Feminist Urbanism for Cities that Recognise a Plurality of Voices

A Collective Assessment of the Sant Antoni Superblock

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ABSTRACT

In this research I explore *how feminist urbanism can better incorporate the voices and stories of women and non-hegemonic groups to shape cities that place sustainability of life at the centre – And ask why is this important*. To do this, I critically and *carefully* reflect on the urban planning processes behind the increasingly popular Superblocks Model in Barcelona, with particular attention to gender-sensitivity and other structures of oppression. Ontologically embracing the notion of *situated knowledges* and drawing from feminist geography and applying Feminist Participatory Action-Research methodologies, I work with local women to carry out a diagnosis of everyday life in the Sant Antoni Superblock.

The findings of this study stress the value of feminist methodologies in bringing to the fore the vital experiences of those who have traditionally been marginalised in urban decision-making. And most importantly, this research demonstrates that incorporating feminist perspective and methodologies in planning processes ensures participatory parity of women and non-hegemonic groups because it involves actions to redistribute the responsibility for care work and (re)value a plurality of voices, stories, and desires.

Urban planning that guarantees the right to the *gendered* city fosters true socially and ecologically just ways of being in this world and prioritises the vulnerability and finiteness of life. A feminist perspective to urbanism involves principles and methodologies that move urban planning cultures, processes, strategies, and interventions away from exclusionary practices towards the inclusion of everyone who inhabits and shapes the city. Feminist urbanism, therefore, creates the conditions for reformulating oppressive structures and social relations and cultivating lives worth living through caring urban paradigms – where cities allow us to care for ourselves, others, and the planet.

KEYWORDS: FEMINIST URBANISM, GENDER-EQUAL CITIES, INCLUSIVE URBAN PLANNING, PARTICIPATORY METHODOLOGIES, RIGHT TO THE GENDERED CITY.

ABSTRAKT

In dieser Forschungsarbeit untersuche ich, wie feministischer Urbanismus die Stimmen und Geschichten von Frauen und nicht-hegemonialen Gruppen besser einbeziehen kann, um Städte zu gestalten, die die Nachhaltigkeit des Lebens in den Mittelpunkt stellen - und frage, warum das wichtig ist. Zu diesem Zweck reflektiere ich kritisch und sorgfältig über die Stadtplanungsprozesse, die hinter dem immer beliebter werdenden Superblocks-Modell in Barcelona stehen. Dabei achte ich besonders auf Geschlechtersensibilität und andere Strukturen der Unterdrückung. Indem ich den Begriff des situierten Wissens ontologisch einbeziehe, mich auf die feministische Geographie stütze und die Methoden der feministischen Aktionsforschung anwende, arbeite ich mit den Frauen vor Ort zusammen, um eine Diagnose des Alltagslebens im Superblock Sant Antoni zu erstellen.

Die Ergebnisse dieser Studie unterstreichen den Wert feministischer Methoden, wenn es darum geht, die vitalen Erfahrungen derjenigen in den Vordergrund zu rücken, die in der städtischen Entscheidungsfindung traditionell an den Rand gedrängt wurden. Und vor allem zeigt diese Untersuchung, dass die Einbeziehung feministischer Perspektiven und Methoden in Planungsprozesse die paritätische Beteiligung von Frauen und nicht-hegemonialen Gruppen gewährleistet, weil sie Maßnahmen zur Umverteilung der Verantwortung für die Fürsorgearbeit und zur (Wieder-)Wertschätzung einer Vielzahl von Stimmen, Geschichten und Wünschen beinhaltet.

Eine Stadtplanung, die das Recht auf eine geschlechtsspezifische Stadt garantiert, fördert echte sozial und ökologisch gerechte Lebensweisen in dieser Welt und stellt die Verletzlichkeit und Endlichkeit des Lebens in den Vordergrund. Eine feministische Perspektive des Urbanismus beinhaltet Prinzipien und Methoden, die Stadtplanungskulturen, -prozesse, -strategien und -interventionen weg von ausgrenzenden Praktiken hin zur Einbeziehung aller, die die Stadt bewohnen und gestalten, bewegen. Feministischer Urbanismus schafft daher die Voraussetzungen für die Neuformulierung unterdrückerischer Strukturen und sozialer Beziehungen und die Kultivierung eines lebenswerten Lebens durch fürsorgliche urbane Paradigmen - wo Städte uns ermöglichen, für uns selbst, andere und den Planeten zu sorgen.

SCHLÜSSELWÖRTER: FEMINISTISCHER URBANISMUS, GESCHLECHTERGERECHTE STÄDTE, STADTPLANUNG, PARTIZIPATIVE METHODEN, RECHT AUF DIE GESCHLECHTERGERECHTE STADT.

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine a city that really looks after its inhabitants, allowing them to build meaningful relationships and care for each other. A city that supports socially just ways of living, where the physical environment encourages co-responsibility, does not exclude people or put them in boxes, and reflects the needs and experiences of different social groups. Urban planning that acknowledges the interconnectedness of life and designs cities that support the activities belonging to all spheres of life, not just the productive one. A place where democratic policymaking creates room for a plurality of voices and stories. This is not simply a utopian game; we must imagine different stories and realities if we are to survive and thrive as communities. We must ask ourselves: what kind of world do we want to live in? And how can our cities fit into this world?

Feminist scholars and practitioners have been calling for a change in urban paradigm since the second half for the twentieth century (Greed, 1996; Hayden, 1980; Jacobs, 2011). Today, this call could not be more relevant, with the ecological and the care crises urging us to place the sustainability of all life at the centre of urban planning and decision-making, and fast. In the efforts to transform the current social-economic paradigm, ecofeminists imagine a future where human beings' vulnerability, interdependence and ecodependence are recognised; our well-being is conceived in a multidimensional way (understanding it as a personal experience that occurs in the community); and the ethical criteria of universality and singularity are applied (Pérez Orozco, 2019, p. 243). An ecofeminist perspective requires us to recognise that human and other forms of life in this world are finite and vulnerable and, as such, they need *care* (Puig de La Bellacasa, 2017).

It is through caregiving and care-receiving that our own and other's bodily, emotional, and spiritual needs are met. Caring and nurturing allows us to maintain social relations and provide space for nature to flourish. Care is universal, but it will take different forms depending on the context. Borrowing from Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher's definition, care is "everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web" (Tronto, 2016, p. 3). This thesis is rooted in such an understanding and contributes to feminist demands to consider care a social responsibility and recognize it in the structural organisation of our societies (Carrasco, Borderías, & Torns, 2011, p. 54).

However, the hegemonic paradigm does not recognise the value of *care*, and this reality is reflected in our urban spaces. Urban planning often downplays our dependence on each other and on mother nature while valorising masculinised worldviews and a value system of competition, rationality, and individualism (Fraser, 2016; Herrero, 2011; Valdivia, 2018). Urban landscapes prioritise productive work within the neoliberal capitalist economic model, for example, by providing infrastructure to attract investment and ensuring efficient and expediated flows of goods and individuals (Harvey, 1989). Moreover, the design of our cities reinforces whiteness by making invisible the diverse experiences of migrants and people of colour (Fenster, 2005; Parker, 2016). Care work is a gendered practice as much as a racialised one and connected to economic status (Tronto, 2016, p. 13). The lack of attention to unequal power dynamics in urban planning results in places – public spaces but also public participation arenas – being colonised by certain social groups and not *others* (Fenster, 2005; Young, 1997).

In this study, I build on the work of feminist academics who argue that the exclusion and marginalisation of women and non-hegemonic[1] groups from urban space are intrinsically linked to the material and symbolic injustices they face when participating in decisions about the production of the city (Fenster, 2005; Fraser, 2003; Young, 1997). I incorporate a feminist perspective to urbanism because it involves principles and methodologies that move urban planning cultures, processes, strategies, and interventions away from exclusionary practices towards the inclusion of everyone who inhabits and shapes the city (Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2019). Feminist urbanism pursues social justice by guaranteeing the *right to the gendered city*, a concept rooted in the idea of co-creating the urban space from the bottom-up while incorporating a critical reflection of neoliberal capitalism, patriarchal structures, racism, and other intersecting power dynamics (Fenster, 2005, p. 229). This is the only way urban planning can foster true socially and ecologically just ways of being in this world and ensure that the vulnerability and finiteness of life are a priority. In short, for urban planning to be truly sustainable, it must be feminist.

This research is a critical and *careful* reflection on the urban planning processes behind the Superblocks Model in relation to sensitivity to gender and other structures of oppression. Superblocks prioritise everyday life by redistributing public space, improving green areas, and supporting sustainable forms of mobility. A stroll along Borrell Street in the Sant Antoni

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[1] By 'non-hegemonic groups' I mean inter alia, women and girls, children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, local communities, informal-settlement dwellers, homeless people, workers, refugees, migrants regardless of their migration status, LGTBIQI+ community, persons with different body sizes.

neighbourhood[2], at any time of the day, is testimony to how these transformations have 'filled the streets with life'. And during the pandemic, the superblocks' new public spaces provided a much-needed respite for confined neighbours. Moreover, the evolution of this urban model and its implementation merits attention because Barcelona is internationally acclaimed as an example of forward-looking urbanism, meaning that urban innovations here are followed closely by other cities.

I designed this research as a feminist assessment 'from below' of the Superblocks Model. It is feminist because I embrace Dona Haraway's (1988) *situated knowledges*, which means I work from a reflexive and grounded-in-place approach to make visible the plurality of urban experiences. I say 'from below' because my research is centred on a collective diagnosis, that is, a bottom-up collaborative exercise whereby a group of local women and I explored other forms of thinking and knowing their neighbourhood. For this, I drew on Iris M. Young's (1997) model of communicative democracy and the Feminist Participatory-Action Research (FPAR) methodology (Casanovas et al., 2014; Frisby, Maguire, & Reid, 2009).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis is guided by the following research questions:

> *How does feminist urbanism incorporate the voices and stories of women and non-hegemonic groups to shape cities that place sustainability of life at the centre? And why is this important?*

To answer my research questions, I carried out a feminist assessment of an already implemented superblock to understand, specifically, *how does the Sant Antoni Superblock support the everyday lives of local women?*

AIMS AND STRUCTURE

In this study I seek to explore the contributions of the Sant Antoni superblock to feminist objectives through a collective diagnosis. Second, I aim to stress the value of feminist methodologies in bringing to the fore the vital experiences of those who have traditionally been marginalised in urban decision-making. And third, I intend to demonstrate how these mechanisms work towards participatory parity and, thus, towards socially and ecologically just ways of being in this world.

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[2] Borrel Street has undergone structural and tactical urbanism transformations as part of the superblocks project.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. **Chapter 1** develops the conceptual framework, which focuses on feminist issues of socio ecological justice, and the representation and participation of women and non-hegemonic groups in the production and appropriation of urban space. **Chapter 2** presents the research design, starting with my positionality, followed by the research approach, and ending with the research limitations. **Chapter 3** introduces the context of my case study. It includes an overview of the theory behind the superblocks model, an explanation of the superblocks in practice, and a brief description of the Sant Antoni neighbourhood's demographics. The analysis of the findings from the collective diagnosis can be found in **Chapter 4**, this section also includes some recommendations made by the participants for the Sant Antoni superblock. **Chapter 5** offers a discussion where I go deeper into some key critical questions about understandings of superblocks as 'social' or 'functional'; issues of access derived from the strategy's approach to the principle of universality; and the potential of the urban model to instigate systemic change. Finally, **Chapter 6** includes an answer to the research question and some concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 REDISTRIBUTION, RECOGNITION AND PARTICIPATION IN THE CITY

Urban planning cultures that place the sustainability of all life at the centre shape cities that nurture socially and ecologically just communities. My understanding of social justice, which I develop below, is informed by Nancy Fraser's (2007) reflections on redistribution, recognition, and participation.

In a socially just society, participatory parity allows all members to enjoy a qualitative condition of being a peer to others. This concept integrates claims for recognition and distribution; and it applies to all areas of social life and to all axes of social difference. In terms of gender equity, for women[3] [4] to live a dignified life the fair allocation of tangible and intangible resources is required, as well as a recognition of the masculine and feminine as equals. In this sense, obstacles to justice include sexist maldistribution and sexist misrecognition (Fraser, 2007, p. 25).

Sexist maldistribution refers to socio-economic institutions' withholding of resources from women, resources which are vital if our objective is for this half of the population to fully participate in social life. The claim for redistribution aims to ensure a fair allocation of resources, and most importantly to eradicate gender-related inequalities through transforming the gender-based organisation of work in our capitalist societies. At the core of this study lies a desire to realise a fair share of urban resources between all members of society (Fenster, 2005; Hayden, 1980; Muxí, 2007). This means generating the adequate conditions for all social groups to have the possibility to use and appropriate public space, public services, and public infrastructure; as well as to attend urban decision-making processes.

Sexist misrecognition occurs when social relations in our societies are shaped by institutionalised androcentric norms, which leads to relations of subordination whereby women are denied their status as full partners of social life (Fraser, 2007). In the following sections of

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[3] While I use the word 'women', I place the focus on the diversity of people's experiences and do not consider women to be a homogenous collective. Attempts to do so would be seen as reductionist and essentializing – both characteristic practices of the hegemonic paradigm that we aim to leave behind.

[4] I would like to explain why I apply the terms 'woman' and 'man'. The use of these terms is not in support of the binary opposition between all women and all men, I recognise that not all women identify with 'gender issues' and that many men confront patriarchal relations. I use these words because people still identify themselves with these concepts – as do the women who participated in my research. Most importantly, because a critical use of these words allows me to expose and discuss the structural inequalities that continue to be produced by patriarchal and gendered relations. My conscious use of the term *woman* involves a recognition of the diversity of experiences that relate to holding multiple identities and living in different contexts (Cornwall, 2003).

this literature review, I will explain how this situation constraints women and feminised bodies'[5] right to the city. The claim for recognition in participatory parity is concerned with denaturalizing values that cause subordination and institutionalising values that foster parity. This study aims to emphasise the needs and experiences of a social group that has traditionally been marginalised when it comes to urban decision-making.

In sum, a socially just society is one that secures fundamental entitlements for all and where all members are respected and socially esteemed and can interact with one another as peers. Positive material and institutional support are vital for participatory parity to unfold because they foster genuine engagement and create spaces where people can make their voices heard (Fenster, 2005; Fraser, 2007). This study aims to explore the mechanisms we can use to work towards participatory parity in urban decision-making, as well as for the production and appropriation of urban space.

CHALLENGES OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY IN URBAN DECISION-MAKING

The contemporary urban paradigm is one where cities have been designed by architects and urban planners, both traditionally male-dominated disciplines, and powerful interest groups. Masculine planning practices (interest-based, individualistic, and top-down) have shaped urban planning to the point that cities have become homogenous and universal spaces that reflect the desires and aspirations of this collective (Greed, 1996; Hayden, 1980). Habermas' model of deliberative democracy aimed to shift the technocratic focus towards a reality where planners and the public come together – 'the public' being free, equal and open-minded individuals – to participate in a dialogue about collective problems based on rational arguments (Young, 1997, p. 61). In this ideal model, the role of planners is as facilitators responsible for listening to people's different experiences and working with them to reach a collective judgement. Consensus is the goal of the deliberation process.

The perspective from which I do research is less aligned with such masculinised views and more with Iris M. Young's (1997) as, in her work, she incorporates difference, conflict, oppression, and structural injustice. A central critique to the deliberative democracy model is that power geometries often remain present in participation processes as gender and other structures of privilege and oppression result in some groups feeling more entitled to participate than others (Young, 1997). For example, Young explains how the speech used by powerful actors –

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[5] With "feminised bodies" and "feminised people" I refer to the *other* bodies and people, those who do not conform to the ideal masculine body and identity.

assertive, confrontational, 'expert', articulated, dispassionate, disembodied (1997, p. 64) – can silence and devalue the voices of those who have an internalised sense of not belonging, of being 'out of place' (Ahmed, 2017). Furthermore, Young argues that differences of forms and styles of speaking, correlate with other differences of social privilege – i.e., gender. While white, middle-class men are associated with the abovementioned set of characteristics, women's speech is usually linked to the opposite, namely: explorative, submissive, vernacular, passionate, embodied, or gesticulated. I consider Habermas' model to be masculinist because seeking consensus does not involve questioning whose voices and choices are being heard. Also, because his model's emphasis on rational speech evokes competitive and individualist attitudes and is detached from reflexive and caring practices, and mutual aid and understanding.

While many planners seem to be aware of the importance of the local perspective and the need to include participatory processes; oftentimes they do not form meaningful relationships with local groups (Listerborn, 2007, p. 65). The result is the disavowal of the diversity of perceptions, needs and interests. Additionally, institutional, budgetary, time-related, and other practical issues may hinder the constitution of a group of participants that is truly representative of the identities and needs of the population.

At the same time, evidence suggests that sensitivity to gender and other structures of oppression in policy processes and interventions is not always guaranteed (Andersson, 2015). In her article, Angela O'Hagan adds that gender equity goals in policy programmes oftentimes fade away as they are "deliberately silenced or wilfully ignored" (2020, p. 14). Renée Andersson's (2015) critique of a gender mainstreaming project in a Swedish municipality illustrates how, while gender mainstreaming discourses have been incorporated by local governments around the world, these kinds of interventions are often uncritical, and consensus based. Participatory planning processes that do not challenge embedded assumptions about gender and power are commonplace (Cornwall, 2003). Avoiding a reflection on power relations and conflict takes the transformational potential away from policy processes and interventions which, in turn, works against participatory parity.

1.2 A City Co-Produced by Everyone: Participation and Diversity

A city co-produced by everyone is one where decision-making and urban planning processes take place at least in partnership between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and, at best, in a way that citizens achieve certain degrees of control over the process, institution, or project (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217). Citizen engagement processes are based on communicative democracy, which differs from the deliberative model in that difference is not considered a problem to be overcome through consensus but is seen as a resource (Young, 1997, p. 67) – this entails, for example, listening across differences of positioning and of needs. Reflecting on Arnstein's quote above, therefore, and following the work of Fraser and Young, I would add that it is the redistribution of power, *as well as* the recognition of the plurality of voices and stories as equally valuable that enable people to be deliberately included in the future.

According to Young, the transformation potential of the communicative model lies within the egalitarian dialogue (1997, p. 59). A dialogue based on equality and mutual respect adds perspective to our own experiences; shows participants that their arguments are as valuable as others' and makes them understand their moral obligation to prioritise the experiences of the most vulnerable; and generates social knowledge about the experiences of people in all their diversity. Planners and other agents who hold a status of power are aware of their positioning and work not just to guarantee a sphere of non-interference but to create material and institutional environments that provide affirmative support for the diversity of people who choose to engage in the production of their cities (Nussbaum, 2003). And while dialogue is considered a way of communication, processes of co-production of the urban environment resort to a plurality of ways to express people's arguments, feelings, desires, and experiences. Examples of feminist research methodologies applied in urban planning are exploratory walks and everyday network mind maps (Casanovas et al., 2014), relief maps (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2014), and participatory video (Kindon, 2003), or photovoice (McIntyre, 2003).

This study follows feminist academics and practitioners who advocate for connecting feminist principles and methodologies with participatory processes to challenge hegemonic power

relations and preconceived values and stereotypes in urban planning (Casanovas et al., 2014; Cornwall, 2003; Fenster, 2005; Frisby et al., 2009; Young, 1997). In Cornwall's words:

> Whether by reconfiguring the rules of interactions in public spaces, enabling once silenced participants to exercise voice, or reaching out beyond the "usual suspects" to democratize decision making, such processes can help transform gender blindness and gender-blinkeredness into the basis for more productive alliances to confront and address power and powerlessness. (2003, p. 1338).

Designing policies that contribute to improving issues of social justice in the city require specific knowledge of the diversity of experiences and sensitivities, and the challenges different social groups face. Zaida Muxí (2007) maintains that urban planning must learn from the vital experiences of the *other*, which in this case is women and non-hegemonic groups. Paying attention to *her*stories[6] means paying attention to the shared experiences and the difficulties and needs of others – the roles of caregivers and companions culturally assigned to women makes them aware of other's experiences (Day, 2000, p. 117).

WHY INCORPORATE WOMEN'S VOICES IN URBAN PLANNING?

As socially constructed beings, humans naturalise societal expectations, roles, hierarchies, and stereotypes that are assigned to us based on our sex. In patriarchal systems, the masculine portion of a society is positioned as superior and holds authority over the feminine counterpart (McDowell, 1999, p. 32). To help us move beyond these structural inequalities, Angela O'Hagan talks about the need for a level of gendered knowledge – among government officials, policy actors, politicians, and the community – which generates awareness of the discursive and lived effects of gendered categories, roles, and expectations (2020, p. 14).

Gender is about norms, socially and culturally produced attitudes and expectations based on stereotypical understandings of femininity and masculinity (Schiebinger et al., 2011-2020). Gender norms shape how people and groups perceive themselves and how they present their identities to society – i.e., in response to societal expectations about how women should look and behave. Additionally, gender norms determine the kind of activities women and men carry out, how they are expected to relate to one another, and how different bodies appropriate space[7]. Of central import to this study is the concept of intersectionality, which brings attention

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[6] The concept of *Herstory* is an alteration of the word *his*tory, based on a feminist critique.

[7] *Hexis*, is a concept that describes the ways in which the social world is embodied, it also refers to how people use, present, and move their bodies around space, reflecting the networks of dominance and submission in which these bodies exist (Bourdieu, 1991, in McDowell, 1997, p. 69). Simply put, the way different people claim space will be unequal because our most unconscious

to the compounding effects of multiple structures of privilege and oppression – such as age, class, capabilities, origin – on the lived realities of gendered individuals (Crenshaw, 1991). By acknowledging the existence of multiple dimensions of subordination and generating the institutional and material means to overcome unequal social relations, urban planners can bring a plurality of voices to the fore.

Societal expectations around essentialised notions of femininity and masculinity manifest in the urban space, and the built environment reinforces and reproduces hegemonic gender relations and expectations (McDowell, 1999, p. 145). In their day-to-day, gendered individuals carry out different tasks, appropriate space in different ways, and, generally, move differently. Women have more complex mobility patterns resulting from their multiple responsibilities and diminished access to private cars (Observatori IQ, de la Fuente, Bolao, Carrillo, & Duran, 2019; Sánchez de Madariaga & Zucchini, 2019). In Barcelona, women make more trips than men, most of them related to 'personal motives' – which, according to Inés Sánchez de Madariaga and Elena Zucchini (2019) can be understood as a proxy for trips related to care work. Women also tend to move more sustainably, on foot and by public transport (Agència de Salut Pública de Barcelona, 2020, p. 37).

FORBIDDEN URBAN SPACES

Despite the above, the urban landscape continues to reinforce masculine powers and activities in the public realm and disavow care work and the lived realities of many. The segregation of the city into uses and activities, the privatization and securitisation of public space, and the domination of the automobile, for example, have created hostile urban environments (Tonucci, 2005, p. 185). Urban landscapes often lack everyday networks of proximity – which are central when we talk about care, caregivers, and care-receivers (Muxí, Casanovas, Ciocoletto, Fonseca, & Gutiérrez Valdivia, 2011, p. 112). Children lack autonomy in the city (Tonucci, 2005). The youth, people of colour, and homeless people are frequently excluded from public space through processes of securitisation and sanitisation (McDowell, 1999, p. 223).

