are seeing a boom in the number of disadvantaged urban areas, whose development indicators are very distant from what the data show when they are aggregated into national averages [3,6].

A clear case is found in Spain. Relevant regions, such as Extremadura or Andalusia, show development indicators that are closer to those of the eastern countries that have recently joined the European Union. By delving deeper into the inequalities and segregation found in these regions, in some cities, we can find urban areas where social exclusion is extremely relevant. For example, highlighting only one of the most objective indicators that is less given to interpretation, the average income per capita in some of these urban areas barely reaches €5000 a year. They do not suppose a marginal representation of the population; in some cases, the dimension of these neighborhoods is close to 50,000 people.

In this study, we provide evidence on six marginal urban areas of Andalusia (Spain). These neighborhoods belong to four different cities, and they gather a total of more than 110,000 inhabitants, which is approximately 10% of the population of these four cities.

Despite their struggling situation, each neighborhood is experiencing its own collaborative process to combat social exclusion. In recent years, collaborative partnerships have been established in each neighborhood, to promote the multistakeholder governance of the New Urban Agenda. One of the first steps taken to understand the complexity of their collaborative projects and to guarantee their governance was to perform a self-diagnosis of the social situation in their neighborhoods as perceived by each member of the partnerships.

The current analysis does not concentrate on highlighting the most relevant aspects of the social exclusion experienced in these neighborhoods; rather, it emphasizes the differing opinions that the actors have on said realities based on various intersectional characteristics, including sociodemographic attributes such as gender, age, or living conditions, and the nature of the organizations they represent. This analysis provides evidence about how collaborative partnerships can be encouraged despite confronting differing opinions among the participants. Furthermore, this analysis also provides the baseline evidence that would contribute to the explanation of the diverse efficacy and sustainability reached by such multistakeholder partnerships.

2. Materials, Data Collection, and Methods

The results presented in this study were collected from 118 participants who joined a survey carried out in the months of November and December 2019. The surveys were conducted among the representatives and leaders of institutional public actors, private organizations, and civil society organizations located in six neighborhoods in the region of Andalusia (Spain). As all of the individuals take part directly in the multistakeholder partnerships being recently developed, the questionnaires were collected one by one through a face-to-face interview.

According to the preferences of the participants, we respect not only their anonymity but also the identification of their neighborhoods. Therefore, a double-codification process was performed.

- To preserve the anonymity of the participants and the possible identification of their answers, the information is presented only in an aggregated way.
- To prevent the identification of their neighborhoods, we note the areas with a code composed of a letter and a number; the number refers to the city, and the letter refers to the neighborhood. In this study, three of the six neighborhoods studied are noted as 1A, 1B, and 1C, as they are located in the same city, with a population of approximately 8000, 12,000, and 3000, respectively. The remaining neighborhoods are noted as 2A, 3A, and 4A to reflect that they belong to the other three cities. These last neighborhoods (2A, 3A, and 4A) have approximately 45,000, 10,000, and 32,000 residents, respectively.

The questionnaire was composed of 11 sociodemographic questions and 36 topics about their perceptions of the situation in their neighborhoods (the questionnaire can be viewed in the Appendix A, Table A1). Each topic was evaluated as a response to a series of statements following a Likert scale, where 0 means total disagreement and 5 means total agreement with the statement. We used an even number of categories for the rating scale, as we wanted to force participants to make a choice rather than offer them a midpoint [53]. The 36 topics were then grouped into 10 dimensions that referred to the different facets of social exclusion (health, education, economy, presence of illegal activities, security, coexistence, and urbanism) and the departure conditions in the neighborhoods (social cohesion, public trust, and diversity). The chart diagram of this research process is introduced as Figure 1 [54,55].

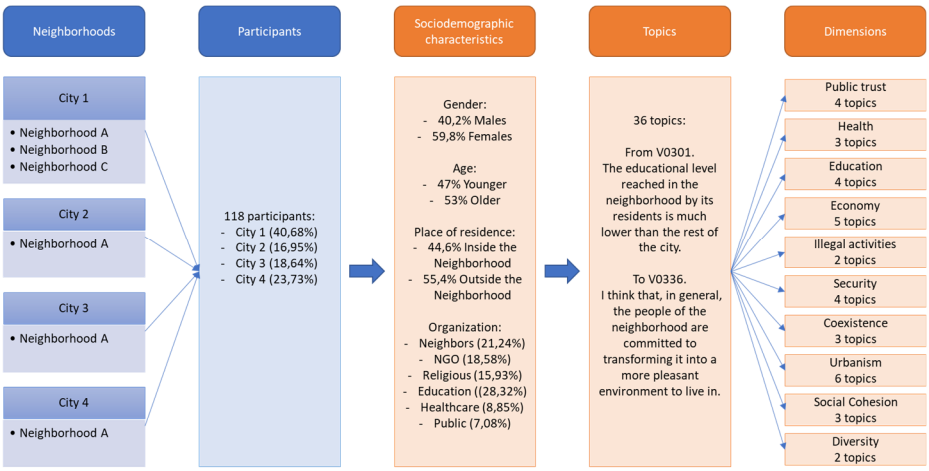


Figure 1. Chart diagram of the research design.

To present the results, we first introduce the distribution of the database according to the characteristics of the participants. After that, we offer a descriptive analysis of the situation in the six neighborhoods in an aggregated way, showing a brief description of the results by neighborhood to understand their diversity. As the key analysis is the identification of the differing perceptions the actors have about the territory in which they operate, a cross-sectional analysis is presented to highlight their conflicting opinions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Identification of a Multidimensional Problem: A Descriptive Analysis

The analysis of the situations within the six neighborhoods is treated in an aggregated manner. Nevertheless, the outcome is proof of the diversity of the sample. It is interesting to begin by describing the number of surveys collected in each neighborhood out of the total of 118. Figure 2 introduces this information.

