Barcelona en Comú. A new municipalist approach for a more cohesive society and an open public space.

How does the new municipalist movement *BComú* interpret neighbourhood/social cohesion and how does it translate into built and lived form?

Analysed by the case of the Superblock SB9 in Poblenou, Barcelona.







DIPLOMARBEIT

BARCELONA EN COMÚ. A NEW MUNICIPALIST APPROACH FOR A MORE COHESIVE SOCIETY AND AN OPEN PUBLIC SPACE.

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ABSTRACT - ENGLISCH

Municipalism is a form of politics that views the municipality, its political level and spatial scale, as the optimum strategic entry point to better people's life's. New municipalism is a modern-day interpretation of this form of politics, with a tradition reaching back to the ancient Greek city-state. It combines the well-being and quality of life of city residents with goals of sustainability and the preservation of the planet. A major component of quality of life and well-being for new municipalism is a vibrant and active community that is socially cohesive on the level of the municipality as well as the neighbourhood. The city of Barcelona is led by a *new municipalist* movement, *Barcelona en Comú (BComú)*, that aims to get more residents involved in the political process and make politics more accountable by opening up its institutions. In combination with the adaption of the *superblock* initiative into a holistic concept to tackle a variety of problems its residents struggle with, *BComú* intends to create a more cohesive neighbourhood and municipality.

The thesis focuses on what *social* and *neighbourhood cohesion* is in the eyes of a new municipalist government and how the goal of increasing cohesion can be achieved via the reorganisation of the public space accompanied by a set of different measures. Barcelona has started a pilot project, a pilot superblock, in the quarter of Poblenou and tests out its approach of killing not two birds but many more with one stone. Under the overarching goal of mitigating the effect of the climate crisis other agendas are nested. Agendas concerning pollution, traffic, land use, health and the quality of life which are all factors influencing the cohesiveness of a society. Throughout history municipalists have shaped cities, a look back in time helps to understand the traditions new municipalism carries on.

BComú takes a holistic stance on how neighbourhood and social cohesion can be increased, the thesis will explore different measures the city has implemented in the pilot project as well as their roll-out throughout the entire Catalan capital. Every measure will be looked at with a focus of its benefits to nurture a more cohesive society.

ABSTRACT - DEUTSCH

Munizipalismus ist eine Form der Politik, die die Gemeinde, ihre adminstrativ-politische Ebene und räumliche Ausdehnung, als optimalen strategischen Ansatzpunkt zur Verbesserung der Lebensbedingungen der Menschen betrachtet. Der Neue Munizipalismus ist eine moderne Interpretation dieser Politikform, deren Tradition bis in den antiken griechischen Stadtstaat zurückreicht. Sie verbindet die Lebensqualität und das Wohlbefinden der Stadtbewohner*innen mit den Zielen der Nachhaltigkeit und der Erhaltung des Planeten. Eine wichtige Komponente der Lebensqualität ist für den Neuen Munizipalismus eine lebendige und aktive Gemeinschaft, die sowohl auf nachbarschaftlicher als auch kommunaler Ebene sozial kohäsiv ist. Die Stadt Barcelona wird von einer neu-munizipalistischen Bewegung, Barcelona en Comú (BComú), regiert, die darauf abzielt, mehr Einwohner*innen in den politischen Prozess einzubeziehen und die Politik durch die Öffnung ihrer Institutionen rechenschaftspflichtig und nachvollziehbarer zu machen. In Kombination mit der Erweiterung der Superblock-Initiative zu einem ganzheitlichen Konzept, das unterschiedlichste Probleme der Bewohner*innen in Angriff nehmen soll, will BComú einen stärkeren Zusammenhalt in den Nachbarschaften wie auch der Stadt schaffen.

Im Mittelpunkt der meiner Masterarbeit steht die Frage, was soziale und nachbarschaftliche Kohäsion in den Augen der neu-munizipalistischen Regierung bedeutet und wie das Ziel eines stärkeren Zusammenhalts durch die Umgestaltung des öffentlichen Raums in Verbindung mit einer Reihe unterschiedlicher Maßnahmen erreicht werden kann. Barcelona hat ein Pilotprojekt, den Superblock im Stadtteil Poblenou, gestartet und testet seinen Ansatz, nicht nur zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe zu schlagen, sondern viele mehr. Unter dem übergeordneten Ziel, die Auswirkungen der Klimakrise abzumildern, finden sich noch weitere Agenden. Diese betreffen die Umweltverschmutzung, den Verkehr, die Flächennutzung, die Gesundheit und die Lebensqualität, allesamt Faktoren, die die Kohäsion einer Gesellschaft beeinflussen. Im Laufe der Geschichte haben Munizipalist*innen Städte geprägt. Ein Blick in die Vergangenheit hilft, die Traditionen zu verstehen, die der Neue Munzipalismus fortführt.

BComú vertritt einen holistischen Ansatz bei der Frage, wie nachbarschaftliche und soziale Kohäsion gestärkt werden können. In dieser Arbeit werden verschiedene Maßnahmen untersucht, die die Stadt im Rahmen des Pilotprojekts umgesetzt hat, sowie deren Pläne für die Implementierung über den gesamten Raum der katalanischen Hauptstadt. Jede Maßnahme wird im Hinblick auf ihren Nutzen für die Erhöhung der Kohäsion in der Gesellschaft untersucht.

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Introduction

In an ever-growing globalised world, human connections are made over distances spanning continents and oceans via wires, computers and screens. At the same time, traditional bonds like family and neighbourhood seem to dwindle in light of new emerging technologies thickening the web of worldwide entanglement. The tech industry, with the big giant Facebook at the forefront, plans on revolutionizing the way how individuals form our species interact with each other, again. Creating a universe, that is immersive, all-encompassing and disruptive of the form in which humans have interacted with each other over millennia. The Meta-Verse paints a future of little to no face-toface, hence real, contact and lives that are led in a digital realm detached from the physical space we all share. But this vision of the future is not shared by all. Something has been stirring and rumbling in cities all over the planet.

These cities fear not reimagining the future through reviving the past, reviving municipalism. The municipalistic belief in the capability and responsibility of the city to better the lives of its residents, has a long tradition going all the way back to ancient Greece. Barcelona en Comù's new interpretation of municipalism derives itself from the current status of humanity and the planet. Apart from the sole betterment of Barcelona's own residents the new municipalisit movement acknowledges the global role it plays in terms of acting humane and being a contributor to the climate crisis. With the combination of a set of measures the municipal govenment of Barcelona tries to do the opposite of tech companies. The movement wants to fill the streets and not screens. It wants for people to see each other, recognize each other, interact with each other, form friendships with each other and grow their community. To become more socially cohesive, not via a digital marketplace but face to face, in the same physical place and in a 'shared' reality, in an agora. "Omplim de vida els carrers" - ,Let's fill the streets with life".

BComú is part of a wider socio ecological-economic movement, new municipalism, that bases itself on the historic achievements, municipalism, urban sociology, social economic theories, feminism and protest culture. The overarching red threat that spins through this holistic approach to changing the world is openness. Openness towards humanity, openness of the political process and its institutions, openness of the city in terms of use and the physical structure and openness towards one's neighbours.

I grew up in a neighbourhood in Viena, Austira where up until recently there was little to none street or public life and very little interaction between neighbours. As I first heard of BComú's ambitous project I wonderd, how does this movement plan to increase neighbourhood and social cohesion through a new form of politics and the built space? But in order to answer that question I first needed to know who it interpret social cohesion.

STATE OF THE ART

Although neighbourhood and social cohesion plays a huge role for *Barcelona en Comú*, there is very little research to be found on that topic in realation to *new municipalism* or the *superblock*.

Why is your research topic important?

The new millennium has left the world facing a range of different problems. Political distrust, the approximating climate catastrophe, inequality between different demographic groups and a growing class struggle make this a challenging time.

On the municipal scale, especially in urban areas, these problems manifest themselves in form of negative effects due to the climate crisis, negative physical and mental health effects, an unfair division of the public space etc. as well as an ever more polarised society, a lack of participation in politics as well as the community (-ies) and a general decrease of cohesiveness within its residents. In order to combat these challenges a new way to conceptualise the city is needed and integrate it into the already built and lived environment via a series of measures. Social proximity, broad and continous participation as well as political accountability are the cornerstones for a better future according to the New Municipalist movements.

In the urban realm, there has always existed a duality of social proximity and social distancing (even before the state and municipal mandates put into law in the wake of the corona crisis) as Georg Simmel (1903) already attested. Inhabitants of large cities have adapted to manoeuvre this tightrope act of opening up to individuals while at the same time blending into the anonymous crowd of residents and tourists. This shield of social distancing (in non-pandemic times) is a self-preserving mechanism that guards us from the fear of constant 'surveillance' by neighbours or the neighbourhood. There is something soothing and mentally very important in the aspect of urban anonymity. But from my own experience this privacy can go too far. There are certain benefits that we lose by not sharing ourselves with the ones living and working around us. Such things include: the creation of tolerance towards others, may they be familiar or not (Jacobs 1961, p.72); the enhancement of self-worth and the willingness to participate in neighbourhood processes (Kearns & Forrest, 2000, p.1001); etc.

This research (Jacobs, Kearns & Forrest etc.) lays an important empirical foundation, suggesting that the solutions to many of these problems may rest in the coming together of residents, the getting to know one's neighbours, in being active in one's community, participating in local and municipal politics, in building a more cohesive neighbourhood and society. By not necessarily being on the same page as fellow residents, but at least knowing where they come from.

The new interpretation of the superblock initiative, in Catalan *superilles* meaning super-island, is an example of a city conceptualised in this *new municipalist* fashion and may yield important insights into how this foundation for change can be laid. It will not provide a blueprint on how to reach this goal, because every city, its culture and residents are unique, but it may serve as a roadmap, a guideline on which to orientate and adapt in order to lay the cornerstone of broad societal (and environmental and economic) change.



RESEARCH QUESTION

How does the new municipalist movement $BCom\hat{u}$ interpret neighbourhood/social cohesion and how does it translate into built and lived form?

Analysed by the case of the Superblock in Poblenou (SB9), Barcelona.

- 1. What is Barcelona's urban history and how does it inform the *new municipalist* superblock initiative?
- What is the history of municipalism, how did it evolve in general and into the new municipalisist movement Barcelona en Comú?
- How can neighbourhood and social cohesion be defined/interpreted and how can they be increased according to the BComú?
- What is the history of the superblock and why has its purpose been adapted with every change of municipal rule?
- 5. What does the superblock initiative look like currently and what are the reasons for its adaptation under *new municipalist* principles?
- Was the pilot superblock in Poblenou planned, designed and implemented in accordance to the *new municipalist* principles?
- 7. What have been the effects of the pilot superblock on neighbourhood and social cohesion of the people living in the superblock?

I'm going to conduct a detailed analysis of one specific case. The case is clearly defined by the parameters of the superblock implemented between 2016 and 2017 in Poblenou, the SB9. Poblenou is a quarter in the Catalan capital of Barcelona, Spain.

Since the socio-demographic and spatial differences are quite stark even within the same city, the superilla (superblock) in Poblenou has to be considered an 'extreme or unique' case. Therefore I conducted an 'unique' case study. This entailed that I was going to be concerned with elucidating the unique features of the case and I was going to take an ideographic approach on the quest for answers.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The thesis will be structured into different chapters. First, I will give an overview of the urban history of Barcelona, for it is vital to understand the concept of the superblock from a physical standpoint. I will end the chapter with a brief history of the civic culture in the Catalan capital for it explains how the new municipalist movement was able to get the mayor's seat. Also, it sheds a light on how new municipalism wants to conduct and reform politics. With more resident participation and bringing more people into the political process.

The second chapter will address the history of municipalism. This is the second vital component to understand the claim, that the municipal scale is the optimum stratic entry point to better people's lives. This next step, new municipalism, in the evolution of municipalism takes on different forms in different cities. The chapter includes an overview of these forms and looks in detail at Barcelona's version of new municipalism and the role it plays in its global context.

The third chapter covers the different understandings of neighbourhood and social cohesion, and its different dimensions. In light of the superblock the perspective of the neighbourhood is very important. Social cohesion and neighbourhood cohesion share many aspects, but also differ because they are used to describe the cohesiveness of a group on different spatial levels. The superblock initiative aims to address cohesion on both levels, therefore it is necessary to look at both versions. To conclude, Barcelona's interpretation of social cohesion and how it can be affected will be portrayed.

The fourth chapter will explain the concept behind the superblock. Its history and its adaption by the new municipalist government to reach their goals. To find out if their set goal of increasing social cohesion is met, I will analyse the pilot superblock in Poblenou, a quarter in the district of Sant Martí. My analysis will be informed by my conducted interviews, the conducted questionnaires and my observations done in my month long stay in the superilla.

I will end my thesis with a conclusion and an outlook of the ambitious urban transformation project as well raise some further questions that I cannot address in my thesis, but are still worth asking.

> I want to thank my parents for supporting me during the writing process, as well as Prof. Knierbein and my fellow colleges.



EXPLANATION OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronyms

AdB = Ajuntament de Barcelona

CiU = Convergència i Unió

BComù = Barcelona en Comù

dBA = Decibel

EU = European Union

Lden = EU day-evening-night noise indicator with 5 dB and 10 dB weights for the evening and night time, respectively.

LE = Life expectancy

NO2 = Nitrogen dioxide

PAH = la Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (Platform for Mortgage Affected People)

PMU = Urban Mobility Plan

PSC = Catalan Socialist Party

ERC = Republican Left of Catalonia

SB9 = Pilot Superblock in Poblenou

SDG = Sustainable Development Goal

UN = United Nations

WHO = World Health Organisation

Spanish Words

Superilla = Superblock

Superilles = Superblocks

Spanish Terms

Superilla = Super-Island

Barrio = Quater

Botellón = the practice of gathering outside to drink alcohol

CONTEXT

The city of Barcelona is and was a city of change experiments and a pioneer when it comes to urban development, renewal and transformation processes/projects. To understand the city, its typology, layout, grid and political landscape, and how the city council plans its latest major coup in urban transformation (the superblock), it is important to understand its urban history.

BARCELONA'S URBAN HISTORY

Ildefons Cerdà's Plan - Reconstructing the City

Looking at the city of Barcelona today means looking at generations of architects and urbanists transforming the capital of Catalonia. Some may be more prominent then others. But one stands before all others, Ildefons Cerdà (1815-1876). When you fly over the coastal city or look at a map the footprint this architect and engineer left in the urban fabric ('tejido' in Spanish) cannot be overlooked.

As an engineer Cerdà had a technical background, but his designs always served the inhabitants of his city. He was "[...] a more people-oriented urbanist [...]" (Sennett 2018, p.37) then other architects of his time. This was due to a powerful group of professionals residing in Catalonia. Going against the grain of the Habsburg-Spanish empire, this Catalan class turned towards Enlightenment. Looking forward, valuing progress over conservatism, their decisions would be based on rationality and inclusion (ibid., p.37).

Barcelona is still and has a long history of being an inclusive city. This stems from, apart from other reasons, its location. Like other coastal cities of the Mediterranean, trade and a steady flow of people coming and going moulded Barcelona into a mixture of different religions and ethnic groups. This was still true in Cerdà's time. Instead of dividing society along demographic differences, knowing or suspecting that class conflicts like in 1848 could be provoked, he had a different vision for Barcelona. Taking clues from the ancient Aristotelian model his Barcelona should be a form of cooperative socialism, integrating and embracing the cultural, religious and class differences of its citizens, creating a cosmopolitan metropolis (Sennett 2018, p.37). As Barcelona grew in population, so too it had to grow in size or density. Cerdà was going to be the architect of the city that would be built on the planes outside the city wall and would come to be known as the Eixample. Cerdà planned the Eixample as "[...] a continuous grid of 113.3 m by 113.3 m blocks, from Besòs to Montjuïc, with streets ranging from 20 m, 30 m and 60 m in width" (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.8).

Ildefons Cerdà's idea for his grid and typology, his fabric, arose out of necessity. Due to hygienic problems endangering the lives of Barcelona's citizens the engineer opted for orthogonal streets that were lined by huge blocks with flattened corners. These blocks would not serve only one function but have several different usages and provide citizens with an open, green inner courtyard. The blocks, though staying within their predefined limit, could be adapted and changed according to the needs of the people and its location. He also designed huge public spaces within the blocks, but they never made it from the drawing board into the built space (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.12).

What differentiates Cerdà's typology from the orthogonal grid, that can be found in all roman cities (Barcelona also was founded by the romans) and settlements for example, is the fact that there are no central orientated axes. In Cerdà's fabric, there was no need for a centre, since he imagined

that with rising demand, a new row of blocks could easily be added. Hence the name additive grid. What he kept from the roman design, the hypodamic grid named after the Greek Hippodamus of Miletus promoting it, was the orthogonal street layout which encouraged walking, mixing of uses and street life (Roberts 2019, N.6).

On a side note: Since its beginnings, even the roman settlement, Barcelona was very densely built and the people packet in a small space. This high building and people density was at first forced by the artificial limitations of the various city walls (the roman wall, the extension in 1260 and 15th century) and later by the natural limitations of the city's geographic location (Roberts 2019, N.6).

In the 1860s Cerdà's vision was approved by royal decree and started to take form and the rows of blocks started to embrace the old city centre. Consistent with his goal for more equality, all over his fabric, green threads and green spaces would be woven in, to provide accessible greenery for all, not just the few (Sennett 2018, p.39).

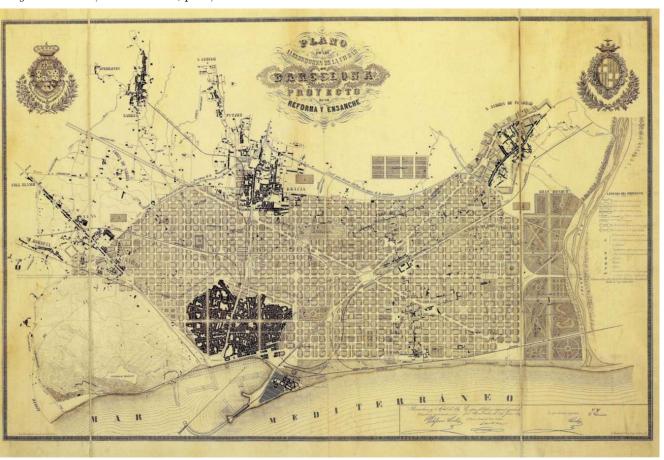


Figure 1: Ildefons Cerdà's Plan modified plan (1859)

Cerdà learned from previous plagues that plagued Europa's larger cities in the early 17th century. Quarantining those who had fallen ill did not work and sanitation for all was in his eyes the only remedy for Barcelona (Sennett 2018, p.37). The hygienic problems that forced Cerdà's hand to develop his plan had two mayor causes. First, after the War of Spanish Succession in 1714 Spanish kings did not allow the city of Barcelona to build outside its medieval walls. This urban development prohibition that was upheld until 1854 would cause more and more people to be crammed into an already very dense space, with foreseeable hygienic results (Roberts 2019, N.6). Second, was the rise of the industrial age.

And in that Barcelona was not alone, since many European cities started to face the problem bad hygienic conditions. The industrial revolution left its mark in many mayor European cities and

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their exploding populations. The role of the city had changed during the time of industrialisation in order to provide better quality of life for its people. And many cities rose to the occasion and were successful through scientific analysis and clever engineering. What separated Cerdà's approach to increase the quality of life for the residents of Barcelona from other engineers of his time like Haussmann, who transformed Paris, or Bazalgette, who implemented the sewer system in London, was that he saw his transformation as a chance to combat inequality. According to Cerdà "This idea of a hygienic, functional city was [...] to produce conditions of equality between all residents who used it" (Sennett 2018, p.37 from Busquets 2005, p.129).

In the 1860s the construction for the first 32 blocks began. But Cerdà looked far into the future and far beyond the plains surrounding the city centre. He envisioned the additive grid to be a balm for the housing situation of the poor. Back then the mountains were still far away from the outskirts of the city and the plains seemed to provide a plentitude of space in which the additive grid could be extended in. He saw this as a measure for him to keep land values low and housing for the poor affordable (Sennett 2018, p.40). Evidence for his social vein and strive for more equality can also be found within a block, within the actual (supposed to be) built structure. He wanted people from every walk of life to be able to live under the same roof. No matter which door one would knock on, there would be no way of telling the social status of its residents. Now this form of social mixing is known as the *Dutch Model*. Socially mixed housing, with one building door for everyone. In contrast Haussmann (1809-1891) designed his buildings with clear separation of the classes. The rich occupying the first story and every *etage* higher than the previous one, would be home to people from a lower class than the ones below them. In New York the poor were not allowed to use the front door but had to enter the buildings form the side (ibid., p.40). Class difference baked into the

physical structure, the *ville*, of the city. The French separated the city into two spheres referring to the *ville* as the overall (built) city and the *cité* to "[...] the character of life in a neighbourhood, the feelings people harboured about neighbours and strangers and attachments to a place" (ibid., p.1).

Cerdà never saw his true vision for the *Eixample* realised, because it was deemed too luxurious for the poor. In his original plans, a block was to consist of two each other facing buildings, leaving space in between them for a big inner courtyard (occupying about 50 percent of the surface area).