The question of access to toilets is an emblematic example of gender inequality in cities – such as in Barcelona. Deficient public toilets networks, Clara Greed (2019) argues, are evidence of an

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behaviours are learned through coexistence and imitation in a social world shaped by power structures of gender, race, class, etc. Social inequalities are embedded in the way we use our bodies, our expressions, the way we walk, the way we sit, the tone of our voice. These behaviours will denote confidence or shyness, they will be expansive or repressed and, therefore, they will establish the 'presence' of some bodies and the 'insignificance' of others (McDowell, 1997). Bodily *hexis* is an important concept in this study because it can be applied to the way different people use and appropriate public space but also to their presence or insignificance when it comes to their participation in policymaking.

urban planning that responds to patriarchal and capitalist models. In the UK, women have access to half the number of toilet infrastructure compared to men, and this translates in long queues and competition for limited facilities (Greed, 2019, p. 909). Menstruating, pregnant, menopausal bodies, use the toilets more often. The autonomy in public space of people with disabilities, functional diversity, chronic pain, or incontinence is also intrinsically connected to the availability of public toilets.

Moreover, the lack of attention to gender violence in the design of public space restricts the mobility of women and feminised bodies. Issues of fear and safety are a central matter of concern when it comes to forbidden urban spaces (Whitzman et al., 2013). Social factors – i.e., gender – as well as spatial aspects – i.e., urban interventions – contribute to negative perceptions of safety in the city. While it would be deterministic to expect urban planning to solve the former, there is much it can do regarding the latter. Such changes would, in turn, contribute to transforming unjust social relations. The report *Gender in Numbers* shows that Barcelona's public spaces and public transport are places where gender violence is exercised by strangers (Observatori IQ et al., 2019, p. 36). According to this report, about 72% of women have suffered harassment and gender violence at some point in their lifetime, and one in three has suffered severe acts of violence[8].

The collective study *Map Of The Forbidden City*, carried out in Bilbao to identify and address local women's perceptions of fear and safety, is another example of how planning excludes women from public space (Consejo de las Mujeres de Bilbao por la Igualdad, 2010). Inadequately lit spaces, concealed areas, and nooks and crannies are perceived by women as potential hiding places for aggressors. Similarly, areas undergoing construction work generate anxiety because of the potential for low public visibility. The existence of poorly maintained or dirty areas, deteriorated street furniture, and overgrown vegetation, were also factors that contributed to poor perceptions of safety.

Linking back to the idea of social justice, it is safe to say that participatory parity is advanced when the right to the *gendered* city is guaranteed. Masculinised urban planning understands

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[8] A recent survey in Ghent about young people's experiences of sexual harassment in their city found that this problem affected 90% of girls and women and 25% of boys and men (City of Ghent, 2021). Moreover, a survey on the impact of the pandemic lockdown on women and non-binary groups' perceptions of safety in Barcelona's public spaces found that 37% of the participants considered that their perception of insecurity has increased – this was particularly noticed by women and non-binary people who are racialized, migrant, and/or belong to the LGTBIQ+ collective (Àmbit Prevenció, Col·lectiu Punt 6, & Creación Positiva, 2021).

'the public' as an homogenous and depoliticised sphere, composed by self-sufficient, market-oriented individuals who relate to one another on the basis of rationality, self-interest, and competition (Asen, 2017, p. 330). Urban interventions rooted in this perspective ignore the plurality of life stories and atomise everyday lives. A caring urban planning paradigm, therefore, would incorporate conflict, inequalities, and a reflection on power structures, and develop mechanisms to incorporate women and non-hegemonic groups in the co-creation of the city.

1.3 THE CRISES OF OUR TIMES

The multidimensional crises of our capitalist societies are rooted in unequal socioecological relations. The capitalist economic system relies on an unlimited source of unpaid care work carried out, mostly, by women (Fraser, 2016, p. 100) and, ever increasingly, by migrant women (Barañano Cid & Marchetti, 2016, p. 21). This system also relies on the existence of nature as an infinite source of commodities and as a sink for all kinds of waste (Gardner, 2016, p. 34). The stability of nature and care work, however, are constantly threatened by the values of neoliberal capitalist societies – i.e., self-sufficiency and a negation of our ecodependence and human vulnerability[9] (Pérez Orozco, 2019). These structural dynamics manifest in cities through urban planning, resulting in a misrecognition of certain voices and stories in the production of urban space, maldistribution of urban resources, and a careless approach to the ecosystems in which cities are situated.

Cities play a central role as the main drivers of two major challenges of our time: The ecological and the care crises, which I will elaborate further below. An ecofeminist perspective maintains that addressing them jointly will enhance our transformative potential. As I write, the COVID-19 pandemic and the findings of the IPCC *Sixth Assessment Report* (2021) add even more urgency to the call for drastic change.

THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

The 'take-make-waste' linear model that underpin the activities of capitalist societies is destroying the world as we know it (IPCC, 2021). We are carelessly overexploiting the system's external inputs such as water, fossil fuels, and raw materials (and feminised and racialised bodies); irresponsibly consuming energy and materials; and producing destructive outflows instead of recirculating them back into the system (Gardner, 2016). Only in a suicidal paradigm

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[9] Other neoliberal capitalist values include anthropocentrism, androcentrism, individualism, ableism, ageism, classism, profit maximisation, productivity, efficiency, power attributed to money, and the merit reward system (Fainstein, 2014; Fraser, 2016; Valdivia, 2018).

the metabolic outflows become *wastes*. Considering that more than half of the world's population live in urban areas, it is safe to argue that cities are major contributors to the ecological crisis.

In Barcelona, the predictions for the next decades are that temperatures will rise, rainfall will decrease, and sea level rise will affect most beaches (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 21/04/2021). These changes will pose a risk to key infrastructure, damage ecosystems, and affect the wellbeing of the population. The transportation sector is the main contributor to the ecological crisis in Barcelona (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2020b), consequently, air and noise pollution are the main environmental risks to Barcelonians' health – which connects to the case study of this thesis. Air pollution levels are above the recommendations established by the WHO, which is particularly harmful to the health of children and the elderly (Rico et al., 2020, p. 7). Noise pollution levels are also well beyond recommended limits (Font, Gómez, Oliveras, Realp, & Borrell, 2020). Chronic exposure to environmental noise causes severe emotional, psychological, and social discomfort, sleep disorders, and even deaths in Barcelona. Also, environmental noise is heard more intensely inside the homes in lower income neighbourhoods, and the perceptions of noise inside their homes is higher for young adults and people born outside of Spain.

Moreover, in summer, Barcelona's city centre is 4 degrees hotter than the rest of the city (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017), the effects the urban heat island[10] are becoming more serious due to climate change (Martin-Vide & Moreno-Garcia, 2020). Extremely high minimum temperatures over extended periods can be fatal, especially, for women, people with lower mobility, or those suffering from diseases (Fernandez Milan & Creutzig, 2016). To cool down, urban spaces need to feature quality green areas and well-designed water features (Gunawardena, Wells, & Kershaw, 2017), but Barcelona has one of the lowest percentages of green spaces per inhabitant of Europe. While the WHO recommends a ratio of 9 m2 per inhabitant, the figure for the *Eixample* district is as low as 1,85 m2 (Rueda, 2018, p. 144).

Climate change and urban environmental problems are partly the result of a masculinised planning culture that assumed its role was to control, discipline, and subordinate the environment and design urban centres to service the capitalist economy. Unsustainable urban models understand civilisation in contraposition with the natural environment (Adam, 1998). These worldviews negate that cities are built in and interact with marine, freshwater, and

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[10] Urban heat islands refer to the meteorological phenomenon whereby higher temperatures in the city centre due to construction density

terrestrial ecosystems in complex ways. In this study I embrace an ecofeminist perspective to argue that planning efforts to restore city-nature relations should integrate the realities of those most vulnerable to the effects of the ecological crisis which, not coincidentally, are those who have been traditionally left out of urban decision-making.

THE CRISIS OF CARE

Our capitalist societies have separated productive and reproductive work, the public and private, and masculine and feminine, producing a Manichean world. Space became divided into the public and the private realms. In each sphere, specific activities take place. Stereotypical assumptions of masculinity and femininity allocate men to the public realm, where he participates in economic, cultural, and political activities. Women, on the contrary, are to remain at home in charge of reproductive and care work. In Nancy Fraser's words capitalist societies "remunerated 'reproductive' activities in the coin of 'love' and 'virtue', while compensating 'productive work' in that of money" (2016, p. 102). Binary thinking is characteristic of our Western societies and creates a system of oppression whereby one side of the binary subordinates the other. It is from such a paradigm, that devalues and invisibilises all things feminine, reproductive, and private, that the crisis of care emerges.

The crisis of care encompasses the problematic dynamics underlying the fulfilment of a specific dimension of humans' social reproductive expectations: care work (Pérez Orozco, 2011, p. 32). Care and reproductive work are about fulfilling material and emotional expectations. This space concerns all human beings because it involves provisioning, caregiving and maintaining relationships with others. Care activities include shopping for clothes and groceries, escorting dependants, and cooking. It involves the socialization of children, as well as providing care to family, friends, and relatives. It requires us to be emotionally involved. Social reproduction is also about participating in and building communities where social values and experiences are shared. Care activities happen both inside and outside homes, in the neighbourhood, and around the city.

In the current era of corporate capitalism, our societies enshrine diversity, meritocracy, and emancipation while simultaneously encouraging measures that lead to disempowerment and inequalities through the precarization of the labour force, disinvestment in the public sector, and the recruitment of women into the productive world (Fraser, 2016, p. 113). These actions have added to the weakening or disappearance of collective mechanisms, public support systems, and networks that had been developed to support life (Herrero, 2011, p. 45).

Moreover, inside the home, the 'two-earner family' sees care work as a problem that needs to be overcome; a logic that leads to a division between commodified and privatized care work (Fraser, 2016). The externalisation of care means that life becomes easier for those who can afford paid care and overburdened for those who cannot (Barañano Cid & Marchetti, 2016). There is indeed a growing connection between climate change, displaced populations, and transnational care chains. Those who are qualified to provide care in places where it is most needed are moving to work in more privileged, less climate-vulnerable places (Clark & Bettini, 2017).

CITIES ARE NOT NEUTRAL

Responding to the zeitgeist, the segregation of men and women into two separate spheres was consolidated in 20th century cities. It was done so effectively that nowadays the spatial segregation of cities into the public and the private realms seems natural. A planning emphasis on functionality and political neutrality was instrumental in making this reality possible.

The focus on neutrality is exemplified in the adoption of Le Corbusier's *Modulor (*an anthropometric scale of proportions based on the image of a man used by the architect to design his buildings) as the standard subject of urban planning. The *Modulor* is described by Zaida Muxí and Josep María Montaner as a middle-aged man (with emphasis on gender, not sex), in good physical condition, with a stable and well-paid job, who owns a car and has a wife who takes care of domestic chores (2011, p. 13). Of course, using the life experiences of *Modulor* men to explain the lived realities of all citizens is not a neutral practice. This is something feminists have been arguing for decades and demonstrates that city planning is not neutral.

Twentieth century planners followed the recommendations of the *Athens Charter*[11] and separated the city into monofunctional areas: Dwelling, work, recreation, and transportation (Sancho Martínez, 2017). Large distances between residential areas and the workplace led to a dependency on private motorized transport. The increase in car ownership translated in agglomerations issues and inspired an approach to urban planning that is car-centred and aimed at improving time efficiency. This transformation, as I argue throughout this study, gave rise to many of the urban problems related to environmental and social care issues.

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[11] The Athens Charter (1933) is an influential document on urban planning published by Le Corbusier.

While traditional urban planning practices, processes and assumptions conceive the public and the private as independent realms, when paying attention to the everyday lives of different people we understand that this separation is less apparent. A large portion of care and reproductive activities take place in the public sphere. These include tasks such as taking children to school or after-school activities, grocery shopping, visiting the doctor, and accompanying dependent people. In the context of the pandemic, Lucía Cavallero and Verónica Gago (2020)[12] posit the spill over of domestic activities into the public sphere is so dependent on the public realm that a conceptualization of a domiciliary confinement became unfeasible. Everyday services such as day-care or community kitchens, often run by community groups, as well as schools, play an irreplaceable role supporting care activities in many neighbourhoods. Local governments are aware of this and hence introduced the '*Stay in your neighbourhood'* slogan to define the lockdowns from the second half of 2020 (as well as the reluctance to close schools).

However, the unquestionable presence of care activities in the public realm does not mean they are accepted and valued for their contribution to society in the same way as productive activities (Tronto, 2016). The public/private dichotomy that underpins masculinised urban planning homogenises the diverse experiences of women and non-hegemonic groups, because it establishes that certain types of activities and, therefore, certain social groups are allowed in specific areas and excluded from others. Such an urban context discriminates against women and non-hegemonic groups and undermines equal opportunities (Valdivia, 2018, p. 68). The works of Tovi Fenster (2005) and Yon and Nadimpalli (2017) are two examples of how patriarchal, cultural, and religious beliefs underlying 'neutral' urban planning and governance create *forbidden urban spaces* for women. The authors agree that for this to change, marginalised groups need to have a say in urban decision-making.

CITIES THAT ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF ALL LIFE

One of the central claims of this study is that masculinised, disembodied, consensual, and placeless understandings of 'urban life' that underpin urban planning cultures work to exclude women and non-hegemonic groups and disavow care and nature. Feminist geographers call for

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[12] "In the Midst" is a blog from the *Critical Times Journal* that recognises both the difficulties and the importance of writing during critical times. In the context of this study, I find blogs to be valuable sources of information because they are accessible and versatile. Academics and non-academics write blog posts that range from essays to exploratory interventions and reflections. These posts are about situated experiences, responding to unfolding situations, etc.

a prioritisation of a physical, social, and economic design of cities that reflect the diversity of experiences and puts the sustainability of all life at the centre (Fenster, 2005; Greed, 1996; Hayden, 1980; Herrero, 2011; Pérez Orozco, 2019). A caring urban paradigm involves, inter alia, environmental awareness and commitment, sustainable mobility options for all, the availability of quality public spaces and green areas, the presence of everyday life infrastructures and services, positive perceptions of safety, and recognition of marginalised groups' bodies, voices, needs, desires, and experiences. An urban planning guided by ecofeminist worldviews represents a shift towards an urban paradigm where cities allow us to care for ourselves, others, and the planet.

1.4 FEMINIST URBANISM

What kind of urban planning and policymaking processes will ensure that conditions are favourable to developing lives worth living, and to nurturing thriving cities and communities? The work carried out by the *Col·lectiu Punt 6* (Collective Point 6)[13] has been influential in my thinking about practical implications of a more feminist urbanist practice. Based on the constellation of works presented in this study and continuing the work of pioneers[14] like Eva Kail, Ana Falú, or the already mentioned Zaida Muxí, the Col·lectiu Punt 6 (2019) describes feminist urbanism as a perspective that seeks to transform the city, its relations, its spaces, its uses, and its priorities, to centre them around the sustainability of life.

In practice, feminist urban planning is guided by principles of horizontality, non-hierarchisation, flexibility, and adaptability (Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2019, p. 158). Methodological multidisciplinarity allows us to develop a multi scalar approach to the city, while attention to neighbourhood scale is seen as central to understand people's everyday dynamics. Feminist urbanism applies an intersectional gender perspective to everyday lives to make visible care work and its temporal characteristics (Carrasco et al., 2011). It also incorporates diversity, conflict, and inequalities into the analysis (Fenster, 2005). Lastly, participatory approaches (from below), complement methodological interdisciplinarity, a multi-scalar view, and the intersectional gender perspective to generate a situated understanding of urban life (Haraway, 1988).

Most importantly, feminist urbanism is not a theme, but a perspective that must guide all urban policies and all stages of the planning processes. This perspective requires a holistic

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[13] The Col·lectiu Punt 6 is a Barcelona-based cooperative of architects, sociologists, and urban planners of different origins. Their work builds on the work of the many feminists concerned with urban issues since the 1970's. And with more than 15 years of local and international experience, Col·lectiu Punt 6 has become a referent in the field.
[14] Eva Kail (Austria), Ana Falú (Argentina), and Zaida Muxí (Argentina) are three practitioners with decades of experience implementing a feminist perspective into urbanism and urban planning.

understanding of the interconnections between the physical variables in which people's everyday life take place – i.e., interventions in mobility, housing, public infrastructure and services, and public space – while transversally incorporating questions of care, safety, and participation (Ciocoletto, 2014).

EVERYDAY LIVES

Urban planning from a feminist perspective draws on understandings of space as a practical place. We shape our identity and learn to appropriate space based on our collective daily routines (De Certeau, 1984 in Fenster, 2005). By habitually moving around our neighbourhoods, we collect knowledge, bodily experiences, and memories that contribute to our sense of belonging and attachment.

Everyday life includes those activities people carry out to satisfy their needs in different spheres of life (Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2019, p. 14). The *productive* sphere includes those activities related to the production of goods and services and is related to employed and remunerated work. The actions related to our own personal and intellectual development belong to the *personal* sphere. These include, inter alia, socialising, sports, free time, and hobbies. The *political* sphere is where we carry out actions in relation to community goals and values and is related to social and political participation. Lastly, the *reproductive* sphere is all about domestic activities and care.

Daily activities take place in a continuum of time and a specific place. Urban planning that puts everyday life at the centre must design cities that support the activities belonging to all spheres, not just the productive one. Most importantly, this definition recognises the centrality of the activities related to the reproductive sphere because without them, human life cannot continue.

Through our everyday lives, care and place become intrinsically connected. Fisher and Tronto reflect on care as connecting our bodies, ourselves, and our environment in a life-sustaining web. Similarly, Buse, Martin, and Nettleton argue that the "practices of care are not merely embodied spatially but also emplaced" (2018, p. 247). Caregiving and care-receiving practices can be understood as an ongoing negotiation with place. Different spatial settings – i.e., the arrangement of furniture and other objects – may support or constrain certain types of care. The impact on caregivers and care-receivers' lives will depend on which care arrangements are prioritised and supported and which are not. Such spatial understanding underpins this

research, motivates me to put the analytical focus on people's everyday lives, and helps us move beyond the problems posed by binary thinking.

The city is where our day-to-day unfolds (Muxí, 2007). Academics and practitioners around the world concerned with everyday urban life have fundamentally embraced Jane Jacobs' vison of a city with a human scale, which challenges the functional city model where cars have an excessive presence, and which supports bottom-up approaches to city making (Jacobs, 2011). Jacobs' conditions for urban vitality have transformed hegemonic understandings about the production of urban space (Delclòs-Alió & Miralles-Guasch, 2018) and constitute the principles for feminist approaches to urban planning (Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2019). The collective assessment carried out as part of this research has been designed with the qualities mentioned below in mind.

The conditions that favour urban life and vitality according to Jane Jacobs (2011) include, first, the presence of a mix of uses at all times throughout the day. Proximity is understood as the close location, in space and time, as well as the unconstrained pedestrian connectivity. Proximity allows us to carry out personal, productive, reproductive and community related activities effectively (Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2019, p. 43). Secondly, Jacobs argues that city blocks should be small to foster encounters in corners and to provide alternative routes, while more intersections allow for more opportunities for shops to open. This, in turn, results in more people on the streets. The simultaneous and continuous presence of people and the density of activities and uses contribute to the vitality of public spaces (Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2019, p. 46). Moreover, Jane Jacobs's (1993) concept of 'eyes upon the street'[15] is connected to the vitality of a public space and refers to informal vigilance that makes street safer.

A third condition would be a mix of new and old buildings (to ensure that diverse people from different backgrounds are present in the neighbourhood) as well as a diversity of land uses. Diversity is about a social, physical, and functional mix that welcomes different people, activities and uses (Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2019, p. 43). As a fourth condition emphasized by Jacobs, and which connects to the criteria of vitality and diversity, is the need for having people close to one another, that is, urban density.

Delclòs-Alió and Miralles-Guasch (2018) identified two more conditions in Jacobs' work, namely, the need to ensure accessible mobility – for pedestrians and in relation to public

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[15] Jane Jacobs' work on safety has been highly influential in feminist work on this issue (Allen, Cárdenas, Pereyra, & Sagaris, 2019; Ciocoletto, 2014).

transport –, and the negative effects caused by large scale public spaces or buildings that create border vacuums and diminish street life. Public spaces designed to overcome safety and accessibility issues provide the material conditions for people's autonomy. Lastly, the Col·lectiu Punt 6 include a fifth criteria, representativity, which is about real and symbolic recognition and visibility, in urban spaces, and participation, in urban decision-making, of the diverse social groups (Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2019, p. 47).

GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Incorporating a gender perspective to the analysis of everyday lives is about challenging and transforming the cultural norms, stereotypes, and expectations of our societies. A key focus, therefore, is to make visible and prioritize care work and its temporal dimension. Care is a relational practice and is about meeting people's needs (Tronto, 2016). Gender roles, feminised bodies, and age are key factors influencing people's everyday activities and the way they manage their time (Miralles–Guasch, 2006).

Throughout our lives, we are constantly dependent on the time of others, and feminist scholars have exposed the fact that it is generally adult women who dedicate large parts of their days to care and reproductive work (Carrasco et al., 2011; Sánchez de Madariaga & Zucchini, 2019; Torns, Borras, Moreno, & Recio, 2006; Tronto, 2016). In Cataluña, for example, women dedicate double the time than men to care work (Valdivia, 2018). But this does not mean they do not participate in the productive world. The notion of 'double presence' is used to highlight the difficulties women face conciliating productive and reproductive work in their everyday lives (Carrasco et al., 2011, p. 34). The fact that women have less time to participate in activities related to the personal and political spheres is a consequence of this double presence, and contributes to women's time poverty (Legarreta Iza & Sagastizabal Emilio-Yus, 2020, p. 22). The pandemic lock downs have aggravated this time poverty, as many women struggle to reconcile increased unpaid care work, a reduced income, and remote full-time paid work (UN Women, 2020) – An even more stressful situation for single mothers and for those who do not count with a social support network, as may be the case of migrants.

Organising our time in the city depends on the distances, means, and conditions of travel. But the temporality of care is less aligned with clock-time, and more connected to bodies and needs (Buse et al., 2018). In this sense, time is often constituted relationally in specific places and points in time (Schwanen, 2008). The territorial organization is not designed to help conciliate

the different timetables of our bodily needs, everyday activities, our jobs, and our personal and professional aspirations (Greed, 1996; Hayden, 1980; Muxí et al., 2011).

Dolores Hayden (1980), also considered a precursor of feminist urbanism, proposes a non-neutral approach to urbanism as a way to achieve social transformation. The non-sexist city interweaves a gender perspective with urban criteria that supports everyday life, echoing Jane Jacobs' abovementioned conditions. The non-sexist city supports everyday life because it ensures proximity, placing the emphasis on walking distances. It encourages a mix of uses in the neighbourhood and provides everyday services and infrastructure. Bringing together employment opportunities, childcare, and affordable housing contributes to urban vitality and reduces the number of trips taken. Moreover, the non-sexist city maximises material choices concerning recreation and sociability. Other key measures that Dolores Hayden claims are needed for social transformation include ensuring co-responsibility in unpaid and paid work, eliminating residential segregation, and rejecting urban planning practices that reinforce the unpaid role of the female homemaker.

Those who can free themselves from carrying out domestic work have more time and energy for self-care and personal development (Valdivia, 2018). Without an enabling environment, however, caring activities will continue to absorb a significant part of women's lives, affecting our quality of life and conditioning our opportunities and choices. In this study, I incorporated this perspective both in the assessment of the neighbourhood and in the design of the collective diagnosis.

PARTICIPATION 'FROM BELOW'

The exclusion of women and non-hegemonic groups from urban spaces is inherently connected to the constraints these groups face when it comes to playing a meaningful role in decisions regarding the production of the city. Thus, we see the importance of connecting feminist methodologies and principles with participatory planning processes to go beyond consensus-based policymaking and incorporate the diversity of voices and stories.