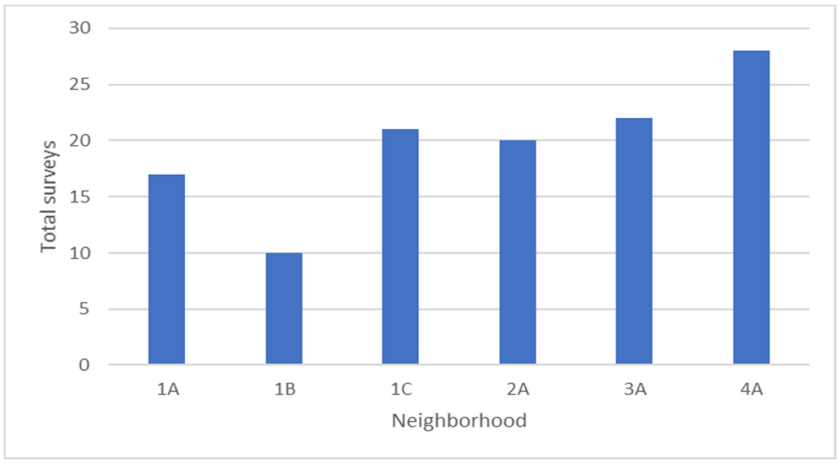


Figure 2. Distribution of the sample by neighborhood.

As stated before, the survey requested the participants' opinions about 36 topics related to their neighborhoods. From first to last, the respondents characterized their opinion about their situation in the context of many social aspects. The topics ranged from the educational level of their inhabitants (V0301) to their commitment with the social transformation of their neighborhood (V0336) (the questionnaire can be viewed in the Appendix A, Table A1).

The questions were redacted indistinctly as either positive or negative. However, to facilitate the presentation and interpretation of the results, the score of the answers was inverted when necessary. Therefore, the results must always be interpreted as follows: The higher the score reached by a topic, the better participants perceive the situation in the neighborhood for that issue. Relatedly, the lower the score achieved by a topic, the greater the situation of social exclusion or deprivation suffered in the neighborhood is in that topic. A first approach to the results is summarized in Figure 3, which shows the average result of each of the 36 topics.

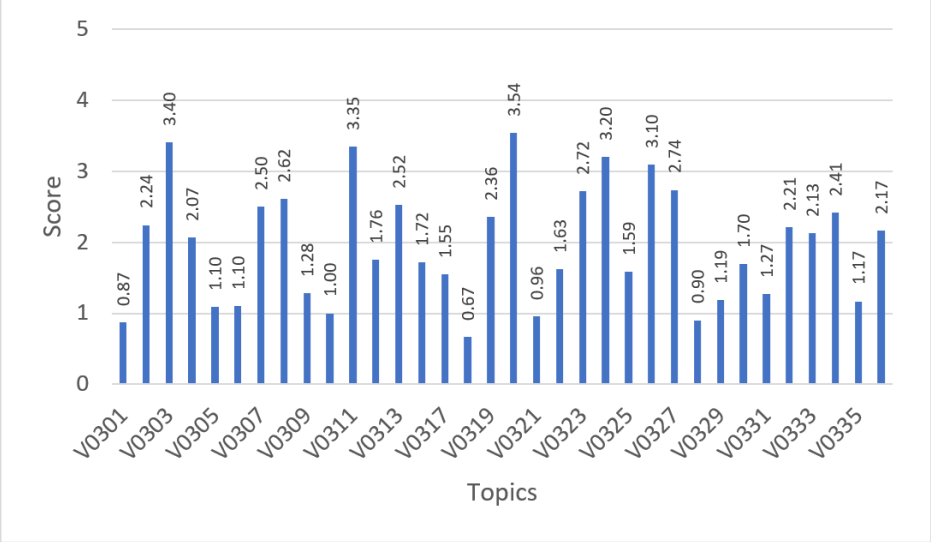


Figure 3. Average scores by topic.

As Figure 3 shows, deprivation is the norm in most of the social dimensions investigated. None of the scores exceeds two-thirds of the scale, and only 25% of them surpass what could be defined as acceptable: 2.5 out of 5. In Figure 4, we reassume both the best (score higher than 3) and the worst (score lower than 1) social aspects as seen or experienced by the participants in the partnerships.

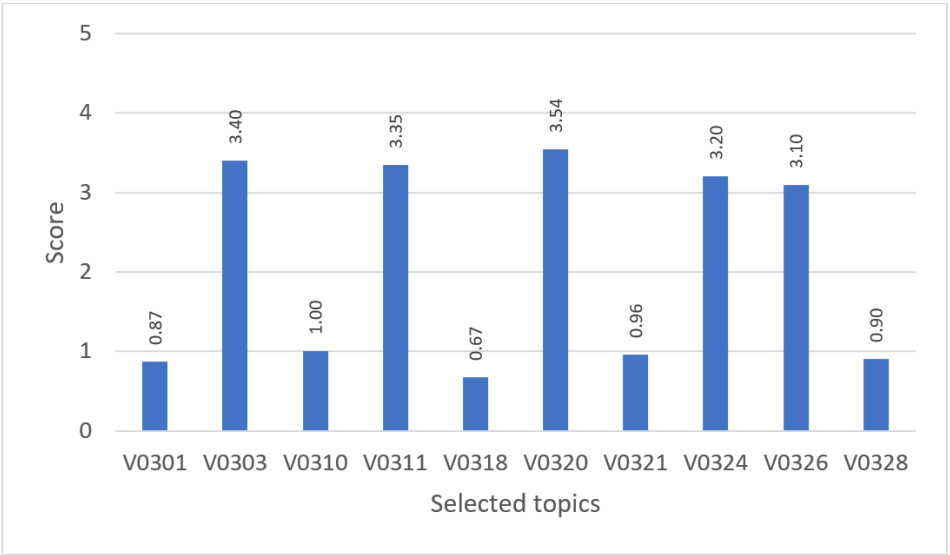


Figure 4. Average score of most positive and negative topics.