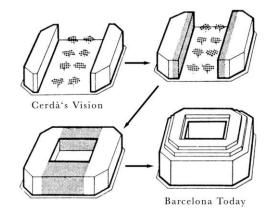


Figure 2: Adaption of Cerdà's Block

This open courtyard was to function as a social space, a place for gatherings, encounter, play and human interaction and connection. His design also acknowledged the right of all residents to fresh air, light and space. Similar problems with which Barcelona is also struggling today. Instead of realising his vision, he was forced to enclose the courtyard on all four sides, giving Barcelona the visage we know today. But even his adapted plan saw a stark difference in quality of life in comparison to other quarters like the workingclass district of *Barceloneta* in the east of the old centre (Sennett 2018, p.41). This neighbourhood is characterised by narrow streets (two people might even be able to touch one another if they reached out), long narrow building rows and little to none greenspaces or greenery.

Since his idea for a social place, open and accessible for everyone, would never see the light of day, the residents of Barcelona had to take matters into their own hands and unexpected spaces all over the city became the meeting place of many generations to come, the intersections. Cerdà did not plan for this. Because the interior courtyards, the *intervalos*, were supposed to serve the social func-

tion in Cerdà's plan, the road network was designed for transportation, designed as a space not a place. Back then cars were still an invention of future times, but even horse drawn carriages could reach respectable velocities. To accommodate and secure the steady flow of animalised traffic, Cerdà cut off the corners of his blocks. Rounding them, smoothing them of, so turns were better manageable and speeds could better be upheld (Sennett 2018, p.41). This is a feature quite unique, as far as I know, to Barcelona, at least on this city-wide scale and depth of the cut of the corners.

This allowed for a space to become a place. Not by design but as Richard Sennett puts it, by evolution. "This shaving of the edge may seem trivial, but it proved immensely consequential socially, because the cité [the lived, experienced city] which arose in Cerdà's ville lay just there" (Sennett 2018, p.41). This, for other purposes intended design choice, would affect the experience, the feel, the atmosphere of the city for its residents and its visitors alike till this day.

This new understanding of the city in the 19th century, the realisation of its responsibility and power (*Municipalism*), would influence Barcelona's political landscape in the 21st century.

Today the additive grid provides the city government with the space to realise its ambitious goal: To fill the streets with life, to turn space into place, to alter the *cit*é by altering the *ville* by implementing *superilles* (superblocks). Increasing the quality of life and the social cohesion for its residents by keeping true to a municipalist tradition and the legacy of the urbanist Ildefons Cerdà. But more on that later.

Cerdà's additive, isotropic grid had yielded many benefits from which the city still profits. It was flexible, variable and open enough for re-imagination by the ruling administration for the needs of its residents at the time. Cerdà's base grid served its purpose so well, that it became internationally known (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.8). Barcelona (today) is a city that knows how to market itself and its urban planning projects and initiatives. Depending on the socio-economic stance of the majority party of the city council the city model that was marketed was different but the goal the same: be a famous example, other global cities look towards.

Cerdà's urban fabric generated a lot of interest around the world and could be seen as a starting point for Barcelona to position and market itself as a city at the forefront on how urban planning should be conducted.

Different plans in the second half of the 20^{th} century

Major international events were started to be held in Barcelona, which all went along with improvements to the city. In 1888 it was the Universal Exhibition (Exposición Universal de Barcelona) and in 1929, by then the city had swallowed six settlements in its soundings and grown impressively in size, Barcelona was the host of the International Exhibition. In 1888 it got a new sewage and water system and in 1929 public toilets were installed all over the city as well as old gas lights were replaced with electric ones (Roberts 2019, N.6).

Only two years after the Expo the Spanish monarchy fell and modernist ideas for the transformation of Barcelona arose. A group of architects with close ties to the French modernist visionary and architect Le Corbusier drew up with his help a plan (the Macià Plan) of a modern Barcelona. It was never realised (due to the civil war and later Francos suppression of Catalonia, its people and culture) and would have contradicted much of what Cerdà tried to achieve. The Macià Plan saw, in line with many modernist urban projects, the separation of uses into different spaces (Roberts

2019, N.6). The streets would have lost their function of places for encounter, leaving them just as spaces for the purpose of reaching one's destination. Everything would have been oversized, from the buildings to the gardens between them, not considering the dimensions under which humans feel safe and calm, and not small.

Cerdà's grid was adapted and changed several times over the years. In the second half of the century two major plans had been introduced. The fist in 1953, the County Plan, and in 1977 the General Metropolitan Plan providing the framework of the city of Barcelona even today (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.8).

BARCELONA AS AN ENTREPRENEURIAL CITY

The city has a longstanding history of making itself known to the world, or as its mayor from 1982 until 1997 Pasqual Maragall put it: "[...] posar la Ciutat al mapa (put the city on the map) [...]" (Russo 2017, p.8). It started with promoting tourism after hosting the 1888 Expo and continued with the 1929 Expo (ibid., p.8). In 1982 the FIFA World Cup was held in Spain and then the first Barcelona City Council (Franco had only died seven years prior) came to the realisation, that these globally broadcast events could be used to put the city on the map (ibid., p.8) and even circle it with a huge bright highlighter. Barcelona would not let another such opportunity slip through its fingers.

This realisation inflated the phenomenon that is called 'Boosterism', which in the last decades meant that cities start to compete with each other on a global level for international investors and their capital, for educated and highly skilled residents and consumers with deep pockets (Russo 2017, p.3). This boosterism can take on built form in form of "[...] infrastructure development, flagship sports and cultural venues, rehabilitation of historical buildings and sites, requalification of shopping areas [...]" (ibid., p.3) etc. One of the flagship sport events that caused drastic changes to the physical structures of the city, was the Olympics Games in 1992. The 'olympic transformation' of Barcelona involved the transformation of the old industrial areas (ibid., p.7) in the district of Sant Martí, situated east of the city centre, along the coast. This transformation involved the adaption of this area as well as its waterfront into iconic residential, production and consumption spaces. This got the ball rolling and in combination with other large infrastructure projects lead to a stark increase in tourist numbers (Russo 2017, p.7). What is now known as Private-Public-Partnership (PPP) was a financial scheme developed by the Barcelona City Council, a private-public venture which back than became known under the creative name 'Barcelona model' (ibid., p.8). "This degree of intermeshing of public and private interests is arguably a reflection of a very careful operation of linking the physical development of the city to its branding as a business-friendly, cosmopolitan and creative place" (ibid., p.10). The in the 1990s conceived 22@ project, which sought to establish the first 'innovation district' in Europe in Sant Martí and be representative of the future, became another famous example of the 'Barcelona model' (Battero et al. 2020, p.3ff).

In 2004 the next global event hosted in Barcelona, the Universal Forum of World Cultures, provided the than mayor Joan Clos (1997-2006) from the Catalan Socialist Party (PSC) with the opportunity to finish the urban transformation project his predecessor started, as well as attract global capital for the real estate market (Russo 2017, p.8). Under mayor Jordi Hereu (PCS) (2006-2011) who formed an alliance with left-wing parties, Barcelona stayed business friendly, even relaxing planning rules (ibid., p.8).

In the 2010s Barcelona took up the smart city agenda which developed out of the entrepreneurial



model Barcelona was perusing in the 1990s (Thompson 2020, p.12). This also entailed the promotion of the Catalan capital as an entrepreneurial city itself (ibid., p.12). Mayor Xavier Trais (2011-2015) from the Convergència i Unió (CIU) stated that he would have preferred the promotion of a 'Barcelona brand', the "\[... \] first example of a proper Smart City, completely interconnected and fit for the new cosmopolitan lifestyles of new and old residents" (Russo 2017, p.9ff). So, the elites that governed Barcelona at the time promoted and aimed to remodel the city as a 'city of software' (Thompson 2020, p.12). To achieve this post-political techno-solutionist vision and to become not one but the reference of smart urbanism and digital transformation, the elites teamed up with big, global firms like Microsoft (ibid., p.12).

Barcelona portrayed itself in the years until 2015 as a tourist utopia. Even becoming one of the prime destinations promoted by Airbnb. Tourism can be seen as way to get to know different cultures and make connections, but in a capitalist economy it can also be seen as a "[...] staple of the neoliberal urban regime [...]" (Russo 2017, p.3). Tourism reached critical mass in the Mediterranean city and although the media propagated the economic value and necessity of Barcelona's tourist economy, the residents started to feel that their city was not theirs anymore.

PUBLIC SPACE AND COMMERCIALIZATION

Public space in Barcelona used to serve many purposes. It was the place that provided citizens with access to needed services through transportation. But at the same time, it was a space for children playing their games, for exercise and sport or to gather with friends, family or other residents. It was a place to stroll and to rest, a place of and for culture and protest (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.7). This multifunctional space lost its diversity over the last decades, more and more functioning as a space for travel and less for social activities (ibid., p.7). This decline of using public space as a location related to leisure and meeting fellow residents is partly due to the increase of traveling speeds of motorized vehicles, making the streets less safe, and their sheer quantity (ibid., p.8). This trend of repurposing the public space has been going on since the emergence of the car as a mass product and the promotion of the use of a private motorised vehicle by many city governments. In the last decades under the emerging neo-liberal globalisation the trend was visible, that capital wields much more power when it comes to the production of public space, than the 'public' itself does (Purcell 2006, p.1921). What the public is, can vary, depending who defines it (ibid., p.1921). This lack of control of the production of the public space can be interpreted as a threat to urban democracy, but Purcell (2006, p.1921) warns not to shoot straight from the hip since this connection has not been thoroughly examined.



GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT BARCELONA TODAY

In 2021 Barcelona had 1.660.314 residents (Departament d'Estadística i Difusió de Dades 2021, p.1) which dwell in 10 administrative districts. These can further be divided into 73 barris (eng. quarters). Barcelona is mostly urbanised (90% of its 102.2sq km) and its density stayed roughly the same in the last years (Marquet & Miralles-Guasch 2014, p.259). The density over the total surface area of the city is 161 res/ha (residents/hectar) and 596 res/ha neto density (just the residential areas) (Ajuntament de Barcelona: Estadística i Defusió de Dates - Densidad de populcaión (hab/ha).

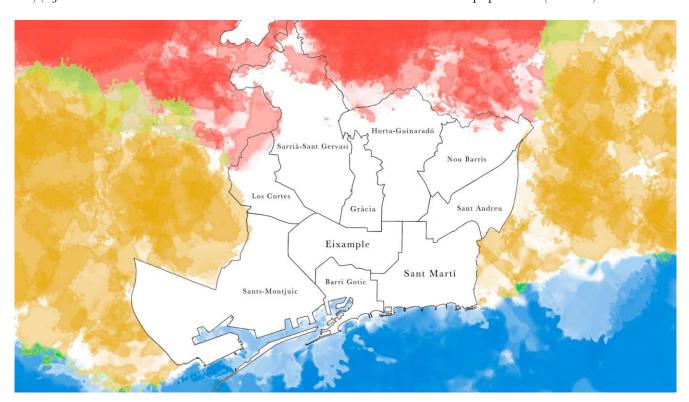


Figure 3: Districts of Barcelona

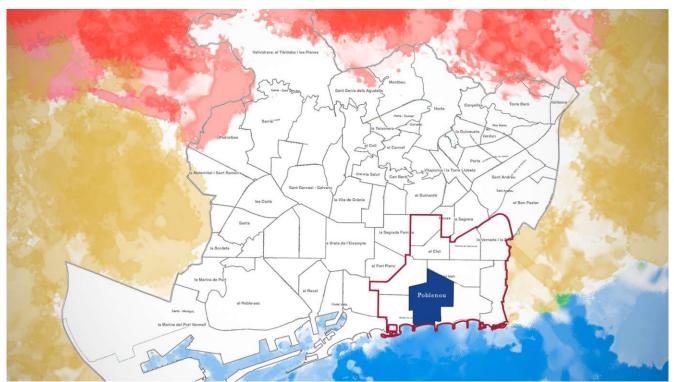


Figure 4: Quaters (Barrios) of Barcelona



BARCELONA' CIVIC CULTURE HISTORY

To understand the political landscape of Barcelona after 2015 that saw the movement *Barcelona en Comú* win the municipal election in May and with it the mayor's seat, it is vital to know about its recent history. Why it started, how it formed and who founded it, helps us understand Barcelona's *new municipalism*, its political (socio-economic) views, its vision of conducting politics, goals like increasing neighbourhood and social cohesion and the instruments for achieving them: the participation of residents in political processes and in the planning and design of the *superilla*.

PARTICIPATION AND SELF-ORGANIZATION

One key factor for the rise of the *new municipalist* Movement in Barcelona is the real estate sector in Spain. This sector plays a bigger role than in other countries and was established during a period of growth under the dictator Franco (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.45 from Charnock et al. 2014). During his reign Franco established a politics of 'homeownership', meaning that citizens should be incentivized to buy rather than rent real estate. The goal was stability and control (ibid., p.45 from Colau & Alemany, 2012). So, the system that came crashing down in 2008 had a long history, but the period between 1997 and 2007 acted like a fresh oxygen to a flame. The state facilitated Franco's homeownership model, in a classic neo-liberal fashion: Deregulating the land, the banks and the "[...] mortgage financing-related policies during the 1980s and 1990s, under both Conservative and Socialist party rule, deregulation that was also driven by European Union membership requirements" (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.46). The carefully planned deregulation cannot be contributed to one party or political ideology nor level alone. Franco's model evolved into a system that stimulated corruption and took urban planning-related tasks away from local and regional governments. At the same time, local and regional governments had been negligently underfunded, resulting in economic and not social driven housing policies (ibid., p.46 from López & Rodríguez, 2011).

To illustrate the magnitude of these policies Garcia-Lamarca gives 4 pieces of information:

- During 1997 and 2007 one-quarter of Spain's land was built up;
- Spain became the biggest European consumer of cement (from Nardeo et al., 2008);
- Almost seven Million housing units were built (in some years more than in France, Germany and Italy combined);
- And housing prices increased over 200%.

In addition to the deregulation in Spanish law, the adoption of the Euro opened up the floodgates to unprecedented amounts of capital pouring into the Iberian country. And although the average salaries dropped by 10% between 1995-2007 and 30% of all employment contracts were only temporary, banks willingly handed out mortgages (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.46). Still during the 1990s commercials and "[...] aggressive marketing [...]" (ibid., p.46) from public administrations to estate agencies and mass media painted a picture of a bright future in which the housing prices never fall (ibid., p.47). Homeownership gives a person a certain status in society. Because of its history and promotion of the above-mentioned institutions, nowhere is it as true as in Spain. At the same time, the rental market became more unstable and pricy. Additionally, social housing units only make up 1.5 - 2% of all the housing stock in iberian country (ibid., p.47).

Before the crisis of 2008 hit, people already could see the problems Franco's old system of homeownership, fueled by neo liberalism, was creating. The pressure of falling wages and rising housing prices led to the formation of 'Miles de Viviendas' (Thousands of Houses) in 2003. Differences within the group made them unsuccessful in reaching their goal of making squatting (the occupation of houses) a commonly used practice. As it often happens a splinter group separated from the Miles de Viviendas calling themselves 'V de Vivienda' (V for Housing) referencing 'V for Vendetta'. More militant, this splinter was widely popular with the younger segment and students, but failed to form a broad coalition throughout the whole demographic spectrum. The problem of the platform V for Vivienda was, that the looming crisis was not acknowledged by enough people at that time (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.46). "As two of the PAH's [Platform for Mortgage Affected People / la Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca] founders note, V de Vivienda was a minority movement pushing against a largely homeownership-based society that during the boom saw its patrimony (housing) steadily increase in value" (ibid., p.46 from Colau and Alemany, 2012). Though unsuccessful its founding members will play an important role in the later formed PAH which today is the largest anti-eviction movement in Europe (Krstić 2019, para.4).

A quick overview of the toll the crises took on the people living in Spain:

- The increase of wealth because of rising housing prices was actually an increase of household debt;
- Indebtedness rose during the boom while real wages declined;
- Mortgage were extremely problematic since 85% of people in Spain were homeowners;
- Debt held in 1990 was four times lower than held in 2006;
- 42% of people older than 20 held debt;
- Over half of this debt was mortgage related;
- By 2006 households owed 1,25€ for every euro of monthly net salary;
- Since house/apartment prices tumbled, they don't suffice anymore to settle the mortgage. Many people are indebted for life;
- The Spanish Mortgage Law of 1946 forces people to pay the mortgage "/...] or have their goods and salary (above a €967 monthly minimum) appropriated to repay their debt" (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.47);
- 27% of children in Spain were living in poverty;
- And in 1,7 million families not one person had work (Krstić 2019, para.2).

2008 marked the year in which the real estate bubble burst and with it Franco's system of homeownership. Since mortgage was now a huge part of the already precarious housing situation, V de Vivienda had to reinvent itself (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.47).

A MOVEMENT IS BORN

The housing-financial crises of 2008 led to a major bail-out of banks. Billions of taxpayers' money was spent on financial institutions pouring their money in speculative financial commodities. Spain was not exempt from this. The decisions of the Spanish government in the following years gave rise to the question: "[...] whose interests, and in whose benefit, the state (supposedly in the name of the public) acts to rescue financial systems: people or capital?" (Garcia-Lamarca, 2017, p.44).

Lamarca extends the question of who is benefiting from the State to the public and to democracy. Even before the 2008 economic crash the public sphere in Spain had been a heavily discussed topic for decades. Due to privatization and growing neoliberal regimes resulting in restrictions in and control over said public spheres (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.44). Adding fast accelerating unemployment and increasing precarity to the already mentioned problems led to "[...] the Spanish indignados 15M plaza occupations in May 2011 [...]" (ibid., p.44). The main focus of these demonstrations (occupations of public space) was the political and financial class. This was captured in a single Slogan: 'real democracy NOW!' (ibid., p.44). The slogan was also aimed at corruption of the political system and within the government. The mistrust of politicians summited in the no-confidence vote of then Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy (Russell 2019, p.992). Already we can find a lot of the cornerstones of the rising new municipalism: Critique of class society, be it financial or political, rethinking democracy and using the public space as the 'battle ground' and starting point. I will go into detail about new municipalism later on in the chapter Municipalism (Page: 31).

Many new political parties arose out of these protests (e.g. Podemos) in many different Spanish cities even winning seats in the May 2015 elections (Garcia-Lamarca, 2017, p.44). Barcelona was with the platform *Barcelona en Comú* (BComú) no exception (Russell 2019, p.992). Ana Méndez de Andés, from the platform 'Ahora Madrid', believes that a lot of the mobilisation potential of these movements, and later on *new municipalism*, is rooted in the neglect of the Spanish government to fight the cause of the problem itself but rather focusing on alleviating the symptoms. These include different issues ranging from specific local shortcomings like the environmental catastrophe in Galicia (an oil tanker named Prestige sunk causing an oil spill) or the bombings in the Metro of Madrid to failures at the national level like the first housing crisis in early 2000 to international problems like the Iraq war (Krstić 2019, para.6). What separates these new political parties that rose out of the 15-M protests from the old established ones is that they aimed to carry the spirit and philosophy of these social movements with them into their respective municipal governments (Russell 2019, p.992).

The public sphere is deeply rooted and connected to historical and political practices. Barcelona is a good example for that, since it is known to be a very transformative city undergoing numerus of changes in design, layout, function and purpose as laid out in the chapter Context. The coastal city's continuing evolution shows that public space and public sphere are informed by the social relations within them and their material arrangements (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.45). On the other side "[...] the spatiality of the public sphere transforms an understanding of the politics of public space" (ibid., p.45 from Low 2015, p.4). This becomes especially interesting in the case of the superilles since they are supposed to be designed through a 'real' democratic process with the citizens (inhabitants of the concerning blocks) heavily involved. To better understand new municipalism and the change in how public space is conceived and created in Barcelona, a glance back in time to 2009 provides insight.

This was the year the PAH (la Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca) was founded by, amongst others, Ada Colau. Having started in the Catalan capital it spread through the whole country in the wake of mass foreclosures and evictions brought about by the already mentioned Spanish real estate crises (1997-2007) (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.45). The basic idea behind the platform was simple: people joining together to help one another. Local assemblies were organised, providing different services. These ranged from "[...] collectively advising people unable to pay their mortgages or facing rental or squatting eviction, the PAH deploys a range of actions including blocking evictions, organizing bank blockades and occupations, promoting popular legislative initiatives to change Spanish law, and recuperating (occupying) empty bank-owned housing, among others" (ibid., p.45). The housing crises in Spain has a track-record of 695,000 foreclosures and more than 327,000 evictions in 8 years from 2008 until 2016 while at the same time 3.5 million housing units remained empty (ibid.,

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p.45). This is due to the Spanish legislation, requiring citizens to pay their debt even if their flat or house had already been auctioned off. Leaving hundreds of thousands of citizens without a roof over their heads and a real possibility of being indebted for life, the Spanish mortgage law desperately needed changing (ibid., p.45 from Colau & Alemany 2012). The importance of tackling a problem at its roots, in this case at the legislative level, can later be found in the 'game plan' of the *new municipalist* movement in Barcelona.

PAH: Origins of a social Movement

The first session the PAH (la Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca) ever held, would become the cornerstone the *new municipalist* movement in Barcelona stands and is built upon. It is a story of learning how to come together. The first assembly took place in Catalan capital in February of 2009. The location, a neighbourhood association in the city centre with 40 people, facing the same problem: mortgage foreclosure. Most of those 40 attendees had emigrational backgrounds (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.45).



