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***Localizing
the SDGs: A
managerial
perspective***

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SAVING THE EARTH

with Sustainable Cities

Why this study

- Sustainability is gaining public attention – but a consistent theory of government’s sustainability is still missing
- Pivotal role of LGs for the implementation of SDGs
- Many challenges arise when it comes to integrate SDGs into cities’ strategic planning process and operation
- Growing number of ‘sustainability reporting’ but disclosure in strategic plans is still scarce
- Shortage of empirical studies of how cities are incorporating the sustainable development concept in their strategic plans

The paper

- Type: Explorative
- Research questions:
 - Is sustainability part of the agenda of politicians and public managers? How is sustainability integrated into cities' planning documents?
 - What is the level of disclosure on sustainability?
- Methodology: qualitative



Why Italy?

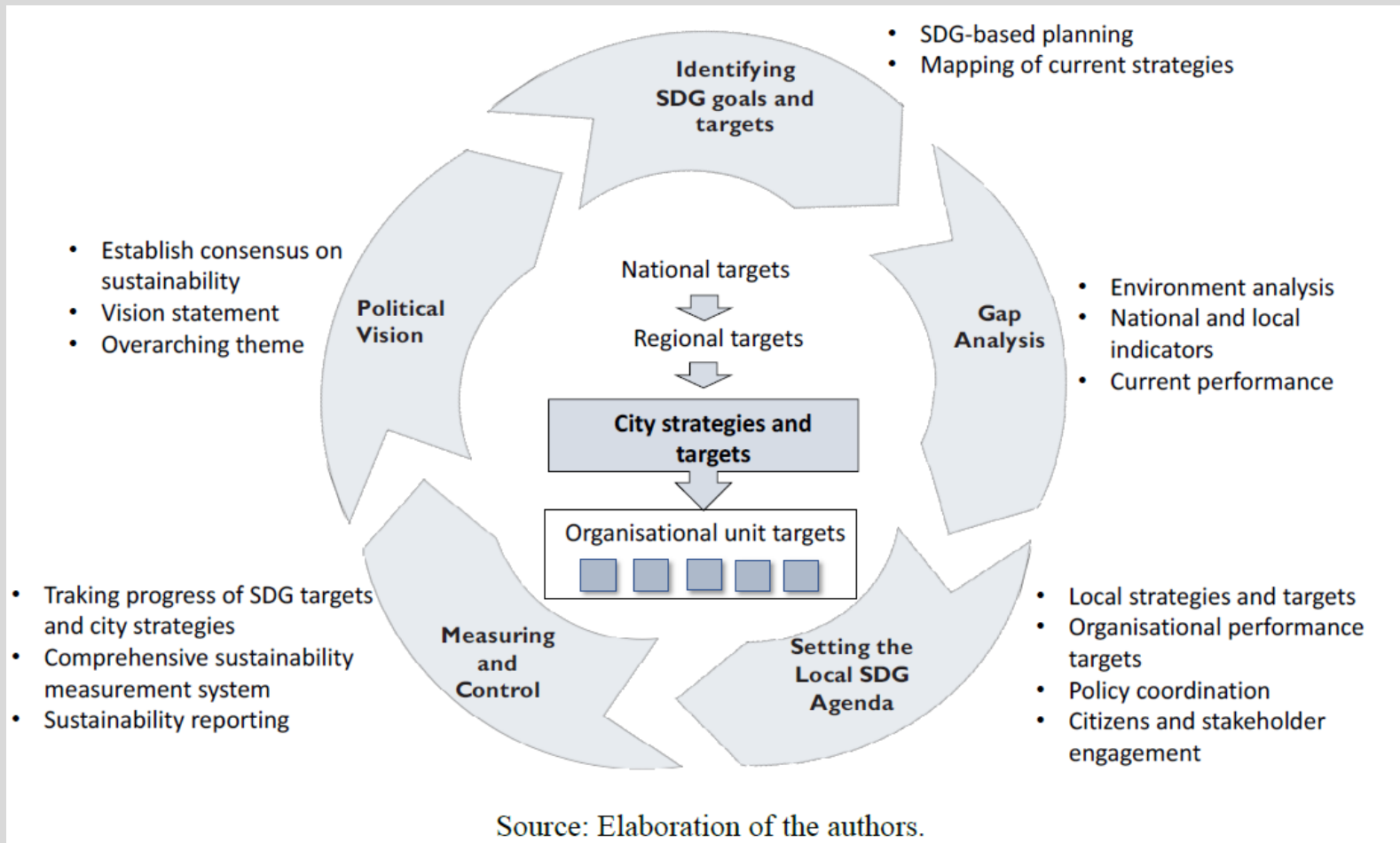
- *The Italian National Strategy for Sustainable Development;*
- *BES project;*
- *UrBES project*



Our proposition

- Managerial capacity of LG's decision-makers plays an important role for institutionalizing the concept of sustainability as a reform value or guiding principle into organizational routines (Wang et al., 2002)
- Strategic planning offers to LG's decision-makers the opportunity to critically think how *sustainability* and *sustainable development* challenge existing assumptions regarding their strategy (Zeemering, 2018)
- The inclusion of sustainability metrics into strategic plans is also a significant progress for a local government to both communicate how metrics are used to craft the strategy and if plans are making progress

Integration of SDGs into city strategic plans: A conceptual framework



Source: Elaboration of the authors.

Methodology

- Analysis of strategic plans of all 110 capital cities of Italian provinces
- Focus on the dimensions of the formal strategy and on what is explicitly accounted by documents
- Identification of 19 cities that potentially used the sustainable development concept in their plans

Keywords for the textual research: *sustainable development, sustainable development goals, SDG(s), BES*

Assessment criteria

Political vision

Is sustainability a declared value in the vision?

Gap analysis

Is sustainability mentioned in the context analysis? How? Is SWOT analysis used?

Identification of the relevant SDG goals and targets

Is there an explicit link in the formulation of the strategic objectives to the SDGs?

Setting the local SDG agenda

Are there targets for strategic objectives?

Measurement and control

Are performance indicators linked to sustainability? Are results measured through sustainability indicators?

Findings: information disclosed

Criteria	City
Political vision - Sustainability as part of the Vision Statement	Explicit link between the overall political vision and sustainable development Milan, Modena, Naples, Palermo
Gap analysis - Analysis of current performance through sustainability indicators	The positioning of the city according to a ranking of sustainable cities project is mentioned Genoa
	A demoscopic survey with reference to quality of life and well-being has been realized Bologna
	A selection of BES indicators is used for the analysis of the context Ferrara, Livorno, Modena, Naples, Palermo, Parma, Rome
Identification of the relevant SDG goals and targets - Alignment between SDGs and strategic objectives	Alignment remains at the level of Mayoral political goals Rome
	Strategic objectives are related to one or more SDGs Bologna (*), Ferrara (**), Parma (***)
Setting the local SDG agenda, measuring and control - Use of outcome indicators to measure sustainable goals	For each strategic goal, description of actions, and disclosure of outcome indicators (BES and statistical data) are reported on an historical basis Bologna, Ferrara, Parma (***)
	Quantitative targets disclosure -
(*) All strategic goals have been formally linked to SDGs. (**) 17 out of 26 strategic goals have been formally linked to SDGs. (***) One experimental strategic area only, no data reported.	

Conclusions

RQ1 – RQ2

- The focus on sustainable development in LG's strategic plans is in its initial stage
- Few cities have started to disclose sustainable development goals in their strategic plans
- Governance mechanisms across government tiers might play an important role in localizing the SDGs