The five topics that received a better evaluation are as follows:

- V0303: The quality of education received by children in the neighborhood is relatively similar to that of the rest of the city.
- V0311: The presence of illegal activities related to prostitution is not one of the main problems of the neighborhood.
- V0320: Either there are no adequate health centers in the neighborhood, or the existing centers are very low quality.
- V0324: The neighborhood is well connected with the rest of the city.
- V0326: The distribution of the buildings in the neighborhood greatly facilitates the coexistence between neighbors.

On the other hand, the five topics that received a worse valuation are as follows:

- V0301: The educational level reached in the neighborhood by its residents is much lower than the rest of the city.
- V0310: One of the main problems of the neighborhood is the presence of illegal activities related to drugs.
- V0318: People have an image of the neighborhood as a dangerous place to be avoided.
- V0321: There are too many people in the neighborhood who suffer psychological problems (depression, anxiety, stress, etc.).
- V0328: One of the main problems of the neighborhood is housing (illegal sale, occupation, etc.).

The information derived from the opinions of the participants about each of the 36 topics provides an image of the specific challenges to be addressed, which could set up an agenda of prioritization. However, the underlying problem is complex and multidimensional. To make an accurate diagnosis, it is pertinent to group individual topics regarding dimensions or social challenges. In this study, we identify ten challenges whose scores are the result of the linear combination of included topics. In Table 1, we systematize and define these dimensions as the combination of topics that contribute to each one of them.

Table 1. Dimensions of social exclusion and topics included.

Dimension	Definition	Topics
Public Trust	Confidence in public powers on the actors of the neighborhood	V0329, V0330, V0331, V0332
Health	Physical and mental health of inhabitants and infrastructures	V0319, V0320, V0321
Education	Educational level of inhabitants and infrastructures	V0301, V0302, V0303, V0304
Economy	Wealth, employment, and financial capabilities of inhabitants	V0305, V0306, V0307, V0308, V0309
Illegal activities	Presence of illegal activities, such as drugs and prostitution	V0310, V0311
Security	Perceived and experienced sense of security by neighbors and visitors	V0312, V0313, V0317, V0318
Coexistence	Mutual and beneficiary exchanges between neighbors	V0316, V0322, V0333
Urbanism	Quality of the infrastructures and social exchanges they facilitate	V0323, V0324, V0325, V0326, V0327, V0328
Social Cohesion	Mutual trust and confidence, level of social capital in the neighborhood	V0334, V0335, V0336
Diversity	Presence of people from different ethnics, cultures, or origins	V0314, V0315

Source: Author's own elaboration.

It is interesting to first take a look at diversity. The literature identifies the level of diversity in a given context as a controversial factor that either enhances or hinders the consolidation of partnerships [32,33]. As a consequence, in this study, we use this dimension only to highlight the different nature of each neighborhood. Nevertheless, in general, diversity is prominent, mainly given to the presence of the Roma people, but also, in some contexts, due to the location of migrants, who are mostly from North Africa and Latin America. Figure 5 shows the diversity picture of the sample of neighborhoods.

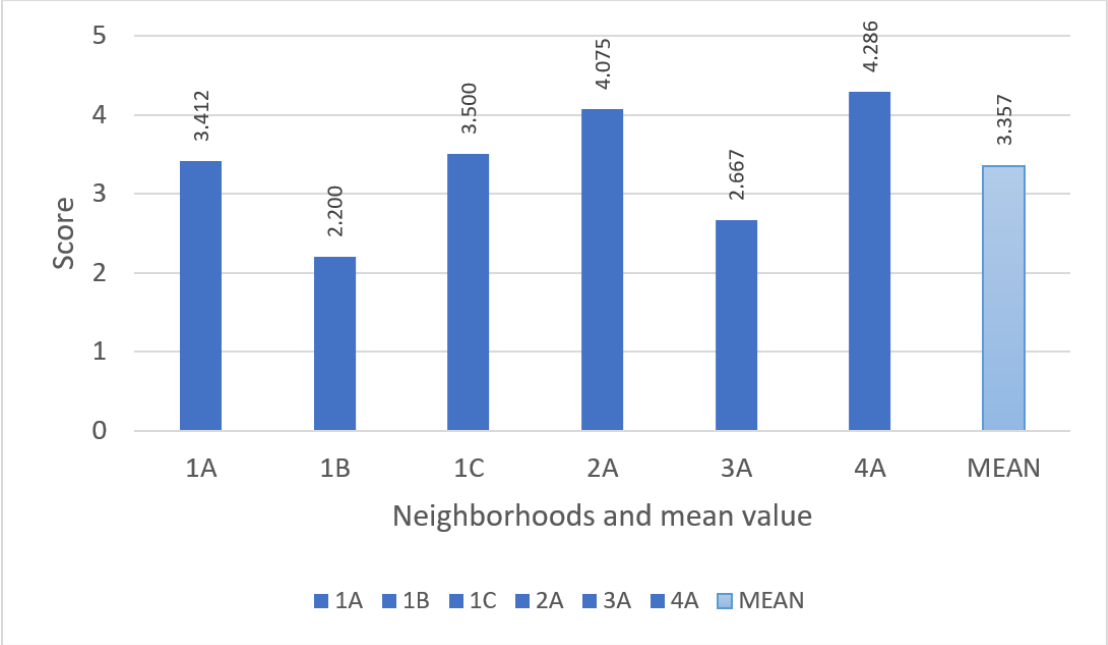


Figure 5. Level of ethnic and cultural diversity by neighborhood.