Donna Haraway's notion of *situated knowledges* represents a key contribution to feminist thought as it offers an epistemological, ontological, ethical, and political approach to research and to life. In her words, situated knowledges produces "a more adequate, richer, better account of a world, in order to live in it well and in critical, reflexive relation to our own as well as others' practices of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that make up all positions" (1988, p. 579). The notion of situated knowledges emphasises proximate and

contextualised exchanges whereby partial information that reflects the embodied experiences of subaltern groups is co-created (Frisby et al., 2009; Harding, 1992). Moreover, a situated and personal approach enables an understanding of the complexity of life and makes visible intersecting power dynamics.

A feminist perspective to urbanism involves collaborative and bottom-up participatory processes[16] 'from below' to bring to light the experiences of women and non-hegemonic groups (Ortiz Escalante & Gutiérrez Valdivia, 2015). Feminist qualitative methodologies are rooted in the notion of situated knowledges and incorporate an intersectional approach. Situated, contextualised, proximate, intersectional, and collective work puts the sustainability of life at the centre and challenges the systemic restrictions that generate inequalities. Hence, we can make room for a plurality of voices and stories (Cornwall, 2003; Listerborn, 2007; Ortiz Escalante & Gutiérrez Valdivia, 2015; Parker, 2016).

1.5 CONCLUSION

The wicked problems of our contemporary societies are being (re)produced in a plethora of ways – from structural forces to bodily *hexis* – which are then reflected on the built environment. As a result, women and non-hegemonic groups face inequalities when it comes to participating in decisions about urban space and their right to use the city is constrained. At present, the interrelated crises of care and the ecological emergency represent the greatest global urban challenges of our times – ecofeminism urges us to address them jointly (Herrero, 2014).

A feminist perspective to urbanism aims to shape better ways of living in this world. It is concerned with debunking false neutrality and including the diversity of life in city making. It exposes the multiple forms of oppression and inequality that determine different social groups' access to good housing conditions, public and social services, mobility options, and quality public and green urban areas. It transversally incorporates attention to perceptions of safety into all interventions. Importantly, feminist urbanism contributes towards socially and ecologically just ways of being in this world because it demands a transformation of urban planning cultures, processes, strategies, and interventions, which in turn generates the

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[16] The work of Col·lectiu Punt 6 incorporating feminist participatory methodologies into urban planning has been influential in the Spanish and Latin American contexts, as well as a source of inspiration, personally, and to this study.

conditions for participatory parity of women and non-hegemonic groups, while also acknowledging the world that surrounds us.

CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 POSITIONALITY

ABOUT MY EXPERIENCE AS A WOMAN IN THE CITY

I am a well-educated, bilingual, able-bodied, South American woman, who is also a migrant. I would consider myself a privileged migrant in most contexts, as I hold an EU passport; but I have found myself in less privileged situations, for example in English speaking territories such as New Zealand, where I resided for the past six years. My identity, worldview, and lived experience underpin my passion for urban geography, my research topic for this study, and inform my feminist approach, values, and standpoint.

As a woman who has always lived in cities, I share the experience of insecurity, anxiety, paranoia, and outright horror in public spaces that many women around the world feel. As a migrant, I understand the feeling of not belonging to a place, of not feeling part of a community. The fact that my mobility is not impaired means it took me a long time to understand the perils and difficulties of moving around in a city like Buenos Aires, where there are not enough ramps, the pavement is usually full of obstacles such as tiles thrust up by powerful tree roots. Now, in my thirties, I live vicariously through the urban experiences of grandparents and friends who now have babies to care for.

ABOUT MY EXPERIENCE AS A WOMAN DOING RESEARCH

As a feminist practitioner I take a specific standpoint, one that recognises that knowledge is socially situated, hence, doing research is inevitably partial and political (Harding, 1992). From this perspective, I recognise that not only the vital experiences of women have been invisibilised, but also those of people with disabilities, older people, children, people of colour, and working classes, for example, have also been ignored.

Regarding the urban model discussed in the case study, the Superblocks Model, I apply a critical and constructivist stance towards the project and its impacts. I am attentive to unequal power dynamics inherent to this urban strategy; however, I do not let this awareness stop me from recognising the time and effort planners and city officials in collaboration with residents have put into improving urban conditions, transforming the urban space in a way that recognises our ecodependence, and prioritising values that put people and everyday lives at the centre.

I am conducting this research as part of the M. Sc., this means that I am learning about and producing 'scientific' knowledge, from Europe, from the centre, and in English. A decolonial perspective helps me become aware of the inequalities that the Western knowledge matrix has produced and continues to do so. While I cannot deny the importance of Western knowledge systems, I recognise this is not 'the only way'.

With this thesis I situate myself as a female urbanist, in a masculinist planning world and 4CITIES Master's program. 4CITIES is characterised by a masculine culture which is evidenced by a lack of a feminist (or even feminine) perspectives in the master's curriculum, theory, and methodologies. Not to forget that second supervisors (more often female, because of the obstacles that women indeed face with respect to climbing the academic ladder) are not acknowledged on the title page template of one of 4CITIES coordinating institutions. For these reasons, I have prioritised to the work of feminist organisations, academics, and practitioners.

2.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

This research is exploratory by nature as it aims at theorizing inductively about the experiences of a group who has traditionally received little attention in urban planning (Given, 2008). This study aims to emphasise the needs and experiences of local women because, as the first section of this research has shown, urban planning and decision-making has traditionally favoured masculinised values and disavowed the plurality of voices and stories.

A case-study methodology provides flexibility to apply a variety of methods which allow me to undertake an in-depth analysis of local women's experiences in the Sant Antoni superblock and build bridges between empirical data and theoretical constructs (Given, 2008). I engage with ethnographic methods to gain a general understanding of the socio-spatial dynamics at place in the neighbourhood of my case study and draw from Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) to work with marginalised groups through more flexible, open-minded, collaborative and engaged methods.

The collective diagnosis lies at the heart of this project. Participatory Action Research (PAR) connects theory, methods, and practice to challenge power relationships and structures (Fals Borda, 2013). PAR aims to overcome the divisions between theory and practice, between subject and object, and between worldview and orientation (Fals Borda, 2013). It is an effort to discard the reliance on a priori hypotheses, assumptions, and practices. It is concerned with

understanding the researcher-researched relationship not as antagonistic but as people connected to each other, with different lived realities and worldviews. The basic idea is that the researcher and the researched engage in collaborative work based on egalitarian dialogue to formulate practical outcomes and new forms of understanding. And, lastly, PAR requires us to unlearn our knowledge structures and appreciate different epistemologies.

FPAR adds a focus on gender power dynamics and on how these create inequalities with real life consequences (Francisco Amat, Lozano Estivalis, & Traver Martí, 2015; Frisby et al., 2009; Gatenby & Humphries, 2000). FPAR pursues social transformation and strives to incorporate other worldviews and ensure authentic participation (Cornwall, 2003). Informed by a variety of feminisms, FPAR ontologically embraces the idea of situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988), and directs attention towards positionality and privilege through the application of an intersectional framework (Frisby et al., 2009).

2.2.1 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS

1. EXPERT INTERVIEWS

The conversations with experts provided a valuable background and practical information on the planning process of superblocks and the incorporation of feminist principles at a technical level. Key actor interviewing was also an opportunity to have insightful exchanges with feminist urbanists and planners with more critical views. Interviews were unstructured. Due to COVID-19 most of the interviews took place through video conference. A summary of these conversations can be found in *Annex 5*.

Interviewees were selected based on their expertise on 1) Superblocks planning, 2) Urbanism from a feminist perspective, 3) Actors involved in neighbourhood politics. The characteristics of the interviewed people are the following:

o Senior Urban Planner 1. Expert in urban planning from a gender perspective. Professor of Urbanism and Planning.
o Senior Urban Planner 2. Expert in urban planning, participation, and gender planning. Pioneer in the implementation of a gender perspective into urban planning.
o Senior Urban Planner 3. Expert in Feminist Participatory Action Research.
o Senior Superblocks Planner 1. Department of Perspective, Barcelona City Council.
o Superblocks Planner 2. Communication and Participation, Barcelona City Council.

- o   Key informant 1. Department of Perspective, Urban Ecology Area, Barcelona City Council.

2.   OBSERVATIONS

The observations allowed me to get a general idea of how the different public spaces are used by locals and, specifically, by women and non-hegemonic groups. Going beyond the observable and recordable, I carried out ethnographic work to account for the sensory nature of the human experience in that specific place (Buse et al., 2018). Being there also involves becoming aware of my own experience in public space, as a well-educated, bilingual, able bodied, South American woman with Spanish citizenship.

RECORD-BASED METHODS

I carried out a review of institutional websites and policy documents to complement the information produced during the expert interviews. Key policy documents include:

- o   Fill the Streets with Life: The Implementation of the Superblocks in Barcelona (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2016).
- o   The Action Plan for the Sant Antoni superblock *(Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017).*
- o   Barcelona City Council's Regulations for gender equality (Regidoria de Feminismes i LGTBI, 2019).
- o   Superblocks Project: Technical and Participatory process (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2019a).
- o   Guidelines for Everyday Life Urbanism (Paricio, 2019).
- o   This Is Not A Drill: Declaration of Climate Emergency (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2020b).

FPAR: COLLECTIVE DIAGNOSIS

I made a concerted effort to find a diverse group of women. I was assisted in this endeavour by the owner of a local feminist bookshop named *Prole*, who helped me by publishing a 'call for participation' on her social networks. I also made use of my own social media accounts and word-of-mouth to help find participants. To reach people beyond the internet, I called two centres for older people (sadly without success), and I sent out emails to local groups asking for assistance, such as the parents' association of a school (AMPA), the head of the neighbourhood council, and the local cultural centre. The AMPA and a contact at the neighbourhood council proved very helpful in connecting me with participants.

We formed a group of ten women, including myself, and three children to carry out the collective diagnosis. Some group characteristics, which can also be found in *Figure 1*, are: Most of the participants are from Barcelona, and between 35-45 years old. A third of the participants identify as part of the LGTBIQ+ community; and about half of the group has dependents. None of them identified as having disabilities. Regarding the participants' relation with the neighbourhood, most of them live in the Sant Antoni superblock, and the other visit the neighbourhood frequently. I did not collect information regarding economic status and occupation but, based on our group conversations, most of the participants appeared to belong to the middle classes and have professional jobs. I noticed a clear difference, however, between the economic stability and type of work held by the women of European origin and the Latin American women (whose work life was connected to care and social work and the performative arts). All the participants came to the reconnaissance walks, and a slightly reduced group – eight women – participated in the other two activities.

Where are you from?
9 responses
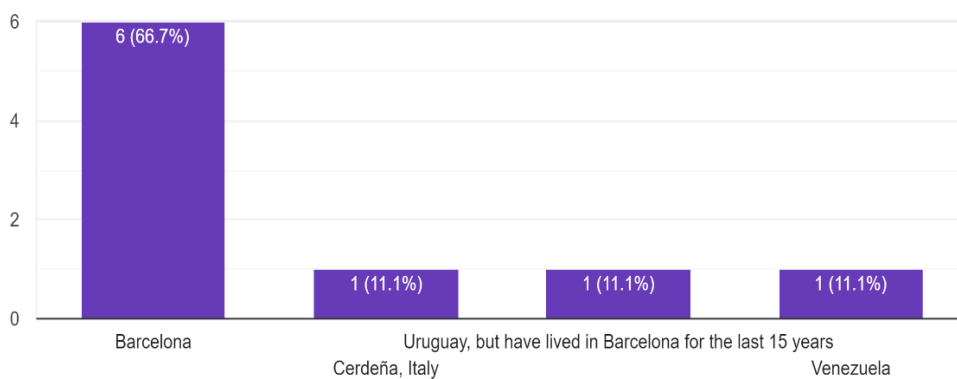
Age
9 responses
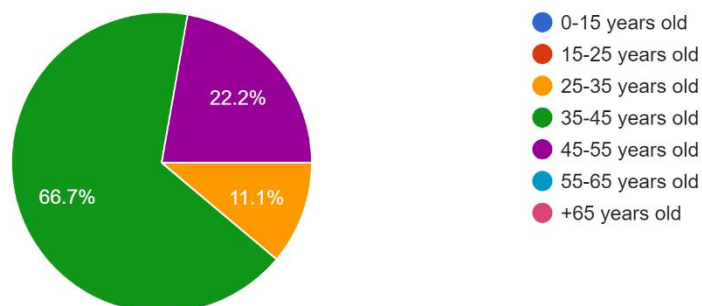
Do you identify with any of the following collectives?

9 responses
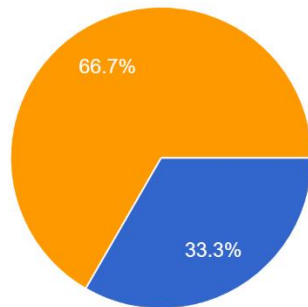
- LGTBQ+ community
- People with disabilities
- No, but I empathise and support

66.7%

33.3%

Level of study

9 responses
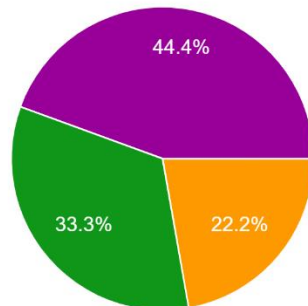
- Primary school
- Secondary school
- University degree (undergrad)
- Postgraduate studies
- Other education

44.4%

33.3%

22.2%

Do you have dependents?

9 responses

- yes
- no

44.4%

55.6%
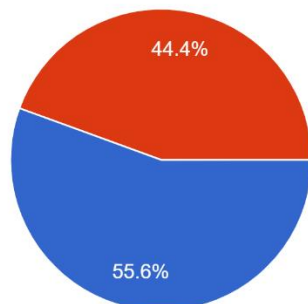
What is your relationship with the Sant Antoni neighbourhood?
9 responses
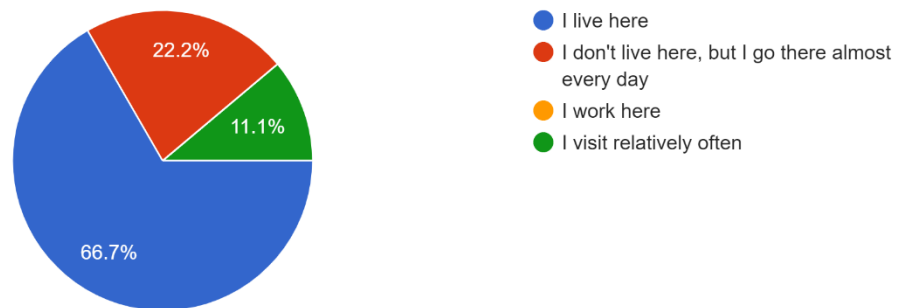
FIGURE 1 SHOWS SIX GRAPHS DESCRIBING THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS. FROM TO TOP TO BOTTOM: PLACE OF ORIGIN, AGE, BELONGING TO A COLLECTIVE, LEVEL OF STUDY, RESPONSIBILITY OVER DEPENDENTS, NATURE OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NEIGHBOURHOOD [17].

1. ### PRODUCTION OF 'EVERYDAY MOBILITY NETWORK' MIND MAPS

This method is about drawing a mind map that shows a person's everyday mobility networks (Casanovas et al., 2014). This activity is about individually reflecting on one's own daily mobility network: How do we move? With whom? At what times? For what activities throughout their day? The aim is to assess our everyday mobility and to identify the main problems, challenges, and opportunities of the mobility network.

The drawing up of everyday mobility network mind maps was the first activity of the collective diagnosis (to see all the mind maps, go to *Annex 1*). Participants started this process by producing six mind maps with individual reflections on their everyday lives and marking the places where they usually go *(Figure 2).*

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[17] If no other source were specified, figures were created by the author.
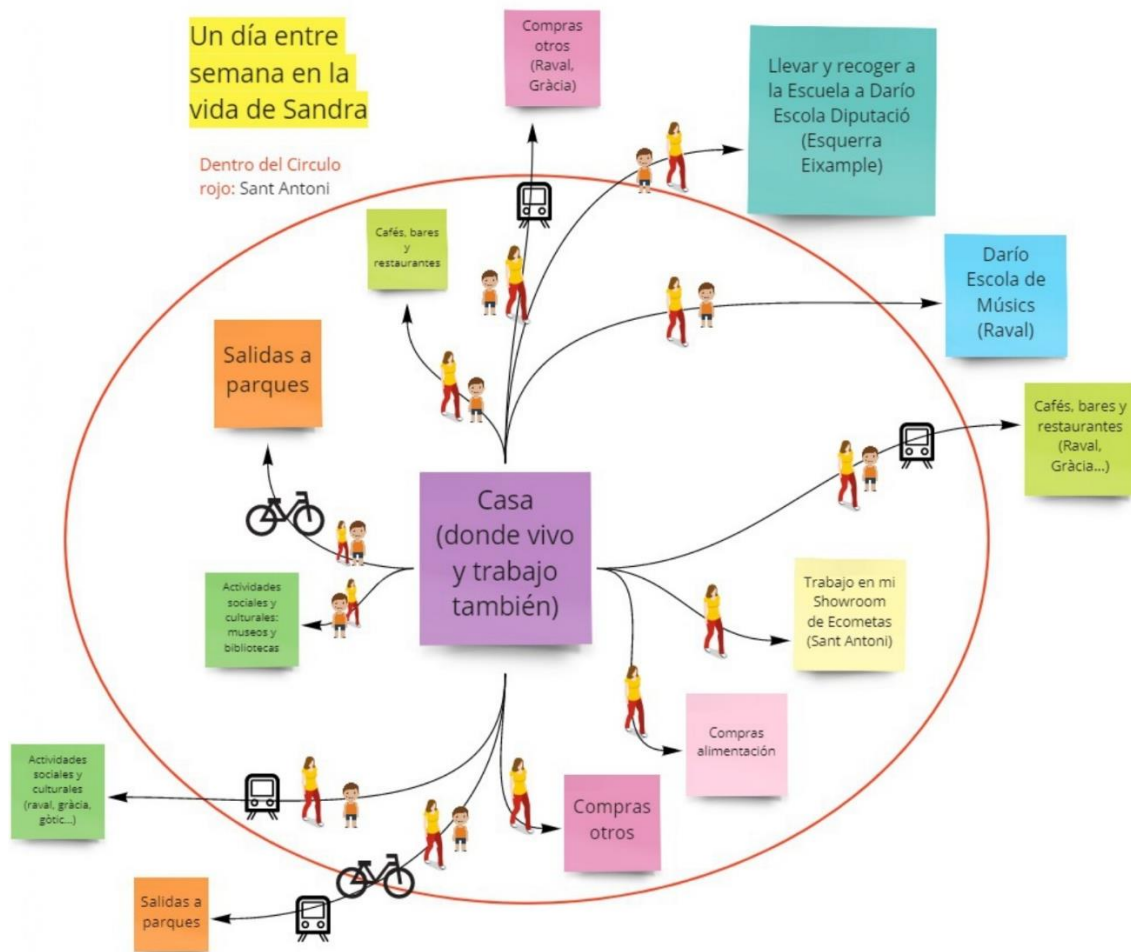
FIGURE 2 SHOWS THE MIND MAP OF ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS. IN THE CENTRE, THERE IS A PURPLE STICKY NOTE THAT SAYS "HOME, WHERE I LIVE AND ALSO WORK". WITHIN THE RED CIRCLE ARE PLACES/ACTIVITIES THAT TAKE PLACE LESS THAN 15 MINUTES AWAY FROM HER HOME (I.E., GROCERY SHOPPING AND GOING TO PLAYGROUNDS). OUTSIDE THE RED CIRCLE THERE ARE PLACES THAT ARE FURTHER AWAY (I.E., HER SONS' SCHOOL).

2. RECONNAISSANCE WALKS

The reconnaissance walk is about observing and describing the everyday urban environment as experienced by inhabitants (Casanovas et al., 2014). The goal is to identify physical, social, and functional characteristics to provoke a collective reflection on issues of public space, mobility, everyday infrastructure, housing, participation, and safety.

Between the 24th and 30th of November 2020, we took three reconnaissance walks around the Sant Antoni superblock with seven people (who self-identified as women) and three kids. The tour included locations identified through the mind map activity *(Figure 3,* to see both routes, go to *Annex 2).* During the walk, we inspected the built environment through feminist lenses. As children were involved in the first walk, I tailored it to be more entertaining for them. For example, we played with the senses by closing our eyes and paying attention to noises, smells,

feelings, and memories. At the end of the walk, I also asked the kids to draw the neighbourhood of their dreams on a canvas.
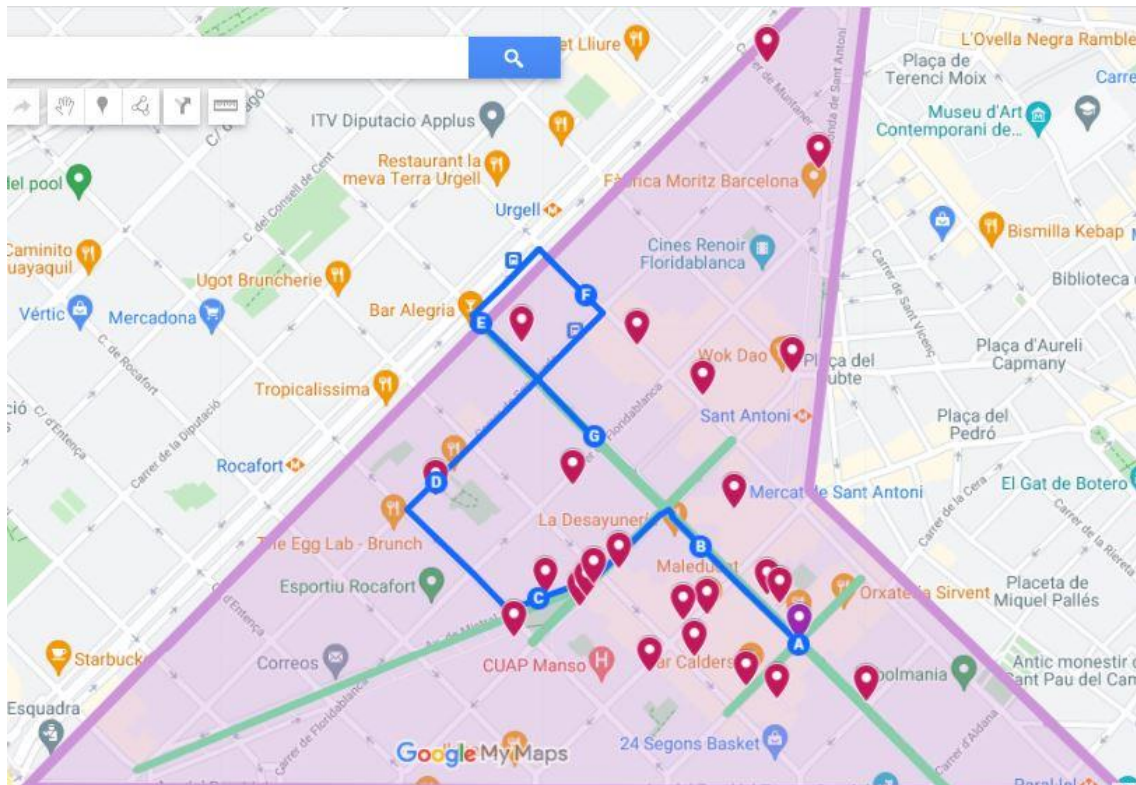
FIGURE 3 SHOWS ONE OF THE ROUTES RECONNAISSANCE WALKS.