Figure 5: PAHC Sabadell assembly, September 18, 2014 by Emma Giné

I find this detail, that most of the attendees had migrantional backgrounds, important, because it shows the willingness of the people behind the movement to keep true to their ideals: To this day there is no exclusion of people. Neither their sexual orientation, gender, class (Pérez 2019, p.24) nor nationality, ethnicity or cultural background (Baird et al. 2019, p.32) can change this. In the Appendix (Page: 171) I have a few pages dedicated to Barcelona's stance on refugees. The city's history with that topic and how *BComú* carries on that tradition reflecting *new municipalisms* humanitary approach.

The PAH (la Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca) has extended its influence across Spain within 236 localities. Although in every location the PAH is unique, all of the 236 are connected through the same demands and the same organisational principles. Even though the 15 May plaza occupations (15-M) laid the foundation for the creation of the PAH they were "[...] without clear and defined lines of action [...]" (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.47). The PAH had a more focused goal rooted in the immediate reality pointing to immediate material acts and therefore had to be better structured and organised.

One of the principles connecting all PAHs throughout Spain is the accord that the movement should be constructed as free, horizontal and non-party affiliated as possible. In addition, they have three unnegotiable demands that should be considered as the bare minimum to

- "[...] (1) change Spain's mortgage legislation so that during foreclosure proceedings the bank cancels all outstanding mortgage debt in exchange for the house (dación en pago);
- (2) to immediately stop all evictions where it is the family home and sole property; and
- (3) to transform empty houses held by rescued financial institutions into social housing where families would pay a social rent of no more than 30% of their income" (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.48).

Since these demands were barely met on neither national, regional or local level of government the PAH has built a culture of taking action by themselves. These can vary from denouncing politicians at events to blocking evictions or reoccupying empty bank owned buildings. One of the most powerful tools in the PAHs tool shed, that is used in combination to all other forms of action, is the tool of the weekly assembly. These assemblies have a deep positive psychological impact. Many people attending the PAH feel guilt, shame or even fear. Some fall into depression and there are even cases of suicide attempts. The weekly assembly acts as a sort of psychotherapy session. Meeting with people with the same kind of problems being able to express their own feelings and therefore seeing that they are not alone contributed to a feeling of relief and hope. This had been expressed by many attendees of the weekly assembly. One attendee put it this way: "[...] before coming to the PAHI thought my world had fallen apart, that I was the only one who has this problem. However, no, when I went there [to an assembly], well millions of us are affected and we are in the same boat, fighting for the same things, because there is strength in numbers" (personal communication, 28 August 2014) (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.48ff). This idea of the citizens assembling is a good expression of the core value of new municipalism as well (Thompson 2020, p.7). No one is left out because the problems one is confronted with, we are all confronted by and facing them together is better and facing them alone.

These weekly meetings help solidify the idea of collective action and that individual problems originally situated in the private realm are at the same time of public nature. The movement has politicised "[...] the spatiality of the public sphere, making debates and above all disagreement (Rancière 1999) visible in space. They are examples of relational counter spaces, "where alternative paths of urban development beyond capitalist growth scenarios can be imagined, invented and explored" (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.48 from Knierbein 2015, p.53). This is a very important development for creating a project that, in its transformational nature, defies city planning as it has been done over the last 50 years. Breaking with the status quo. For a seed to sprout it first needs a soil that provides all the right nutrients. In case of the reimagination of the superblock idea and the new municipalist movement in general the 15M as well as the PAH can be seen as the minerals which enriched an otherwise dry and unfruitful soil (Thompson 2020, p.5).

The PAH takes a big stance against neoliberalism in politics. They condemn the private banks and the political system in which socialist as well as conservative governments rescued 21 private saving banks with billions of euros of public funds, without nationalising them (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.49). Some of the demands, for example that the public should benefit the public and not private capital, are (amongst others Marxist) ideas that also can be found in *new municipalism* (this does not mean that *new municipalism* claims itself Marxist for there are plenty socio-democratic stance in the same vein). Although very interesting I can only scratch the surface of the economic thought within the *new municipalist* movement, since the topic would provide material for a master thesis of its own. But when I do write about its stance on the economy and how it envisions a better economy, it is to underline the movements communal nature.

That Barcelona has a rich culture of protest and political action is highlighted by the fact that, the first occupation that took place in September 2011 was in Montcada i Reixac, a city located in the metropolitan area of the Catalan capital. After not being able to stop the third eviction, the flat, that was now owned by the bank, was occupied by the family who had previously owned the condo before they were forced out. In another metropolitan region of Barcelona, Terrassa, the tradition of collective occupations as well as the campaign 'Obra Social' (Social Work) was born. The Obra Social is dedicated to helping families, faced with evictions.

Garcia-Lamarca (2017, p.53) writes that the Obra Social was very important for lifting the veil

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behind the mechanisms of capitalism. It showed that, at least in the crisis of 2008, the private debt of the Spanish financial sector was turned into a public crisis by the Spanish state and the European Union intentionally and willingly. The PAH and the Obra Social became the sparks for bringing the question and discussion of what is private and public property as well as the question of exchange value vs. use value from the shadows of academic discourses in lecture halls onto the streets and into public light. So, in a sense the M-15 Movement "[...] revived and rejuvenated the activist tradition of Barcelona, becoming intermeshed with it when the activity displaced from occupied squares to neighborhoods, yet introducing to it the language, global framing and work methods which reflect the socio-organizational machinery of the knowledge society" (Russo 2017, p.14).

The PAH articulates its political stance quite unambiguously: "\(\ldots \) we rescue people, not banks" (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.53). This notion of putting people at the centre of their work can also be translated to the new municipalist movement. The foundation for every action should and must be the human being alongside the environment, for humans cannot exist without intact ecosystems.

This consensus trickles down to every aspect new municipalism touches. It manifests itself in the superillies initiative, a holistic environmental urban transformational adaption aiming at reducing CO2 emissions and to alleviate the city of effects of the climate crisis. Humans give back space to plants and animals and they should profit by their integration into the urban landscape. In turn humans profit from the new urban-fauna-flora ecosystem (cooler public spaces, reduced noise levels, less air pollution etc.). That the public space should be a place for humans (and animals) is underlined by one of the slogans of the future superblocks: Omplim de vida els carrers - Let's fill the streets with life! Though having a nice ring to it, the fashion and manner of how the streets should be filled with life is very important here. New municipalism aims to be open and inclusive, but public spaces can quickly become exclusive if they become commercialised. Of course, these are ideals of new municipalism and whether they stay true to their ideals, whether the quarrels of everyday politics get in the way or if it is a utopian dream that cannot come true, only time can tell. Barcelona is currently governed by a new municipalist administration, holding office since 2015. It has implemented a pilot superblock (SB9) in 2016 in the quater of Poblenou. After six years it can already shed (some) light on to which degree the new municipalist ideals manifested themselves in the lived and built space of their first superilla.

Garcia-Lamarca, without referencing new municipalism or the superblock initiative, foreshadows in the last paragraph of her conclusion that something was stirring in Barcelona. She writes: "As an ideological construction, just as the false ideal of public space being open to all can become a "rallying point for successive waves of political activity" (Mitchell 1995, p. 117), the ideal of the public can be used to recuperate spaces in the name of (supposedly universal) rights" (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.53).

Barcelona en Comú - A Platform goes Mayor

Ada Colau is well known for being an active activist at the time and part of the team that founded the PAH (Thompson 2020, p.5) and its leader. In 2014 the cornerstone for Barcelona en Comú (BComú) was laid. With the municipal elections in sight, the new movements that rose from the M-15 aftermath connected with important academics but even more critical, connected with neighbourhood associations (Russo 2017, p.14). Due to her fame in Barcelona, as well as abroad (she had held impressive speeches in the Spanish as well as European parliament), she was the obvious choice to lead this new coalition project (ibid., p.14). This coalition was formed by diverse groups with varying but also common opinions. Colau brought together: "[...] the most prominent spokespersons of the 15M movement, activists going way back into the social fights of the early seventies, key figures of the political group Iniciativa per Catalunya – Verds (a federation of the Catalan Communist Party, Catalan Unified Socialist Party and Green Party, which eventually decided to dissolve into the new formation), prestigious academics and promising researchers from the four public universities of Barcelona, renown environmental and gender activists /.../" (ibid., p.14ff).

The financial and housing crises was kind of like the last blow for Barcelona's residents for whom "\...\] the post-[Universal] Forum [of World Cultures], post-crisis Barcelona, the relentless growth of tourism and the polarization of the society started to appear connected – the transformation of the city was not anymore seen as a blessing by everybody, but something that was deepening the divide between winners and losers, along class, spatial and age and gender lines" (Russo 2017, p.11). So, in May of 2015 they voted Barcelona en Comú, which won 11 of the total 41 seats, into Barcelona's city council (Zografos et al. 2020, p.7). The movement did so without the money of corporations or banks but through donations via crowd-founding (Russell 2019, p.993) and was built on "[...] markedly urban-based practices in self-organisation, exemplified by the strong anarchist and federalist traditions in Barcelona [...]" (Thompson 2020, p.9).

BComú also won the mayor seat for Ada Colau. The election of Colau as mayor was a significant moment in Barcelona's political history, for it was the first time, not a traditional party but a movement (grassroots-based political party) led by a woman won the mayor's office (Zografos et al. 2020, p.7). As mentioned above she has a capitalist and conservative critical background that is shared within Barcelona en Comú which emerged out of the struggle against neo-liberal austerity measure (Thompson 2020, p.4). In urbanistic matters this stance is displayed by challenging the previous 'Barcelona model' of urban development in the Catalan capital: Growth oriented and drawn towards commercialisation and without effectively dealing with real estate speculation (Zografos et al. 2020, p.7).

With the election of Ada Colau a new wave of political thinking and interpretation of what politics could and should be swept over the Catalan capital. A politics rooted in a long history of participation and the betterment of city dwellers quality of life. Russo (2017, p.13) places BComú into historic context as the successor of the "[...] tradition of citizens" (sic) activism, itself a derivative of cooperative solidarity and unionism movements, inscribed in the republican and anarchist history of the Catalan capital of the XX century. Suffocated during the Franco regime but resurfaced in its final stages and in the period of transition to democracy, the constellation of neighborhood associations came to be a key player in the design of democratic institutions and in the negotiation of the" urban renaissance" program".

This is the recent historic background highlighting the conditions and political and economic circumstances that led to the formation of the new municipalist movement Barcelona en Comú. But municipalism itself has a history reaching back over two millennia. Reaching all the way back to 'mother land' of European democracy, Greece.



MUNICIPALISM

The shortest and most pragmatic way of viewing new municipalism is, that it's a social movement with the goal of transforming the local state and economy through democratic mechanisms deriving from contesting neoliberal austerity urbanism and platform capitalism (Thompson 2020, p.1). It is a movement built on urban solidarities (ibid., p. 1) and it is transnational, taking root separately in many different continents. For example, the movement sprung up in countries in Europe, Latin and North America. In the beginning, these were separate movements with only lose connections. This changed in 2017 at the 'Fearless City Summit'. It was organised in Barcelona by BComú with the purpose of bringing people, their knowledge and stories from all over the world, together. To understand new municipalism it is important to understand the history and the different forms munic*ipalism* has taken over the course of history. Its history is also vital to comprehend *BComú's* ideals, its views on neighbourhood and social cohesion and the design/decision making process, the implementation and goals of the superblock initiative.

THE HISTORY OF MUNICIPALISM

Origin of Municipalism – The Polis

'Municipalism' is not something new. It is almost as old as democracy itself. Municipalism is rooted in the idea of the 'Polis', a sovereign city-state, by Aristotle (Thompson, 2020 from Bookchin, 1987). Back in his time (384-322 B.C.) in Greece large countries (empires), in terms of landmass, were seldom. The Polis had a rich history reaching from the eighth until the fourth century B.C. (Wolff 2014, p.801). The ancient city-states did not consider themselves a country/empire. Unlike the Persians whose people had an 'ethnic' identity (ibid., p.801). The Greeks rather formed small and free communities that primarily did not define themselves through their territories, but its citizens. This meant that every city-state had:

- Sovereignty over their respective territories;
- The power to sign and enforce their own laws;
- And could choose their favoured god to protect them (e.g. the city-state of Athens selected the goddess Athena) (Wolff 2014, p.801).

Other characteristics of a Polis were:

- A large assembly (agora) in which all citizens [politeia (πολιτεία)] would gather (in the polis, women, children, foreigners and slaves were not considered as citizens and therefore excluded from the assembly);
- A number of councils tasked with implementing the decisions made by the assembly;
- Public offices that could today be considered as magistrates. Citizens took turns holding these offices;
- The political system that ruled the city-state. It could either be an oligarchic or in the case of Athens a democratic polis. After a debate, in which every attendee of the assembly had an equal right to make his opinion known, a decision was reached by majority vote. The council and the public office had been appointed via lottery (Wolff 2014, p.801).

An interesting distinction between the Polis and modern terms like 'state', 'society' or 'nation' can be drawn like this:

"Every Greek felt connected to his polis by an attachment so strong that he was often prepared to sacrifice his time for its administration and his life for its defense, and he feared the punishment of exile more than any other. Nonetheless, this feeling was not exactly national, if by "nation" we mean a community of language and culture (what the Greeks called ethnos [ἔθνος], and which they distinguished precisely from polis), not exactly patriotic, since it is less a relationship to a "native land," to a territory, than what the Greeks called chôra [χώρα], an awareness of belonging to a human community bound together by a shared past and a future to be constructed in common." (Wolff 2014, p.801).

The community of a Polis was not only bound by the characteristics mentioned above but the power it wielded over all its members and groups. Likewise, this is true for modern states no matter the political form they take or the ideology they build upon. But for Wolff there is a stark difference.

"The state appears as an omnipotent, anonymous, and distant legal institution against which individual liberties must—always and again and again—be defended: the state is "they" against "us"—and "we" are individuals, or society" (Wolff 2014, p.801).

I do not whole heartily agree with Wolff on this harsh separation of the state (politicians – they) and individuals (the voters – us). I myself see the connection and the impact I (can) have on the political realm (voting, demonstrating, joining a political party or movement, taking part in participatory processes etc.). But in my opinion the quote serves quite well, because of its extreme, to highlight that the representative democratic system, like all other forms, has benefits and drawbacks. Casting ones vote or taking to the streets is a personal decision. One can opt out of the political process if he or she so chooses, no matter the reason. Be it a loss of faith in the system or its representatives, not finding one's values or beliefs represented in any party or just a lack of interest. There exists a variety of reasons not to 'fulfil' one's 'duty', as at least the voting part of the political process is often described, but if a person simply has no interest in participating, it can be said that very little harm is done to the political system (it does not portray the system in a good light either, for a democracy should aim to motivate all to take part in it and losing an opinion, for me, means losing potential valuable input) but reasons of mistrust, of 'they' vs. 'us' thinking, harbours many potential dangers for the system itself.

Corruption scandals, politicians working for their own interests, emerging every other day (in Austria) do not alleviate this feeling, this stance either. In Austria 40% of people hold the opinion that corruption has risen in the last 12 months (Kukutschka 2021, p.3), 46% think that it is posing a big problem (ibid., p.11) and 42% give the government a bad performance review when it comes to handling the issue (ibid., p.13).

This is reflected in the drop of trust and confidence in the administration. This should not be interpreted as a mistrust of the system, but politics not addressing this issue of corruption (politics is taking this issue more seriously in recent years in Austria) and not holding people accountable for their misconduct (which is yet to be seen and time will tell) may sow the seeds of doubt and distrust in the system itself. The goal must be to get more people to participate in democracy.

I'm not advocating for obligatory participation. It is obligatory to vote in Luxemburg (derStandard 2018: Luxemburg wählt ein neues Parlament) for example. As is in Belgium, citizens can lose their right to vote for 10 years and will have it harder to get a job in the public sector if they fail to exercise their right, in this case obligatory right at least four times (Frankal 2005: Compulsory voting around the world). I advocate for motivating people and raising interest to take part in democracy

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of their free will. Also, I believe, that people need to be involved in the political process on a regular basis and not just every four or five years throwing a paper into a ballet box.

A representative democracy means delegating reasonability and power to another person. But it also means giving up control. Depending on how the representative democracy is structured this lack of control on part of the citizens is smaller or greater. In Austria for example there exists the mechanism of a Volksbegehren. This is a means for citizens to voice a specific concern and to oblige the national parliament consider it and maybe turn it into a law (the Volksbegehren must be signed by at least 100,000 citizens in order to reach consideration by the parliament) (Republik Österreich: Parlament - Volksbegehren). There are also other forms of control but I would argue, that the vote is, for the citizens, the most direct and easy mode. But this mechanism of control only comes around every now and again (e.g. in Austria every five years if the coalition lasts that long). But the "[...] same was not true in the polis: the pressure exercised by the polis is still exercised by "us," as such, by the community as a whole. To this extent, the freedom of the individual is gauged not by his independence with regard to the state but by the collectivity's dependence with regard to him, that is, to his participation in the polis" (Wolff 2014, p.801). The keyword connecting this old idea of the Polis to the new municipalism movement, which will be explained in detail later on, is participation, the agora and the accountability of the city's council and institutions. Participation in the political process is the control mechanism. Our word 'idiot' comes from the Greek word idiōtēs [ἰδιώτης] which means 'private person' or 'private citizen'. In ancient Greece, the word was used for citizens of a Polis who did not take part in the assemblies and participate in public life.

Great Greek philosophers thought a great deal about what it means to be human and what it means to live and why we live in communities. I want to cite a few quotes that resonate with me and are interesting in the context of *new municipalism*:

Protagoras "[...] thought that men have to live in poleis because they lack other animals' biological qualities that fit them for the struggle for life, and thus have to unite by showing the virtues necessary for life in common" (Wolff 2014, p.802). Today the struggle for life includes preventing the climate crisis, which we, as a species, can only achieve united.

Aristotle "[...] sees man as being by definition a "political animal" (Politics, 1.1253a 1–38), that is, "one who lives in a polis," and by that we must understand not only a "social animal," but also a being that can be happy only if he can freely decide, with his peers, what is right for their common life" (Wolff 2014, p.802).

This fight against a common struggle and the navigation of a common life through participation builds a community in which solidarity does not hinge upon family ties but is carried on over generations building on a collective identity. This may sound like what we today would call a society, but this is not the case. In ancient Greece, the social and the economic was not part of the public but the private sphere, the \emph{oikos} [oikos]. The polis can best be described as a 'political community' because it unites the spheres of power (what we now would consider as (institutionalised) politics) and community (what we today would deem as 'society'). The shared believe in the conjunction of these two spheres is what binds all citizens of a polis together, not a sense of nation, territory, culture or ethnic identity (Wolff 2014, p.802).

It must be stated again, that women were not considered as citizens in the Greek city-states, the cradle of *municipalism*. Today, in the 21st century the premise of being born a male to be allowed to participate in the political process is outdated in many countries. But not all of them yet. In some countries, this is still a huge struggle that continues. As I stated before, I firmly believe that every person, no matter their gender, origin, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, believe system (religion,

atheism, science etc.) etc. can, if they so choose, provide valuable experience, information and input for their community, society and political system.

As over the course of time many things have evolved, so did the idea of the Polis. Its current stage, *new municipalism*, takes a different stance on who gets to have a say in the political process. But I am getting ahead of myself. Before the Polis gets to this evolutionary step, and I will get to that, it still has some thousand years of evolving to do.

EVOLUTION OF MUNICIPALISM

Since then Municipalism took many different forms. Guilds, which can be seen as an early form of Municipalism, being an association with a huge web of connections, sprung up all over Europe before being overtaken "[...] by Westphalian nation-states, bureaucracy and diplomacy, and consequently consigned by Weberian sociology as pre-modern relics (Thompson 2020, p.3 from Ewen and Hebbert, 2007). According to Thompson (2020, p.4) Municipalism made a comeback at the beginning of the 19th century as local authorities were introduced as part the regulatory system of European states. Spain being one of them (ibid.p.4). Other examples of citizen government by the citizens themselves include the Paris Commune and the Anarchist Collectives of Spain in 1936 (Bookchin 2019, p.14).

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, DISEASE AND ENGINEERS

In Spain, Barcelona, Cerdà played an important role during that time for its citizens and urbanism itself. He was the first to write down the terms 'urbanism' and 'urbanist'. He put those words to paper, because "[...] the conditions of modern life demanded a distinctive understanding of cities" (Sennett 2018, p.21). This was due to the implementation, one could say invention, of local authorities that acted within the established state regimes of the European continent. Cities in Europe had a variety of problems to handle. As already mentioned in the chapter about Ildefons Cerdà (Page:15), the city of Barcelona faced huge hygienic problems. Until municipalists took on the herculean task of sanitising cities and increasing the living conditions for citizens the grim reality of city life throughout history up to this point in time was one of disease, plague and death (ibid., p.21).

Another factor adding stress to an already strained environment was the stark growth of the population that dwelled in urban areas (e.g. in Britain in the 1890s three-quarters of its population dwelled in urban regions) due to the industrialisation, leaving most of the infrastructure overwhelmed (Leopold & McDonald 2012, p.1839). More people pouring in from the countryside to find work meant more houses, more chimneys, more pollution and more disease (Sennett 2018, p.22). This massive rise in urban population, crammed together in a small space in terms of the cities expansion as well as dwelling size, had negative effects on the spread of diseases. In turn a collective feeling of vulnerability and the epiphany that the prosperity, the stability and the health of all inhabitants was intertwined arose (Leopold & McDonald 2012, p.1839).