The nine remaining dimensions can be grouped into two types; seven of them refer to different aspects of social exclusion and deprivation, namely health, education, employment and income, presence of illegal activities, security, coexistence, and urban exclusion, while the other two are considered essential conditions or prerequisites to facilitate development and inclusiveness processes in the neighborhoods—public trust and social cohesion. Figure 6 presents the average scores by dimension.

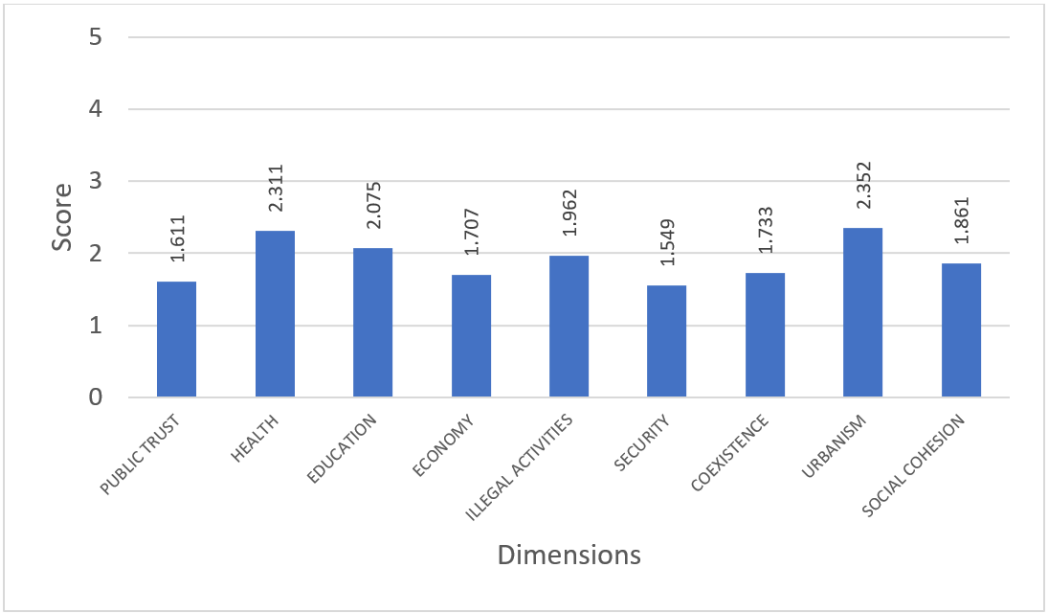


Figure 6. Average score by dimension.

Out of the nine dimensions considered, not one was assessed as positive (score higher than 2.5). It shows how profound and multidimensional the situation of exclusion and vulnerability experienced in these contexts is and how low the commitment by public and private actors to reverse this situation remains. In fact, only three of the dimensions received a score higher than 2 out of 5. Moreover, their better score is motivated rather by the presence of infrastructures than by social aspects, as derived

from the relatively good evaluation obtained by health facilities (V0320 scores 3.52), educational infrastructures (V0302 scores 2.24), or the urban configuration of the neighborhood (V0326 on the distribution of buildings and V0327 on the existence of green areas score 3.1 and 2.74, respectively).

Although the object of this study is to address an aggregated analysis, a last descriptive result can be provided. The disaggregation of the results by neighborhood can provide sensitive information for readers about the reality of each context. Therefore, Figure 7 highlights the scores received by each dimension in each of the six neighborhoods analyzed, while also introducing the presentation of the results in a radial diagram, which is the preferred presentation.

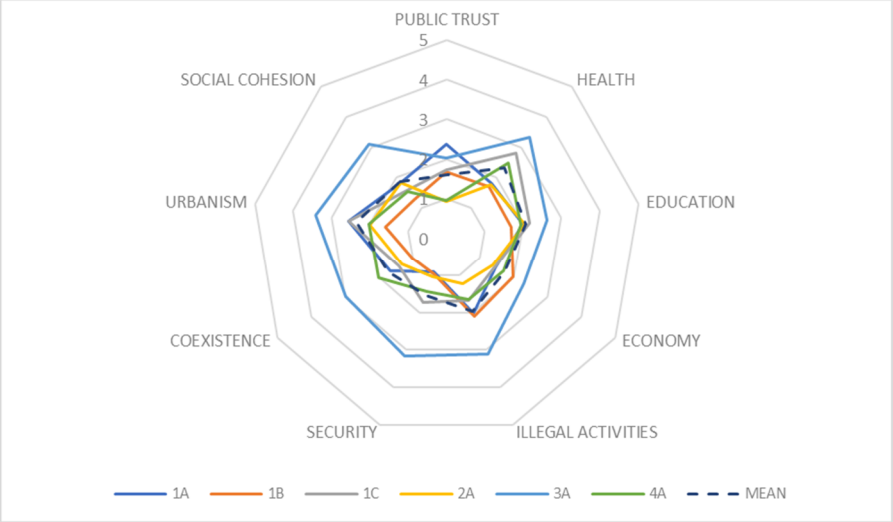


Figure 7. Average score by dimension in each neighborhood. Radial presentation.