3. CO-CREATION WORKSHOP

The co-creation workshop builds on the previous activities, namely, the daily mobility network mind maps and the reconnaissance walks, and on a questionnaire about mobility from an intersectional gender perspective (Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2019). In the design of this activity, I incorporated the recommendations made by one of my interviewees, who has extensive experience in designing participatory processes from an intersectional feminist perspective. The workshop took place online and we used Miro as the collaboration tool for the activity (refer to *Annex 3* for images of the workshop's stages).

The objectives of the workshop were twofold. First, it was designed as a reflexive process, allowing the group to collectively assess and value their everyday networks and explore how our everyday mobility patterns are shaped by traditional planning cultures and mindsets. The second goal was to develop concrete proposals and recommendations for the existing superblock in Sant Antoni and to imagine how superblocks can support new forms of social relations.

2.2.2 DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

The data collection methods described above produced information that I considered to be best analysed through my own direct interpretation, in conversation with the conceptual framework introduced in the first section of this study. Feminist theories guide my reasoning and help me make sense of the findings.

The data analysis process involved several techniques (Given, 2008). There were moments when I simultaneously collected data and analysed it. For example, to ensure coherence between the successive steps of the collective diagnosis. Also, shortly after the completion of the collective diagnosis, I recorded the various incidents and my reflections on them. Moreover, during the research process, I wrote memos with connections to theory or to information produced in the collective diagnosis, tentative guesses, related literature, etc. Lastly, coding sentences or paragraphs based on feminist principles and qualities of public space outlined in Chapter 1 helped me find connections between the conversations with key actors and the findings of the collective diagnosis. All these actions contributed to the final stage of data analysis, where I have embedded my empirical generalisations into the literature of feminist geographies, participation, and urban studies.

2.3 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

In terms of limitations of my research topic, and the ideas put forth in this study, some may worry about the risk of my arguments falling into urbanistic determinism. In addressing this, I refer to Christina Buse, Daryl Martin, and Sarah Nettleton's Christina (2018) notion of 'spatialities of care' to emphasise the role of space in shaping how people enact and experience care. In line with the arguments presented in this work, a feminist perspective to urbanism is an interdisciplinary effort to change the urban planning culture and redistribute public space and infrastructure to improve people's quality of life. Such an approach, focused on conflict and inequalities present in the immediate environment, can help us overcome simplistic assumptions about the built environment as the sole determinant of social behaviour.

Most of the challenges I faced in conducting my fieldwork were due to the COVID restrictions on socialization and mobility over the 2020/2021 period. The restrictions made it hard to connect with some collectives, for example, elderly women. The number of people who could come to the walks was subject to COVID restrictions. The co-creating workshop had to be adapted to an online format, but it did not prove to be problematic due the digital competency of the participants.

In this research I did not have much time to analyse the experiences of the participants based on the intersections between gender, race, and class. A careful reflection of the interplay of gender and other structures of oppression would be necessary to get a closer understanding of social relations in the neighbourhood of my case study. Regarding the sample, I only talked to 10 people and at least half of them had a university degree – the group certainly did not represent 'a plurality of voices'. However, the focus of this master thesis was to explore methodologies that can bring such life stories to the fore.

Sharing the results of the study with the participants (for them to review and comment on) would have been an appropriate way of wrapping up the process, but we were unable to coordinate a meeting before the summer holidays. Lastly, in relation to the bibliography, I am aware that there is an underrepresentation of knowers 'from the margins. If I had more time, I would use it to create a more balanced references list.

CHAPTER 3. CASE STUDY

This case study focuses on women's everyday lives in the Sant Antoni superblock, in Barcelona, and is produced through a collective diagnosis 'from below'. The actions and spatial transformations proposed by the Barcelona superblocks model are welcomed by many of those involved in creating sustainable urban environments. Moreover, these interventions appear to be aligned with many of the conditions that an intersectional gender perspective demands of urbanism. Indeed, a recent Spanish article presenting the views of thirty-two professional women in the fields of mobility and urban planning confirms that the functional transformations Barcelona is undergoing represent a much-needed approach to recover the habitability of public space, which has been curtailed since the motor vehicle appeared (Álvarez & Muxí Martínez, 2021).

Some of the earliest conceptualizations of superblocks occurred in parallel in North America and Europe between the 1920s and 1930s (Bambó Naya & Monclús Fraga, 2019). The fact that Dolores Hayden considers *The Radburn Plan*[18] (1929) – the North American precedent of superblocks – an illustration of non-sexist planning is another good reason for choosing to study this urban strategy. The *Radburn Plan* encouraged vitality through a mix of uses and ensured proximity between green spaces, playgrounds, and everyday infrastructure – these are qualities that contribute feminist objectives (Hayden, 1980, p. 186). In this research, I seek to 'update' Hayden's example by exploring the contributions of contemporary superblocks to feminist objectives.

The rest of this chapter is structured as follows, I will firstly introduce the theory behind Salvador Rueda's (2018) superblocks model; this will allow me to explain how the model has been adapted and implemented by the Barcelona City Council (BCC) (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017). The final section will cover the demographics of the Sant Antoni neighbourhood.

3.1. THE SUPERBLOCKS MODEL

The urban theory used by Salvador Rueda (2018) was inspired by Ildefonso Cerdá's original plan for the city of Barcelona: The *Cerdá Plan* (1860), a project designed to transform the area of the

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[18] Clarence Stein and Henry Wright designed neighbourhood units of large dimensions organized around basic infrastructure – such as schools, day-care, shops, etc. – that incorporated the principle of road hierarchies to adapt the garden suburbs layout to include the automobile. These neighbourhood units, or early superblocks, where the basis of the *Radburn Plan* (Bambó Naya & Monclús Fraga, 2019).

city which lay beyond its medieval walls. The original plan was based on a grid, each of which enclosed a block of houses. The city blocks of the new neighbourhood, called the *Eixample,* were open and featured houses of limited height and discontinuous construction, green areas, and social and cultural infrastructure. This plan, however, was not fully adopted as land speculation led to the loss of most public areas to housing and transport infrastructure (Sancho Martínez, 2017). Rueda's urban theory aims to restore the balance contained in the original plan by reclaiming public space from the car.

Ecosystemic Urbanism calls for a contextualized approach to city-making that incorporates the principles of habitability, proximity, metabolic efficiency, environmental sustainability, sustainable mobility, accessibility, comfort, safety, diversity of uses and functions, and coexistence (Rueda, 2018). Salvador Rueda's theory finds expression through the superblocks model, an urban recycling project based on creating road hierarchies to encourage a modal split[19] and recovering public space from the automobile. Superblocks should be reproduced throughout the whole city if the model is to generate environmental comfort without compromising the functionality of the urban system.

Rueda's (2018) criteria for a 'perfect' superblock are the following: First, superblocks are formed by grouping together nine blocks, or three blocks squared. The 3 x 3 dimensions and the creation of main crossings every 400 metres in the perimetral roads avoid the disruption of traffic flows. Second, superblocks require population density. And third, roads are organised in a hierarchy. In the superblocks' perimetral roads the maximum speed is 50 km/h and there should be bicycle infrastructure with separate cycle lanes, and shared roads between cars and buses. Inner roads have a limited speed of 10 or 20 km/h; they do not allow cars to drive straight through because a superblock cannot be crossed (Rueda, 2018). As for bikes, they can ride in both directions, but must prioritize pedestrians. The pacification of such roads should make it safer for children to go to school without being supervised.

Inside superblocks, the reclaimed urban spaces are transformed to host a diversity and multiplicity of uses and rights. Pedestrians and cyclists gain about 70% of the space currently used by through-traffic, and four new public squares emerge at the inner intersections featuring different kinds of vegetation and urban furniture (Rueda, 2018). According to Rueda, these

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[19] 'Modal split' is about increasing the proportion of trips made using sustainable modes of transport, its ultimate goal is a 'modal shift' towards 100% sustainable modes.

changes positively impact quality of air, noise pollution, and greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions indicators, (three of the major urban issues currently affecting Barcelona's city centre).

3.2. SUPERBLOCKS IN PRACTICE

In line with Rueda's theory, the aims of the BCC's superblocks programme are to make the *Eixample* more "healthy, egalitarian, sustainable and full of life" by supporting a modal split and improving indicators related to habitability, availability of green spaces, noise and air pollution levels, traffic accidents, sedentarism, heat island effect, and CO2 emissions (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017). The transformations are carried out through long-term structural changes as well as by bringing into play tactical urbanism techniques *(Figure 4)* – light, quick, and unexpensive interventions aimed at exploring and testing ideas (The Street Plans Collaborative, 2021).

FIGURE 4 SHOWS A TACTICAL URBANISM INTERVENTION IN THE INTERSECTION OF PARLAMENT AND BORRELL STREETS (SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2020).

Adding to the environmental and overall quality of life goals that underpin the superblocks model, the BCC is committed to making Barcelona a feminist city by "applying the gender perspective in all municipal policies and taking a collective stand against gender violence" (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2020a). This commitment is further backed by the *Regulations for Gender Equality in Barcelona City Council* (Regidoria de Feminismes i LGTBI, 2019). Among

other things, this directive determines that interventions in public spaces – i.e., the superblock model – should be carried out from a gender perspective. The BCC's *Guidelines for Everyday Life Urbanism* (Paricio, 2019) is supposed to include recommendations on this issue. However, Senior Urban Planner 1 and Senior Urban Planner 3 consider this document as not being transformative enough because it co-opts feminist concepts and depoliticises them.

The Sant Antoni superblock implementation process formed a steering group that would be involved in the project from design through to the evaluation phases (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017). The goal of a steering group is to provide planners with specific information about the territory, contextualising the project, and improving it. The steering group was made up of people from neighbourhood entities and planners. Superblocks Planner 2 explained that special attention was paid to including the voices of local traders as well as associations of parents of schoolchildren, and other groups such as the visually impaired – who, according to the planners, would be particularly affected by the project and do not usually have a voice in urban processes.

3.3. THE SANT ANTONI NEIGHBOURHOOD

The Sant Antoni superblock is presented as a successful model that will soon be reproduced throughout the city by way of the *Superilla Barcelona* urban strategy (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2020c). The Sant Antoni superblock is different to Rueda's ideal model because instead of 3x3 dimensions it includes the entire Sant Antoni neighbourhood. My interviews with Senior Superblocks Planner 1 and Superblock Planner 2 revealed that this divergence from the 'ideal' superblock (a model which was implemented in the Poblenou neighbourhood) is the result of a learning process of what worked and what did not, as well as the outcome of an intense collaboration process between locals and planners for the design and implementation of the Sant Antoni superblock. Reflection of what worked in previous implementations convinced the BBC that Rueda's model was too rigid. This, coupled with citizen feedback, resulted in a superblock that does not strictly follow the conceptual model, but which has nonetheless become a successful experience.

The latest available information of the Municipal Statistic Department (2019) shows that Sant Antoni neighbourhood has a population of around 38.900 registered residents living in a surface of 0.8 km2, the second highest density of the Eixample district – the Eixample being the most densely populated district of Barcelona. Sant Antoni is a multicultural area, with one third of the local population with a migration background. About 10% of the residents is under 14 years

old and those over 65 represent 22%. Almost a third of those over 65 live on their own. This neighbourhood is experiencing a rate of aging of its population higher than the average for the Eixample and Barcelona. Finally, more people self-identified as women (20.412) than as men (18.494) live in the Sant Antoni neighbourhood.

Central issues of concern among Sant Antoni residents are real estate speculation and gentrification, with apartments being turned into tourist accommodation, and 'hipster' bars, restaurants, and shops replacing traditional establishments (Fem Sant Antoni, 2021). The Fem Sant Antoni[20] website explains the consequent rise in rent prices is transforming housing "into a luxury product" aimed at attracting people with higher purchasing power. This has caused direct and "invisible" evictions of residents who cannot afford to pay or whose contracts are not being renewed.

In sum, diverse people with different life experiences, capabilities, backgrounds, and vulnerabilities live very close together in Sant Antoni, an area of the city characterised by high volumes of motorized traffic, a lack of quality green and public spaces, harmful levels of air and noise pollution, and increasing exclusion and dispossession processes.

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[20] *Fem Sant Antoni* (We Make Sant Antoni) is a grassroots organisation formed by neighbours, social movements, and local organisations to represent local voices in the production of their neighbourhood.

CHAPTER 4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This project focused on the case study of the already implemented superblock in the Barcelonian neighbourhood of Sant Antoni. Ontologically embracing the notion of *situated knowledges*, drawing from feminist theories, and applying FPAR, I worked with local women to collectively explore *How does the Sant Antoni Superblock support the everyday lives of local women?*

In this Chapter I analyse the results of the collective diagnosis borrowing from Col·lectiu Punt 6's (2019) criteria for public space and mobility from an intersectional gender perspective, the analysis section is followed by some of the recommendations produced during the co-creation workshops[21]. Please, go to *Annex 4* to find the results of the workshops' envisioning exercise, where the participants explored visions of a feminist superblock. These imaginaries proved to be insightful not only because the participants went beyond traditional understandings of 'the urban' and reflected on new ways of appropriating and using space, but also because within these imaginaries it is possible to find a critique of the current superblocks strategy. I will discuss these critiques in Chapter 5.

I have also annexed more information the regarding research methods, these documents include the everyday network mind maps (*Annex 1*), the route from the reconnaissance walks (*Annex 2*), the murals from the co-creation workshops (*Annex 3*), summaries of the expert interviews (*Annex 5*), and the participants informed consent (*Annex 6*).

4.1. DIAGNOSIS

4.1.1. REFLECTING ON OUR DAILY LIVES

Each participants' everyday network mind map is unique because it shows the everyday mobility of women with diverse habits, needs, and responsibilities. As participants presented these in the workshop, however, a main commonality emerged: A significant part of the participants' daily activities fit outside the productive realm – understanding the productive sphere as those activities related to the production of goods and services, employment, and remunerated work. The activities that most featured in the mind maps include "strolls and bike trips", "catching up with my neighbour", "trips to the library", "taking my son to school", "trips

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[21] I would like to remind the reader that, while I am producing this text, the analysis of the superblocks has been carried out in collaboration with the participants. What I write is drawn from what we discussed during our encounters. And my reflections are the reflections of the group.

to parks and playgrounds", "taking the rubbish out", "grocery shopping", "running run up the hill to clear the mind", and "volunteering". The participants' everyday lives encompass activities that belong to the productive, reproductive, personal, and political spheres; and reproductive and care work, be it caring for someone else or self-caring, represent a substantial portion of their movements in the city.

Reflecting on the everyday networks of participants with dependents allows us to understand the caregivers' complex uses of time and mobility patterns which, according to Xavier Delclòs-Alió and Carme Miralles-Guasch, reflect the multiple responsibilities associated with their participation in paid work and care work. One participant's mind map, for example, mentions she owns a showroom and conciliates productive work with unpaid, reproductive work: including taking her son to school, going to work, picking him up at lunch and dropping him off at extracurricular activities, going back to work in the afternoon – all the while carrying out other domestic and personal needs. These trips occur outside peak hours and create an interconnected web – not a division – between everyday services and infrastructure, the workplace, and the home. Understanding these interactions and designing policies that improve the connectivity between them can make life easier for women and others overburdened with a 'double presence'.

In relation to how women move, the mind maps reveal that all the participants flow through the different spheres of life in sustainable ways.
o   They generally make short trips on foot within their neighbourhood.
o   Most of these trips (approximately 5-15 minutes) are to satisfy a variety of everyday needs such as shopping for groceries, going to the bank, meeting friends and socialising, going to the library, and escorting children.
o   Cycling is preferred when the trips are slightly longer (approx. 15-30 minutes).
o   The participants bike to commercial areas, to public parks, to work, and to university.

One participant often chooses to bike to university rather than going by public transport because it is faster. Public transport appears as the preferred mode of transportation for longer distance travel (20-40 plus minutes), and common destinations not only include the workplace and university, but also beaches and larger parks, social and cultural activities, relatives' homes, and volunteer work. The variety of travel motives and needs illustrated in the mind maps mean that planners should pay special attention to safety and accessibility aspects in a way that goes beyond the general prioritisation of productive activities.

The mind maps also identify some of the obstacles these women face in relation to the way they move around and, considering that they mostly walk, cycle, and take public transport, this reveals weaknesses in the local government's sustainable mobility strategy. One participant pointed out that bike lanes are discontinuously implemented throughout the city; and another indicated that she feels unsafe biking to work on Saturdays. Moreover, it was suggested that public transportation may be preferred over bicycles for medium-length trips when accompanied by dependents. In this sense, policies that support women's mobility will also contribute towards achieving environmental goals.

Lastly, this activity demonstrates the fallacy of the public-private dichotomy by not only highlighting that care work takes place in the city, but also by showing the emerging reality of increasing numbers of people choosing to work from home. In line with this, half of the participants indicated they often work remotely. This situation has been facilitated by decades of neoliberal policies of work flexibilization in terms of contracts, remote work arrangements, flexible hours, etc. (Fraser, 2016), and more recently accelerated by the COVID pandemic (Cavallero & Gago, 2020). On the one hand, flexible work arrangements in the neoliberal era have worked in favour of the capitalist marketplace and made the vital experiences of those at the bottom even more precarious. On the other, flexible arrangements designed with *care* could offer some opportunities for caregivers to accommodate their multiple responsibilities.

In chapter one, I discussed how urban planning and the built environment tend to prioritise ideal conditions for the productive world. Often, masculinist urban planning pays attention to non-productive activities only when they align with neoliberal goals – i.e., improving the quality of public space for tourism. Through this mind map exercise, we become aware that such a planning culture, in many senses, fails to adequately respond to the basic needs of the population and disregards many spheres of everyday life.

4.1.2. ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

PUBLIC SPACES THAT SUPPORT CARE WORK AND EVERYDAY LIVES

Dolores Hayden (1980), Carme Miralles–Guasch (2006), Ines Sánchez de Madariaga and Zucchini (2019), or Cristina Carrasco, Cristina Borderías and Teresa Torns (2011), among many others, tell us neighbourhoods which support everyday lives and care work are those that feature and connect a wide range of everyday shops, services, relational spaces, and basic infrastructure. In this sense, the everyday life in the neighbourhood of Sant Antoni is guided by the principle of proximity. The self-contained nature of the neighbourhood is a characteristic

known to many Eixample residents, and the women who came on the reconnaissance walks agree.

Those who reside in and around Sant Antoni are satisfied with the diversity of shops and services available. These shops are often small businesses, many of which "have been there forever", and offer a wide range goods and services. In terms of everyday infrastructure, there is a health care centre; at least five schools; three day-care centres; several day centres, residencies, and housing for older people; a public library; a community centre; and a local market (*Figure* 5). The neighbourhood also offers several cafes, bars, and restaurants that, according to the participants, are popular places where locals and tourists come to socialize. The implementation of the superblock model addressed the lack of quality green spaces and recreational areas by recovering public space, prioritising pedestrians and slow mobility, and opening up new relational spaces.

FIGURE 5 SHOWS THE SANT ANTONI NEIGHBOURHOOD'S EVERYDAY SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE (IN PINK, ORANGE AND BLUE), AND THE AREAS THAT UNDERWENT TRANSFORMATIONS UNDER THE SUPERBLOCKS PROJECT (IN YELLOW AND GREEN) (SOURCE: IMAGE PRODUCED BY THE AUTHOR WITH DATA FROM THE BARCELONA URBAN INFORMATION MAP (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2021)).

Overall, it could be argued that the proximity between all these places allows different social groups to combine the spheres of life as they carry out their daily activities on foot (Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2019, p. 43). Senior Superblocks Planner 1 said the interventions "improve peoples' quality of life by supporting their everyday lives (…) And as a neighbour of the Sant Antoni superilla, I can see how things have improved. Families celebrate their children's birthdays out on the public picnic tables now". Meanwhile, Senior Urban Planner 1 shares this viewpoint:

"they [superblocks] put life at the centre by creating public spaces for people to stay, socialise, play, learn, and carry out care activities".

During our walk, however, we realised that some vital aspects need further attention. For example, we noted that the neighbourhood lacks water elements and fountains to support the everyday mobility of many passers-by, especially during summertime. Additionally, we noticed a lack of benches not only along the inner streets of the superblock, but also in certain sections around the recently redeveloped marketplace which are popular spots for taking in the sun during the cold months *(Figure 6).* Around the Sant Antoni market "benches are not designed to take advantage of the sun", one person argued. On this question, a participant mentioned she would have liked to see the area around the market designed in a friendlier way: "I appreciate the new furniture and greening, but I think this [the interventions] could have been more generous". Another participant added it was positive there is "more air, better for children", but she complained about there being "too much concrete".

The discussion about the market environment was insightful because it exposed the disappointment of some participants with an area that had recently undergone public works. My dialogue with Senior Urban Planner 3 revealed that the renovation of the Sant Antoni market and its surroundings included citizen participatory processes to learn about neighbours' needs and expectations. The participation workshops were designed from an intersectional gender perspective and included working groups for young people, associations, older people, persons with functional diversity, local business owners, women, and children. Yet, Senior Urban Planner 3 considers that neither the practitioners nor the participants found the results were satisfactorily reflected in the final outcome: "The transformations made to the market's immediate environment did not comply with the information produced in the participatory process".

This experience is important not only because it shows how urban redevelopment projects frequently disregard – through homogenisation – the needs and expectations of different social groups, but also because it highlights that urban projects can be hermetic. Key Informant 1 contributes to this reflection, adding that the methodology for the implementation of superblocks "is about quick changes and not about creating a dialogue with previously implemented urban projects and weaving them together". This is where the holistic approach embraced by feminist urbanism is most critical, as it incites us to create a dialogue and to learn between the different urban interventions.

FIGURE 6 SHOWS A MAN, A COUPLE OF FRIENDS, AND ANOTHER PAIR OF WOMEN WITH A BABY SITTING ON THE FLOOR JUST OUTSIDE THE SANT ANTONI MARKET (SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2020).

When I asked about public toilets, or rather, the lack thereof, one participant exclaimed: "Oh, forget about that". This was a widely shared frustration. "There is one inside the Sant Antoni Market and one in the library, but both are quite hidden". Indeed, there is scarcely any signage indicating their existence. These toilets are concentrated in one corner of the superblock (one

hundred and fifty metres from each other), leaving no coverage for about two-thirds of the neighbourhood. Moreover, the opening hours of both toilets are tied to daytime working hours. The lack of a public toilet network in the neighbourhood hinders the mobility of many people who depend on them. It affects those who, for economic or cultural reasons, often spend time in the public spaces. The problem become worse at nights. Some people, generally masculine identities, have less trouble satisfying their physiological needs in public (a pervasive problem in Barcelona's city centre). For others, however, the situation is more complicated. As women, not only do we need to overcome culturally assigned expectations about femininity, but we also must find a spot that meets certain safety and privacy requirements. While a dark corner might sound ideal in terms of privacy, it will certainly not be perceived as safe. As Clara Greed says, "if governments want to create sustainable cities, and to get people back to public transport, cycling and walking, then adequate public toilets are essential: they are 'the missing link'"(2019, p. 909)

Many of the participants said the superblock design lacked a caring approach to school areas [22], such as choosing what streets to pacify, and where to put furniture, etc. An end-of-the-line bus-stop has been established just outside a school due to a restructuring of routes into orthogonal-grid lanes. The functional changes, participants notice, resulted in more road traffic and increased noise and air pollution on the street where the Ferran Sunyer school is located. This, according to some of the women, works against the health and social aims of the superblock project, specifically, in an area where children spend a significant part of their days. "More attention to [the comments of parents regarding] schools would have resulted in these areas being healthy environments and better suited to encourage stay", a participant reflected.