The civil engineers of that period, like Cerdà, became highly thought of during their lifetime. Not only through clever engineering, the invention of new materials and the finding of scientific evidence, but also through trial and error, this group of people managed to achieve what neither doctors nor politicians could. They became the real craftsmen of the city and their quality of life as we know them today (Sennett 2018, p.22).

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But they did not only make changes to the physical structure. They also sought to influence the mentality of the people residing in their cities. Influencing the cité by altering the ville. For example, in London they improved the ville by using smoother stones as pavement, hoping that streets that are easier to clean, will motivate the citizens of Great Britain's capital to clean them more often (Sennett 2018, p.22). Another example that may now seem small but had a big impact, was the installation of urinals in Paris in the 1880s (ibid., p.23). Because of these engineers many municipalities were won by socialist and reformist alliances and the so called 'Municipal Socialism' was formed (Thompson 2020, p.3ff). But it was not just the struggle against these many health crises that made Municipal Socialism popular. This new form enjoyed widespread support amongst the people because it transformed public services, running them effective and efficiently, and tried to act as an intellectual and political counterpart "\[\cdot\]...\] to privatization and other prototypical forms of what we now call neoliberalism" (Leopold & McDonald 2012, p.1838).

In Britain, the management of these crises on local level resulted in the reversal of political decision making. Proposals and requests were sent up the political ladder, instead of top-down from parliament (Leopold & McDonald 2012, p.1839). But of course, this does not signify that every municipality which tried Municipal Socialism considered it to be a success and critique of the idea also circled in high political ranks. Lenin for example saw its shortcomings in its range, not being able to bring to fruition the larger socialist transformation (one is inclined to say revolution) need at the beginning of the 20th century (ibid., p.1838).

From the late 1800s to the 1940s Municipal Socialism was used to spread socialist ideas (Leopold & McDonald 2012, p.1838). In general, one could say that Municipalism strives for a democratic, political and economic autonomy aside the nation-state (Thompson 2020, p.1).

'International Municipalism' is a different form of municipalism that came to be as a utopian-socialist conception. It "[...] evolved into an apolitical and techno-scientific endeavour in pursuit of the common good' [...]" as it mixed with concepts of the Garden City, pacifism, internationalism and Esperanto (Thompson 2020, p.4). The idea was to find and create connections with different municipalities no matter their ideological positions. The pillars bridging these different municipalities, was science and each municipality a laboratory (ibid., p.4). The goal was further for science to build a common 'library' of shared knowledge for advancing and reproducing innovative urban policies.

The 'Transnational Municipalist' movement arose in the 20th century but soon was transformed into the post-war national welfare state as we know them today in Europe. The 'European Municipalism' sought out peace and unification and turned into the EU policy networks, for example the Eurocities (Thompson 2020, p.4).

Municipalism did not stop at the borders of Western Europe and spread to the eastern part of the continent as well as Asia and the newly democratized countries of Latin America. The neoliberal globalisation played a huge role in building city networks (e.g. international NGOs, UN Habitat or WHO) throughout the globe (Thompson 2020, p.4). By 2017 there were over 200 of these networks, a third of which have been created since 2001 and are tied to or can be affiliated "[...] closely to North American philanthropies such as the Rockefeller foundation" (ibid., p.4).

When looking at how such global cooperations could be formed, Thompson refers to Saunier (2002) "[...] the future is undoubtedly urban; that municipalities, not nation-states, are the basic cell structure of civilisations; that municipal governance is an apolitical, technical exercise aspiring to scientific method; that municipalities, existing in a shared universe of rules and values, are globally comparable" (Thompson 2020, p.4). Saunier believes that members of an international cooperation need to ascribe to these four statements in order for them to work. Having analysed *new municipalism* and its effort to build an international cooperation (Fearless Cities) throughout different countries, cultures and cities I do not agree with all of these postulates.

First, the statement that the future is undoubtedly urban may be correct in the sense, that in 2050 around 68% of the human population will live in an urban setting (United Nations - 68% of the world population projected to live in urban areas by 2050, says UN). But only time can prove Saunier right or wrong. What that urban setting will look like on the other hand is quite debatable and must be better and more clearly defined.

The second statement is in my opinion true. I for my part have stronger connection to the borrow, the district and city I grow up in than to the state or other municipalities in Austria. I guess there are different views on what civilisation is and therefore how it is formed. For me civilisation is the coming together of people, the sharing of knowledge and time, the formation of a community and common culture and identity (culture and identity should not be formed by the separation and distinction from others but the celebration of one's own and the diversity of the others since no culture or civilisation is better or worse, they are just more or less familiar).

That brings me to the fourth statement. We exist in a universe of more shared rules and values than ever before, but there is still quite a lot of diversity left (and good so). Even if all rules and values are the same (as are in a country or municipality) the same rules do not apply to all equally. They can be bent and broken and the consequences are different depending the persons own unique situation. As for values, these are for me quite loose terms that are seldom clearly defined. They are more or less guidelines, but again each person's uniqueness will play into one's own interpretation of values. The topic of values will be further discussed in later chapter since it is an important dimension of *social* and *neighbourhood cohesion*. Comparability is good, when it can be done, for putting things into perspective and context. But in urban projects, since every city is unique and even districts within cities are rarely comparable because of their socio-economic and topographical diversity and political systems, because of the uniqueness of the history and culture of the people making up and participating in that system, comparability is not a necessary goal to strive for.

The third statement, that municipal governance is an apolitical, technical exercise aspiring to scientific method also needs more clarification. Municipal governance as it is lived by *BComú* is a new, more open and inclusive interpretation of politics, but it is still a form of politics. It may be considered as atypical politics because the *new municipalist* movement in the Catalan capital believes that good ideas by the people should not be discarded, just because they can be contributed to a political party or ideology. They hope to brake from the tradition of 'in the trenches politics' in which votes in the municipal council are only cast along political lines. Also, as I will argue later on, the urban (or a rural municipality) cannot be separated from politics. Every municipality is by definition part of politics, because a municipality is just a spatial definition (limitation) of the political influence, control and power. In a municipality decisions on public goods, public space, public services etc. hence the public has to be made and every decision that has to be made evokes politics. For, if we break it down, politics is nothing but decision making (of course including all the reasons that lead to the desired outcome of the decision).

Alongside its goal of breaking with the austerity politics of neo-liberalism new municipalism seeks to, as Thompson (2020, p.5) puts it, bring "/...] together diverse intersecting citizen interests, classes and groups into platforms that transcend traditional party lines for more open, democratic organisational forms" and calls this type of "\[\]...\] transformative politics beyond formal liberal-democratic representative mechanisms \[\]...\]" (ibid., p.10) 'political anit-politics' (ibid., p.10).

CRITIQUE AND OPPOSITION

Municipalism was criticised from the beginning, from all sides of the political spectrum. Businesses raised questions about the fairness of municipal intervention in the economy. The right fear mongered, that it would bankrupt cities and towns. The left declared it just to be another form of capitalism, not aiding the goal of universal socialism and its ideals.

The argument that rose out of the ranks of businesses was that public undertakings could not be efficient. That people not skilled enough worked in the public sector, that public enterprise is erasing 'equal opportunity' that a free market provides and that the rates and costs municipal enterprise could set is hurting their financial wellbeing. Local governments should stick to governing and keep their heads out of trading (Leopold & McDonald 2012, p.1842). The spread of municipalism was feared in Britain as well as in the United States of America. Prominent political figures, like the Director of the of the US Census, Robert Porter, toured all over Britain prophesising the financial collapse of every town and the establishment of an army of officials which would take up Social Municipalism (ibid., p.1842).

In London at the turn of the 19th century 40,000 had been employed in the public sector by the London County Council (LCC) (Leopold & McDonald 2012, p.1843). Back then construction work was outsourced to private businesses that kept prices high and costs low by forming cartels. Most of the employees of the LCC earned nothing close to the minimum living wage. But around the same time unions were gaining traction and power. The LCC helped this trend by establishing their own workers department. This meant that constructions, repairs and maintenance of infrastructures were done by public employees. In addition, the LCC started paying living wages. Promoters of municipal employment understood, that starvation wages had long-lasting effects on the welfare of its population. Even tough costly upfront, paying higher wages resulted in a decline of crime, illness and poverty (ibid., p.1843). Treating the source and not the symptoms.

The hiring of its own workforce by the LCC did not change the system as foretold by the scaremongers. In general, the number of municipal employees made up between 2% and 3% of the cities total workforce and most of the construction contracts still were awarded to the private sector. But paying a fair and secured wage had a big impact of the perception of unfair payment, helping workers in all sectors (Leopold & McDonald 2012, p.1843ff). Leopold and McDonald go so far as saying, that these early municipal enterprises transformed the notion of municipal and state employment in a profound way, "/...] from one that fell within the logic of the market to one that saw state spending as having a larger social and economic role in stimulating the provision of improved services" (ibid., p.1844).

Municipalism has a rich history of providing the residents of its cities with better quality of life on multiple levels. New municipalism is a movment that continuous in this vein and adapts this 2000 year old tradition to be able to combate modern crisis.

New Municipalism

New municipalism on the other hand, as the name kindly gives away, is relatively new. For Thompson (2020, p.18) this is in part because of its radical political agenda which separates it from older forms such as Municipal Socialism. Thompson quotes the Cooperation Jackson Slogan, a movement from the United States, to showcase this: "[...] the democratization of society and the socialization of production [...]" (ibid., p.18), only to ask the question what it is, that makes new municipalism so radical, so new. In short it is the level, the scale on which it operates: the local. But political movements acting at this level are in danger of falling into a trap: the local trap. In this chapter I will examine why the municipal scale is considered important, what the local trap is and if new municipalism is wary of this pitfall.

LEVEL OF OPERATION AND THE LOCAL TRAP

New municipalism's strategy is to bring about change at the municipal stage. Rather than to follow state logics, the movement sets out to transform and imagine new institutional forms (Junqué et al. 2019, p.49). And there are three different ways on achieving this goal:

- "[...] through challenging traditional party politics with digitally-mediated citizen platforms;
- channelling economic development through non-state urban networks of anchor institutions and co-ops;
- or building autonomous federations of urban assemblies in place of the state." (Thompson 2020, p.2).

For Thompson (2020, p.2), acting on the scale of the urban is a very important distinction. He argues that in social studies, geography as well as urban studies, the Polis was conflated to the state and that this view makes us fail to see the "[...] symbiosis of the urban and the political" (ibid., p.2 from Magnusson 2014). So to speak, the urban is the 'real' political arena, the place to "[...] either re-form the state at the municipal scale or prefigure a different kind of polis, rooted in the urban" (ibid., p.3). State-centrism is to be made a relic of the past by reconstructing the relations between the political, the state and the 'urban everyday' (ibid., p.3 from Beveridge and Koch 2019a & Magnusson 2014).

Mark Purcell (2006, p.1921) cautions to be wary of what he calls the 'Local Trap' which consists of two mayor attributes:

- 1. The insertion of inherent characteristics into any scale for they "[...] are socially constructed strategies to achieve particular ends" (Purcell 2006, p.1921).
- 2. Equating the local (in the case of *new municipalism* the municipality) with the 'the good' (Purcell 2006, p.1924) and thereby giving it an inherent characteristic.

First, I want to address the first point raised by Purcell, that of scales being socially constructed strategies. As Russell (2019, p.994) points out, it does not matter, whether scales are socially constructed strategies or if they are "[...] a contingent outcome of the tensions that exist between structural forces and the practices of human agents" (ibid., p.994 from Marston 2000, p.220) and therefore should be thrown out the window and made unnecessary (ibid., p.994 from Marston et al. 2005, p.416). There exists a mountain of evidence, that scale is socially and materially constructed (ibid., p.994) and that it does not matter if the concept of scale is real or not, because it structures our world and very real sense (ibid., p.994).

I tend to agree with Russell for I hold the opinion, that human beings are always in need for structure. Many of us have an innate drive to order and structure the world around us. Other animals have claws, sharp teeth or venoms, we have the power to see and recognise patterns. I believe, that we see and understand the world around us through these patterns. Subconsciously looking for

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them everywhere and in everything, we try to make sense of the world, and life for us easier by structuring our lives. This includes our homes, our daily routines, time itself (into hours, minutes and seconds) and ourselves (social hierarchy) and our politics are no exception. The level of scale can be constructed however we decide (international, state, regional etc. or something in-between), but it will not make a difference for its abstraction and remoteness (meaning the physical distance of officials and residents). So, for me the question what scale works best or is the optimum is the wrong one. Instead we should ask how the scales can best work together. This may make transformations necessary. Which is possible because a scale is a social construct and "[...] Therefore, the particular qualities of a given scale, such as its extent, its function or its relationships to other scales, are not eternal or ontologically given" (Purcell 2006, p.1927).

Addressing Purcells second point. The shift of focus to the urban/municipal by the *new municipalist* movement is not to be understood that the municipal scale is inherently a place of greater democracy or justice (Russell 2019, p.911) or inherently 'good'. *New municipalism* rather views the "[...] "municipal" as a strategic entry point for developing broader practices and theories of transformative social change" (ibid., p.991) and transformative prefigurative politics (ibid., p.991). Zografos et al. (2020, p.3) write that in order to make urban planning and design practices as well as new climate (I would also include resident) infrastructure more inclusive, with more equality and more resilience, it is important to reconfigure current political constraints (e.g. for urban transformational adaption like the *superilla*) and power relations (ibid., p.3). That the municipality is the optimum entry point for bringing about that change, carved by municipalist movements, has no conclusive theoretical backing though (Russell 2019, p.911).

Purcell (2006, p.1921) believes there are no inherent characteristics at any scale because any particular outcome can be achieved at any scale. As he himself writes "Localisation can lead to a more democratic city, or a less democratic one. All depends on the agenda of those empowered by a given scalar strategy" (ibid., p.1921). I agree with Purcell that the course of an outcome does not depend on the scale. For me it is more a question of how the scale is constructed, who works on it and to whom they answer to. A political science professor during my history studies once said that there is nothing inherently good or bad about a state form. Like Purcell he argued, that a 'good' dictator may provide a better life for his subjects than a corrupt democracy for its citizens. It is not about the form of politics but the outcome. Also, what is considered as 'good' has a huge spectrum of interpretation (Russell 2006, p.1924). There is a difference though, which makes democracies in general work at least a little bit better for the people than dictatorships normally do and that is accountability. If the democracy is not a dictatorship disguising itself as a democracy, people have the ability, the right to reject the politics made and vote for another kind of politics. So, coming back to the inherent characteristics of the scales, in my opinion there is one inherent difference between the state, regional or municipal level: accountability. This makes the municipality, the local attractive for change as a strategic entry point. Not it's spatial size, but the proximity to the people. This allows the mobilisation of people and organisations from inside, as well as outside of municipal authorities to democratise institutions (Russell 2019, p.911). To open them up to, by and for the people and make them more accessible, more transparent and especially more accountable, if the scale is constructed 'good'. Under the new municipalist vision what is considered to be 'good' is decided collectively (Junqué et al. 2019, p.49) in local assemblies at the bottom and brought to the top via delegates not representatives.

Russell (2019, p.994 from Featherstone et al. 2012, p.177-178) also argues that localism should not fall into a trap and be consumed by "[...] anti-state populist agenda [...]". But he points out, that

"[...] contesting scale does not mean valorising the "national" or "international" in opposition to the "local" (ibid., p.995). This issue is addressed in the 'Fearless Cities Book' by Jorge Sharp stating that municipal politics has never understood itself as an exclusion or even an opposition to the state (Sharp 2019, p.18). BComú and Ada Colau provide an example of a localism that recognises the importance of all levels and the role they play for a functioning society. Although Colau politically and materially supported a referendum of Catalonia's independence from Spain, she distanced herself from the left-wing party Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) seeking independence (Zografos et al. 2020, p.8).

Her true intentions are obviously not clear to me, but I believe, that Colau does see and recognise the role Spain as the national level plays also for Catalonia. The state does not always play his part well but nonetheless its importance can hardly be denied. Colau supporting the referendum makes sense to me because of her history and her goals to democratise politics. It could be considered as hypocritical to open up politics and institutions to the people but not support a citizen referendum.

In turn, the Spanish government provides evidence of halting much needed change and gives credit to forces advocating for 'localism'. In August of 2017 the Catalan regional government introduced and passed a law for mitigating climate change and the Spanish government instead of praising Catalonia for its effort, tried to strike the bill down and challenged it in court (Zografos et al. 2020, p.10).

Again, the question is not what the best scale is but what is being constituted at each scale (Russell 2019, p.994 from Featherstone et al. 2012, p.179). Purcell (2006, p.1923) argues that the Local Trap leads to favouring local residents instead of a wider public. In the case of the climate bill I would contest him, for the prioritisation of the local's residents wishes over the state yields benefits for all. Another example is the recently introduced 'Montoro Law' with which the Spanish government "[...] limits local government capacities and spending powers to pursue municipalist reforms, especially in re-municipalisation and staff hiring" (Thompson 2020, p.16).

Not everything is black and white and many factors play a role in such complex matters. There are numerous positive as well as negative examples of having federalism within a state. It always depends on what one considers as 'good'. A scale is sometimes dismissed because at the current stage it is occupied by the 'wrong' political agenda. Purcell (2006, p.1928) gives the example, "[...] if in a given case neo-liberal interests have successfully used a strategy of nationalisation to pursue their goals, those resisting neo-liberalism might come to associate the national scale with the neo-liberal agenda and the local scale with resistance". BComú is not in the position to nationalise its agenda, but that the 'greater' movement (by that I mean all movements that rose out of the 15 May plaza occupations (15-M)) is working to change the political agenda at the national scale is proven by the offshoot 'Podemus'. Scales are fixed in a certain point in time but fluid when looking at them over a longer period (Purcell 2006, p.1928) and therefore a scale or a scalar strategy (e.g. municipalisation) is never the same as an agenda (e.g. social-ecologism) (ibid., p.1928).

PLACE, TIME AND DEMOCRATISATION

So how can democratisation be conducted. Russell (2019, p.995) goes on by linking the process of democratisation with place and refers to Margaret Kohn (Kohn 2003, p.152-153) who views place as a conditional part of transformative politics and contests the notion "[...] that a political appeal to place is conservative, essentialist, or anachronistic". She states that "[...] municipalist politics is "a political approach to community [that] mobilizes the resources of locality for an explicitly political agenda", one which "involves

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citizens in governing through participation ... that blur[s] the line between state and civil society" (Russell 2019, p.995 from Kohn 2003, p.152-153).

For me another conditional part of transformative politics is time. If people are to really engage with politics on a more profound level, critically viewing information and forming their own opinions, they need time. Changing of our economy, changing the value we place on certain sectors while devaluing others, we could take steps forward in reducing working hours: "Our basic needs are food, healthcare, education, and shelter. If as societies we focused on those needs rather than maximal output, it would free up a lot of labour for other activities" (Schor 2020, p.50).

But as our societies work right now with most people working at least 40 hour jobs, the regional and national level cannot be democratised in the same way as the local level, for it is already not that easy to find the time to invest it in the local community or local politics. But I do not think these scales need to be democratised in the same way as the municipal scale. I think more transparency and accountability on these levels suffices. And I believe it can be achieved through democratising institutions at the municipal level and let accountability trickle up. This is, in my view, exactly what new municiplism aims at. At "\[\lambda \ldots \right] how different elements of the state apparatus can be used against itself in bolstering the capacity of societies to govern themselves [...]" (Russell 2019, p.996). So, it is of utmost importance to keep in mind, that winning elections and filling seats at the municipal level is just a part, just one tool in a toolbox full of instruments for more democracy. Russell (2019, p.997) puts it that way: "Engagement with institutions and elections should be understood as a component of broader strategic approaches, rather than the defining feature of the new municipalism".

For example, the reason why new municipalism took such a hold in Barcelona and in Spain was a mixture of self-organisation and a rare cultural aspect. A driving force behind the movement were people with a background in cultural production and knowledge of using actions, images and storytelling to get people's attention and to eventually get them exited. Ana Méndez de Andés believes that this approach triggered the imagination of people from all walks of life. This way political affiliation did not matter. No political party nor trade union was involved (Krstić 2019, p.6). This brings us to proximity.

POLITICS OF PROXIMITY

"Those who engage only in a politics of protest or organizing on the margins of society must recognize that there will always be power – it does not simply dissolve. The question is, in whose hands will power reside [...]" (Bookchin 2019, p.13).

Once they gained power, Barca en Comú implemented progressive policies set upon cooperative principles. Barcelona embraces new technologies to widen their influence and to empower its citizens. Murry Bookchin formulated the empowerment of the people like this: "[...] new municipalism is not just about implementing progressive policies but about returning power to ordinary people" (Thompson 2020, p.7 from CLES, 2019: 4).

> Thompson (2020, p.9): "The social movement literature predominantly sees the transition from citizen-led protests into less disruptive and more formalised, durable, organised forms of contention – institutionalisation – as their moment of exhaustion and failure rather than success".

Russell (2019, p.1000) describes politics of proximity, as new municipalism imagines it, quite beautifully (although maybe a bit utopian): "[...] the reframing of the local as a politics of proximity, [is] the attempt to transform institutions and distribute power, and its manifestation as a "becoming common of the public"".

And activists within the movements describe it like this:

Member of 'Cooperation Jackson': "The local level is the place and a space where these shifts and change can truly be transformative in terms of impacting people's lives" (Russell 2019, p.1000).