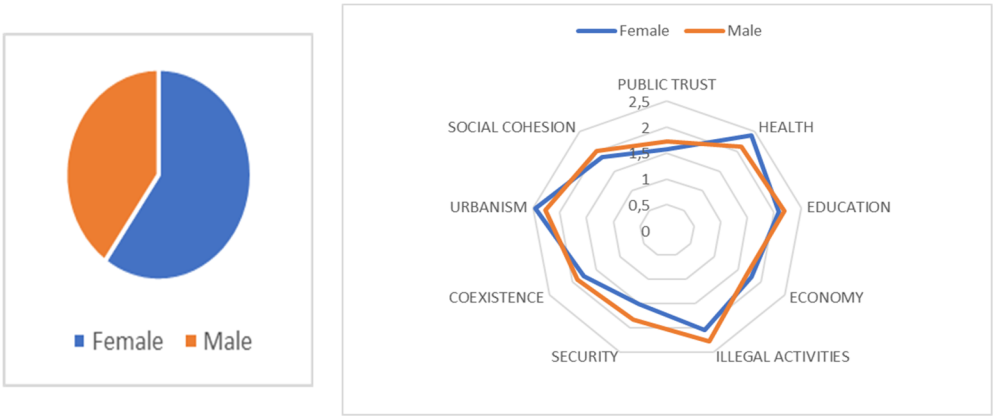
3.2. The Recognition of Differing Opinions among the Participants in the Partnerships: Bivariant Analyses

As stated in the theoretical framework, collaborative and horizontal partnerships are essential for establishing a local collective action aimed at promoting cohesion and social inclusion in the most disadvantaged urban environments. To promote such partnerships, it is crucial to reach high degrees of coordination and harmonization by the different actors with competences in the territory. Therefore, having a shared vision of the neighborhood challenges is essential to articulating transformative processes.

In this epigraph, we introduce a series of figures to show, in a comparative manner, the differing visions that the participants in the partnerships have about the challenges their neighborhoods face. This analysis of differing perceptions will be realized according to the intersectional characteristics that the literature has identified as being relevant. We can group them by sociodemographic characteristics, which include gender, age, and place of residence (within or outside the neighborhood), and by characteristics of the organization they represent, such as type of entity (neighborhood entity, NGO, or others) and their degree of representativeness.

3.2.1. Sociodemographic Characteristics

First, we introduce a gender-based analysis. Males and females are generally deemed to have different perceptions about social problems and their intensity [56–58]. However, in our database, no significant differences are observed between men and women with regard to their judgment on the challenges they face. As shown in Figure 8, there is a slightly more negative opinion by women about the situation of coexistence, security, and the presence of illegal activities in the neighborhood, which could be linked to the greater amount of time they spend in it. The literature has also proven how females usually demonstrate a better confidence in the healthcare system [59] and empathy with healthcare workers [60], which is again consistent with our results.

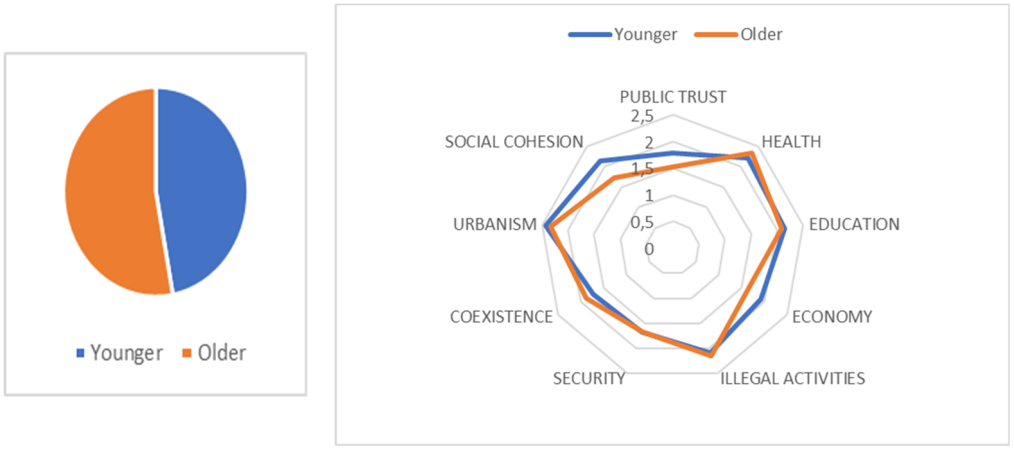


(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 8. (**a**) Distribution of the sample by gender. (**b**) Comparison of average scores by dimension.

From a more qualitative point of view, in the configuration of the agenda of the partnerships, there are no significant differences between the male and female proposals. Other sociodemographic characteristics have a higher influence on their opinions, such as age.

Actually, age is another intersectionality that the literature has identified as explaining differing perceptions about the social reality [61–64]. Age is also widely deemed to be a predictor of social participation and volunteering [65]. Consistent with that evidence, in our database, older people are more critical when evaluating commitment with the transformation of the neighborhood, both from their own neighbors and from public administrations (see Figure 9). It is important to highlight this difference, since most associative movements in marginalized urban areas are composed of older people [66]. Their vision may suppose a certain confrontation with the public administration or even a disincentive for younger people to join the partnership.