In terms of diversity of people and of uses of public space, a shared feeling among the participants was that the area around the public square in the intersection of Parliament and Borrell streets accommodates people from all walks of life, gender, social position, and functional diversity. There are areas where people can stay without having to consume, and they do so in a variety of ways. Indeed, a quick glance around revealed men from different ethnic backgrounds playing chess, schoolgirls doing homework, a group of young professionals having an office meeting, an older woman taking some air accompanied by a caretaker *(Figure 7)*. "Women and children are present in this area throughout the day, particularly around 4 pm

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[22] This is an interesting finding because the BCC has a programme aimed at improving the environments outside schools.

after school", one participant added. And as the sun sets, the public square fills with young adults who gather to eat and drink, and to socialize.

FIGURE 7 SHOWS A FAMILY SPENDING TIME AT THE SQUARE IN THE BORREL AND PARLAMENT INTERSECTION, IN THE BACKGROUND, ONE CAN OBSERVE PEOPLE USING THE FURNITURE WHILE HAVING A SNACK, OLDER PEOPLE TAKING AIR, KIDS PLAYING, AND PASSERS BY (SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2020).

"My favourite places in the city are those with playgrounds", exclaimed a seven-year-old boy who joined the walk. He refers to the play areas located in the civic axis of Mistral Street *(Figure 8)* and inside the neighbourhood's inner parks where his mum often takes him after school. To this, his mother added, "I feel claustrophobic in that playground". The two participants who came to the walks with their children think that public playgrounds need more greenery, more comfortable furniture, and a more inviting atmosphere. The area under the Sant Antoni market is a favourite spot for ten-year-olds because "there is space to skate" *(Figure 9).* However, their mothers said this area is under surveillance by supermarket security, who maintain that skating is not allowed. The fact that grown-ups feel uncomfortable in playgrounds, older kids are not allowed to appropriate certain spaces, and younger kids can only play in designated areas, points to a lack of an intergenerational and holistic approach to the design of some spaces.

FIGURE 8 SHOWS A GROUP OF OLDER WOMEN SITTING ON ONE OF THE MANY BENCHES ALONG MISTRAL STREET, WHICH HAS UNDERGONE STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS AS PART OF THE SUPERBLOCK INTERVENTION. ON THE BACKGROUND, THERE ARE OTHERS ALSO ENJOYING THE AFTERNOON, PARENTS AND THEIR KIDS, FRIENDS, ETC. (SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2020).
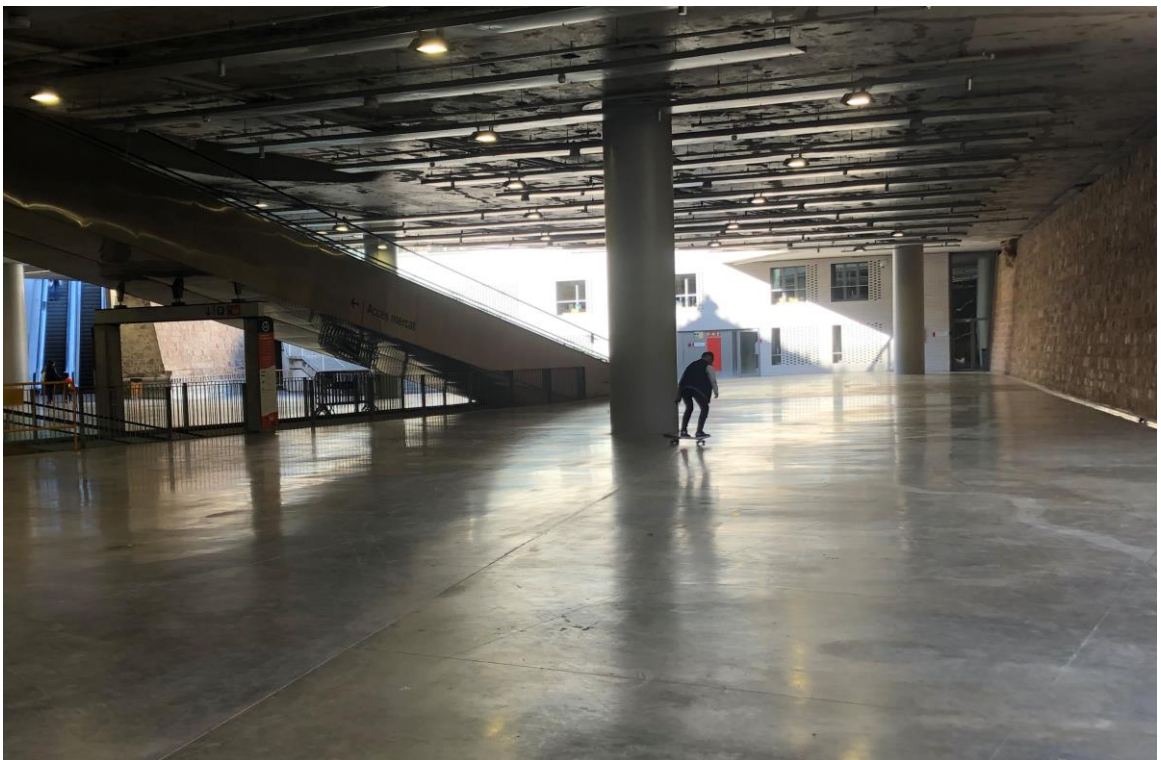
FIGURE 9 SHOWS IS A WIDE-OPEN SPACE WITH NO PEOPLE EXCEPT A YOUNG SKATER. THIS IS THE SEMI-PUBLIC AREA BELOW THE SANT ANTONI MARKET THAT IS FAVOURED BY MANY YOUTH (SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2021)

About the neighbourhood's cycling infrastructure and its role in supporting everyday lives and care work, several participants agreed they would like "to have more bike lanes connecting more points of the neighbourhood". The main concern was that the bike network often connects locations where productive activities occur (I.e., along busy roads) but they would like improved connectivity between other everyday places such as services for people, playgrounds, and other infrastructure. Lastly, some consider that the shared-bikes system, *Bicing*, does not work very well for them because "it is rarely available in popular hours, is expensive, and the bikes are usually in bad condition". Also, these bikes have a very small carry basket, and the strap is so tight it can damage groceries.

Explaining the local government's approach to urbanism, Superblocks' Senior Planner said, "we call it a focus on everyday lives. So, it is not only about women. Women and men have everyday lives. We all look after children, we can all have disabilities, and we all get old". This argument is in line with the concept of universality, but it falls short in terms of upholding the principle of singularity. In this sense, Senior Urban Planner 3 maintains that "the superblock actions may improve daily life in general, but they do so indirectly because they have not been thought of from a feminist point of view". With this statement, Senior Urban Planner 3 expressed her views that while a universal approach is the horizon, we must *actively* – not only indirectly – focus our efforts to make life easier for the most vulnerable.

The concerns of Senior Urban Planner 3 correspond with the issues raised by the participants. These results add weight to the argument that the methodology behind the implementation of superblocks is not considering important gender-specific aspects such as women's safety at night (i.e., based on the lack of activity or lighting on certain streets), or the need for breastfeeding areas and public toilets. It seems that a gender perspective exists but only at certain times, and it disappears in others. Hence, there are situations where superblock fails to respond to the complexity and diversity of women's and non-hegemonic groups' vital experiences.

PUBLIC SPACES THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE AND DIVERSE

Accessible and diverse places, according to the Col·lectiu Punt 6 (2019), are those that reflect the different needs, rhythms, bodies, health conditions, and economic situations of the public.

During the first half hour of our walks, most participants were satisfied with how Sant Antoni's public spaces welcome a diversity of people and respond to a variety of needs. Walking around Sant Antoni one comes across people carrying out diverse activities, who are of all ages and

cultures, of diverse gender identities and sexualities, etc. However, as we went deeper into our conversations and different viewpoints emerged, we reached a more nuanced understanding of the situation. Some participants argued that while there are many public places in Sant Antoni where young kids and middle-aged people can spend time, "there are not so many areas designed specifically for teens or older people ... they don't have much choice but to go out and sit on a bench" (Figure 10).

FIGURE 10 SHOWS OLDER PEOPLE AND CAREGIVERS ENJOYING THE NEW PUBLIC SPACES OF THE SANT ANTONI SUPERBLOCK (SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2021).

Another participant said the type of furniture available in the superblock was designed "to ensure homeless or drunk people don't sleep there". One woman, who was also part of the steering group, recalls that "planners referred to issues of safety caused by drunk or homeless people to justify not putting urban furniture in the alleyway near the [Ferran Sunyer] school". The participant's view on this was that while public spaces need to be safe for their children, planners' decisions against including comfortable urban furniture do not address the root causes of homelessness and touristification. The public space around the Sant Antoni market is another example of design features overlooking important uses. These vast open spaces are

particularly used by families with a migrant background who bring their children to run around and play – likely because they do not have enough space in their own homes. The family appeared to be having a great time, yet the lack of comfortable furniture such as large picnic tables in this area conveys a disinterest on the part of planners to support certain kinds of activities carried out by certain people *(Figures 11 and 12).*

FIGURE 11 SHOWS CHILDREN PLAYING NEXT TO THE SANT ANTONI MARKET, JUST OUT OF THE PICTURE THEIR FAMILIES WERE SITTING ON BENCHES AND ON THE SIDES OF THE PLANTERS (SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2021).

FIGURE 12 SHOWS A FAMILY SPENDING THE AFTERNOON IN THE SPACE AROUND THE SANT ANTONI MARKET, THEY ARE ALL SITTING ALONG ONE BENCH (SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2021).

When assessing the quality and availability of everyday shops and services, as well as rent prices, we inevitably ran into the problems of gentrification. The perceptions of the participants in this respect were varied. Some women had a relatively positive view, arguing that the superblock was implemented in 2017 and there are still several local shops and services: "Sant Antoni always was and continues to maintain its identity as a working-class neighbourhood". Other participants, however, were concerned about the rise in rent prices since the superblock was implemented, and the slow replacement of traditional shops by "trendier and hipster businesses such as the shop that sells overpriced succulents".

Gastronomic gentrification was perceived as a central problem in the area as it associated with a further encroachment and commodification of public space. As an example, the participants mentioned a section of Parlament Street where businesses' terraces creep over the newly created public area *(Figure 13)*. The group found this situation problematic as the reclaimed

public space was meant to offer comfortable environments for socialising without having to consume, not for commercial gain. Additionally, "the gentrification [referring to the presence of tourist crowds] in Parlament Street and the area between Ronda Sant Antoni and Sant Pau makes life difficult for elderly and disabled people". When paying attention at the uses of space, differences based on age, class, and race became evident. While it is mostly Europeans in their 20s-40s enjoying tapas in bars' terraces, those using public spaces are predominantly older people and people with a migrant background. While the experiences of the latter groups are improved by the superblock interventions, it is also likely that the urban project is feeding tourist and gastronomic gentrification processes that reinforce such segregation.

FIGURE 13 SHOWS A SECTION OF PARLAMENT STREET WHERE THE TERRACE OF A BAR EXTENDS TO BLEND WITH THE URBAN FURNITURE (SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2020)

Two women involved in the local steering group explained the approach taken by the BCC to counterbalance the gentrification processes, was to pass regulations "restricting the opening of new bars in the neighbourhood". This regulation banned the opening of businesses linked to touristic activities such as bars or restaurants, auto-service shops, wine cellars, sex-shops, music

venues and bicycle rentals. Yet, as Sant Antoni has become a trendy and touristic neighbourhood, one participant disputes that speculation on housing poses a threat of symbolic and physical expulsion to residents who cannot afford rising prices. Indeed, considering that the area's demographics show an aging population and a high percentage of migrants (Oficina Municipal de Dades, 2019), the number of residents who may end up in a situation of vulnerability becomes a matter of concern.

During our walks, we also noticed important accessibility elements for the diversity of persons and bodies. While on Mistral Street, we observed an older man crossing the street with a walking aid, and he was not using the designated pedestrian crossings on the chamfers, off the main street, but moving straight across Mistral Street *(Figure 14).* This path, we realised, made most sense for him because the crossing was further away, and he had very restricted mobility. Apart from the risks associated with jaywalking, there was a threat posed by the ramp in this street section, which is very steep and hence not safe for walking aid and wheelchairs. Paying attention to these elements in the design of public space directly affects the autonomy of people, and this is particularly important in a neighbourhood with an aging population, many of whom live alone.

FIGURE 14 SHOWS AN OLDER MAN WITH WALKING AID CROSSING IN A DIRECT LINE INSTEAD OF GOING THROUGH THE DESIGNATED PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS ON THE *CHAMFERS* **(SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2020)***.*

Sant Antoni is a central neighbourhood and, as such, is well connected through several metro and bus lines, as well as bike and pedestrian networks. There are several bike-sharing stations, and the superblock interventions aim to prioritise sustainable mobility. When reflecting on public transport accessibility within the superblock, the participants considered that bus and metro stops are generally adequately illuminated and visible. Additionally, they believed these stops were often – but not always – equipped with analogic information regarding the bus times and connections.

Another element that caught the attention of the group was that there are several bus routes crisscrossing the superblock, a characteristic that contradicts Rueda's theory. On this point, one of the women (who is knowledgeable about urban models), explained that the recently implemented transport plan "makes it impossible to pacify all streets inside a superblock". This is because the orthogonal bus routes require buses to go in one direction on one street and come down the opposite direction on the parallel street, and this conflicts with the superblock criteria which holds that two out of three parallel streets should be pacified. Based on this explanation, the participants supported BCC's modification of the theoretical model as they consider it "important to let a bus go through the superblock to avoid forcing older people to walk two hundred metres" to another stop. This participant is one of many migrants from the global South who care for some of the most vulnerable in European societies. Specifically, she takes people with disabilities out on day trips, and commented that a well-connected public transport network is vital to ensure successful outings.

The conversations I had with three of my interviewees on the need for the urban intervention to be flexible echoed the abovementioned views of the participants. Senior Urban Planner 1 emphasised that "Salvador Rueda is not a feminist; his superblock theory is stiff and does not include a gender perspective". On the issue of allowing public transport inside the superblock, Senior Urban Planner 2 said that not doing so would "impact [women's] daily lives because it makes their chain trips longer" – Referring to mobilities of care. Regarding the project in general, Superblocks' Senior Planner 1 explained that "to successfully adapt Rueda's model to reality, the transformations need to be more controlled (...) the city is not ready to reproduce the 'perfect superblock'". The rigidity of Rueda's model is a characteristic incompatible with feminist urbanism, which calls for flexibility in the implementation of superblocks so they can "be adapted to the realities of the neighbourhoods", as Senior Urban Planner 1 put it.

Developing pedestrian and bike networks and creating new public spaces are crucial measures to improve the urban experiences of wide range of people. People with a migrant background

and older people appear to be big users of public space in Sant Antoni, so these interventions appear to benefit them. Adapting the theoretical model to ensure that buses can go through the superblock is another aspect to be praised, particularly in terms of improving mobility conditions for adult women and supporting care work. Designing accessible cities for all is a complex issue and this collective assessment found that superblocks interventions contribute greatly in terms of accessibility and welcoming diverse uses and people. But we also identified some problematic areas, where the sustainability of life has not been prioritised – perhaps, due to being considered 'outside the scope' of the superblock interventions or because key issues ended up buried in consensus. The participants perceived urban problems such as the exclusion of homeless people from public space, the effects of gentrification on locals, or the decision to add a bus terminal outside a primary school as connected to the superblocks project – suggesting that this urban model may not be completely free of the compartmentalised approach that typically underpins traditional urban planning cultures.

PUBLIC SPACES THAT ARE HEALTHY AND SAFE

Safe places, as Jane Jacobs (1993) or Eva Kail (Kail, Irschik, Zuckerstätter-Semela, & Posch, 2007) would argue, are those that embrace the principles of diversity, vitality, and autonomy. Healthy urban environments are dependent on urban policies and interventions that are guided by the principles of human vulnerability, interdependence and ecodependence (Pérez Orozco, 2011). Our group kept this perspective in mind when we assessed the environmental and social qualities of the public spaces in Sant Antoni.

When considering issues of health, there was a general agreement about "the need to create intergenerational sports and recreation areas inside the superblock (…) the transformations in Sant Antoni did not really create these kinds of spaces". Throughout our tour we noticed that there are some elements to exercise with, but they are located just outside a private gym and exposed to cars and car fumes, and people walking past *(Figure 15)*. My own observations and the impressions of the participants confirm that the sports elements are seldom used. Looking for aspects that work, a participant mentioned the petanque court in the inner garden next to the public library as a good example and suggested the area around the market – which is quite open and empty – could have more sport elements, "such as ping pong tables".

FIGURE 15 SHOWS AN AREA FOR EXERCISING ON BORREL STREET (SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2020).

One of the main objectives of the superblock model is to address noise and air pollution in the Eixample through the pacification of inner streets and the creation of green areas. The improvements were evident all the participants. However, some of them were doubtful about the overall impacts of the transformations. "The quality of air and noise pollution levels have improved along the civic axes, but road safety problems and noise and air pollution are now worse on the inner streets, such as Viladomat". Viladomat street lost its on-street parking spaces to traffic, and this road with an extra lane is meant to absorb the excess traffic flows that have been diverted away from Borrell street. "There is so much noise now on Viladomat Street that I had to change my windows", said the other participant, whose home overlooks this road. Moreover, the Ferran Sunyer school is on just such a street, and the loud noise and poor air quality were inescapable as we passed this area. Addressing noise pollution in all areas of the neighbourhood is particularly important considering that one third of the neighbourhood's residents are of migrant background, and migrants tend be more adversely affected by noise – a statistic that was confirmed by the migrants in the group.

When moving along Mistral Street and assessing the civic axis' long-term transformations and new green patches, one participant wondered "Who chose which plants should be planted? These plants are really short and not diverse, they are also poorly maintained (...) it would have been nice to see these spaces become veggie gardens for the locals to look after". This comment speaks to the superblocks' performance regarding its objective of promoting biodiversity, but also expresses a desire to have access to public spaces where neighbours can create bonds and collectively engage in more sustainable practices. Community gardening is not only a way for undertaking conscious consumption and healthy lifestyles, but it is also connected to community bonding, contributes to mental well-being, and is an element of aesthetic improvement.

Greening the neighbourhood of Sant Antoni to mitigate the effects of the urban heat island is another of the main aspects of the superblocks strategy, according to Senior Superblocks Planner 1. In this sense, however, the participants were not very happy with the newly incorporated vegetation. These women considered that the neighbourhood needs "more plants, at different levels" *(Figure 16)*. The permanent transformations in Sant Antoni incorporated patches of permeable soil, but the perception of the participants is that there is still too much concrete. The public parks in the reclaimed urban block's inner courtyards provide permeable surfaces, but often lack greenery. The implementation of green and blue infrastructure to improve the quality and comfort of the inner courtyards could transform these spaces in green lungs and climate shelters for those who need it most.

FIGURE 16 SHOWS ONE OF THE GREEN AREAS CREATED AS PART THE PERMANENT TRANSFORMATIONS AROUND THE SANT ANTONI MARKET. IT SHOWS VERY LOW BUSHES AND TWO SMALL TREES. THERE IS ALSO A MAN USING THE SIDE OF THIS PLANTER BOX AS A BENCH (SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2020)

Reflecting on road safety issues within the Sant Antoni superblock, a participant pointed out the tactical urbanism section of Borrell street "looks like a normal street" (referring to the presence of curbs and different levels) and this setting is safer for kids because they know that they must not go past the curb and onto the street *(Figure 17)*. "The problem is that cars do not respect speed limits while driving through the sections that underwent permanent transformation", another participant added.

FIGURE 17 SHOWS A SECTION OF BORREL STREET AND THE TACTICAL URBANISM INTERVENTIONS (SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2020).

At the same time, another person argued that tactical urbanism transformations are "too confusing", and cars continue to drive fast through the civic axes. There is also a safety issue in the areas that underwent long-term changes, where streets and sidewalks have been levelled out. "Without curbs, the little ones do not have a way of distinguishing between safe and unsafe areas". Based on this, two of the women who came to the third walk, and who are engaged with the district council, explained they had asked the council for more signs to ensure car drivers know the rules within superblocks (i.e., 10 km/h maximum speed limit on Borrell street, that bikes are permitted to go on both directions, that pedestrians have priority on pacified streets) but planners discarded their claim as "they believed there was no need for more signalisation".

An objective of the superblocks is that kids should be able to walk around and go to school unaccompanied. On this question, there were divergent viewpoints among the participants with children (this topic was not raised during the walk with the women without children). Half

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of them did not feel comfortable with the idea of sending their kids to school on their own. The main issue is road-safety. "There are no school routes that would take them safely to their school because they will always have to cross Gran Via". There is also the perception that the many patterns and colours of the design of the civic axes can be confusing for children (as well as for adults). The other half, however, whose children attend a school located within the superblock, had no problem with letting their children walk to school, and "not even in winter when it gets dark early".

Our conversations also focused on participants' perceptions of safety in relation to cycling. The 'shared streets' strategy implemented along the superblocks' inner roads was generally not well regarded and perceived as dangerous. "There is no way I'd let my twelve-year-old daughter ride her bike on the inner streets" – These streets are supposed to be shared by private vehicles, public transport, motorcycles, and bicycles. As for the pacified green axes, the participants who have children expressed that biking with the little ones along Borrell Street "is not as safe as public officials claim". Road safety is again their main concern, "drivers do not respect speed limits", they argue. Several women in the group said the separate bike lanes built in some inner roads and along the perimeter of the superblock feel safer but do not go far enough *(Figure 18)*. "There's no chance I'll go on bike with my kids on those bike lanes", a participant claimed and explained that she often rides on the footpath when accompanied by her children. Reflecting on the characteristics of the bike lanes, the group agreed that exclusive, raised, and separated bike lanes would be the best option (Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2020).

FIGURE 18 SHOWS A SEPARATED BIKE LANE IN ONE OF THE MAIN ARTERIES OF THE SUPERBLOCK (SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2020).

Inevitably, during each of the walks, the conversation about gender violence and street harassment came up. As a first reaction, most participants said they did not feel unsafe in the neighbourhood. Statistics show that women tend to choose where to live partly based on environmental qualities of the neighbourhood and the opportunities to generate community ties and, as such, they often regard their neighbourhood more positively than men (Observatori IQ et al., 2019). All the women consider that Sant Antoni is a vital area both at day and during the night, as "it has a lot of nightlife". As explained below, the presence of nightlife is a double-edged sword: while it brings vitality, it is also associated with loud noises and drunk and uncivilised people, which contribute to perceptions of fear. As the group conversations went

on, we realised that most of us have developed strategies to handle unwanted situations in public space. "I feel safe because I have the cat key-ring that I can use for self-defence", one of the women exclaimed. We asked her to show it to us *(Figure 19)*.

FIGURE 19 SHOWS THE HAND OF ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS AND HER KEY RING, WHICH SERVES AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SELF-DEFENCE (SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2020).

The qualities of public spaces contribute to low perceptions of safety. The public space in Sant Antoni is used differently during days and nights, "this is a touristic area where many come to drink and party". Crowds of drunk people walking around and being loud not only generate tensions with neighbours, but also impacts on women's perceptions of safety, a participant argues. Another connects touristic gentrification with safety issues, "it is important that the neighbours don't leave the neighbourhood because it gives security, you know that if you shout someone will come out on the balcony". While regarding illumination, one of women said the streets around Sant Antoni are usually well lit, but every now and then lamp posts get covered by tree branches and this limits the sidewalk lighting. Another important aspect the

participants pointed out is that Entença and Sepúlveda streets have no night-time activity. The commercial nature of these streets means that people have no reason to go there at certain hours. The resulting lack of 'eyes upon the street' contributes to the participants' perceptions of fear.