Member of 'Coalizione Civica': "We really believe that the city is the main space and level where you still have that direct rapport between the citizens and the people that they elect in the institutions" (Russell 2019, p.1000).

And Ada Colau says that *BComús* political approach is "[...] an agora, not a temple — an arena for democratic deliberation and collective policy-building [...]" (Thompson 2020, p.7), agreeing with Murry Bookchin, while at the same time referring to the roots of municipalism (Aristotles city-state).

The agora is a place for people to gather. A democratic space nurturing discussion, deliberation and the process of finding collective decisions and the creation of policies. A temple on the other hand is a place of worship of an entity that is situated above others, demanding hierarchy and is more representative of the current democratic system of many states and municipalities. *New municipalism* attempts to tear down this top-down system of decision-making, this 'temple like' structure. In its place, there shall stand an 'agora' which *BComú aims to build by "[...] opening up public offices to citizen scrutiny and accountability and by deepening participation through institutional innovations such as neighbourhood assemblies, participatory budgeting and open-source digital voting platforms"* (Thompson 2020, p.7 from Rubio-Pueyo, 2017). For example, *Dicidim.Barcelona* is the name of the open-source platform that was created for the purpose of increasing resident engagement in decision making and participatory budgeting (ibid., p.12ff). I will later on go into more detail about the platform *Dicidim. Barcelona*. Actively working on new tools of participation and adapting and democratising already existing ones is an important part of politics of proximity. This is due to the fact, that physical closeness, physical proximity does not necessarily bring people together (Russell 2019, p.1001).

Like Georg Simmel (1903) expressed in his short essay 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben', it can also be counterproductive. Simmel bases his assumption on these observations: city residents get rationalised and think with their Verstand (= mind) and not with their Gemüte (= disposition, temper, nature, but for me heart is the best translation) as a safety mechanism to shield our mental and physical health from the stress, disturbances and discrepancies of a busy, sensory overloading environment. Rationality is (has to be) chosen over emotionality and experience leading to a Abstumpfung (= numbness). Another factor for Simmel is separation of the producer and the consumer. Because those two don't get to meet face-to-face in a metropolitan environment where the human connection between the two is entirely severed and no Kundenarbeit (= relationship building from the producer with the consumer) has to be done. The third factor is constant Berührung (= contact) with uncountable amounts of people. Simmel explains his train of thought like this: every encounter causes internal reactions, that are in a small town manageable because of the familiarity of the people between each other (maybe even harbouring positive feelings to each other), but the multitude of internal reactions caused in a metropolis would leave people with unthinkable seelische Verfassung (= frame of mind) (Simmel 1903). These are for me the reasons why creating more democracy in large urban realms is interlinked with place and how it informs human behaviour and their frame of mind. Why furthering democratisation (altering the cité) must also include the adaption of the ville into a more open, inclusive public space. A space that is calmer and more failry

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distriupted amoungst it's residents. For designed in the 'right' way, the public space can influence how long or how meaningful an encounter is and thereby how impactful. As Merrifield interprets Lefebvres 'encounter': "The notion of "Encounter", after all, is a tale of how people come together as human beings, of why collectivities are formed and how solidarity somehow takes hold, takes shape, shapes up" (Russell 2019, p.1001 from Merrifield 2011, p.473). On the other hand, if designed in the 'wrong' way it can increase stress, too many encounters, the longing for anonymity and the formation of individuals rather than collectives. Proximity must therefore be considered as an opportunity that has to be seized (ibid., p.1001). To use Purcell's (2006, p.1924) words a bit out of context: proximity "[...] is merely a tendency, not a logical necessity".

That the 'how' of politics is equally as important to the movement as the 'what' (Pisarello 2019, p.8) is evidenced by the Fearless Cities book, which includes toolkits on how to organise and how to make policies. The importance of each tool may vary from one municipalist movement to the next since first, they cannot be viewed as one homogenous group (Russell 2019, p.996) and second, derived from and operate under different circumstances (ibid., p.999). They must rather be considered as multiple initiatives building on connecting principles. These include community/grassroots organising or social work (ibid., p.999) and acting autonomously from a political national party (ibid., p.1000.) In Barcelona, this entailed also a distancing from progressive left-wing (ibid., p.1000) but already established national parties.

Purcell critiques those advocating for the "[...] political devolution of power to the local action units" (Purcell 2006, p.1926 from Fung and Wright, 2003b, p.20). Basically, this means the redistribution of powers from other scales. This is mostly found in participatory democrats drawing on Aristotle (participation leads to the realisation of the full political and human potential) and advocating that people develop fully as citizens if they partake in a face-to-face manner (ibid., p. 1926). Cohen and Rogers (1995) and Matthews (1989) on the other hand view the devolution of power as a boost for democracy (Purcell 2006, p.1926). In my view for increasing democracy, no matter the scale, the goal should be "\[\lambda \ldots \] to return to each person reasons to believe in the future and in his \[\int or her \] capacity to build that future [...]" (Veltz 2019, p.14 from Pech 2017, p.227).

To conclude. Purcell (2006, p. 1924) lists five assumptions that left-wing movements have when they fall in into the local trap. I want to relate these specifically to BComú.

First: "\[\ldots \rightarrow \] localisation is conflated with democratization \[\ldots \rightarrow \] (Purcell 2006, p.1924). BComús stance of the local being an opportunity for more democracy and not being inherently more democratic has been explained in length.

Second: "[...] 'local people' are conflated with 'the people' of democracy's popular sovereignty, even though 'the people' can be (and have been) defined at a range of scales" (Purcell 2006, p.1924). I agree with Purcell that 'the people' can be defined at different scales. But I too believe (referring back to Schor), that most people want, at a basic level, the same or similar things. From studying the movement Barcelona en Comú holds the same opinion. All people want clean air, unpolluted water, less noise in the city, more greenery, to feel safer, to have an impact in the world, to have a say etc.

Third: "[...] 'community' is commonly conflated with 'local-scale community', even though communities exist at all scales" (Purcell 2006, p. 1924). BComú views all people and all communties, even thouh different, as part of one community. There aim to feminse politics, as I will explain in on page 47 as well as their stance on refugees (found in the appendix Page 171) provides evidence.

Fourth: "[...] local 'community-based development,' is then conflated with 'participatory development' even though local-scale community control does not necessarily lead towards greater popular participation" (Purcell 2006, p.1924). This is a point that time will prove right or not. What can be said is that BComú is not just using tools for local participation but has implemented new forms of partaking in the political process (Dicidim.Barcelona), making participation easier and less time consuming.

Fifth: "[...] the modifier 'local' is regularly used to stand in for more specific ideas such as 'indigenous', 'poor', 'rural', 'weak', or 'traditional', even though there is nothing essentially local about any of these categories" (Purcell 2006, p.1924). BComú is quite clear about who can and should participate in municipal politics: All residents of Barcelona, no citizenship required. "This is why we want to acknowledge citizenship by residency status, not by legal status or nationality" (Taleb 2019, p.29). So, Lefebvres 'right to the city' was of grave importance to the movement in Barcelona, but "[...] with social rights reimagined as open, dynamic and expansive rights of inhabitance based on participation in the (social) production of space rather than abstract, fixed and exclusive legal rights of territorialised citizenship defined by nation-state membership" (Thompson 2020, p.6 from Purcell, 2002).

The turn to the local or the 'Local Turn' is not something exclusive to municipalist or neo-liberalist agendas. It is turning up in European societies and other wealthy nation-states at a wide spectrum of issues like the talked about political and economic ones, but also culture, food- and energy production are subjugated to the turn (Veltz 2019, p.16ff). In light of the recent pandemic we can add pharmaceutical production to that list. Veltz (2019, p.16) contributes this phenomenon not as much to globalisation and excesses but a general shift in values, especially the millennial generation, that he outlines in three keywords. Since I am a late millennial myself, I have some thoughts on that, that also relate back to the local trap Purcell warns about. But first an explanation of the three keywords is in order.

First up is 'Autonomy', the cardinal value according to Veltz (2019, p.18). Autonomy is considered more important than security, young people want control over their lives and the local scale is more befitting that longing than the vastness and abstractedness of the state scale (Veltz 2019, p.18).

Second up is 'Meaning'. "[...] engaging in local action is a preferred way of associating meaning with effort, of escaping from an automatic routine" (Veltz 2019, p.18).

And the third keyword is 'Doing/Making'. Veltz (2006, p.18) sees this trend in the do-it-yourself attitude, in arts and crafts making a comeback, in recycling etc. and is a symbol of not wanting to be just another anonymous brick in the wall whose actions remain unseen.

Many of the issues that cause this shift in values are related and interconnected. Concerning the strive for *autonomy*, in my view, it is caused by many different things. In terms of family we want more autonomy because parents never held their children as close to their chests as they do now. There is even a term for it: helicopter parents. Children having such parents are not allowed to climb, to run, maybe even not to play. We want autonomy in our jobs (and this concerns meaning) because we don't consider working for 40 hours a week life fulfilling. We want to be able to travel, gather experiences and make memories (the job is there to enable that). And we want autonomy from political systems (scales) and politicians that do not seem to serve us (as portrayed by the decline of the social state and corruption). That on a political level we want to turn local is in some cases true and in others not. In my case it is true concerning the national level, not because of the

scale itself but as Purcell stated, because of the neo-liberal agenda that has taking hold of this level. The political landscape in Austria is not reflective of my personal stance on a lot of issues. My municipality (Vienna) reflects that better and the values upholded by the manager of my district (Währing in Vienna) even more so. The feeling of control, as Veltz stated, at that local scale is for me indeed higher. I can run into the manager of my district any day by accident. She uses the same parks, cafés and markets (I know that this is not always true. It depends on the person, the former manager rarely used the infrastructure the local people used, and on the territorial expanse of the administrative level). I said that the local turn is only true for some cases. I know that some issues can better and more effectively be dealt with at the national, European or international level. My generation in Austria was raised in a time in which borders fell (Austria joining the European Union). But globalisation also has its drawbacks and we are seeing this quite clearly now. For the generation of my parents the word globalisation meant something quite different. For them it meant "[...] mobility and mass consumption [providing] generations (and notably women) with opportunities to free themselves from forced ties of proximity to the village or neighbourhood" (Veltz 2019, p.18). But for my generation it means dependency (e.g. Russian oil), destruction of the natural environment (e.g. Cargo ships) and poor working conditions (e.g. sweatshops in Bangladesh etc.). I identify myself as much a European as a world citizen, an Austrian, Viennese and a guy from Währing. This leads me to security.

We value security, I would say as much as previous generations, but the Millennials in western Europe are the first generation to have not witnessed a war in Europe (up until recently) or have been that strongly generationally traumatised. Our concern for security is mostly about job security and even that concern is mostly overshadowed by the looming climate crises. So, when national and international politicians turn their backs on climate mitigation demands we are left with two options: turn to oneself and enjoy life as much as possible or turn local. At this level, we can at least see and feel that we are doing something, since "[...] it relates to tangible aspects and experiences" (Veltz 2019, p. 18). This is leading me to meaning and doing/making at the same time. Young people turn away from religions by the numbers and search for new meaning. My generation considers the climate crisis to be one of the most important issues and while "[...] the local is clearly not the proper scale of analysis and response" (ibid., p.18), action on the local level at least gives us meaning. Why we are making stuff ourselves or recycling is on the one hand helping the natural environment and on the other it helps us. We spend much of our time sitting in front of screens. Making something with our own hands helps us to stand up and turn off the screen from time to time.

Which path or paths will the 'Local Turn' have in store for the different scales? Veltz (2019, p.18) puts it like that: "The probable scenario is therefore not divergence between increasingly globalized (in the current sense) economic models and local, alternative neo-artisanal models of the "maker" type. It will be more of a coexistence and articulation of these various forms".

To conclude. Russell (2019, p.996) writes that just because new municipalism considers the municipal scale to be the optimum strategic entry point for bringing about change, it does not think of the local as better. Nor for possessing certain qualities the other levels do not have.

I do not fully agree with Russell, for I do consider 'place (proximity)' and 'not being abstract' as qualities favouring the local scale. But again, in my opinion the question should not come down to which scale is the best but instead which scale is best for doing what and how they work together. Considering Lenin's critique that municipalism has not the potential to reform the world at a scale that would be necessary, *new municipalism* is quite aware of that. But its different offshoots, that can be found all over the planet, gather regularly to share their experiences, learn from each other and collaboratively build a vision for the future. Dogged in 'particular localism' and rying to prove Lenin wrong.

PLATFORM MUNICIPALISM AND PARTICULAR LOCALISM

Barcelona en Comú is an example for platform municipalism. This is due to the way it was formed and how it operates. It works at the same time within, against and beyond the state and platform capitalism (Thompson 2020, p.10ff) as explained in the previous chapter. It does this via 'politics of proximity' and the use of physical (assemblies) and digital (Dicidim.Barcelona) citizen platforms (ibid., p.10ff). These platforms are not meant to be used as data-harvest platforms but platforms for socialising (ibid., p.11), advancing participation and making it more accessible and giving every resident a space to voice concerns or ideas. This can also be seen as a reaction to the platform, data driven smart city vision for Barcelona in the 2010s.

After *BComú* took office it aimed for technological sovereignty by terminating the contracts with firms like Microsoft and funnelling funding towards digital platform co-ops (Thompson 2020, p.12). One of these platforms is the aforementioned *Dicidim.Barcelona* with was created as an open-source platform (ibid., p.12ff). *Dicidim.Barcelona* is a platform for participation, but municipal hosted or owned platforms could even provide more. Juliet Schor (2020, p.50) holds the opinion that these municipal platforms could also be used as the basis for an alternative platform economy, with cities actively creating and promoting jobs and in a more creative fashion.

Barcelona became the prominent example of the new municipalist movement. Due to Ada Colau becoming mayor of major global city, Barcelona en Comú got greater recognition than other new municipalist movements in other countries. In addition, BComú had founded an International Committee, which worked very hard at building up relationships and sharing their own experiences with those other movements (Russell 2019, p.992). So, in 2017 they used their 'fame' to host the first Fearless City Summit creating in the process a 'Fearless Cities Network' using the rallying cry "Now is the time to demonstrate the potential of towns and cities to resist hate and to spur democratic transformation across the world" (ibid., p.993 from BComù 2017).

More Information on the Fearless Cities Summit and the different types of New Municipalism can be found in the Appendix at page 172.

Political-Economic Thought

Thompson (2020, p.3) has identified another feature that distinguishes *new municipalism* from its former forms. It is the critique of capitalism, as I explained in the chapter 'Barcelona's Civic Culture History'. Thompson describes this stance as a "[...] radical-democratic and transformative response to urban-capitalist crises" (ibid., p.3). So as the superblock initiative has been adapted to the *new municipalist* agenda, the *superilla* could be considered as a radical-democratic urban transformational adaption, as a response to urban-capitalist and the climate crisis. This small chapter is important for the later part of the thesis since it provides the backdrop and reasoning for the adaptation of

the superilles initiative by BComú and why the initiative, although a holistic project, is anchored not only in the Urban Mobility Plan but also in Barcelona's Climate Action Plan and the Barcelona Commitment to Climate initiative.

New municipalism also differs from previous forms of municipalism in another political and an economic way. Debbie Bookchins ideas on democratic confederalism and social ecology had a huge impact on new municipalism, namely in terms of its eco-socialism and degrowth stance. Bookchin critiques that the destruction of non-human nature and the plunder of its resources for our commodities are a result of capitalist-colonialism (Thompson 2020, p.6 from Jarvis, 2019; Vansintjan, 2018). For that Bookchin got the honour of writing the first chapter of the book 'Fearless Cities - A Guide to the Global Municipalist movement'. Her ideas and views have been heavily influenced by her mother Beatrice who ran for city council in Burlington Vermont and by her father Murray, a social theorist, Marxist and someone searching for freedom of all kinds of oppression: economic, race, class, gender, ethnicity (Bookchin 2019, p.12). In addition, Murry Bookchin recognised that capitalism is the biggest threat to the natural world and substantial change would be needed, small single action would not be sufficient (ibid., p.12). He connected the issue of the natural world with the social, all ecological problems are social problems, and named it social ecology (ibid., p.13).

Purcell (2006, p.1926) warns of neo-liberal agendas using the local as a smokescreen to shift financial and organisational burdens away from the national government and onto the communities themselves as Nixon, Reagan and Thatcher envisioned. New municipalism is not a movement aiming just at increasing democracy at the local level but is deeply rooted in Marxism, social ecology and equality for all. So, it's very purpose is to contest these neo-liberal efforts.

FEMINISING POLITICS

New Municipalism is also deeply rooted in feminist theory (Thompson 2020, p.15). The feminisation of politics is written all over the Barcelona en Comú movement and is "[...] posited to move beyond hierarchical, competitive and patriarchal relations towards more open, honest, transparent, relational and cooperative relations in 'transversal forums' with an ethos of dialogue, empathy, mutual care and listening (Rubio-Pueyo, 2017). Feminism also infuses the movement with an emphasis on situated social reproduction over extractive production of commodities" (ibid., p.6 from Bhattacharya, 2017). The feminisation of politics is one of the fundamental dimensions of new municipalism, meaning that patriarchal models are replaced by political agendas and modes of organisation that position care work at its centre (Pisarello 2019, p.9).

For politics to be feminised four conditions or steps must be achieved:

- 1. Equality of women and men wherever politics is being conducted (BComú is gender-balanced and 60% of their governing team are female) (Pérez 2019, p.22). For me this is very important for it is a more accurate representation of society.
- 2. The second step concerns participation and flattening hierarchies (Pérez 2019, p.22). Participation should have an outcome that is formed by the collective intelligence and produce collective knowledge (ibid., p.22). To facilitate that all voices are heard, in assemblies and gatherings it should be ensured that the time a person speaks is kept (as) short (as possible) so more opinions can be expressed (ibid., p.22). That not the same people talk all the time (ibid., p.22) and those more timid are motivated to speak their mind as well. And that decisions are made as a collective (ibid., p.22). A practice done by BComú is to alternate between women and men speaking, as well as stopping the duration to raise awareness and use as



- evidence for the need to close the gap (ibid, p.22). In addition, it is of utmost importance to question what it is that makes someone an expert "[...] because municipal problems are everyday problems, every resident is an expert on their neighbourhood. (ibid, p.23).
- 3. Step three is the sharing of responsibilities not only in the political but also in the personal (Pérez 2019, p.23). Because of the care work, that is mostly done by women, they have less time to participate in the political process, be it attending an assembly, marching in the street as protest or running for office (ibid, p.23). As stated before, being active in politics costs time. So, reorganizing, rethinking, reimaging society and how it is structured is a very important step in order to get people to sit down and work together (Pérez 2019, p.23). Time is precious, therefore in order for people to spend it, better said to invest it, in their (living) environment demands the redistribution of caring responsibilities, questioning traditional gender roles and to stop to subordinate everything to economic growth, work and individualism. To stop subordinate everything to capitalism. Until the responsibilities are fairly distributed Pérez (2019, p.23) suggests three measures that can be taken now to open up the political process. First, trying not to set the time of a meeting at the end of a work day. Second, use spaces in which children can too be present or invest money in spaces to make them also children friendly. Third, include new technologies (Discord, Zoom, mailing lists, messenger apps etc.) into the participation process.
- 4. The fourth step is to include a gender perspective into all policies and actions (Pérez 2019, p.23).

Bärnthaler et al. (2020, p.133) draw on the beautiful metaphor of 'Bread and Roses', a song written by James Oppenheimer for the women's rights movement, to describe the more profound goal of feminising politics and economy: A good life is not lead by just having bread (guaranteed survival) but roses (decent working and living conditions) as well.

In my opinion, this describes the overall stance of *new municipalism* quite well. It is not just about survival and meeting the basic human needs like food or shelter so that everyone can live, but also about how people live their lives. It is about living well, in good spirit. A condition the ancient Greeks already knew by the name of *eudaimonia* (Bärnthaler et al. 2020, p.133). Of course, the question of what living 'well' or 'good' is and who gets to define it, remains. For it is "[...] contextually different, rests on value judgments, and requires public involvement in decision-making. New forms of participation are essential to identify the conditions, infrastructures and institutions which are the linchpins of "the good life". This infrastructure tends to be organised locally or regionally and produces value and well-being "in-situ" (ibid., p.133)

Marxism vs. Neoliberalism

As I already mentioned, there is an old discourse in political science, whether a form of government is inherently good or bad, be it democracy, aristocracy or dictatorship. Aristotle holds this opinion: "The true forms of government (politeias $[\pi o\lambda \iota \tau \epsilon i a \varsigma]$), therefore, are those in which the one, or the few, or the many, govern with a view to the common interest; but governments which rule with a view to the private interest (to idion $[\tau \delta i \delta \iota o v]$), whether of the one, or of the few, or of the many, are perversions" (Wolff 2014, p.802). In a theoretical sense, I agree with this statement. But what the common interest is in reality, still lies in the eye of the beholder. Even tough in theory it is possible that one individual is able to identify the common interest, I think it unlikely. I rather think it is much more plausible for many, or better all, to partake together in the political processes and maybe not to find the common interest but at least common ground.

The municipal movement is aiming to bring together people but also the two spheres that neo-liberalism has actively tried to separate: the political and economic domain (Thompson 2020, p.7). For Bookchin as well as Lefebvre these two are not separable for the social reproduction of society and the production of space (ibid., p.7).