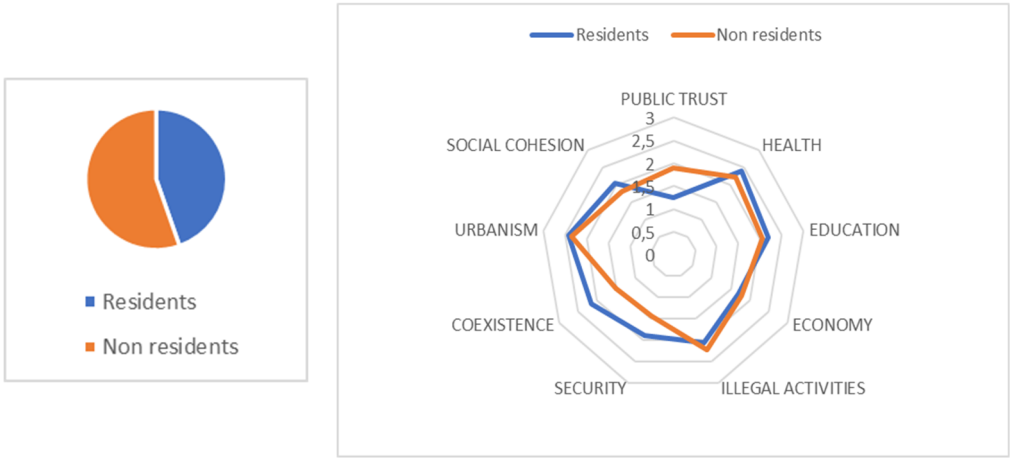


(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 9. (**a**) Distribution of the sample by age. (**b**) Comparison of average scores by dimension.

A third analysis can be offered to distinguish those who are residents of the neighborhood from those who work in it. Differences in perceptions between residents and nonresidents have been deeply proven by the literature, mainly in fields such as tourism [67,68] and in perceptions about neighborhoods [69]. It is interesting to note, in our database, how the people who spend their daily lives in the neighborhoods have a much better perception of their contexts than do the people who work but do not live in them (see Figure 10). This difference is highly significant in the dimensions of coexistence and security, which are considered more negatively by nonresidents, and it is also observed in the distrust of the public administrations that residents feel. In a similar vein, even

though the difference is not significant, social cohesion and commitment to the social transformation of their neighborhoods seem to be overestimated by residents. As collaborative partnerships are composed of residents and nonresidents, it is interesting to track how these divergencies could affect the sustainability of the partnerships.



(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 10. (**a**) Distribution by place of residence. (**b**) Comparison of average scores by dimension.

In general, the influence of sociodemographic characteristics on perceptions and opinions about neighborhoods is consistent with the literature. These results seem to ratify, at least to some extent, one of the most extended criticisms among residents participating in partnerships. They share an opinion about how people actually living in neighborhoods have a more realistic vision of the problems they face. Our analysis cannot confirm or refute this idea, but it reinforces that they do have differing opinions. In fact, in a counterintuitive way, the results show how the perception of residents is slightly more benevolent in general. It could be interesting to address to what extent the opinion of those who do not reside in the neighborhood can be mediated by this criticism of the disaffection with the deep reality of exclusion suffered in the neighborhoods.

3.2.2. Characteristics of the Organizations

In our case study, partnerships are wide open and diverse since they are composed of public, public–private, private actors, and civil society organizations. Out of the 118 partners working in the six neighborhoods, 63 are identified as private and 50 as public entities. To introduce a general overview of the nature of the organizations, we introduce a classification in Figure 11. Neighborhood entities comprise neighbors' associations and grassroots civil society organizations. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are civil society organizations that work, but not exclusively, in neighborhoods. We classify entities as religious when they have such a nature and are based in a church. Educational entities comprise educational bodies, including both primary and secondary schools and universities. Healthcare entities include health centers and private actors such as pharmacies. Finally, we classify community or civic centers or delegations of the municipality as other public entities.

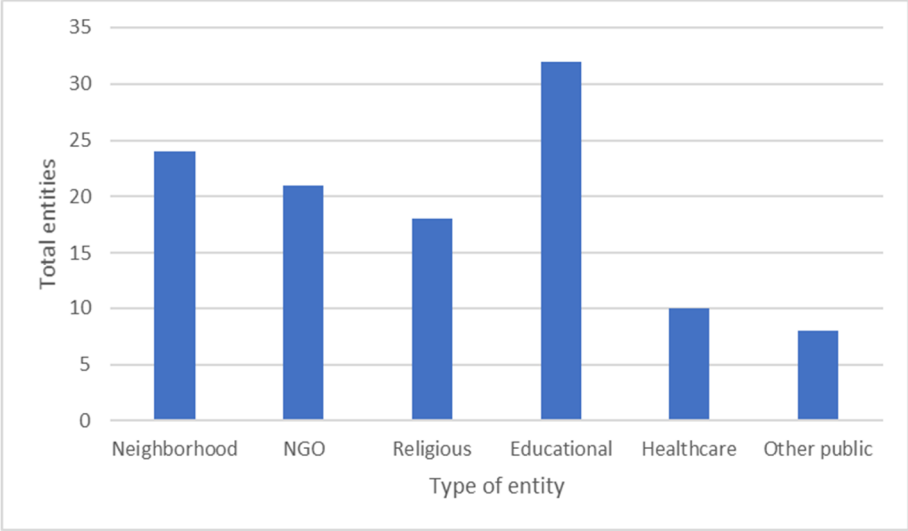
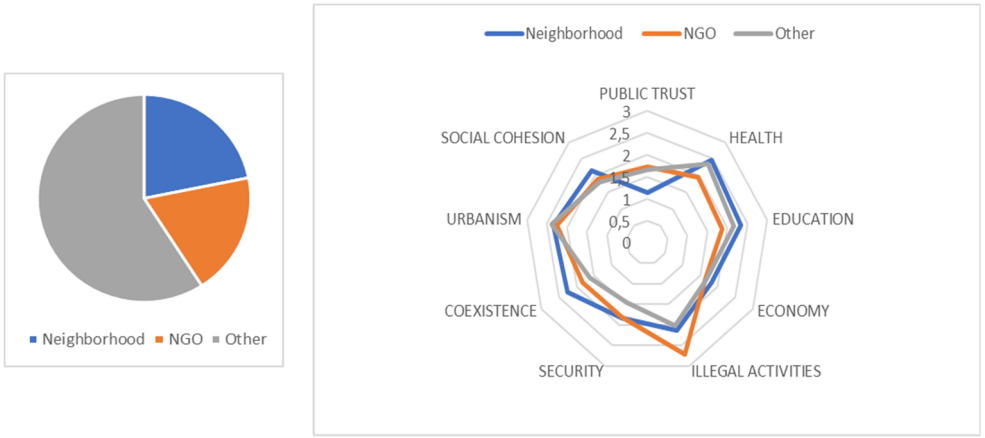