The maintenance of public spaces also contributes to perceptions of safety. Within the superblock, a few participants consider that the area is well looked after. The two women who were involved in the superblocks processes attribute this to the engagement of neighbours in the implementation of the project. "I think it was successful in creating a sense of ownership among locals, if plants are destroyed, very soon you will have someone replacing them", one of them commented.

Others in the group, however, were more critical about the cleanliness of public spaces. They argue there is often litter on the benches and tables, and that "it is generally men who use public spaces and walk away without tidying up". We dwelled on this comment and the idea that masculine identities tend to appropriate – and even monopolize – public space. Many saw these behaviours, the bodily *hexis* of masculinised identities, as being rooted in socially constructed gendered expectations which say men shall feel comfortable in public space (i.e., act like they are in their own living rooms and expect someone to clean after them) while women continue to experience public space as guests (hence, making sure things are left tidied up). At the same time, another crucial issue from a feminist perspective is that the groups of men dominating public space were often people from a migrant background who were benefitting from the urban elements incorporated in public space, and socialising without having to consume *(Figure 20)*.

FIGURE 20 SHOWS TWO MEN PLAYING CHESS AND OTHERS HANGING OUT IN THE EXTENDED SIDEWALK OF BORRELL STREET (SOURCE: THE AUTHOR, 2021).

Polluted and unsafe urban spaces degrade people's wellbeing. Those who move more often on foot and by public transport[23] are more exposed to the harmful health effects of pollution. Moreover, a person's autonomy is dependent on whether feminine (or feminised) bodies can safely use and move around the public space. The superblock improved the conditions for sustainable mobility, tackling some key health, environmental, and road safety problems. Yet the participants consider there is still much to do in terms of road and cycling safety from a gendered point of view, as well as for women's perceptions of fear at night. The diagnosis

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[23] While the statistics and the findings of this work tell us that women generally move in these ways, we must also consider other social groups such as migrants.

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reveals that it is important for the participants' wellbeing, as well as their mental and physical health, to have comfortable and quality public spaces where they can create community, socialise, rest, exercise, cool down, or just move around freely and safely at all times of the day.

PUBLIC SPACES THAT ENSURE PARTICIPATORY PARITY

Iris M. Young (1997) and Nancy Fraser (2007), as well as the work of the members of the Col·lectiu Punt 6 tell us that to ensure participatory parity we must pay attention to questions of redistribution, on the one hand, which entails the issues raised on the previous subsections in relation to guaranteeing adequate conditions for women to appropriate public space. And on the other hand, participatory parity also requires us to actively work to ensure the recognition and participation of intersectional voices in urban planning and decision-making.

Throughout our route we kept an eye out for inclusive nomenclature. The streets of the superblocks were named after places (i.e., Tamarit Street) or after men who are important in Catalan history (i.e., Commander Borrell). Most of the public spaces named after women who have contributed to the collective social and cultural heritage were public squares and playgrounds (i.e., singer songwriter Càndida Pérez i Martínez; or activist María Manonelles) – and, according to the participants who participated in the superblocks' implementation process, there are plans to name more public squares after important women. Naming public spaces after characters of Catalan or Spanish heritage – be they male or female – boosts a specific understanding history (typically Eurocentric, nationalist, racist, classist, and heteronormative). This inevitably excludes other histories and herstories which also contribute to the identity of the neighbourhood but are deemed unimportant. For example, currently, the largest immigrant populations in Sant Antoni are of Italian, Chinese, and Filipino origin (Oficina Municipal de Dades, 2019) and the LGTBIQ+ community is also very strong. Moreover, while local governments' efforts to create a more equitable nomenclature are welcomed, I cannot avoid noticing a bias in these actions – Perhaps an unconscious bias, but no less problematic. The fact that playgrounds are named after women, and male names represent the streets, echoes private-public dynamics, and fossilises gendered roles and expectations – Especially considering the playgrounds are located inside the reclaimed blocks' inner courtyards.

Those who were actively engaged in the superblock implementation process consider "it was an intense process that created a sense of ownership among those who participated", but they also recognize there were no specific actions taken to include a women or feminised perspectives in the sessions. In fact, both of them were frustrated because the superblock

technical staff disregarded their concerns about the impacts of noise and air the pacification of the area just outside Ferran Sunyer school. "Some members of the steering group proposed specific changes offering a solution to avoid cars driving past the school, but somehow this idea got lost along the way". This is a clear example of consensus-based decision-making invisibilising the plurality of voices.

Issues of accessibility were raised when talking about participation in urban interventions more generally. Some of the women in the group declared that they were not sure how to participate in the transformation of their neighbourhood. "Barcelona City Council's online participation platform *decidim* is not very accessible and is sometimes confusing", someone else argued. A participant who has engaged with *decidim* said that proposing a project can be very taxing, "it needs effort and time to prepare a proposal which will then be, at best, partly considered". Most of the participants commented that participation requires time, and given the fact that women tend to carry out most of the care and reproductive activities, *time* is not something they have.

The perceived lack of attention to unequal power dynamics based on gender – and race – in the organisation of the participation sessions was substantiated during my conversations with Superblocks Planner 2 and Key Informant 1. Explaining the challenges faced by the superblocks planning team after the controversial and top-down implementation of the first superblock in the Poblenou neighbourhood, Superblocks Planner 2 admitted that for the Sant Antoni project "(…) we wanted to take a very classic approach, so we knew exactly what we were doing. And including the gender issue in participation, for me, would've been out of my comfort zone". Superblocks Planner 2 also explained that "when the project is implemented in a rush (…) there are no obligations to focus on gender issues and any efforts to include it would depend on the awareness and commitment of the technician. It is open to interpretation". Not surprisingly, Key Informant 1 considered that the superblocks participation process was "quite mainstream".

In line with the work of Iris M. Young and Nancy Fraser, to ensure a plurality of voices it is essential that a communicative democracy model and an intersectional gender perspective guide all citizen engagement processes and urban interventions. The approach and methodologies behind the diagnosis carried out in this research show that there are other forms knowledge production, based on collaborative work and egalitarian dialogue, which work towards participatory parity. The challenge, according to Key Informant 1, is to overcome the "many difficulties at the technical level such as a lack of availability of appropriate tools and resources, and a lack of training of technical staff on the gender issue from an intersectional

perspective". And based on the abovementioned comments by Superblocks Planner 2, we could say that this argument is not far from the truth.

4.2. Recommendations

In the co-creation workshop, the participants identified both problematic and positive aspects by commenting on sticky notes and placing them on a map of the Sant Antoni superblock *(Figure 21).* The reader will find the high-resolution maps with the notes in *Annex* 3. Hereby, I will outline only some proposals made to illustrate the kind of valuable knowledge produced in collective:

o   In relation to road safety: On Ronda San Pau "A dangerous intersection. Maybe, create separate zones." Also, "cars go past too fast" at the top of the Borrell Street civic axes. Suggestions included to "initiate a new informative campaign on road education, there was one before, but it was not enough"; to "add signs and other elements to control the vehicle speed, not just a conscientization campaign"; and to "close [Borrel] street on weekends".

o   In relation to elements that contribute to perceptions of fear: A note beside the Sant Antoni market said, "some of these corners are avoided at night". The participants suggest, among other things, better illumination and "more cleanliness in the streets adjacent to the superblock."

o   To support coexistence and maintenance of public spaces: A participant suggested to "increase the presence of civic agents. In the afternoon, when there are more people around, they are not so easily seen".

o   For the existence of everyday infrastructure: It is necessary to "add water fountains and water elements around the superblock". Other suggestions included to "create public toilets and protected spaces for changing babies and breastfeeding".
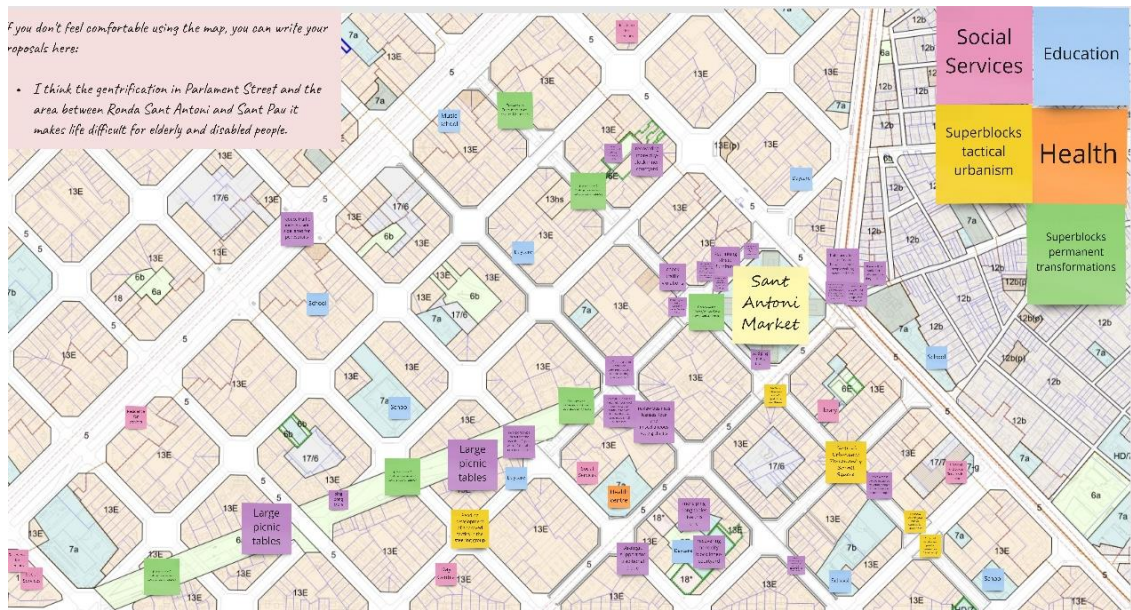
FIGURE 21 SHOWS ONE OF THE MAPS USED IN THE CO-CREATION WORKSHOP. THE COLOUR CODING: GREEN MARKS SUPERBLOCKS PERMANENT TRANSFORMATIONS, YELLOW IS FOR TACTICAL URBANISM INTERVENTIONS, ORANGE SHOWS THE PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRE, PINK FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, AND BLUE IS FOR EDUCATION AND DAY CARE INSTITUTIONS. THE SUGGESTIONS MADE BY THE PARTICIPANTS ARE IN PURPLE.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

From the exercise of envisioning feminist superblocks, I identified three main critiques that provide a deeper understanding of how the Sant Antoni Superblock supports the everyday lives of local women. These are, first, regarding the different understandings of superblocks; second, questions of access; and third, about the potential of the urban strategy to instigate systemic change. These discussion points are not only important for Superblocks Models, but also other urban strategies aimed at creating sustainable and just urban spaces.

A first critique revolves around the implications of different understanding of superblocks as *functional* or *social*. On the one hand, the technical definition of superblocks describes them as functional changes: modifications in street directions and removal of parking lots to liberate public space (Rueda, 2018, p. 142). Based on my conversations with planners and key stakeholders, I found that purely functional understandings are often employed to avoid dealing with social implications. When I questioned the social potential of superblocks, referring to some of the inequalities mentioned in Chapter 4, the response was that other kinds of urban policies should be designed to address them.

A concerning duality emerges when we consider that superblocks are also – and with good reason – being presented as the BCC's main urban strategy. The BCC website refers to the 'social superblock' as follows, "One of the main goals of the superblock programme is to improve the indicators associated with the gender perspective in public space. Some examples of this include more trees and more pedestrian space, less traffic and less noise and air pollution" (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2019b). Indeed, the collective diagnosis confirms, on many levels, what this excerpt claims. The quality-of-life improvements derive from the not-too-controversial changes which are rightly considered of public relevance (trees, clean air, quiet spaces). But, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, there remains much to transform if we look at superblocks from a feminist perspective.

Compartmentalised planning approaches to planning are instrumental in atomising urban life. Superblocks are inherently social but, as is often the case, some aspects seem to be considered more important than others. Key matters commonly not regarded as of general interest, but central to addressing the 'social' problem of gender equity, include the creation of gender violence-free spaces, areas for breastfeeding, or the 'dirty' issue of public toilets (Greed, 2019). This neglect, according to a study carried out by Helen Cole, Melisa García Lamarca, James

Connolly, and Isabelle Anguelovski reflects a "reverse proportionate universalism" (2017, p. 1120) – proportionate universalism occurring when the benefits are universally felt and *concentrated on the most vulnerable* (Cole et al., 2017, p. 1120). Understanding that superblocks as social interventions require urban planning to pay attention to social conflict and inequalities and incorporate social life in all its diversity and complexity. To be truly transformational from an intersectional gender perspective, urban projects should be understood holistically and planned accordingly (Hayden, 1980).

This takes us to the second critique, which focuses on access. In my fieldwork, issues of touristification and gentrification appeared implicitly and explicitly *(Annex 4).* Gentrification processes and real estate speculation have been a central problem for residents of Sant Antoni for years (Fem Sant Antoni, 2021). Based on the observations, interviews, and the collective diagnosis, a crucial question that emerged was: Whose livelihoods is the superblocks model aiming to improve? Displacement processes, the disruption of community ties, and the added anxieties caused by neighbourhood gentrification can result in vulnerable groups not benefiting from urban interventions (Cole et al., 2017). To address these local concerns, it is vital that urban transformations are combined with strategies to avoid real estate speculation and the exclusion of vulnerable social groups. As noted by the participants, caring urban projects should include measures to prevent disruptions to the social fabric, in terms of community bonding and mutual aid. This is how we nurture the life-sustaining web Tronto and Fisher talk about (2016). There have been parallel efforts by the BCC to counterbalance these forces and understanding the real impact of such measures is an important area of future research.

Furthermore, low levels of female participation and representation of feminine experiences in the implementation process (as noted by Superblocks Planner 2) and a lack of sensitivity to gender in the design of a consensus-based participatory sessions (as recognised by Superblocks Planner 2 and perceived by the participants in the steering group) work against women and feminised groups' participatory parity (Fraser, 2007). Considering that the Superblock Model, as every urban intervention, is developed, studied, advocated, proposed, implemented, and analysed by *people*, those involved in such interventions must have adequate levels gender knowledge and awareness (Cornwall, 2003; Listerborn, 2007; O'Hagan, 2020). At the same time, it is important to note that a central challenge to incorporating a feminist perspective in urban interventions and policy making, is that local governments exist in a neoliberal economic structure where there never seems to be enough time, money, or other vital resources. My response to this, based on my research and on the work of thinkers and practitioners included

in this text, is that to achieve social justice we must transition to a paradigm that embraces ecofeminist principles, which would permit us, as a society, to slow down and prioritise the elements that place the sustainability of life at the centre (Herrero, 2011; Pérez Orozco, 2019).

The final reflection, therefore, concerns the need to shift towards more caring urban planning paradigms. The collective diagnosis found that the superblocks strategy is falling short in terms of promoting systemic change. Key inequalities based on race, gender, and socioeconomic status persist because they were inconsistently prioritised throughout the planning process. To guarantee participatory parity of women and non-hegemonic groups urban planning must include a reflection on neoliberal structures, patriarchal structures, and other oppressive power relations (Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2019; Fenster, 2005; Hayden, 1980; Muxí, 2007). And this means a commitment to engage intersecting voices (Young, 1997) and other ways of knowing (Haraway, 1988).

The situated standpoints discussed in Chapter 4 call the attention to a complex problem that has deep roots in the culture and value system underpinning our societies. It is not enough to nominally adopt feminist-friendly concepts in urban policies or incorporate women into urban participatory sessions if they do not have an independence of voice (achieved through redistributive measures) and their viewpoints are not going to be valued due to a lack of equal respect and opportunities for social esteem (achieved through measures of recognition) (Fraser, 2007, p. 27). Transforming the urban planning paradigm involves, on the one hand, measures that socialise the responsibility over care work to ensure the material circumstances are adequate for women and non-hegemonic groups to participate in the production of their city and, on the other, deinstitutionalising patterns that privilege masculine qualities and encourage those which foster participatory parity in terms of gender and other axis of difference (Fraser, 2016, p. 29). Taking these affirmative actions and not atomising urban policies are vital to produce urban spaces that respond to the needs and desires of a plurality of people and positively interact with the natural ecosystems that surround them.

INSPIRING EXAMPLES OF FEMINIST URBANISM

THE REDEVELOPMENT OF MERIDIANA AVENUE FROM AN INTERSECTIONAL GENDER PERSPECTIVE

The transformation of the environments along the Meridiana Avenue aimed to create "friendly, comfortable, and humanised public spaces" for all (Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2017). The process involved street activities and information sessions; as well as the creation of working groups to represent the diversity of everyday lives. There were different groups

for neighbours, women, children and adolescents, young people, the elderly, people with functional diversity, and the commercial sector. The incorporation of the gender perspective throughout the participatory process brought to the fore the plurality of voices. The participation of women – people who self-identify as women accounted for more than half of the participants – allowed the process to focus on the four spheres of daily life, valuing care.

Some concrete proposals for neighbourhood improvement included:

o   In relation to accessibility in parks: to incorporate accessible furniture, improve navigation, eliminate physical barriers.
o   When carrying out public works: to consider the health effect as well as people with functional diversity; to reduce noise.
o   Regarding bicycle lanes: to create wide lanes to allow for cargo bikes, incorporate traffic lights for bikes, improve visibility, ensure network continuity, limit the speed of bicycles.
o   Relating to pedestrian networks: to ensure pedestrian priority at the intersections; to design the networks with materials suitable for the diversity of bodies and abilities; to remove motorbikes from the roads and restrict wheeled on footpaths; to widen footpaths.
o   Regarding safety: women identified spaces that generate perceptions of unsafety and to drew up safe routes.
o   In relation to participation: to promote active participation to support and value the associative life in the neighbourhood.

INSIGHTS FROM VIENNA: INSTITUTIONALISING GENDER-SENSITIVITY

Vienna is a city with over thirty years' experience in gender sensitive urban planning. In 1998, the *Coordination Office for Planning and Construction Geared to the Requirement of Daily Life and the Specific Needs of Women,* headed by Eva Kail, was established as part of the City of Vienna's Executive Group for Construction and Technology. The creation of such a department at high administrative level was essential to develop a planning culture aware of gender equity issues (Kail, n/d). Gender-sensitive planning, therefore, guided urban interventions in the city, from housing to the design of public parks, to planning for everyday mobility. These urban interventions were successful in responding to the needs of women because they ensured their diverse voices and experiences were incorporated in the process. The *Gender Mainstreaming Pilot District Mariahilf (Kail et al., 2007)* is considered a pioneering example of gender planning (Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2019). The positive results of the interventions and the presence of gender-aware professionals in the different urban planning departments gave visibility to this perspective (Kail, n/d). Collaboration and knowledge-sharing between the local government's departments and with outside actors was central to attract attention to and deepen understandings of gender-sensitive methods and criteria. And, in times of budget cuts, this perspective helped planners organise planning priorities in a fair way (Kail, n/d).

There are no quick answers to the question of *how the Sant Antoni Superblock supports the everyday lives of local women.* Overall, the analysed superblock is an example of feminist urbanism in the fact that it aims to transform important socioecological inequalities which are reflected in the urban environment (Muxí, 2007; Rueda, 2018). Dolores Hayden would agree that the overall improvement of everyday experiences in terms of air and noise pollution, prioritisation of pedestrian and bike networks, and the creation of green areas and public spaces where locals from different walks of life can stay, socialise, take the sun and cool down, support the everyday lives of women and non-hegemonic groups and contribute, in part, to her vision of a 'non-sexist city'.

However, crucial questions emerge when working from a feminist perspective which ought to be considered if the aim is to concentrate benefits on the most vulnerable. The Superblocks Model remains a compartmentalised planning approach, hence, it fails to holistically incorporate feminist social justice issues into the urban processes and interventions – contrary to the positive examples of feminist urbanism described above. The urban strategy's methodology to include a plurality of voices was not reflexive enough to ensure participatory parity for women and non-hegemonic groups in the production and appropriation of the urban space (Fraser, 2007; Young, 1997). And, lastly, while the overall strategy certainly sets the city on a path towards social and ecological sustainability, it is not yet transformative.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to explore *the potential of feminist methodologies in shaping cities that place sustainability of life at the centre* and explain why this is so important. Given what we have learned, we can say that feminist methodologies in urban decision-making make visible the plurality of voices. This, in turn, leads to greater participatory parity and to socially and ecologically just ways of living in this world.

Feminist methodologies, play a key role in making visible the plurality of voices because they value situated forms of thinking and knowing (Hayden, 1980) and create safe environments for marginal voices to engage in reflexive participation, collaborative work, and egalitarian dialogue (Frisby et al., 2009; Young, 1997). The collective diagnosis offers a practical example of how feminist methodologies permit a deeper understanding of people's everyday lives and highlight their unique gendered experiences in relation to issues of care, access, safety, health, appropriation of the urban space, and participation in urban decision-making. Iris M. Young's model of communicative democracy tells us a plurality of voices is not a problem to be overcome through consensus, but rather a valuable resource and, indeed, the collective diagnosis was in itself a process of *conscientization* (Freire in Given, 2008, p. 602). The participants conveyed they felt comfortable to participate, express themselves through words as well as pictures, disagree, learn from each other, and reflect on sensitive issues such as gender violence.

This study also demonstrates that incorporating feminist methodologies 'from below' in urban decision-making is a mechanism that works towards participatory parity. This occurred in, at least, two ways. First, the feminist perspective that underpinned the collective diagnosis ensured the material circumstances for the participants to engage in the different activities. For example, through accommodating the fieldwork times to the busy schedules of the participants or designing different kinds of activities (based on dialogue, drawing, working on a map) so everyone had their chance to have a say.

Second, as Chapter 4 shows, these perspective and methodologies were vital in foregrounding a feminist perspective on key social justice aspects. For example, in the collective diagnosis we discussed issues related to the role of public spaces in supporting practices of solidarity and mutual aid, helping people maintain and nurture relationships, as well as facilitating mobility for different bodies. The activities of the collective diagnosis made visible that women's

everyday lives take place in the public realm and that care work represents a significant part of their daily activities. Hence, the need to understand care as a social responsibility emerged as a sensible response. The collective diagnosis not only encouraged us to imagine ways in which the built environment can support care and peoples' safety and autonomy, but also to envision urban spaces where different individuals and social groups can play, exercise, learn, and feel free.

A socially and ecologically just world is one where the wellbeing of people and nature are prioritised, *care* is valued, and life is understood in its relational sense. Urban environments that support this world(view) guarantee the gendered right to the city. As highlighted in Chapter 5, incorporating feminist perspective and methodologies in planning processes ensures participatory parity because it involves actions to redistribute the responsibility over care work and (re)value the plurality of voices, stories, and desires. Feminist methodologies 'from below' bring diverse people together to critically reflect upon and explore their relationship with their immediate environment and make concrete proposals and recommendations (Ortiz Escalante & Gutiérrez Valdivia, 2015). Situated and collectively produced information equips planners to carefully design, implement and evaluate urban policies and interventions that respond to the context, are flexible, and incorporate diverse views. Feminist urbanism, therefore, creates the conditions for reformulating oppressive structures and social relations and cultivating lives worth living through caring urban paradigms – where cities allow us to care for ourselves, others, and the planet.

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Annex Section

Annex 1. Everyday Network Mind Maps
Below, there are the six mind maps made by the participants.