The 'Obra social' and the PAH are deeply connected to the stance of new municipalism against neo-liberal thinking. As an activist put it: "\(\ldots \)...\(\) it shows the "absolute contradiction" between the PAH's collective solidarity-based practices and the values of the capitalist liberal democratic system grounded in individualism. competition and personal benefit" (Garcia-Lamarca 2017, p.52 from Jiménez 2013). BComú is working to remunicipalise public utilities and services, working against gentrification and the rise of rent prises and working towards the promotion of social rights (Thompson 2020, p.7). Because of its history most strongly for housing rights (ibid., p.7), which in my view is one of the most important rights to improve the overall quality of life for people.

According to Purcell (2006, p.1922) some forms of democracy are compatible with neo-liberalism. New muncipalism's participatory vison of democracy sees neo-liberalism as a cause for important democratic problems (ibid., p.1922). For Thompson (2020, p.7) these are the reasons why new municipalism cannot be viewed as another form of neoliberal urban entrepreneurialism based on speculation and capital. It rather is a new form of entrepreneurialism based on experimentation and degrowth (ibid., p.7) and putting democracy and broad participation first (ibid., p.8). There are also a lot of parallels found between new municipalism and the foundational economy. This concept aims at revaluing sectors of our economy. Placing more importance on daily essentials for human life like food, shelter and the provision of health care, it places an emphasis on local economy over platform economy, connects social and ecological issues, poses the question of what a 'good' life is and its roots can be traced to the municipalisation of infrastructures in the 19th century (Plank, 2019). Barcelona is taking measures to combine the concept of the foundational economy with planning agendas (Plank 2019, p.10).

I want to end this part of the chapter with a quote from Veltz (2019, p.20) that summarises why BComú's turn to the local will not lead into a trap: "The local turn takes on completely different significance when characterized by openness, networking, a search for connections and the appreciation of diversity".

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SOCIAL COHESION

Social cohesion is a term used to define and/or evaluate the connectedness of the members of a society between each other. There are many factors contributing or decreasing the level of social cohesion. Modernity and the rapid changes to the way humans live ignited by the industrial revolution and spurred on even faster by the technological innovations of the 20th century have eroded many of the bonds that prior held groups, clans, ethnic communities or societies together. In a time that seems and feels more and ever more divisive, the question arises on how greater neighbourhood and social cohesion within a society can be achieved while new "[...] pressures of the informational age, the global economy and a new competitively oriented social policy and welfare state are said to be bearing down on cities and neighbourhoods to produce a new crisis of social cohesion" (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p. 995).

Definition of Social Cohesion

There are different ways to define *social cohesion* and many different factors influencing and measuring it. In the following chapter I will write about the factors that influence *social cohesion* that are most important for my analysis. These are the factors of human relationships. Because of limited time factors monetary factors will not be considered.

DIMENSIONS OF COHESION CONCERNING THE CITÉ

There are a lot of different definitions for *social cohesion*. A lose, very broad understanding of the term according to Ade Kearns and Ray Forrest (2000, p.996) is the solidarity of the individuals of a group. That is to say a cohesive group or society stands together. Bateman et al. use the phrase "[...] the presence of strong social bonds" (Bateman et al. 2017, p.329 from Butterfoss et al. 1993). To me this is a very fitting description but I still prefer the phrase in which the two authors Kearns and Forrest put it: a cohesive society "[...] hangs together" (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.996). For me 'hanging together' is a more fitting description, because it not only means that relationships between the individuals are formed but also displays the dependencies on other members of the group. In a cohesive group one is not alone, one has a support system. With these dependencies goes along a certain amount of influence that every individual has on the other members of the group. I imagine a metaphor of mountain climbers during a climb, tied together, so if one falls the rest of the climbing party can bear the weight, of the person in need of assistance, together. So as those mountaineers hang together on the side of a cliff, so too 'hang' the lives and therefore the feelings and the sense of well-being of every individual of the group together, influencing each other.

According to Kearns and Forrest there are different dimensions to a society that ,hangs together'. The two authors break a cohesive society into these five dimensions:

- "[...] common values and a civic culture;
- social order and social control;
- social solidarity and reductions in wealth disparities;
- social networks and social capital;
- and territorial belonging and identity" (ibid, p.996).

These dimensions cannot be considered as separate. They are interwoven and therefore affect each other (ibid, p.997). To take a closer look at all these dimensions would go beyond the scope of this master thesis, that is why I will concentrate on *common values*, *social capital* and *territorial belonging and identity*. Also, for the case of the *superilla* in Poblenou, I will examine the political situation at the time of implementation, the built environment and other, in the eyes of an urbanistic view, important factors influencing *social cohesion*, within the neighbourhood of said superblock.

COMMON VALUES AND CIVIC CULTURE

What common values are may differ from country to country, city to city or may even differ in two small villages adjacent to each other. Common values can take many forms, like religion for example. For a long time, Christianity provided the soil on which European values had been built upon. Today, with the decline of the importance of the Christian religion in the European community (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p. 997 from Hattersley, 1988), other guiding principles or ways of life arise. Vegetarianism, combating the climate crisis or culture (arts) can provide a society with a set of common values to regulate life. Can new municipalism take the place as a new guide (in cities) for common values?

A group that holds an agreement on common or at least similar values, will be empowered to identify a common goal and act together towards reaching that goal. The acceptance of shared values enables a group to live according to the same moral principles and develop a common code of conduct/behaviour. This code applies to the individual itself as well as its relationships towards other members of the group (ibid, p.997).

A group can be people dwelling in the same space or a group sharing the same interests, religion, race, moral framework etc. Common values or common interests are what forge a cluster of people into a community, a cohesive society, but "[...] many partially de-moralised individuals now inhabit public space" (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p. 997 from Wilson, 1985). Interestingly, in a survey from the European Union (2019, p.7) from 2017 Europeans said, that culture (31%) was the factor to most likely create a feeling of community, followed by history (25%) and values (24%).

As mentioned above, the loss of *common values* resulting in partially de-moralised individuals is caused (in part) by the decline of Christian values (in Europe). Although it is to some extent true that the decline of Europe's dominate religion left (especially) younger generations 'without' a moral compass, for me this is only half the story. There are always two sides to a medallion and, in my view, even more than the rejection of an archaic, outdated guide of life, it is the failure to put in its place a beacon worthy of the 21st century. In my opinion, that we are all connected and dependent on each other, must be the new principle. Not just us human beings but also in relation to other animals, nature and the planet as a whole. "My right to swing my fist ends where your nose begins" (source of the quote not clarified). We do not live in a vast, endless world anymore. The world gets smaller and smaller with each passing day and, at least for me, the scales that really are important have changed. In relation to the planet and its health there is the global scale and in relation to human connection it is the municipal, the neighbourhood scale.

Kearns and Forrest write in their article that many different ideas float around on the best way to reintroduce a moral code that is widely, not only accepted, but respected. Three examples are put forth:

1. "[...] compulsory (religious) education;

- 2. the general encouragement of good citizenship with appropriate opportunities;
- 3. and the embedding of mutual assistance into the constitution [...]" (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p. 997).

In my opinion compulsory education is not the best option. Compulsion may lead to resentment and resistance. I think morals, group behaviour and correct human interactions are best learned and taught by example. Embedding a moral code and guidelines in the way people must conduct themselves and in the relationship to others may have some merit but leaving the task of moral education only in the hands of politics is believed to be unhealthy (ibid, p.997). This I believe to be true because politicians and therefore politics don't seem to enjoy a lot of trust lately. In Spain only 38.2% of the population trust their government and elected officials (OECD 2020, Trust in Government). This is in stark contrast to the trust people in Spain put into their fellow residents. 72 percent hold the opinion that people living in their city can be trusted (Bolsi et al. 2020, p.31). This trust is not generated by compulsory education but rather forms over time on via many small contacts between people on cities sidewalks, in public spaces and at service providers (Jacobs 1961, p.56).

Relying alone on politics to be society's moral lighthouse is unhealthy, but giving it no moral authority, to quote Kearns and Forrest "[...] is seen as a bad thing" (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p. 997) as well. They argue (2000, p.997) that political culture and the participation of people in it (their role) depends greatly on the positions of the people towards the political system of the city or country they live in. This is important, because even though political culture is not included in their five dimensions of social cohesion, it can serve as an indicator of the state of social cohesiveness. They make this argument because *civic culture* is in part the result of the process of participant culture, which is intertwined with political culture (ibid, p.997). "Thus, in terms of effectiveness of political institutions, a society might be said to be cohesive if its citizens subscribe to a common view of how to conduct collective *affairs* /.../" (ibid, p.997).

"Social renewal programs built around citizenship and cohesion tend to promote the recognition of one's responsibility to participate in society, learning the skills to do so and to be able to resolve conflict in a democratic manner, and acknowledging the importance of maintaining tolerance and social harmony" (ibid, p. 997). In general, I agree with this train of thought although, building moral and identity around citizenship does not work for me as well as BComú in a European and 21st century setting. Building identity around residency is more sensible. It seems to me that having a shared identity and common values with the people one lives and shares one's time with, is more important than with people possessing the same passport but living hundreds of kilometres apart. I see Barcelona positioning itself as a Refugee City, as the introduction of new rules of interaction and social integration on a grander scale regardless of citizenship. Barcelona's history as a Refugee City can be found in the Appendix at page 171.

As I write about the decline in moral, Christian values and hence social cohesion, two things must also be said. First, that a crisis of social cohesion was assessed by every generation (Forrest & Kearns 2001, p.2126). It is more difficult to confirm the decline of social cohesion when it is thought of in terms of common values, morality and identity compared to indicators like wealth disparities, home ownership or education. As Kearns and Forrest quote Pahl: "The golden age of traditional morality is, typically, not very precisely described and nor, for that matter are future consequences for society" (ibid, p.2126 from Pahl 1991, p.345).

And second, instead of asking ourselves what the reason behind the alleged decline of social cohesion is, we should ask ourselves how a more cohesive society can be built in the future.

Social cohesion is a complex idea that is influenced by many different factors. These factors depend on the spatial scale one analyses. Common values are of graver importance on a municipal or national level but values that deviate from each other lose more and more in relevance when it comes to social cohesion in everyday life (Forrest & Kearns 2001, p.2127) or neighbourhood cohesion. That is not to say that they can or should be dismissed, but neighbourhood and social cohesion have a lot to do with managing the little things in life and carrying on at the day to day basis. Through the importance of these everyday routines, the neighbourhood becomes very interesting (ibid 2001, p.2127) for the topic of cohesion.

Although Barcelona is tackling the issue of *social cohesion* on all levels, this is the reason why I believe the *superilla* will play the leading role in the play called 'Let's fill the streets with life' sat on the urban stage.

The neighbourhood level also brings me to the next point, the next dimension: *social networks* and *social capital*. For many people still find these in their own buildings and local areas, their neighbourhoods.

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social networks are formed by members of a group connecting with each other through interactions. Following this logic neighbourhood cohesion is a result of "[...] socialisation processes and [...] mutual support mechanisms based on family and kin [...]" (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.999). But according to Kearns and Forrest (2000, p.999) these processes have spill over effects and extend increasingly over the boarders of the local level, taking over the city. That means that these connections forged in the neighbourhood yield major benefits for all city dwellers.

With increased scale, the ties that are formed between the residents, weaken. So, social ties can be put into two categories: weak and strong ties. The scientific community thus far is not entirely sure to which degree humans are impacted by strong and weak social ties (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.999). This uncertainty stems from the fact that "[...] strong, dense, neighbourhood-based social networks provide the best means of social support [...]" (ibid., p.999) but weak ties are formed in a far greater number and "[...] provide a sense of identity, security and feeling of home" (ibid., p.999ff). A study by Henning and Lieberg conducted in 1993 found that in a neighbourhood, weak ties are formed thrice as much as strong ties and in their survey only 10 per cent replied, that these weak types of contact "[...] were of little or no importance" (Forrest & Kearns 2001, p.2132ff from Henning and Lieberg, 1996) to them. Therefore, the value of these weak ties for neighbourhood and social cohesion should not be underestimated. Weak and strong ties should also not be viewed as totally separate from each other. Weak ties have the potential to bridge the gap between different networks made up of strong social ties (ibid., p.2133).

"Social cohesion and social capital have important implications for the health and well-being of those living in cities" (Mouratidis & Poortinga 2020, p.2). Mental health, for example the feeling of loneliness and the stress resulting from it, benefits greatly from social networks. Functioning as an emotional, instrumental and practical support system these human connections are vital (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.999) for the survival of the resident of the modern city that Simmel described. On the neighbourhood level, social networks carry out the perhaps most important task: shaping their community members. Teaching them to be tolerant and how to cooperate. Transferring the ideas and workings of social order and instilling in them a feeling of belonging to a place and a group (Forrest & Kearns 2001, p.2130).

But how are these social networks formed and social capital accumulated? Ties in a neighbourhood can be built or strengthened through a process called neighbouring. It's a process of making friends. This process happens naturally by coincidently meeting people in a local shop, greeting a person seen for the third time, exchanging pleasantries with someone living in the same building or borrowing coffee beans from the next-door neighbour (Forrest & Kearns 2001, p.2132). But it can also be facilitated by different factors like culture and planned activities (European Union 2019, p.7), the built environment the presence of ground floor shops and service providers and different uses of the public space.

The process of *neighbouring* has a greater importance for people who are spending more time in their respective neighbourhoods, like the elderly, children and handicapped people (Forrest & Kearns 2001, p.2132). As I stated, neighbouring can be influenced, as well as how many residents stay in their neighbourhood during the day. Full- or part-time workers, who commute out of their local areas may in the future spend more time in their neighbourhood's due to the ability of working remotely or in home-office and be able to participate more in the *neighbouring* process.

Why knowing and meeting neighbours is important

Neighbouring leads me to another piece of the social cohesion mosaic: social solidarity. There are two different versions of *social solidarity*: the state kind and the everyday version. The first concentrates on reducing wealth disparities. The second concerns itself with real human relationships. "It involves the recognition of the needs of citizens, an interest in their well-being and the willingness to provide assistance and to engage in collective action with one-sided benefits" (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.999). This engagement and action without receiving any benefits from them, is much more likely to happen, when residents of a neighbourhood share common institutions and interact with each other (ibid., p.999). In this case 'sharing is caring' is to be interpreted as sharing one's life, one's personality, one's time.

Kearns and Forrest (2000, p.999) go on to argue, that social solidarity does not occur by itself, it does not occur "[...] 'naturally' [just] from the existence of society [...]" as they put it. For them it arises out of the social conventions that are formed in everyday life. They may differ from society to society but Kearns and Forrest (2000, p.999) share the opinion, that the resilience of these conventions is linked to how in sync they are with our natural inclinations.

Where natural inclinations derive from and what they are, is widely debated. Depending on the persons own experiences and world views, they may differ. For example, Aristotle grounded his theory in the philosophy of nature, Thomas Aquinas built on this idea and merged it with a Christian theological worldview or John Locke built his version of natural inclinations on the thirst for knowledge residing in every human being (Peter 2015, p.4). What is at the centre of every theory of our natural inclinations, is the belief that we seek the good and avoid evil, that we have inherent morality (Peter 2015, p.5). Georg Simmel (1903) also wrote "Mag das 18. Jahrhundert zur Befreiung von allen historisch erwachsenen Bindungen in Staat und Religion, in Moral und Wirtschaft aufrufen, damit die ursprünglich gute Natur, die in allen Menschen die gleiche ist, sich ungehemmt entwickle". Simmel is pleading for the detachment of historic bounds like the state, religion, morality and economy and that it would allow for the unrestraint development of the good nature of humans. The good nature that is equally found in all of us.

For me the terms 'good' and 'evil' carry with them heavy (theological) connotations and depend strongly on the respective point of view. I tend to agree more with Anthony Lisska, who sees human inclination as a strive for "[...] well-being, perfection, human flourishing, or happiness" (Peter 2015, p.8). In Lissak's view natural inclination is just a potential though. Peter (2015, p.8) describes this quite beautifully by comparing it to an acorn. An acorn is not an oak tree, but it has the potential (natural inclination) to become an oak tree, if nothing intervenes (what Simmel meant by the historic bounds). For Lisaak the better terminology for inclination in this case is disposition. He makes that distinction because an "[...] inclination is not a conscious drive, but a pre-rational disposition or tendency inherent in human nature (104). Of course, any pre-rational inclination can become the object of conscious intent through rational deliberation [...]" (ibid., p.7). Not any deity and not just our natural inclinations drive us towards well-being, the summum bonum (highest good), but reasoning. Reasoning because the question of morality (good or evil) is not about human nature but instead about what is reasonable (ibid., p.8). So, in order to achieve this potential for everyone, we must act reasonable. The act of finding out what is reasonable must be a collective one as the word 'to reason', also meaning to 'discuss' and to 'conclude' already implies.

For me these natural (human) inclinations (ethics/morality) in terms of urban planning are: sociability, the lust to share and communicate, to be part of a community and not to be alone, to help and support the community and to seek safety and security, hence *social solidarity*. Building a city according to and facilitating these principals, sounds reasonable to me.

Getting to know one another is the bases for *social solidarity* and friendships. This important part of *social cohesion* is in Kearns and Forrests view still underresearched. But they go on to say (2000, p.1000), that these weak ties formed by friendship are growing in importance, because the strong ties that are forged by family and kinship, become harder to uphold. When determining how cohesive a society is, Kearns and Forrest (2000, p.1000) refer to Pahl and Spencer (1997) who raise the point, that the level of *social cohesion* does not depend on whether a tie is weak or strong, if it's to a family member or a friend, but on the quality of said relationship. They make the argument, that a trusting society founded in reciprocity may in fact be a more 'friendly society'. This society of friends, as I am calling it now, may be more adaptable to change, to truly integrate in their lives upcoming social values like diversity (Kearns and Forrest 2000, p.1000), nature conservatism, equality, feminism, etc. ... or maybe even *new municipalism*.

Kearns and Forrest (2000, p.996) consider a return to the neighbourhood of the 19th and 20th century as a way of achieving a more cohesive community. Neighbourhood back then was defined by socially binding activities, a local economy and a life in tight-knit organisational and political structure (ibid., p.996 from Hoffman 1994, p.240). It is very hard to achieve this goal today and is, in my view, not wise. The urban landscape has changed drastically and even the same city can hardly be compared with its former self. Social structures, systems and interactions have changed (and continue to change). The social structure of old can most certainly not be forced and is not necessary. Jacobs writes: "Formal types of local city organizations are frequently assumed by planners and even by some social workers to grow in direct, common-sense fashion out of announcements of meetings, the presence of meeting rooms, and the existence of problems of obvious public concern. Perhaps they grow so in suburbs and towns. They do not grow so in cities" (Jacobs 1961, p.57).

Jacobs does not believe, that inhabitant-organisations, let alone a community, can be formed in an urban realm by merely the announcement of a gathering, the existence of community meeting-rooms or the existence of a shared problem. I interpret Jacobs in that way, that you can't force **TU Sibliothek**, Die approbierte gedruckte Originalversion dieser Diplomarbeit ist an der TU Wien Bibliothek verfügbar WIEN vour knowledge hub The approved original version of this thesis is available in print at TU Wien Bibliothek.

people into 'another' community. In a big city, many are already part of at least two or three communities. There is the family community, the work community, the friend community, and maybe the one community formed via hobbies. The pressure to join an additional community can be too much. The interest may not exist because people cannot yet see the value that this particular community can provide. People may already be overwhelmed and overloaded with their existing social contacts. They are exposed to social contacts on their way to work on public transportation, during work and on their way back home. This idea goes along the same line as Georg Simmel's observations of Abstumpfung. Because the 15 minutes on their commute may be the only ones in the whole day when they don't have to follow any social obligations. Like Jacobs I see communities as 'involuntary', they emerge over time and cannot be forced. They must form naturally, from living side by side, a form of perceptive and considerate coexistence. I stated before that sharing is caring. But too much of it and if it is forced results in the opposite. ""Togetherness" [...] The requirement that much shall be shared drives city people apart" (Jacobs 1961, p.62). City residents want control over their lives and for some parts of it to stay private.

The role that urban planners have to assume then is not one of creating communities, but to support residents to build their neighbourhood in a way that can help facilitate the formation of a community. Taking the example of the superilla, it should be the breeding ground and contain as many necessary nutrients as the given space can provide, the seeds of community must then be sown by the residents themselves and whether they germinate or not depends on the gardeners themselves. But I think that no gardener would deny that the type and condition of the nutrient soil decisively determines the growth of a seedling. Another important step is to make being part of the planning process not obligatory but desirable. Just the announcement of a participatory process of an urban transformation project is not enough. The personal benefits of partaking in these processes should be put centre stage to make residents join. Togetherness will arise, not in all participants, naturally.

Even though it cannot be forced, I believe that togetherness, social capital or social solidarity can be facilitated. Since their formation depends on the proximity of bodies, local infrastructure, the design of the public space as well as cultural and planning activities can increase the likelihood for inhabitants of a neighbourhood to meet one another.