Figure 11. Distribution by type or organization participating in the partnerships.

As in international cooperation processes, in recent decades, NGOs have operated as brokers and intermediaries in many marginalized urban areas [70,71]. As communities and local organizations are empowered, many times thanks to NGOs' interventions, they reclaim a leading role in their own development process [72], which many times drives competition between both kinds of entities [73].

In the disfavored neighborhoods that we are analyzing, this reality has emerged. Today, there is a relevant amount of support regarding this issue. One aspect is related to the opinion of neighborhood entities that the rest of the entities working in their field do not know their reality with the same degree of depth. To check this, in Figure 12, we offer an analysis to contrast the opinion of neighborhood entities against NGOs and all the other entities. The differentiated analysis of NGOs is due to the similar nature of these organizations with some neighboring entities, with whom they sometimes come into confrontation, both due to funding and representation in institutionalized spaces.



(**a**) (**b**)

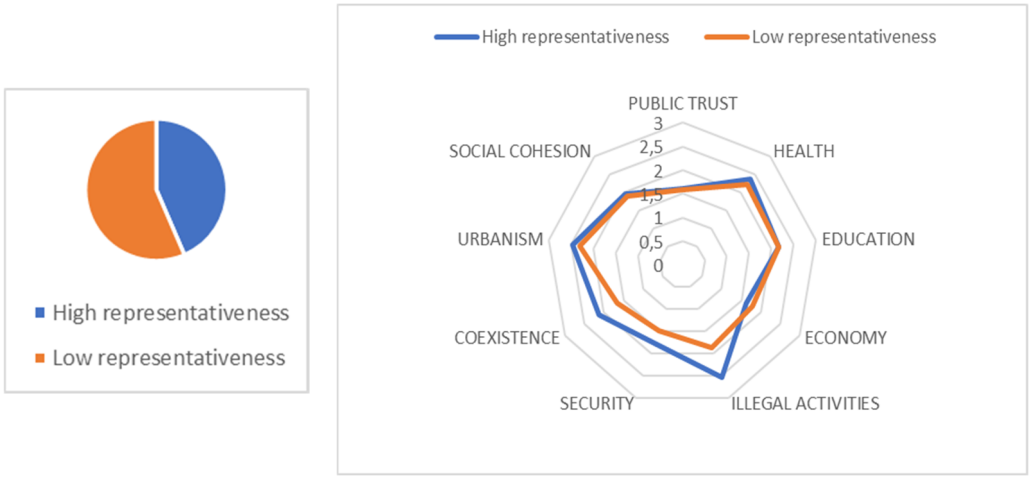
Figure 12. (**a**) Distribution by organization nature. (**b**) Comparison of average scores by dimension.

The results show an interesting and different image from that of the previous analyses. This is the first time that differences emerge in perceptions about basic social needs. Interestingly, NGOs grade the situation on economy, health, and education significantly worse than all other entities. On the other hand, NGOs have a better perception of the presence of illegal activities in these urban areas. An interesting line of research could question to what extent those perceptions might be conditioned by the activity sector in which they operate.

There is still another interesting outcome that emerges from the results shown in Figure 12 regarding how actors consider that the public powers trust them to contribute to the development of their neighborhoods. Grassroot entities have a significantly different perception, as they consider that there is much more social cohesion among the local entities and that the public trusts in their competencies. All other actors, including NGOs, think in the opposite direction, i.e., there is no such social cohesion, which might explain why public trust is not as low as neighborhood entities estimate.

The last analysis offered in this study focuses on the differing opinions between organizations according to the degree of representativeness of the neighborhood they consider holding (see Figure 13). On the one hand, organizations that consider that the residents of the neighborhood trust them to raise their interests in the decision-making spaces are labeled as having high representativeness. On the other hand, those that consider their degree of representativeness to be low are labeled as having low representativeness.

It is interesting how the entities that feel more representative of the neighborhood have a much better perception of the situation of the neighborhood, especially with regard to its social aspect. All the dimensions that referred to the social situation are present in these areas, such as the presence of illegal activities, the situation regarding security, and coexistence, and even less obvious questions of urban planning, such as connectivity, are better valued by these entities. If this vision is expressed in public forums in front of decision-makers, they could perceive a better situation of neighborhoods compared to the actual one. One might even wonder whether this biased impression might be limiting investments and actions in the arena of social cohesion, while giving priority to basic needs such as educational, health, and employment issues.



(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 13. (**a**) Distribution by representativeness. (**b**) Comparison of average scores by dimension.