Me traslado en metro o tren

Me siento insegura

Me traslado en bici

Actividades que realizo sola

Otras actividades sociales

Trabajo de los sábados (salidas de ocio y tiempo libre)

Mi casa (uno de mis lugares de trabajo)
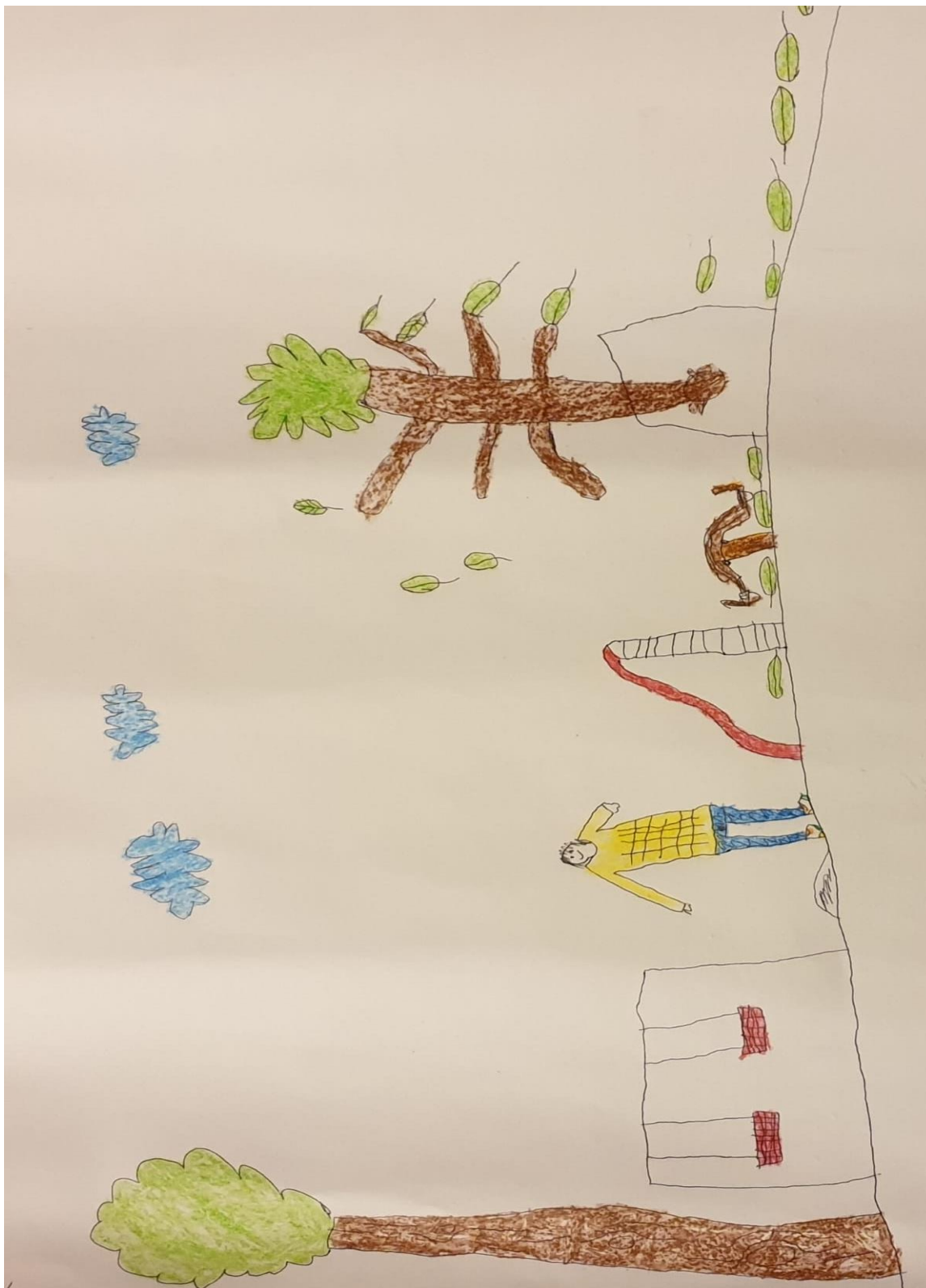
Por lo general, realizo estas salidas en distintos lugares de Barcelona

Playa / Montjüic

Sant Antoni

Sant Antoni

Caminatas o en bici

Hacer la compra

Salir a tomar algo (bar)

Actividades que realizo con mi pareja
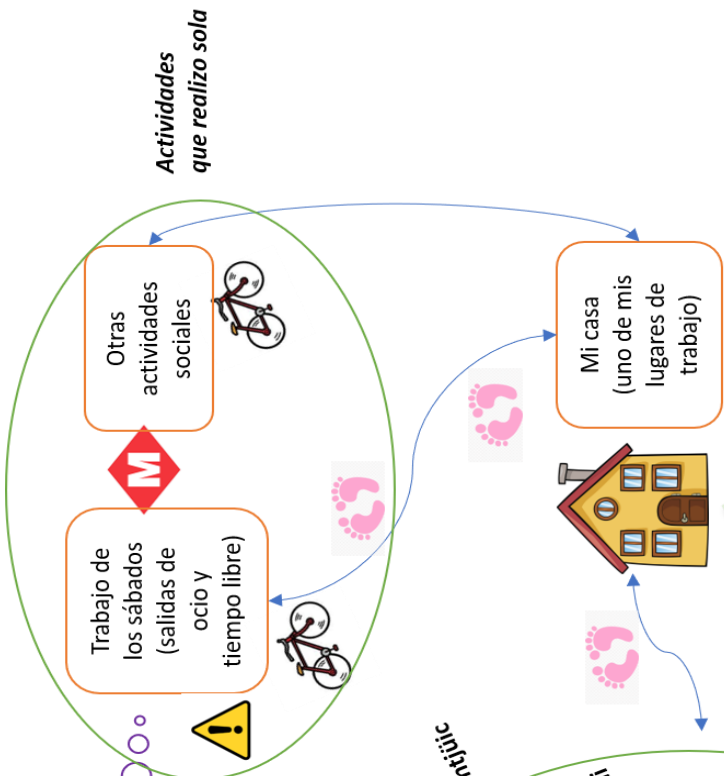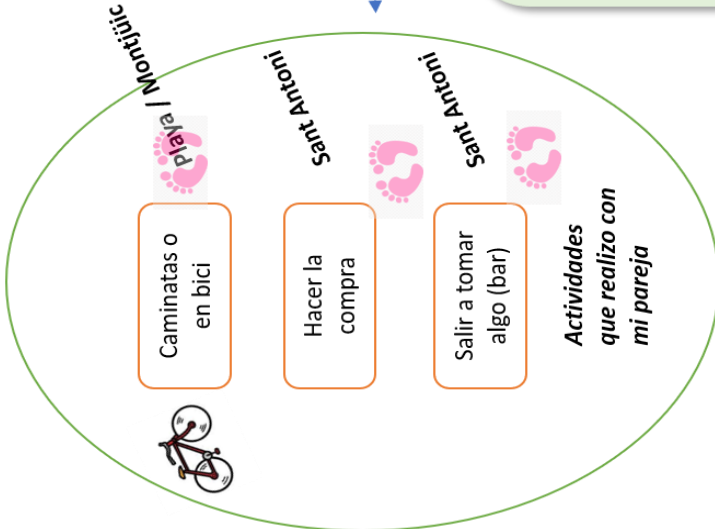
Por lo general, camino o uso la bici para trasladarme, sin embargo, los días sábado suelo tomar el metro o tren para ir a lugares de Barcelona más lejanos. Suelo caminar por Poble Sec, el Montjüic, me gusta mucho el Raval. Cuando voy en bici para pasear suelo llegar hasta Mongat yendo por la costa. Suelo reunirme con vecin@s en la calle donde vivo para tomar algo y hablar, es bastante frecuente.

Voy a trabajar a la Sagrada Fam en bici cada mañana

20'

Voy a la uni en bici

Universitat (Naval)

10'

Hago la compra de pan en Sensun? la Sant Antoni

Vuelvo andando con mi pareja

Andamos 5'

Camino en atarear la Bua

La Drassa del Bose c/Hansto

compra por el camino

Montjuïc

voy a correr cada mañana 45' por la buganta la mente

45'

7.00h

Hogar

30'

800h

Vamos andando a misa a bajar los trastos

10'

Socialize con uno amigo

c/Marquesa del ... Sagrada

5'

A PROP DEL BARRI (RAVAL, POBLE SEC, SANTS)

COMPRAR
LLIBRERIES
CC
COS
BOQUERÍA

RESTAURANTES, SOLA O SOCIALIZANDO
LA RAPOSA
TERRA D'ESCUDELLA
EL NIU
...

SOCIALITZAR
CASA PARES
CASA IRIS
CONCERTS
PLAÇA MACBA
MUSEUS

ALTRES
CORRER MONTJUIC

ANDANDO 15'

ANDANDO 15MIN
BICI 10 MIN

ANDANDO 15MIN
BICI 10 MIN

CORRIENDO 50MIN

Type something

CASA (HABITAR, TRABAJO, SOCIAL...)

METRO 25MIN
BICI 30 MIN

METRO 25MIN
BICI 30 MIN

FGC 35MIN
FGC
60MIN

METRO 20MIN
BICI 25 MIN

FEINA
VISITA CLIENTS

SOCIALITZAR
CASA LAURA
CASA MARC
CASA QUIM
CASA PARES 2

SOCIALITZAR
CONCERTS
EVENTOS A ALTRES
BARRIS

"LLUNY" DEL BARRI (a partir de 25' en transport públic/bici)

ANDANDO, MENOS DE 5 MIN

ALTRES
CAP MANSO
PELUS
BIBLIO

ANDANDO, MENOS DE 5 MIN

SOCIALITZAR
CASA ANNA

ANDANDO, MENOS DE 5 MIN

AL BARRI

COMPRAR
BONPREU
MERCAT
LLIBRERIES
SÚPER DEL MÓN
BONASTRE
FERRETERIA
FLORISTERÍA
HUMANA
KITSCH
CLAREL
KIWOKO
...

ANDANDO, MENOS DE 5 MIN

RESTAURANTES, SOLA O SOCIALIZANDO
RAFEL
NOSTÀLGIC
VILARÓ
PIZZA D'AUTORE
DESAYUNERÍA
MACROBIÒTICO
ASIÀTICO
...

miro

90

Trabajo
Biblioteca
Deporte
Playa
Amigos
Actividades

Amigos
Voluntariado
Lugares nuevos
Playa
Actividades

Mis desplazamientos a pié y en metro.
Fabiana

terapia

Realizo este trayecto a pie, 15 minutos

Bares/ cafe, parques

Hago estos recorridos a pie aprox. 20 minutos depende del lugar donde vaya

Casa

Con amigos, solemos quedar en bares o parques para pasear los perritos, muchos vienen en transporte publico , tardan unos 30 o 40 mins.

Estudios

Voy sola a estudiar, uso transporte publico, cuando quiero ir mas de prisa voy en bicicleta. en transporte tardo 30 minutos , en bicicleta 20.

Actividades socio culturales

Suelen ser fuera del barrio, cine o teatro. Puntualmente puedo ir a alguna actividad o muestra teatral o exposición que se realice en el barrio en algún centro cívico o sala

Compras y gestiones/bacnco

Voy caminando, realizo estas tareas sola suele ser por las mañanas, recorro diferentes tiendas y mercados. Puedo llegar a tardar mas de dos horas

Trabajo

Hago este trayecto en bicicleta, no tardo mas de 15 minutos, dependiendo del trafico, no hay carril bici en todas las calles que cruzo

Lugares que frecuento:
Restaurante benzina ,Passatge de Pere Calders, 6
Bazar, tamarit esq. villaroel
Colmado queviures, calle tamarit esq. mistral
Las vermudas , Carrer de Calàbria, 39
Tambien paso por el mercat a veces cuando compro alimentos.

Annex 2. Reconnaissance Walks routes

Below, there are the routes designed for the walks.
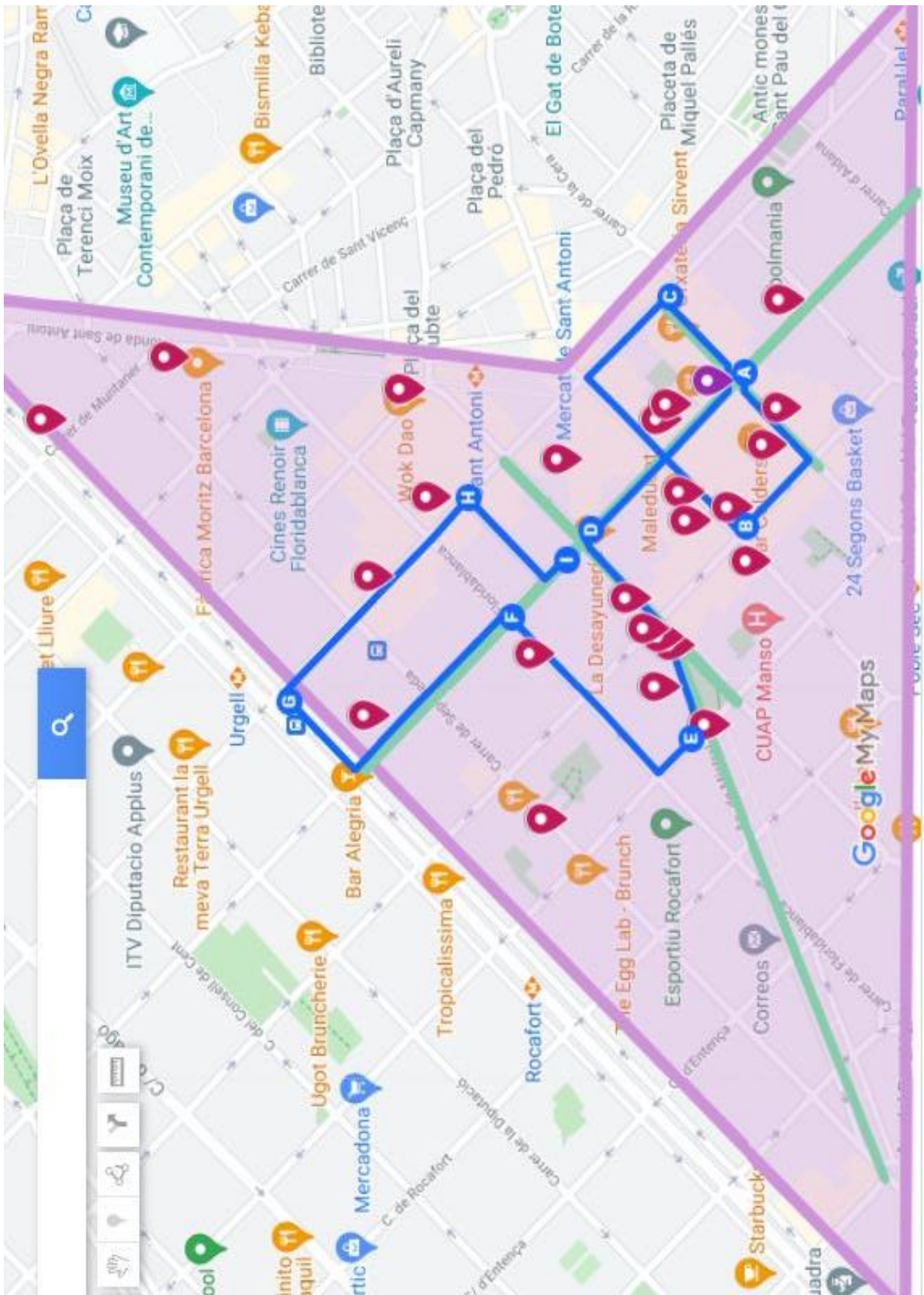
ANNEX 3. CO-CREATION WORKSHOP

Below are the murals developed during the co-creation workshop. The first image includes some gender statistics, images, and questions about the quality of public space, to prompt the imagination of the participants. The next two images, show the superblock maps where the participants developed the concrete proposals. The last two images include the 'imaginaries exercise' whereby the participants envisioned a feminist superblock. Please, refer to *Annex 4* for a reflection on this last activity.

3 CONCRETE PROPOSALS: DEC. 8

Education

Health

Social Services

Superblocks tactical urbanism

Superblocks permanent transformations

Sant Antoni Market

Concrete Proposals: Dec. 9

If you don't feel comfortable using the map, you can write your proposals here:

- I think the gentrification in Parlament Street and the area between Ronda Sant Antoni and Sant Pau it makes life difficult for elderly and disabled people.

Education

Health

Social Services

Superblocks tactical urbanism

Superblocks permanent transformations

Sant Antoni Market

Large picnic tables

Large picnic tables

FEMINIST SUPERBLOCKS CRITERIA: DEC. 9

Superblocks official criteria

Public Space

Mobility

Public Health

Environment

Understood not as moving from one point to another, but as a way of inhabiting the streets (Omplim de vida els carrers).

Feminist Superblocks understand mobility as

·**Everyday and Caring.** Existence of functionally useful, multimodal, and multi-scalar journeys, and support for care activities - both unpaid as well as domestic workers.

· **Accessible and Diverse.** Mobility that responds to the diversity of needs, rhythms, bodies, health conditions and economic status.

· **Safe and Unconstrained** from gender violence or other hate crimes (racism, LGBTQphobia, ableism). Pays attention to perceptions of fear and security. Also focused on road safety, and agency of children, older people, and people with functional, sensory, and cognitive diversity.

· **Nocturnal and Festive.** Mobility that makes possible the development of productive, reproductive, care and leisure activities at night, and on weekends or holidays.

· **Equitable and Participatory.** The recruitment and promotion of women in the mobility and transport sectors. Increasing women's active participation in mobility policies.

signalisation   informal vigilance   infrastructure   visibility   vitality

... LOOK AFTER YOU?

Lighting, open spaces

Do not generate "hidden" spots (high walls that do not allow you to see).

Road-safety training

Vigilance in public space

physical markers to slow the speed down

confinement and lack of movement generated insecurity in the streets.

Safety for pedestrians: poorly lit areas, etc. Even in the north which is generally secure at night.

[although everything goes through a social and educational change].

More vigilance at nights

safe zones at night

places where you can sit quietly and safely.

We also don't measure regarding the care in the public system. All of the women do not have an ambulance or hospital service for each crisis.

Presence of women in mobility plans

Gender training for personnel working in planning institutions

more cultural activities for everyone in the neighborhood. There is a lack of theaters, concert halls, cinemas...

intersectional city

Pedestrianize the streets, so that a person can be reading and there is no car noise.

... TAKE CARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT?

Parks where to meet and stroll

to enhance civic education and respect for urban furniture and gardens

restrictions on traffic within the superblocks, but also cars out of the tunel.

Bicycle use, improve bicycle lanes

Promoting the environment, not only means road pollution, streets further away from the superblock, but also reducing the population and making private transport determine positive. This way, there will be less air pollution.

humanizar las calles

Dogs!

more outside, permeable areas, trees

Green Areas

+ green areas and less concrete

pedestrianize streets

do not let cars enter the superblock on weekends

road awareness and public transport use campaigns

... ALLOW YOU TO SELF-CARE?

Meeting places

Public toilets and fountains

Spaces for everyone

Cultural spaces and activities

promoting local commerce, local production and km 0

something already happens, it is necessary to take care of our spaces and our culture.

That there are not so many terraces of bars, because there are not so many in the neighborhood and that attracts the tourists.

+ spaces for sports

The fact that I miss the space and also the sea and also the heat in the sun, already takes care of me.

pollution-free public spaces

Round benches, such as those on the Rambla del Raval, for intimate gatherings.

HOW TO MAKE THE SUPERBLOCK...

... ALLOW YOU TO TAKE CARE OF OTHERS?

close streets to make playful activities for everyone.

Meeting spaces for neighborhood movements, generating an ORGANIZED neighborhood.

People in the informal solidarity or form, the result is the yellow zone.

Areas accessible to people with functional diversity

Spaces for recreational activities for seniors

not to allow the people of the neighborhood to leave

Encourage support networks, especially for the elderly.

Areas for children, where cars do not pass close by.

spaces scattered throughout the superblock, not concentrated in a center or a single point.

That there are not so many terraces

Cut traffic so that children can play and the elderly can walk safely.

Creation of nurturing spaces

Creation of alternative spaces for the elderly

not only public, but also more variety.

everything revolves around the civic centers. It would be nice to have more options.

Superblocks official criteria

Public Space

Mobility _____

Public Health

Environment

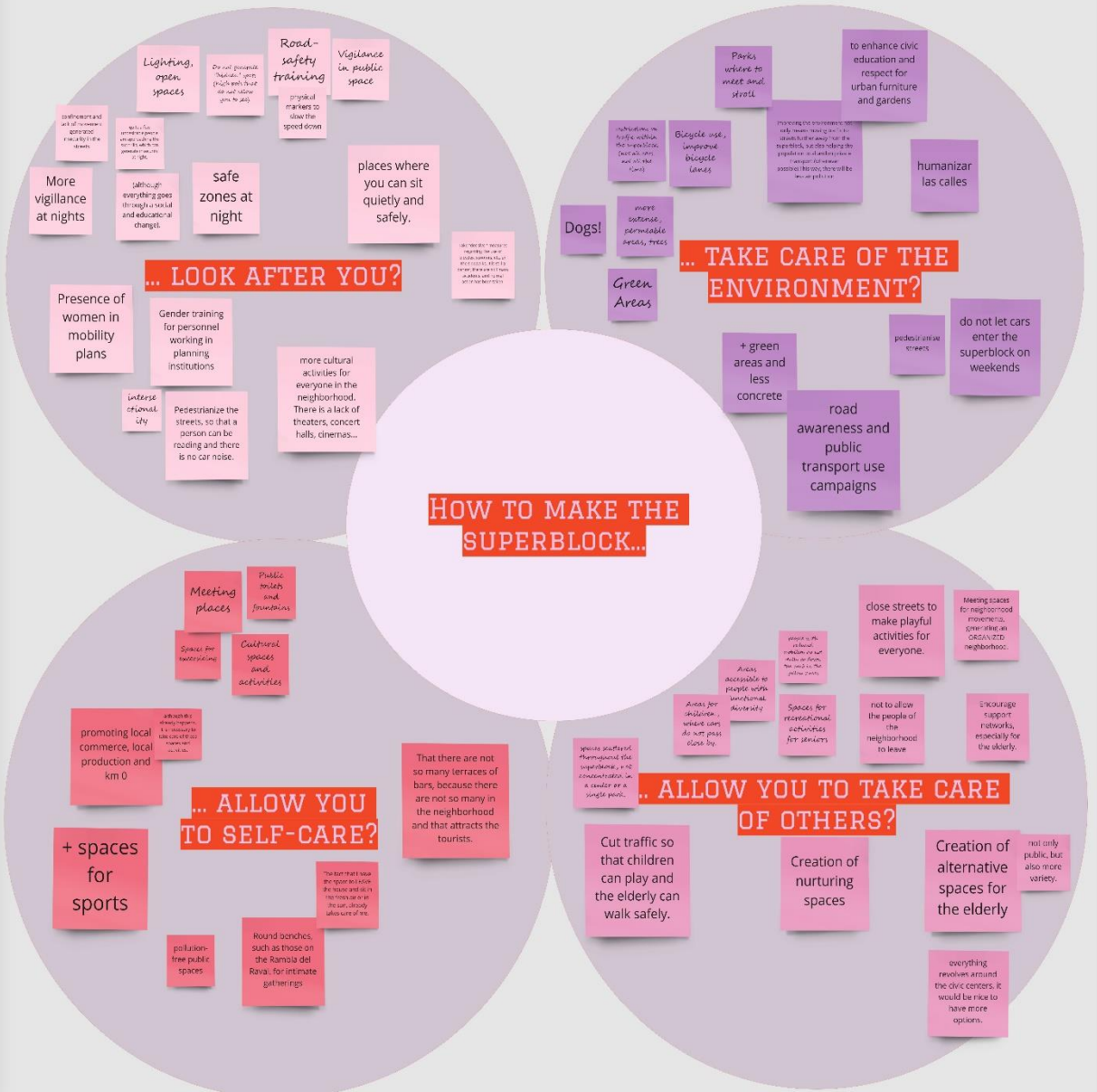Understood not as moving from one point to another, but as a way of inhabiting the streets (Omplim de vida els carrers).