If they meet they then can decide for themselves whether to engage in a conversation or not. No requirement, no obligation. But over time, Jacobs writes (1961, p.51), the people meeting each other become more and more familiar with one another and a public relationship can be formed. These short meetings can be quite trivial, but for Jacobs it is the sum of all these brief encounters that make a big difference (ibid., 56): "The sum of such casual, public contact at a local level—most of it fortuitous, most of it associated with errands, all of it metered by the person concerned and not thrust upon him by anyone—is a feeling for the public identity of people, a web of public respect and trust, and a resource in time of personal or neighborhood need". Under the right conditions a street-neighbourhood is possible, meaning that people from all walks of life can, without any unwanted complications, get to know one another if they so choose (ibid., p.51).

Social solidarity, friendship and kinship (togetherness) are for me an integrate part and pillar of the aforementioned social networks and social capital and are all interconnected and influence each other and that these "[...] social networks and support networks of varying kinds [...] are the essence of social cohesion" (Kearns and Forrest 2016, p.1000).

COMMUNITY COALITION

A more active approach of producing *social capital* in a neighbourhood is to establish or bring into life a *community coalition*. These coalitions are defined as "inter-organizational, cooperative, and synergistic working alliances that bring individuals representing diverse groups within a community together for a shared purpose" (Bateman et al. 2017, p.329 from Butterfoss et al. 1993 & Butterfoss et al. 2009).

This *community coalition* can also be seen as a *social network*, but not in the way this term is understood in most cases today (social-media networks). In comparison to social-media networks that had been birthed in the information age, being platforms that solely exit in the digital realm (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.), a *community coalition* is based in the physical space. People can be touched, felt and not only their words heard but also their facial expressions and body language read.

"[...] remote (telephone) contact has increased and face-to-face contact has declined" (Kearns and Forrest 2000, p.1000). Kearns and Forrest made that statement at the turn of the century and this trend has only increased since then. These digital platforms drive a wage between different groups of society. Not only physically. They polarise individuals, driving them to opposite poles. They shape public opinion and select discourses so far largely without public oversight or control (Kirsch & Plank 2018, p.3 from Dolata 2018).

Facebook for example has become one of the biggest providers of news for many people, but this company is not in the business of informing society but rather in the business of creating clicks. This is a huge issue affecting both the right and the left side of the political spectrum. On these 'social' platforms personal beliefs are reinforced or even amplified by communicating mostly with likeminded people and thereby the confirmation of one's own belief system. If different views clash in this space, often they are not argued and discussed but fought until the keyboard breaks. People are anonyms, faceless and hence the threshold for showing aggression is lowered. This prompted the British journal Economist in 2018 to bestow tech giants like Facebook with the acronym BAADD ("[...] big, anti-competitive, addictive and destructive to democracy" (Kirsch & Plank 2018, p.2 from Economist 2018).

Other technologies threatening physical *social networks*, in a different way, are for example Zoom. Providing the ability to work from home may present itself as an empowerment of the labour force but can be a wolf in sheep's clothing. Lisa Herzog cautions in her book 'Die Rettung der Arbeit' (translation by Herrnstadt: the salvation of labour) that the Home-office may entail negative ramifications because the workplace has become one of the essential spaces for encounter and socialising. They are places for sharing ideas, opinions, making connections and maybe sharing of one's personal information, thus creating bonds, trust and a shared identity. Some argue though, according to Forrest and Kearns, that this shift to remote working is giving back importance to the neighbourhood because they seek out local cafes, parks etc. in their area during breaks or as a diversion (Forrest & Kearns 2001, p.2126). Fukuyama (1999) acknowledges, that technologies allowing people to work from home brings us back to the way humans have lived most of the time in history. With home and work located in the same space (Forrest & Kearns 2001, p.2129).

"New social developments point to the increasing importance of kinship networks, although of a different kind" (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.1000). So, these community coalitions must be understood as networks that are active in the physical space, that on the one hand act to bring neighbours into the community fold, and on the other as a bridge between the residents and their institutions. These coalitions can give credibility and trust to institutions and thereby provide the soil needed for voluntary, spontaneous co-operation. Which in turn is the pillar for "[...] civic engagement, healthy community institutions, norms of mutual reciprocity and trust [...]" (ibid., p.1000 from Putman 1998). Hence social capital. Co-operation and social capital are closely linked and co-operation is one of the best ways for solving many collective action problems. Social capital (co-operation) can be viewed as a skill. The

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more it is used the more it increases, but if it is used less and less, it fades (ibid., p.1000ff). Although it is not a topic of my thesis, it is worth noting that some argue, that social capital can be a booster for local businesses and the economy (ibid., p.1001).

NEIGHBOUHOOD AND SOCIAL COHESION CONCERNING THE VILLE

PLACE ATTACHMENT, IDENTIFICATION AND IDENTITY

One of the problems that a cohesive society faces today is the wearing down of a shared identity which, for a long time in human history, formed the cornerstone, the base of existing social systems (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.995). This base has been undermined, according to Castells (1997), by privatisation, residualisation and globalisation, leaving cracks in the fundament of society. This takes to mean a society becoming increasingly polarised: "[...] new technology and the reshaping of occupational structures and opportunities, which are driving different groups towards opposite poles in terms of income, assets and lifestyles" (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.995). According to Fukuyama (1999) the rise of the age of information in advanced societies goes hand in hand with a rise in crime levels and social upheaval and a fall of levels of trust, values of family and kinship (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.995).

Social cohesion is also linked to a place, namely the place the people dwell in (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.1001). The word place is not interchangeable with the word space. A place is a space in which people connect with each other, in which ways of life and social values are formed or reformed. Places are not just created by the presence of and their use by people, but in return also shape the people into who they are and how they conduct themselves in their community and society (ibid., p.1001).

This bond between places and their users, this attachment, can have different positive effects on the people who feel a connection. According to Altman and Low (1992) these may include:

- "[...] a sense of security;
- a link to people who are important to us;
- a symbolic bond to people, past experiences, ideas and culture $\lceil \ldots \rceil$;
- the maintenance of individual and group identity;
- 5. fostering self-esteem." (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.1001).

Kearns and Forrest raise the point that the attachment to a place, although good, can have negative effects as well. People might think in a closed system, a closed neighbourhood, a closed community. They may share other values then residents from other neighbourhoods (ibid., p.1001).

I think they make a valuable argument that needs to be taken into consideration when addressing social cohesion. For me, even though values and identities differ from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, from district to district, the impact of these differences in cities are not as impactful as maybe in regional regions. City dwellers identify with their neighbourhood and district but as well with the city as a whole. This view of residents unifying different identities in one body is also held by Urwin (1990). Politicians should not shy away from but actively try to establish the ability to form multiple identities on different scales of the city (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.1002)

This identification with the city as a unite may depend on different factors, like the relationship between the political officials and the residents or how well the city does and works. BComú tries to address this fact with different measures. For example, rallying all residents behind one cause or opening up the city on different scales. This will be explained in detail in: *Closure versus Openness* (open vs. close environments) on page 93.

Another potential risk residing in place attachment without multiple identities is the fair distribution of infrastructures and local and public amenities. If an equal distribution is not provided, place attachment may hinder mobility and therefore equal opportunities. How Barcelona wants to tackle this issue will also be addressed later on in the thesis.

I want to conclude by quoting Kearns and Forrest: "Place attachment, whilst important, can only be a part of the story [...]" (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.1002). This holds true for every dimension of social cohesion, for it is a mosaic consisting of many pieces that need to fall into the right places.

HISTORY'S ROLE FOR IDENTITY BUILDING

Since the site of my analysis is situated in a district of Barcelona that saw major urban as well as cultural transformations that changed the character of its neighbourhoods over the last decades, it is important to look at how identity is built.

The role of history is not limited to the history of the place. The history of the individual is very important for the development of a person's identity as well as a group's identity. This development is attached to the place via memories, be them images, smells or stories. The history of the place is in turn formed by the use people get out said place, meanings people bring along with them when they visit the place as well as its physical attributes (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.1001).

The forces of change and tradition have always clashed against each other. But for the most part of human existence change came quite slowly and therefor may not have been that recognizable and disrupting. The industrial revolution brought change on a scale and speed unseen before. With modern times steamrolling ahead into the future the permanent became fleeting, tradition became a different tradition, the solid became liquid. Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx acknowledged this in their communist manifesto in 1848: "All fixed, fast-frozen relations with that train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify all that is solid melts into air..." (Sennett 2018, p.29).

This is also the legacy that modern life left urban planners. A balancing act between modern discoveries, most of them improvements on quality of life and the routine, the familiar, the known. In everyday life we want stability, but at the same time some of us want the perks of modernity. So, the question arises: how "[...] can one relate a solid ville to a liquid cité?" (Sennett 2018, p.30).

As already mentioned new technologies allow for networks to spread all over the world, globalising connections and thereby identities. Although globalisation can be a contributor to identity erosion, Forrest and Kearns (2001, p.2129) raise the point, that in doing so could interestingly increase the attachment on the neighbourhood level. Local social interaction and familiar landmarks could become a greater source of comfort and give a much-needed feeling of security (ibid., p.2129) in an otherwise ever more distancing world.

If a neighbourhood can provide said comfort and security depends heavily on its *social capital*, *social networks*, the built environment and the provided social and cultural activities.

The built environment can be used to bridge the gap that divides the past and the present. Bernhard Steger (2022, We are Neighbourhood - Session 2, 2:00:08) said in a panel hosted by the Architekturzentrum Wien on the topic of 'We are Neighbourhood' that old infrastructure, monuments, memorials, landmarks or old factories etc. no matter how small, can lend a feeling of time and continuity to a place. He refers to those evidences of history as anchors to the past. "Etwas können wir mit noch so guter Planung und Umsetzung nicht machen, nämlich die Zeit in die Stadt zu bringen" (Steger 2022, We are Neighbourhood - Session 2, 2:00:08). Translation by Herrnstadt "There is one thing that we cannot do, no matter how good the planning and implementation, and that is to bring the time, age to the city". By integrating built historic evidences, that represent a 'common' history into urban transformation projects a subtle and not imposed bond can emerge, fostering identity building.

This integration of old relicts that link the familiar past to a changing future becomes more important as the relevance of the neighbourhood for the identity of its residents becomes more important (Home-office). The neighbourhood may play a bigger role as a location for recreation and leisure and as well as regain its historic, primary purpose as an extended space for domestic activities (Forrest & Kearns 2001, p.2130) under concepts like the walkable city or Barcelona's superilles initiative. These activities include buying groceries, washing clothes, accompanying children to school, etc. When neighbourhoods manage to include aspects of leisure in their public spaces, not only the domestic activities are extended to the local area but it can be interpreted as an extension of the home itself (as is the vision of BComú for the street space in a superblock). This increases the social component of the neighbourhood and thereby the identification of the residents with it. "[...] neighbourhood becomes part of our statement about who we are" (ibid., p.2130).

IDENTIY AND IDENTITIES

Many major cities today are a mix of people with different socio-demographic backgrounds resulting many people with different identities. These must not, for neighbourhood or social cohesion sake, be blended together into only one. People can hold multiple identities and can identify with a variety of things. In a socio-demographic diverse city is important though to keep this diversity in mind when planning the public space. The integration of the different groups into the same space and while maintaining social order, resulting in social 'harmony', must be achieved while still respecting their differences. Be it age, ethnicity, culture, religion etc. A key word in this context is tolerance, which Jacobs described like so: "The tolerance, the room for great differences among neighbors [...] which are possible and normal in intensely urban life [...] are possible and normal only when streets of great cities have builtin equipment allowing strangers to dwell in peace together on civilized but essentially dignified and reserved terms" (Jacobs 1961, p.72).

"[...] inclusion was more possible in an impersonal space of strangers than in the more intimate space of neighbours" (Sennett 2018, p.45). The urban dweller, like Simmel, always walks a tightrope between familiarity and anonymity, craving one and needing the other. This duality is a common thread spinning through all public spaces of the urban fabric. And so too it does when it comes to the design of inclusive places. A place for all needs to both provide intimacy and impersonality at the same time thereby creating the space for social order. Or to look at it in another way decreasing its opposite social disorder.

SAFETY

According to Bateman et al. (2017, p.329) one major factor for decreasing the social bond or hanging togetherness, is safety, which is threatened by social disorder. The absence of *social order* presents itself in different forms, depending on the level at which they occur. At the macro-level, it can lead to revolution. At the micro-level, social disorder reveals itself as informal social control and/or crime or just incivility (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.998). Incivility can express it self in leaving trash in the public space or driving over the speed limit. If residents of an area feel unsafe because of this in their own neighbourhood or fear "[...] being the victim of a crime [...] social ties and social cohesion among neighbours" (Bateman et al. 2017, p.329) may decrease. One does not even have to experience crime, but alone the perceived violence or just hearing about it yields psychological effects on the residents such as stress, anxiety or depression (Bateman et al. 2017, p.329). This can be combated with the above mentioned community coalitions.

Safety falls under Kearns and Forrest's (2000, p.998) dimension of *Social Order and Social Control. Social cohesion* is interpreted in this dimension as the absence of general conflict between residents and acceptance of the established system and order. In Western democracies, social control and order is not upheld by force, but is conserved by the daily routines of its citizens and residents. Conserved by their "[...] demands and reciprocities in everyday life" (Kearns & Forrest 2016, p.998). I will not go into detail about reciprocity theory because (again) the economic side of new municipalism and the superblocks will blow my thesis out of proportion, but in short, this theory understands social order as an outcome of the exchange of services, goods and symbols "[...] which create a dense network of obligations, duties, claims and expectations on people" (ibid., p.998).

What is meant to be taken away from this theory is, that residents are not only part of the social system but a social project. They should collaborate together, recognise their interdependencies and reap the benefits of this project together (ibid., p.998). This feeling of interdependence and a shared project (goal) is crucial, because people feeling left out, having no stake, no involvement in this system may express their 'quasi-membership of society' in disorder or petty crime (ibid., p.998).

Institutional weaknesses

As regards to the aspect of political participation, a cohesive society is displayed by the trust put forth by the residents towards the political institutions. This trust and the believe in positive change leads to an increase in contribution to political processes, by the residents themselves (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p. 997).

This can lead to a conditional cycle. When people become more involved in political processes, go to municipal assemblies for example, they are inevitably confronted with different opinions. This clash of differing ideas can lead to conflicts, but these may be resolved in a civil manner. If politicionas are able to achive find solutions that are fair to all parties of the conflict, trust in them may rise. This increase in trust may then translate into an increase of participation.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

In the theatre of *neighbourhood* and *social cohesion* the urban environment plays the role of the stage. It is the setting that can either facilitate the formation of common values and a civic culture, social order and social control, social solidarity, social networks and social capital and territorial belonging and identity or hinder it.

"Urban design is [...] not only about physical infrastructure, but also about the different social activities and events that occur within these places [...]. Well-designed spaces provide opportunities for a variety of casual social interactions; and it is these seemingly trivial interactions that form the social fabric of a vibrant urban life" (Mouratidis and Poortinga 2020, p.2). Eric Klinenberg (2018) writes that, especially in times of growing social divide and discursive bubble building between different socio-demographic groups, that public infrastructures like plazas, parks, libraries, etc. provide the necessary contact space for these groups to meet and counteract the polarisation (Plank 2019, p.10)

So, before I take a look at how Barcelona en Comú is planning to transform and adapt the built environment to increase the cohesiveness of its residents, I want to know how it views neighbourhood and social cohesion. In the next chapter I will present how BComú defines social cohesion, what factors are impacting it and what the party of the mayor Ada Colau has done so far in the not physical realm to increase cohesion in the Catalan capital.

Social Cohesion in Barcelona

"[...] there's no straightforward way to translate justice into physical form" (Sennett 2018, p.3). So, if there is no straightforward path, which route is the city of Barcelona under new municipalist leadership taking?

BARCELONA'S INTERPRETATION OF SOCIAL COHESION

The Government of Barcelona has a simple definition for social cohesion: "La cohesión social hace referencia a las personas que habitan el espacio urbano y las relaciones que establecen" (Rueda et al. 2012, p.139). 'Social Cohesion is referencing to the people who inhabit the urban space and the relationships which they establish' (translation by Herrnstadt).

Although a simple definition, the municipal government considers the effects of *social cohesion* to be far reaching and of grave importance. For in the long term a city without a healthy amount of it can no longer fulfill its role as a motor for social progress, economic growth and as a space for the development of democracy (Rueda et al. 2012, p.139). For me there are two levels on which *BComú* aims to tackle the project of increasing *neighbourhood* and *social cohesion*. One level, that I will address first, is about trust, *togetherness*, accountability, democracy and politics, about the *cité*. And the second level is addressing the built environment, the *ville*.

Measurs Concerning the Cité

Public Institutions and Infrastructure

Public institutions and public services play a huge role in the aspect of social cohesion, because they are providers of everyday necessities. A good distribution of these public services, accessible to all citizens no matter their socio demographic background, is key when aiming to increase *social cohesion*. The recuperation and compatibility of the urban areas can only be achieved if the quality of life is increased for everyone, not just a few. Rueda et al. (2012, p.166) state: "[...] la calidad de vida no represente un lujo al alcance de unos pocos, sino una característica esencial". '[...] the quality of life is not a luxury available only to a few, but an essential characteristic." (translation by Herrnstadt).

According to Rueda et al (2012, p.166) the distribution of public intuitions and services over the city will be determined by their requirement in combination with already existing institutions as well as the typology and socio demographic characteristics of the residents. As a criterion for the accessibility of these institutions the city of Barcelona wants to provide every citizen with the services they need within walking distance, about 300 to 600 meters depending of the service provided (Rueda et al. 2012, p.166).

Concerning the institutions themselves, Russell (2019, p.1003) quotes a member of *BComú's* communications team saying that *new municipalism* seeks to open up those very institutions, that had already been or still must be won, by giving autonomy to social movements and distributing power and influence. Braking the monopoly held by elected officials means on the one hand giving up control, but on the other enhancing the process of change (Russell 2019, p.1003).

To put it in another way, it is not as much about the institutions themselves but more about what

is going on outside of them. It is about the social movements, civic organisations and civic culture and about activating them to claim "[...] their rights to own their cities' future" (Russell 2019, p.1003 from de Magistris in Büllesbach et al. 2017, p.45). As one of the members of Ciudad Futura puts it: "For us it's more important that what takes centre stage is what's going on outside, and not our action there on the inside" (Russell 2019, p.1003). BComú's achievements should therefore not be measured by how many seats it was able to win in an electoral election but by their successes of opening up institutions to facilitate and assist the processes of collective self-governance (Russell 2019, p.1004).

For me, this quote from a *Ciudad Futura* member sums up the stance towards institutions and politics quite nicely and also serves as a segue to the next part: "Changing these institutions is only going to be possible if ordinary people, not career politicians, enter these spaces and in some way make politics become something much more linked to everyday life. Not with lofty speeches, with the figure of someone who's above society because they've got better tools or are better placed to represent it and take its decisions, but rather the opposite, and that's us" (Russell 2019, p.1004). It is not just about reinventing politics and its institutions but "[...] what it means to be a citizen" (Bookchin 2019, p.14) to become more social human beings by the act of participating in politics (Bookchin 2019, p.14ff). In my opinion, to reinvent what it means to be a resident, not a citizen, is more in line with *BComús* interpretation on who is allowed to participate in the political process.

POLITICS OF PROXIMITY

The way politicians present themselves to and interact with the public is very important for a strong and healthy municipalism. Let us journey back to the case of Birmingham, where the mayor built a new water system network in the wake of the smallpox epidemic in 1874. The mayor of the city put the city's money where its mouth is, even investing some of his own money, to convince his citizens that the new water system will be beneficial for the whole community (Leopold & McDonald 2012, p.1841).

New municipalism, considers it vital that there exists a relationship that is built on trust between the ones elected to the municipal council, their base and to the ones they govern (Ferrer et al. 2019, p.48). This cannot always be achieved and in some cases, there already have been tensions between the base of the movement and people elected to the political positions (Russell 2019, p.999). But to mitigate possible tensions *BComú* introduced a 'code of ethics' that every participant would need to subscribe to and hold up, if elected to the municipal council. This code included conditions re-

garding "[...] salaries, external funding, future employment opportunities, and maximum terms for re-election" (Russell 2019, p.998). It also has introduced for the purpose of trust and transparency the *Dicidim.Barcelona* platform and in case of the *superilla* projects neighbourhood representatives are elected.

Ada Colau, the mayor, disclaims her salary, donations, travel expenses, curriculum vitae and her academic records (AdB: Transparency – Ada Colau Mayor of Barcelona). *BComú* tried after its election to the city council in 2015 to lower the salary of councillors to align them with the salary of most residents, but the

Jo, Ada Colau Ballano Alcaldessa de l'Ajuntament de Barcelona, amb DNI núm 38.140.843-N, renuncio a les retribucions per assistència als òrgans col·legiats de l'AMB i a l'assegurança de vida "VIDA CAIXA, S.A. D'ASSEGURANCES | REASSEGURANCE".

Barcelona, 30 de juliol de 2015



Figure 6: Ada Colau's declaration to renounce half of her Salary

members of the CiU, PSC, PP and Cs struck the proposal down. According to the municipal gov-

ernment website Colau non-the less only accepts less than half of the salary of the mayor's office (AdB: Transparency – Ada Colau Mayor of Barcelona).

The website also states, that Colau stays true to her commitment to only travel by plane when the journey is over 1.000km and over 7 hours long whenever possible (AdB: Transparency – Ada Colau Mayor of Barcelona). All her travels from the 29.06.2015 until the 8-9.9.2020 are available for everyone to download as an excel file, documenting date, destination, purpose and cost of the travel. The mode of the transportation is not stated.