4. Conclusions

In this study, we have provided information about the context of six disadvantaged neighborhoods located in four cities of the poorest region in Spain, namely, Andalusia. These contexts have been the destiny of many European economic resources and local interventions for many years. However, social conflicts persist, and endogenic problems seem to be more active than ever, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic has punished them harder.

The study of the social situation experienced in marginalized urban areas is, at the same time, a field of study with persistent results and a constant source of novelties. Thus, in an era where the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and other international strategies call for a rethinking of urban challenges, renewed evidence is needed. Notably, these strategies call for another logic of intervention

based on stronger collaboration between actors in multistakeholder partnerships, which are of critical importance in building habitable urban spaces.

As actors have to work together to overcome these social challenges, the elucidation of differing opinions is capital. We have proven how intersectionality and the sociodemographic characteristics of individuals and organizations are key to the ways in which they remarkably perceive reality as their grassroots and direct connections with reality intensify. It is an interesting source of news, as, many times, representativeness in decision-making forums and direct links to reality do not go hand in hand.

Our case study reinforces the idea that the participation of brokers in such partnerships is a key element. The processes of social inclusion need to be at the local, grassroots level because they are strongly dependent on history. Even though a certain controversy about how the antecedents can influence commitment persists, our experience shows how the intermediary role played by institutions such as universities can be key in healing the wounds from previous experiences of coordination.

Also consistent with previous studies, the inclusion of community members' expertise in local partnerships seems to be a factor that strongly promotes their viability. In a related vein, our study suggests that a certain amount of environmental and public support is also needed. A characteristic that could be contributing to the success of the analyzed partnerships, despite their differing opinions about many topics, is the openness to promote participatory mechanisms that facilitate multistakeholder governance. However, to confirm this conclusion, more evidence is needed, so it should be addressed as a future line of research.

Despite the contributions of this study, it still has certain methodological limitations. As in any case study, the sample contains only organizations within a very specific context. The generalization of our conclusions must be made with reservations. Future research should expand the sample to other cities and countries. Additionally, the current study allowed many interesting questions to be answered. Thus far, we have proven how differing opinions have not hindered the appearance or the constitution of local collaborative partnerships, but their efficacy and sustainability remain unclear. Nonetheless, this study could function as a baseline for such future avenues of research.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Topics included in the survey.

Topics Included in the Survey. Rated from 0 (i.e., Totally Disagree) to 5 (i.e., Totally Agree).
V0301. The educational level reached in the neighborhood by its residents is much lower than the rest of the city.
V0302. The quality of the educational facilities in the neighborhood is much lower than in the rest of the city
V0303. The quality of education received by children in the neighborhood is relatively similar to that of the rest of the city.
V0304. In general, families are very committed to the education of their children.
V0305. The low educational level of the residents of the neighborhood is what most hinders their access to employment.
V0306. When my neighbors look for a job, they are discriminated against by the neighborhood they come from.
V0307. In the neighborhood there are a sufficient number of socio-labor integration programs.
V0308. The socio-labor integration programs that exist are very useful for the residents.
V0309. Regardless of their work situation or where they get their income, families in the neighborhood generally do not have great difficulty making ends meet.
V0310. One of the main problems of the neighborhood is the presence of illegal activities related to drugs.
V0311. The presence of illegal activities related to prostitution is not one of the main problems of the neighborhood.
V0312. I would say that my neighborhood is a much more insecure place than the rest of the city, especially for its neighbors.
V0313. I would say that my neighborhood is a much more insecure place than the rest of the city, but only for people from outside.
V0314. In my neighborhood there is a lot of cultural and ethnic diversity, especially due to the presence of immigrants.
V0315. In my neighborhood there is a lot of cultural and ethnic diversity, especially due to the presence of *payos* and Roma people.
V0316. The coexistence between neighbors is calm and cordial, it is very rare that conflicts occur in the neighborhood.
V0317. When conflicts do occur, they are usually serious, with possible injuries or deaths.
V0318. People have an image of the neighborhood as a dangerous place that is better to avoid.
V0319. In general, there are no serious health problems in the neighborhood, most people are healthy as anywhere.
V0320. Either there are no adequate health centers in the neighborhood, or the existing centers are very low quality.
V0321. There are too many people in the neighborhood who suffer psychological problems (depression, anxiety, stress, etc.).
V0322. In general, the situation of families is calm, there are not many conflicts, neither with a partner nor with parents and children.
V0323. The residents of the neighborhood, in general, feel comfortable leaving the neighborhood and making life outside it.
V0324. The neighborhood is well connected with the rest of the city.
V0325. It is common to see people from outside doing normal life in the neighborhood.
V0326. The distribution of the buildings in the neighborhood greatly facilitates the coexistence between neighbors.
V0327. In the neighborhood there are enough green areas and open spaces to be together with family and friends.
V0328. One of the main problems of the neighborhood is housing (illegal sale, occupation, etc.).
V0329. The administrations (City Council, Andalusian Government, and Central Government) are very concerned about the neighborhood and do their best to solve the problems we have.
V0330. The actions of the administrations in the neighborhood have managed to improve it.
V0331. Administrations do everything to avoid illegal behaviors in the neighborhood.
V0332. Administrations support and trust neighborhood entities to solve problems together.
V0333. The residents of the neighborhood tend to trust each other, there is a climate of trust.
V0334. I think that, in general, my neighbors are very proud to belong to the neighborhood.
V0335. I think that, if they could, an overwhelming majority of neighbors would leave the neighborhood to go to another.
V0336. I think that, in general, the people of the neighborhood are committed to transforming it into a more pleasant environment to live in.

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