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· **Equitable and Participatory.** The recruitment and promotion of women in the mobility and transport sectors. Increasing women's active participation in mobility policies.

signalisation   informal vigilance   infrastructure   visibility   vitality

HOW TO MAKE THE SUPERBLOCK...

... LOOK AFTER YOU?

'purple stations' for gender violence support

billboards against male violence

Urban labs for knowledge exchange

Points of dissemination of information and resources available and easy to access. That often exist, but people don't know how to find them.

Restrict traffic much more and place benches that allow conversation between several people.

designated spaces for young people in the area below the market

Eliminate any urban barriers or dangerous elements for people with reduced mobility.

more places like outside the Lidl. Although if it is guarded by private security it is not good.

More picnic tables

review civic regulations, less restrictive, more caring (consumption of public space, homelessness,...).

... TAKE CARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT?

Add public transportation

recovery of green spaces / + care

Creating common green spaces

Remove all cars

community plan of ecological participation / urban garden type ?

Elimination of polluting private vehicles

Planting more green and promoting its care by citizens.

... ALLOW YOU TO SELF-CARE?

Common areas for exchanging ideas and stories

Green areas for sports

Enabling long routes where sports can be practiced without the use of cars.

Encourage the practice of physical exercise with elements (basketball hoops, ping-pong tables, side bars, petanques, etc.).

... ALLOW YOU TO TAKE CARE OF OTHERS?

safe and private spaces, away from the terraces of the bars as well.

comfortable and accessible furniture for large people or people with disabilities

recreational spaces for children

Compensate for the gentrification that generates

Extending library opening hours and opening days

all areas should be friendly for the game. Not only in specific zones

that these areas be intergenerational, playful, and for the exchange of ideas.

Going beyond the suggestions, the co-creation workshop also encouraged the participants to envision caring imaginaries in relation to their neighbourhood and the superblock *(Figure 26)*. Inspired by the concept of the caring city (Valdivia, 2018) we explored how the superblocks urban strategy can 1) look after people, 2) allow us to self-care and 3) to look after others, and 3) care for the environment (*Figure* 22).

FIGURE 22 SHOWS A DIAGRAM THAT CONTAINS THE IDEAS FROM THE SECOND PART OF THE WORKSHOP, WHERE PARTICIPANTS IMAGINED SUPERBLOCKS THAT LOOK AFTER PEOPLE, TAKE CARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT, ALLOW PEOPLE TO SELF-CARE AND TO CARE FOR OTHERS.

Superblocks that look after people, according to the participants, should feature public spaces where they feel safe. To this end, these spaces include locations that offer support and information on gender violence, as well as billboards and signs with supportive messages and safe zones at night. The streets and sidewalks are well illuminated and be guarded by informal vigilance. Planners receive gender training and understand the complexities of intersectionality while, at the same time, all urban planning processes guarantee the presence and participation

of women. The elements and design of public spaces do not create urban barriers or introduce dangerous elements that limit the autonomy of people with reduced mobility. Public spaces, in these imaginaries, incorporate inclusive urban furniture for all kinds of people to comfortably socialise, set up urban labs for knowledge exchange, and feature pedestrianized streets so that a person can read without being disturbed by traffic noise. Caring superblocks offer wide and open spaces which can be used in a variety of ways and by different age groups, and host cultural activities for everyone in the neighbourhood.

Being able to self-care in a superblock means there are several shops that sell healthy and local produce. Self-care is also accessible thanks to the public spaces equipped with public toilets; water fountains; benches designed in a way that create intimate spaces; and a program of outdoor educational and cultural activities. Encouraging the practice of physical exercise is also a goal of caring urban interventions, thus, there would be a variety of play and sports elements such as basketball hoops, ping-pong tables, bars, petanque, etc. Lastly, public spaces designed as common areas for exchanging ideas and stories are highly valued.

Caring superblocks allow people to take care of others in a plethora of ways. Public spaces are accessible, safe, intergenerational, and playful. All areas in these superblocks would be play-friendly with play and recreation not restricted to specific zones. The opening hours and opening days of the library are extended to welcome those with different life rhythms. There are quality spaces to breastfeed and nurture babies, as well as comfortable and accessible furniture for people with disabilities, different body sizes, and functional diversity. Safe and private spaces are available in areas away from the terraces of bars. Additionally, soft infrastructure within superblocks is formed by different kinds of alliances between the civic, public, and private sectors. These relationships result in the creation of support networks for people of all ages, and especially for the elderly, and in the provision of meeting spaces for neighbourhood associations, social groups, and movements.

A superblock that takes care of the environment is one where public transport is prioritised and cars are removed, or at least there is a policy of "some cars, but not all the time". Using the bicycle is encouraged, and bike infrastructure is adequate and safe for all kinds of people. The streets are 'humanized' inside environmentally friendly superblocks, and common green spaces are created, recovered, and cared for. Such areas are extensive, permeable, and biodiverse. Importantly, the caring for green spaces becomes a shared responsibility between local government and the community.

Annex 5. Summaries of expert interviews.

Senior Urban Planner 1. Expert in urban planning from a gender perspective. Professor of Urbanism and Planning.

Senior Urban Planner 1 opened the conversation by saying "Salvador Rueda is not a feminist; his superblock theory is stiff and does not include a gender perspective". But real-life superblocks like the one in Sant Antoni, do support everyday lives. "They put life at the centre by creating public spaces for people to stay, socialise, play, learn, carry out caring activities, etc". According to Senior Urban Planner 1, the changes that planners have done to the conceptual model – referring to the recently announced *Superilla Barcelona* – are good because this means that the superblocks will be adapted to the realities of the neighbourhoods.

Regarding the fact that the schools inside the Sant Antoni superblock did not get much attention as, for example, the market area did, Senior Urban Planner 1 reflected that it is surprising because improving the public space outside schools is also an objective of the local government. She then searched the superilla in google maps and quickly came up with an alternative route so public transport avoid the area where the school is located, which could result in the pacification of the street outside that school.

Senior Urban Planner 2. Expert in urban planning, participation, and gender planning. Pioneer in the implementation of a gender perspective into urban planning.

My conversation with Senior Urban Planner 2. was focused on how to look at superblocks from a gender perspective in general as well as on some questions that she had in mind. Senior Urban Planner 2 said it would be interesting to see how the concept of superblocks contribute to the goals and criteria of gender planning. It is important to make visible the potential of the superblocks at a conceptual level. How does the potential of the superblock concept contribute to gender goals?

At the practical level, two main issues are mobility and public space. Regarding mobility and traffic organisation, she praised the move to reduce motorized individual traffic and prioritise slow mobility (pedestrians and bikers). Yet she wandered, how is public transport involved in superblocks? How does this affect womxn? Changing public transport routes could be a disadvantage for womxn, who are the majority of public transport users, she argues, would impact their daily lives because it makes their chain trips longer - referring to the mobilities of care. The result would be women having to walk more to catch the bus outside the superblock.

And thinking about public space, what is the quality of public space inside the superblock? For whom is it designed? Do different social groups stay, socialize, play, co-exist in public space? Asking locals about their experiences regarding the superblock implementation, before and after perceptions, etc. would shine a light on whether these new public spaces are satisfying the needs of locals.

Lastly, a critical issue that really concerns Senior Urban Planner 2 is the question of where do cars park in a superblock? Because improving the quality of public space is good, but if for this to happen cars need to be parked inside the blocks, destroying the inner block green areas, then the benefits would be nullified.

Senior Urban Planner 3. Feminist urbanist, Expert in Feminist Participatory Action Research.

Senior Urban Planner 3 started the interview by admitting that she is a bit tired of the hype around superblocks. This topic is so trending, and keeps the world intrigued it is not so interesting to the collective. I asked her why this is, and she explained:

After a 7-year-long redevelopment process, the public works at the Sant Antoni market were coming to an end. She was involved in a participatory process to decide with locals the future uses of the spaces surrounding the new Sant Antoni market, located at the centre of what today is the Sant Antoni superblock. The participatory process collectively identified ways to make the market's immediate environment respond to the everyday needs of the neighbourhood. Yet, when the time came for the materialisation of these collective discussions, Senior Urban Planner 3 says, the results were quite disappointing. "The transformations made to the market's immediate environment did not comply with the information produced in the participatory process that we had carried out".

Furthermore, Senior Urban Planner 3 argues that the subsequent implementation of the Sant Antoni superblock did not consider the work carried out with neighbours about the market's immediate environment. Having said this, Senior Urban Planner 3 recalls that the pacification of the Ronda de Sant Antoni intersection, in one of the corners of the market, was discussed during the participatory process. Also, she considers that the fact that cars had been removed to make space for a provisional market during this seven-year renewal influenced the neighbour's opinion and favoured the subsequent implementation of the superblock.

About urban planning with a gender perspective on the part of the government, "they pay lip service to their commitment to the gender perspective, but it's just that!", Senior Urban Planner

3 says, "Politically they sell, but technically they're light years away". The recently announced open calls to design the green axes of the Barcelona Superblock, for example, do not require a gender perspective. In a similar vein, Senior Urban Planner 3 is very critical of the local government's Guidelines for everyday urbanism. "The manual was not made by a feminist person", she argues. And this resulted, for example, in that the title only refers to 'everyday life' and intentionally avoids mentioning the words 'gender' and, certainly, 'feminism'.

To wrap up, Senior Urban Planner 3 concludes: "The superblock actions improve daily life in general, but they do so indirectly because they have not been thought from a feminist point of view. The superblocks model does not account for women's safety at night. It does not pay attention whether there is activity on the streets that are not the civic axis. Where are the bus stops located? There is a need for benches and resting spaces along people's daily routes. A need for public toilets. Lastly, cycling mobility: pacification and pedestrian and bike lanes must coexist".

SENIOR SUPERBLOCKS PLANNER 1. DEPARTMENT OF PERSPECTIVE, URBAN ECOLOGY AREA, BARCELONA CITY COUNCIL.

Senior Superblocks Planner 1 has been involved in the superblocks project since its beginning. She started the conversation providing a bit of context. Cerdá's plan was based on health principles and urban logistics and incorporation of technology. She understands Cerda's intentions as unifying what then would become the idea of the smart city, and the city of everyday lives approach. However, Cerdá's plan was perverted by speculation: there are no more green spaces, which are also everyday spaces, and there is much more population density than it was originally planned. Basically, every piece of land that could be built, was built. Then Rueda's theory came about, based on reclaiming the balance proposed by Cerdá. The idea is to reorganise the city, grouping blocks in larger units, superillas- Units that are better appropriate to the metropolitan view of Barcelona. What are the advantages of these new units? Well, inside them streets can be hierarchised. Main arteries can remain, but many inner streets can shift their focus to prioritise slow mobility.

Senior Superblocks Planner 1 sees the idea of superblocks as something that has evolved over the past seven years. There were three important moments. First, the project was initially considered by Barcelona City Council as an urban regeneration strategy in line with the concept and ideas of smart cities. Then, when Ada Colau's government came to power, there was a move away from smart city goals – technocratic and technology oriented – towards an

understanding of superblocks as a way to improve the quality of life of people by supporting their everyday lives. It was in this context that the Poblenou superblock was implemented.

Air pollution, noise pollution, and the number of cars that drive through the Eixample per day become urgent problems to be solved in the third stage. "Greening the neighbourhood of Sant Antoni to mitigate the effects of the urban heat island was one of the main concerns". The focus on everyday life means that the following social groups become relevant: kids, older people, "women in terms of their relationship with everyday life", Senior Superblocks Planner 1 comments (which hints at a lack of explicit attention paid to the gender issue).

Discussing the main challenges of the superblock concept, Senior Superblocks Planner 1 maintains that the superilla cannot exist in a vacuum. The objective must be to pacify traffic, add green, and reclaim public space in the whole city. Otherwise, the benefits will not be felt. If you implement a superblock in one area, and another isolated one in a different neighbourhood, then you are creating a kind of ghettos, she argues. "This idea of 'I live inside the superilla, you live outside'". At the same time, it is not realistic to transform the city at once. It requires a lot of money and organisation on the part of the local government. Therefore, they are implementing superillas throughout the city in stages.

When asked about the public's support for the superblock, remembering the negative experience in the Poblenou superblock, Senior Superblocks Planner 1 said that she believes they have overcome this problem. "Certainly, transforming the urban fabric will impact everyone's life, and people do not like changes (…) The Poblenou project was rushed, there was a window of opportunity and some members of our team decided that it was a good idea to implement the project straight away. (…) This was a dictatorial project, implemented over one summer and without public involvement". When neighbours came back from their holidays, they saw the changes and were enraged because no one had told them anything.

This authoritarian, top-down approach resulted in the public only being able to see the negative effects of superblocks. "It seemed there was no way to convince neighbours of the benefits of the transformations, and the planning team was about to drop the model and move on". But Ada Colau decided to insist and try to revert the situation. A participatory process *a posteriori* was carried out in Poblenou to make amendments. Simultaneously, the Sant Antoni process started, but this time they were doing it right. The coordination team was very careful and was in close contact with locals to develop the proposal for that superblock. "The process there went smooth as silk".

Some critics describe the Sant Antoni superblock as the 'less radical' of the three options the collaborative group was working on. I asked Senior Superblocks Planner 1 about this and her response was: "Rueda's model says that two out of three streets should be pacified. This proposal is very ambitious, but it leaves the city with not much basic infrastructure. This is a radical change that cannot be implemented in the city from one day to the next. A project like this one can gain much resistance and be forced to stop. Plus, there are logistic reasons, the orthogonal bus network is an example of why it is not feasible to pacify two out of streets. The result would have been a few isolated superblocks implemented in certain areas where it was feasible to do so".

Over the years, the superblocks planning team learned that "to successfully adapt Rueda's model to reality, the transformations will need to be more controlled". Senior Superblocks Planner 1 says that "the city is not ready to reproduce the 'perfect' superblock such as the one in Poblenou throughout the whole of the Eixample". So, the approach is to be very solid about the superblock model but aim at pacifying one out of three streets. That is, "focusing on the extension rather than on density of pacified axes". This does not mean that, with time, the city will reach Rueda's goal.

Another argument in favour of this modified version of superblocks is that this way, there will be more green areas at the city level thanks to the creation of green axes crisscrossing the city. This is, according to Senior Superblocks Planner 1, much better than having small pockets of green in isolated, ghetto-like, 'perfect' superblocks. Furthermore, the continuity of green axes, whereby different neighbourhoods and everyday infrastructure are connected, is more desirable than having short stretches of inner streets disconnected with the outside.

I asked Senior Superblocks Planner 1 about the tensions between implementing superblocks to improve the city centre, and the need to invest in marginalised neighbourhoods. She said that there is a good portion of the budget that goes to the latter, so it is not like the local government is prioritising the central area and ignoring the problems of the periphery. Moreover, the tactical urbanism approach of superblocks means that they do not require large investments. She also points out that superblocks are about creating green spaces and minimising pollution in an area of Barcelona with a lack of green spaces and highest noise and air pollution rates.

Regarding superblocks and a gender perspective, Senior Superblocks Planner 1 says that "superillas have incorporated a gender perspective since the very beginning". Improving the habitability of streets requires making streets safer for kids, adding urban furniture for older

people to rest, and elements of play along the way. "We call it a focus on everyday lives, so it is not only about women. Women and men have everyday lives. We all look after children, we can all have disabilities, and we all get old (…) Certainly, there are still issues that need improvements", she adds, "But as a neighbour of the Sant Antoni superilla, I see how things have improved. Families celebrate their children's birthdays out on the streets in the picnic tables we have put for them".

SUPERBLOCKS PLANNER 2. STRATEGIC PROJECTS, COMMUNICATION AND PARTICIPATION, BARCELONA CITY COUNCIL.

Our conversation with Superblocks Planner 2 started discussing the context and tensions that were present when the planning team first arrived in Sant Antoni with the idea of implementing a superblock. The planning team had survived the turmoil from the Poblenou process, and they wanted to do things right in Sant Antoni. "We wanted to take a very classic approach, so we knew exactly what we were doing. And including the gender issue in participation, for me, would have been out of my comfort zone".

The Collective Punt 6 was in Sant Antoni working in a participatory process in 2016, around the new Sant Antoni Market. It is from this process that the Sant Antoni superblock steering group emerged. Superblocks Planner 2 worked together with locals to develop an action plan for the implementation of the superblock. They did include "some basic criteria", he recollects, "such as ensuring that there were women in the steering group; or incorporating associations of mothers and fathers from schools to account for their specific views. But there was nothing like exploratory walks or other typical practices from a gender perspective".

When I asked whether the *Guidelines for everyday urbanism* were considered in the superblock's participation processes, Superblocks Planner 2's response was evasive. The answer was "when the participation processes are required by the project's regulations, then there is an incorporation of gender criteria", which, in this case, would mean to follow the guidelines of everyday urbanism, " but the gender perspective tends to be overlooked when participation is not a formal requisite, and this is the case when the project is implemented on a rush due to the pandemic", Senior Urban Planner 3 claimed. "In these contexts, there are no obligations to focus on the gender issue and any efforts to include it would depend on the awareness and commitment of the technician. It is open to interpretation". Senior Urban Planner 3 would like to have the gender perspective formally incorporated.

Regarding the question of how are the participatory sessions organised? First, they must form a steering group to develop an action plan to guide the implementation phases. The steering group includes superblock planners and representatives of local organisations. Apart from contacting local organisations, there are also some neighbours that join the steering group as private individuals. However, it is not the intention to invite all the neighbours, Senior Urban Planner 3 specifies, "otherwise, we would end up with a massive group and this is not the point". Furthermore, there is already a space for local participation, where all those interested can join an open debate, says Senior Urban Planner 3. "The steering group is preferably a closed group because incorporating newcomers later in the process, and having to explain things all over again, would represent an obstacle for moving forward". Yet, this does not mean that they would not let in somebody who is interested in learning about the project.

Lastly, the sessions start with the technicians presenting the objectives of the session, then they work on it, and at the end there is an hour for Q&A. Connecting to gender inclusive practices, "planners try to keep a record of the proportion of women and men who attend the participatory sessions. Over time, it is true that women's attendance decreases", Senior Urban Planner 3 reflects. It is possibly linked to their limitations reconciling their everyday lives and caring activities with this volunteer work. "Women's participation in the sessions is also quite low".

KEY INFORMANT 1. DEPARTMENT OF PERSPECTIVE, URBAN ECOLOGY AREA, BARCELONA CITY COUNCIL.

Unlike the message transmitted by Senior Superblocks Planner 1, Key informant 1 said there was no one directly in charge of implementing a gender perspective in the whole superblocks process. Key informant 1 works along with a team of feminist colleagues to introduce gender criteria to urban planning, but not project by project. In 2019, the Perspective Department developed a manual titled *Guidelines for everyday urbanism*. Although the guidelines do not directly include a gender perspective, Key informant 1 argues, it incorporates some feminist concepts and guidelines such as the need for creating quality public spaces where people can socialize and play, based on the notion of coexistence.

Key informant 1 talks about her work implementing a gender perspective to urbanism as being a holistic endeavour and not limited to the superblock project. "The superblock model deals with public space to implement quick changes through certain indicators. As a methodology, it is about quick changes and not about creating a dialogue with previously implemented urban projects and weaving them together". For Key informant 1, the superblock project does not

necessarily incorporate a re-evaluation of the city model. However, Key informant 1 claims that superblocks contribute to a gender equity in that they improve quality of life through functional changes that redistribute public spaces and pacify streets, gain spaces for co-existence, and create an everyday network. Key informant 1 refers to ecofeminist Yayo Herrero and says "feminist urbanism is about recognising our interdependency as well as our eco-dependency".

When asked about participatory processes in urban planning, Key informant 1 acknowledged that the superblocks participation process was "quite mainstream, it did not incorporate an intersectional gender perspective", which resulted in some groups not given priority in the process. Looking to the immediate future, Key informant 1 suggests that "the call for submissions currently in place to choose working groups to design the Barcelona Superblock could be participatory and not only for technical teams".

Key informant 1 has been recently working on a BCC regulation for gender equality in planning that will require a gender impact assessment in all urban projects. "This kind of requirements will hopefully ensure that the superblock process – and well as all other urban developments – incorporate the gender issue".

An example of a project that was completely thought from a feminist urbanism perspective, Key informant 1 explains, is the one on Meridiana Avenue. There, the Col.lectiu Punt 6 collaborated with the Department of Perspective to rethink the spaces along this avenue and create connections with both sides. Through a planning process 'from below' locals and planners identified connecting axes along the main road. "Kind of like a zip," Key informant 1 says. "These axes, and their continuity are examples of feminist principles in urbanism, as are the nodes and squares, and the concepts of connectivity and centrality". Comparing the superblock project and the Meridiana one, Key informant 1 thinks that the process of the Meridiana "felt a little bit more natural".

Reflecting about the challenges of incorporating a gender perspective in urban processes, Key informant 1 says "In principle, there is certainly a will to commit to feminist ideas in urban policy. The current institutional paradigm and the COVID pandemic are working in our favour. But there are many difficulties at the technical level such as a lack of availability of appropriate tools and resources, and a lack of training of technical staff on the gender issue from an intersectional perspective". "At the political level too, there are issues of time and money. Lastly, improving participation processes to make visible the experiences of non-hegemonic groups is urgent - for

example, incorporating an intergenerational approach. Changing how we do things requires a lot of effort", she says.

ANNEX 6. INFORMED CONSENT

This annex includes the Informed Consent letter sent to and agreed by the participants.

Dear participant,

Thank you very much for participating in the workshop "Feminist Urbanism in Sant Antoni" as part of the research "Feminist Urbanism for cities that recognise the plurality of voices: A collective assessment of the superblock of Sant Antoni" which is part of the academic programme of the Master of Urban Studies 4Cities (https://www.4cities.eu/).

The aim of the workshop to which you have been invited is to reflect on everyday experiences in the Sant Antoni neighbourhood, as well as to open a space for dialogue and sharing experiences. The workshop will take place digitally through "Zoom" and will last approximately two hours. It is important to clarify that there are no right or wrong answers, we only want to know your opinion about the topic of study.

Participation in this activity is voluntary and does not involve any kind of risk. Participants can leave the process at any time without having to give reasons for doing so.

All information provided through the workshop is strictly confidential and will be kept anonymous. It will only be used only by the researcher, Belén Iturralde Farrus, and will not be made available for any other purpose.

The overall data collected may be viewed by the course management or thesis supervisors in order to evaluate the researcher's performance, while maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. The results of this study will be reported to you and published for academic purposes but will be presented in such a way that the participants cannot be identified.

Thank you for your collaboration,

Belén Iturralde Farrus

Barcelona, 20 August, 2021

For fundamental legal questions regarding the students' research, please contact the Data Protection Officer of the University of Vienna, Dr. Daniel Stanonik, LL.M. (verarbeitungsverzeichnis@univie.ac.at). In addition, there is the right to lodge a complaint with the data protection authority (i.e., via dsb@dsb.gv.at).

** I agree to participate voluntarily and anonymously in the workshop and questionnaire in the workshop "Feminist Urbanism in Sant Antoni" as part of the research "Feminist Urbanism for cities that recognise the plurality of voices: A collective assessment of the superblock of Sant Antoni" which is part of the academic programme of the Master's in Urban Studies 4Cities (https://www.4cities.eu/) and carried out by Belén Iturralde Farrus.

** I declare that I am informed about the contents of the letter of informed consent that accompanies this form.