In addition, Colau makes her heritage assets public. Everyone can review how much money she has in the bank (around 30.000€), if she is in debt, if she owns a car or a real estate (AdB: Ada Colau Ballano – Declaraciones de bienes). The site only states information about her bank account. There is no information about the type of car or real estate she owns. I guess that this takes to mean, that she is not in possession of a vehicle or apartment/house but this fact is not clearly stated. It could also mean, that this information is just not entered into the website. Also, the information has not been updated in the last three years. The declaration is from the 14.6.2019. But it serves as a small piece of evidence of the political culture *BComú* tries to evoke. Namely being transparent, practicing what one preaches (in terms of actions against the climate crisis for example) and investing personal money in back into the city, in real municipal tradition.

Although *BComú* is actively working to be an open book, trust alone is not enough to transform a city. Legitimacy and support is another vital ingredient for a successful urban transformational adaption like the *superilles* initiative. It is good to have ideas and plans for the future of a city but they need to be legitimised if they are supposed to become reality. Especially if claims of authority are contested (Zografos et al., p.3).

DIGITAL PLATFORMS

BComú was right from the beginning very active on social media platforms. The movement used them for two different purposes. First as a tool to organise themselves and for decision-making and second as a tool to bring the public closer, to let them peak behind the curtain and engage residents with its project and feel out public opinion (Russo 2017, p.18). In my opinion, it was also a great way to humanise the people behind the movement and bring them to eye level with the people. I followed Ada Colaus Instagram live-feeds in which she answered questions that had been submitted by the public. The process on how the questions had been selected was not revealed, so maybe the difficult ones were overlooked but that is a side note. More important for me was the way Colau conducted herself. She seemed down to earth, never condescending, not like a politician trained the arts of NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) and not afraid to say it, when she did not have the answer to a question. These live-feeds can be wachted under Ada Colau's Instagrm profil (adacolau). She does them on Friday evenings and around 3000 to 4000 people watch them.

Jacobs (1961, p.56) stated that the cultivation of trust cannot be institutionalised. I am not too sure if I agree with this statement. I believe that contact, even if it is planned like in an Instagram Q&A (question and answer) setting or in a neighbourhood association meeting etc. and not just *casual* encounters can build trust. But I do agree with her that these planned encounters should not be forced. For them to yield an effect, people need to join them out of their own free will. On the political side, this is another important goal that has to be achieved in the quest increased *neighbourhood* and *social cohesion*: to get the residents to *want* to participate in the political process.

Jane Jacobs wrote that even though encounters on the sidewalk can be trivial, the "[...] sum of

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such casual, public contact at a local level [...] is a feeling for the public identity of people, a web of public respect and trust, and a resource in time of personal or neighborhood need" (Jacobs 1961, p.56). Although she was referring to unplanned encounters in a neighbourhood, to some degree I think it holds true in the digital world. A politician in a city of 2 million inhabitants may not have the time to stroll the streets and public spaces to meet all of them. These new platforms allow residents to encounter their politicians and if politicians host events like the one Ada Colau hosted on Instagram more often, the sum would make these encounters less trivial.

Gatti and Procentese (2021) have found interesting results on how Instagram can increase neighbourhood cohesion via another function other than Q&As. With its function to look for events and social gatherings via photos it "[...] is able to foster community members' perceptions of being part of a cohesive community which shares a daily life context, a common past, and an emotional connectedness" (Gatti & Procentese 2021, p.6). I wrote a more detailed describtion on how this function works in the Appendix page 174...

How can this be achieved? *BComú* wants to reach that goal by engaging residents via a real physical project and displaying its potential benefits for them and the general facilitation to participate. *BComú* does this via the *superilla* transformation project and the digital platform *Dicidim.barcelona*.

PARTICIPATION

"[...] la participation de la población en las decisions urbanas es, además de una conquista política, un factor de cohesion en una sociedad madura [...]" (Rueda et al. 2012, p.164). '[...] the participation of the residents in urban decisions is not only a political achievement, but also a factor of cohesion in a mature society [...]' (translation by Herrnstadt).

The planning and implementation process of future *superilles* should already have a positive effect on *social cohesion*. Residents should be empowered, be included in the decision-making and design process right from the start. They should make their first experiences with urban transformation projects and grow their knowledge on urban development and civic culture via assembly's and *tactical urbanism* or as the government of Barcelona calls them 'tactical initiatives' (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2016, p.33). This idea is in line with Debbie Bookchins qualities of true politics:

- transparency,
- 100% accountability to neighbourhood organisations,
- neighbourhood organisations are composed of delegates not representatives,
- celebration of the transformative powers of local assemblies,
- including the power to transform themselves and
- an increasingly enlightened citizenry (residents) (Bookchin 2019, p.14).

Neighbourhood assembles and *tactical urbanism* combined yield many advantages. Through tactical initiatives costs are low, the transformation is not permanent and therefore easily reversible so they can be used to showcase the different effects of the introduced change (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.33). The assemblies open up the democratic process, bring the political system closer to the people and shine the spotlight on what the residents have in [the] common. "[...] a healthy civic culture is one in which key political values are debated in a democratic manner and through popular culture; and where engagement in public and collective affairs and social cooperation, are nor eclipsed by a culture of privatism [...]" (Kearns and Forrest 2016, p.997ff) and individualism. This is evidenced by the new municipalist movement in Valparaíso, Chile. Jorge Sharp (2019, p.19) does not see participation as a mere tool

to achieve their goals of more equality, more democracy and the "[...] *fellowship of humanity*" as he puts it, but as the "[...] *putting-into-practise of a desire* [...]" for them.

Since the idea of the *superilles* is to provide better quality of life for the residents, *tactical urbanism* is a very important tool to be used in the initiative, because "[...] major physical changes are not essential at the start" (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.33). The goal behind the superblock idea is to rid the public space from the grip of the car and fill the streets with life. But to fill the available street space, 'now left empty' by fewer cars, with people, the space must be of use to the residents and people working or passing through the area. This is considered as one of the superilla program's challenges. Tactical urbanism does exactly that: change the use of a space with minimal effort and cost making initial large-scale work, that even might be reversed, unnecessary. "[...] measures for management, urban furniture and painting" (ibid., p.33) are tools of tactical urbanism that can change the use of public space.

These changes can be seen as a pilot phase. The measures can, after some time, be evaluated, improved or discontinued. Trial and error play a big part in *tactical urbanism* which helps reach a consensus between the different actors (residents, planners, scientists, politicians etc.) involved in the process (ibid., p.33). This approach of 'trial and error' is nothing new in the urban world. The city of Barcelona is employing this tactic for several years now (Sallinas 2022), in line with municipalist tradition.

The first municipalists during the Victorian age stumbled more or less blindly through a still scientifically quite dark time. The little light of knowledge and understanding of the city as a network and connected ecosystem that flickered in this darkness was sparked by engineers like Cerdà in Barcelona or Joseph Bazalgette in London. Bazalgette was a pioneer in constructing a city-wide interconnected sewer system. Since such an undertaking (bad pun intended) has never been done before, there were a lot of uncertainties that needed ironing out. Bazalgette knew, that the sewers need to mirror the streets, but everything else was still a mystery. For example, he wanted to install meshes to collect the solid-waste, but had no way of knowing what the best filter design was. So, he went ahead and just built different versions and tried them out until he stumbled on the right solid-waste screen and out of the metaphorical dark (Sennett 2018, p.24).

We as a species have made giant scientific leaps since Bazalgette and Cerdá, computers creating models and predictions, and the information technology made it easier for cities (their urban planners and politicians) to connect and exchange 'best' practice examples and ideas. But every city is unique, its residents are different and 'best' practise is maybe, if at all, best for a limited time and space. That is why I think that there is a place in urban planning for trial and error, especially when it comes to broad participation and education of the public on the topic of urban planning.

One other thing we can take away from these giants on whose shoulder we stand upon is the humility of recognizing, that we don't know everything. Joseph Bazalgette did not claim to have all the answers but he believed that he would get it right in the end (Sennett 2018, p.25). And in the end, that is all that matters.

Another positive effect is, that the changes can be experienced. People critical and hesitant to change what has been working their whole lives (e.g. car owners) can feel, touch and experience the new design and use of the space. A new *ville* creating a new *cité*. A pilot phase reduces resistance against the project and elevates the discussion from a level of opinion and fears to a level personal

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experience (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.33). In the eyes of the municipal government easy implementation and the low costs of *tactical urbanism* also help the public involvement and participation even after the initial start. In addition, *tactical urbanism* renders it unnecessary to draw out the planning and design processes to make everything perfect and everyone happy. It's an open-end process (ibid., p.33).

"[...] tactical initiatives help, above all, to involve citizens who do not feel motivated to debate at the drawing-board stage but who do wish to have their say on the changes being realised and under way, making it possible for a final project to enjoy an extremely broad consensus" (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.34).

Apart from the residents inhabiting a future superblock, local initiatives, action groups and neighbourhood associations are invited to the planning and design table and encouraged to participate. The process of participation should not end with the implementation of the *superilla*, but instead all actors are meant to take part in evaluating the project and the measures taken. Thereby shaping future plans and designs:

- "Working jointly with the public on designing, implementing and evaluating the Superblock Programme.
- Promoting maximum openness of the process and ensuring the inclusion of the views of the specific groups involved.
- Combining city and territory approaches and working on the two scales through participation" (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.26).

Local residents and neighbourhood associations should take part in deciding the determining criteria that will shape their superblock. They are considered to be the experts in that matter, because they have daily, real hands on experience on/in/with that area. A broad public participation yields many benefits, but only if the actors get involved.

Rueda et al. (2012, p.164) write that urban models with a steeper social hierarchy make it more difficult and those with a flat hierarchy make it easier to create a more cohesive society. And that socially hierarchal cities tend to affirm and consolidate the existing inequalities (ibid., p.164). Rueda et al. fall in this instance into a form of Local Trap as Purcell would say. Their assumption rests on the idea, that there are inherent qualities to a certain form of hierarchy or heterarchy. I would argue that they, like scales, are a social construct that arises out of struggle. A flatter hierarchy therefore must be seen, like the local level, as a strategic entry point. I do believe, that there is greater potential to approximate bodies the flatter the hierarchy, but a proximity of minds not just bodies must be achieved for an increase in social cohesion. Like the local level, I see it as a potential that has to be used and taped into the 'right' way. Power struggles and inequality resides in all forms and all places. It also dwells in assemblies, neighbourhood groups etc. even close friendships. Some may speak louder, others longer and again others more often. Some may be more introverted and some may have been taught by society to stay quiet. This must all be taken into account when aiming to harness the potential of a flat hierarchy. BComú knows of these inequalities of power, residing in every aspect of life, and formulates answers to relief them as is evidenced by their goal of feminising politics (explained in chapter: new municipalism).

The city government recognises, that the motivation for partaking in these processes can prove to be a challenge. That is why the participation process should be individually adapted to the different phases of the project and each of the territory's unique characteristics while at the same time not straying from the technical participatory criteria put forth by the municipality (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.37). These were defined to guarantee their methodological quality (ibid., p.37).

PARTICIPATION CRITERIA

- City-wide and local approaches: Since the superblocks cannot be seen as islands without a
 connection to their surroundings, they need to be planned on two different scales. At the
 individual, local level and on the level of the relationships they should form between each
 other and thereby the city as a complex network itself (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016,
 p.37).
- Openness and inclusion: This criterion should ensure and encourage the participation of every actor. The process is open to all associations, people from every socio-demographic background, facilities and other groups. None shall be excluded from shaping their immediate surrounding (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.37). Exclusion can happen in a lot of different ways. Like time for example. This is why *BComú* as a platform municipalist movement is working with new technologies to make participation easier and break as many barriers as possible, that hinder residents to partake in the political process, down. I also refer back to the second and third point of *BComú's* aim to feminise politics.
- Monitoring and accountability: neighbourhood representatives (individuals and/or associations) should form a group in each territory, a so-called *promoter group*. The purpose of this unit is to bridge the local residents with the technical experts (city planners, scientists, politicians etc.). Their task consists of monitoring the superblock program for their territory and validating its different phases. They also take part in defining the participatory spaces and are overseeing the results from the workshops (participatory as well as technical) held (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.37).
- Transparency and traceability: Two websites (*Decidim.Barcelona* and the *ajuntament.barcelona*. *cat/superilles*) will help monitor the participatory processes. These websites can be visited by everyone and also enable people to lend their expertise even if they do not have the possibility to be present in the participatory spaces (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.37).

PARTICIPATORY PROCESS. SCHEME



Figure 7: BComú's plan for the Participation Process

The municipality organises different forms of participation during the planning of the plazas (intersections) and the axes (streets) of a *superilla*. These include:

- Diagnostic actions in public space
- Trolley in the street
- Street events
- Exploratory walks
- Survey
- Superilla Barcelona strategy presentation session
- Presentation session of the new Public Space Model and diagnostic work by quarters
- Project proposal sessions
- Return Sessions
- Presentation to the Neighbourhood Councils
- Follow-up sessions of the Monitoring Commissions (dicidim.barcelona: procesos participativos – el proceso).

For those who cannot, for whatever reason, partake at the participation opportunities listed above, the website *Dicidim.Barcelona* was created.

DICIDIM BARCELONA

"[...] man (sic) will adapt to the information age, since his natural instincts will drive him to create new moral rules appropriate to the new situation" (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p. 996).

The study from Gatti and Procentese (2021, p.7ff) about Instagram suggests that social media community-related practices "[...] could be able to give new social meanings and livability to urban spaces" and that tools could be built specially for the purpose of reconnecting local communities. The results of their study also support the idea, that social media platforms can "[...] boot bottom-up processes of re-appropriation, redevelopment, and re-opening of urban spaces and sociability" (Gatti and Procentese (2021, p.8). Dicidim. Barcelona is not a classic social media platform like Instagram or Facebook. But it can be considered as a social platform with somewhat similar and even additional functions tailored specifically for community practicing. As a tool built for reconnecting local communities. Also, the feature that Instagram provides could in the future be built into the *Dicidim.Barcelona* platform.

So far, the Platform has "[...] enrolled 28,000 citizens in active democratic decision-making, facilitated over 800 public meetings and produced some 12,000 proposals of which 9,000 have been incorporated into municipal policy, including the iconic (re)design of urban superblocks (superilles) that have made the city (even) more liveable for many." (Thompson 2020, p.13). For more information on how the platform works and its function, I left a detailed describtion in the Appendix page 173.

These political and participatory measures that BComú is setting help to build trust and accountability, to open up institutions to the public and make residents want to engage in political processes, thereby increasing neighbourhood and social cohesion. So how does Barcelona's municipal council plan to increase the cohesiveness of its residents through the built environment? Through the implementation of the following six measures.

Measures Concerning The Ville

- The physical proximity of facilities, houses and flats and economic activity.
- A mix of different types of housing which minimizes the consumption of water and energy and which shelters people from all social groups.
- The integration of marginalised districts/neighbourhoods through elements of attraction in strategic important locations.
- The provision of a public transport system for all.
- The prioritisation of urban space for pedestrians or its quality in terms of noise, urban greenery and air pollution.
- The accessibility of public space in its entirety for people with reduced mobility.
- etc. (Rueda et al. 2012, p.165).

"[...] these are key elements which make profound changes, in terms of more sustainable lifestyles, in terms of not excluding a single social group and guarantee the development of a society rich in interaction and greater stability, possible" (Rueda et al. 2012, p.165 translation by Herrnstadt).

"[...] son elementos clave para posibilitar cambios profundos hacia estilos de vida más sostenibles, y a la vez para no excluir a ningún grupo social y garantizar el desarrollo de una sociedad rica en interacciones y con una mayor estabilidad." (Rueda et al. 2012, p.165).

Healthy *social cohesion* exists when a space (a block, *superilla*, district etc.) is inhabited by people of different cultures, ages, incomes, professions etc. The municipal council considers this mix to have a stabilizing effect on the urban system (Rueda et al. 2012, p.140). Successful planning will establish the conditions for people to occupy and use the public space, no matter their socio-demographic characteristics. It will not only facilitate the coexistence but interactions of people as well. Contributing to a reduction of conflict, which determines the stability and maturity of a system (ibid., p.140).

FACTORS OF SOCIAL COHESION FOR BARCELONA'S GOVERNMENT

How cohesive a street, a block or a superblock is, depends on many concepts. Two of them are diversity and a mix of activities. These concepts coincide with the ideas and principles of the walkable (15-minute) city. A compact, complex urban area with a high density of residents. The base, the fundament that social cohesion rests upon is the amount and quality of contacts people and groups have. Considering and combining these factors plays an important role in the degree of social cohesiveness. Barcelona seeks to transform urban areas into complex, multi-use spaces. The mix of different usage of space is considered as very important, because diverse usage means diverse possibilities for attracting people from different walks of life. This includes consumption free spaces, spaces of economic activity (Rueda et al. 2012, p.164) as well as the provision of residential public housing (Rueda et al. 2012, p.165). At this point I want to remind, that Barcelona already has a high population density in most areas and a broad mix of different uses fostering proximity and urban vitality (Marquet & Miralles-Guasch 2014). So, I interpret that Rueda et al. are referring to districts in the north of the city and the district of Sant Martí, which lack density and mixed land

uses due to their location and history.

Although the municipal council considers density to be a positive factor for social cohesion, the literature is not at all certain about that. According to Mouratidis and Poortinga (2020, p.2), the built environment plays a definite role when it comes to the development of social ties amongst city dwellers as well as maintaining them, but there are different factors to consider. The built environment consists of many different features and they influence social cohesion to various degrees. For example, accessibility as well as walkability are features connected to (neighbourhood) social cohesion (ibid., p.2). The connection between density and *social* cohesion on the other hand is still a topic of debate and studies show different results (ibid., p.2). There are different factors to consider when trying to compare different studies about that topic. First and foremost, the definition of social cohesion. These may vary, depending on the author(s) of the study. Mouratidis and Poortinga (2020, p.2), for example, use the definition of Kawachi and Berkman (2000, p.175) who see social cohesion as the "[...] extend of connectedness and solidarity among groups in society". Mouratidis and Poortinga (2020, p.2 from Putman et al. 1993, p.167) also relate the concept of social cohesion with the concept of social capital by Forrest and Kearns which signifies to them "[...] features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficacy of society by facilitating coordinated action". This definition takes the kind of relationship, how meaningful they are, heavily into account. By this definition it makes sense, that a less dense area could be more cohesive, because a resident could much easier get to know all other residents.

Barcelona does not have the luxury of not building dense urban areas and neither to thin out existing districts because of its geographical limitations. The city is enclosed on all sides either by mountains or the Mediterranean Sea.

NEIGHBOURHOOD VS. MUNICIPAL VS. SOCIAL COHESION

Another factor to consider is the level at which social cohesion should increase. Mouratidis and Poortinga (2020, p.2) state that although "[...] density may lead to more impersonal social ties at local neighbourhood level, it facilitates more frequent overall social interaction and larger overall social networks as it reduces distances between different areas of the city and increases opportunities for socializing at the city level". So, put more precisely, density may not increase neighbourhood cohesion but at the same time can serve the overall cohesiveness of all residents of a city.

On the other hand, Forrest and Kearns raise the point that stronger neighbourhood ties may weaken the bonds between different neighbourhoods and thereby diminishing *social cohesion* on municipal level. They also note, that strong attachment of residents of a municipality and their loyalty towards it may weaken a wider, national cohesion (Forrest & Kearns 2001, p.2128).

But concerning inner municipal cohesion, the *togetherness* of districts and quarters, a lot of Spanish cities like Madrid, or Valencia have local, communal 'fiestas' (parties/festivals) in which every district participates. Depending on the city these 'fiestas' are either held together at the same time or sequentially. In that case, as it is in Barcelona, each barrio (quater) within a district in the city hosts a street festival and all districts have a *fiesta mayor* in which the streets get decorated and a variety of activities provided for the visitors. These pour in from all over the city. In Poblenou for example, all actors and residents that are able, work together to give music, dance and sports a space in the streets. Cultural acts include the *colles*, performance of the 'giants' (huge paper-mache statues), community meals and workshops for children (Barcelona.cat, Fechas de celebración).

I was not able to attend the fiesta mayor in Poblenou but here are some impressions from my visit

of the fiesta mayor de Gracia:







Figure 8, 9 & 10: Images from the Fiesta de Gracia

WALKABILITY, PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND GREENSPACES

The city of Barcelona, as already stated in the previous chapter, does not specify their stands on the quality of the relationships. But as the goals of the *new municipalist* platform point to and Ada Colau shows in her interview, the aim is to increase *social cohesion* on all levels: At the local neighbourhood level via the *superilles* and at the city level via the integration of all superblocks into a cohesive urban system, promoting walkability and an extensive, uninterrupted green network. Walkability is one of the factors for higher levels of *social cohesion* in a neighbourhood as walking leads to more encounters and social interaction, creating *togetherness* over time as Jane Jacbos (1961) suggested. In that vein, public transportation also has a positive effect on *social cohesion* since, no matter how close, its users need to walk to and from the stations to their respective destinations (Mouratidis and Poortinga 2020, p.2).

Studies on green spaces on the other hand show conflicting results. They may animate residents to engage more in social activities and thereby build up social cohesion (Mouratidis and Poortinga 2020, p.2) but, depending on their design and size, they may have an opposite effect. Hartig et. al. (2014) for example raise the point, that precisely the lack of social interactions gives green spaces their calming and recreational quality (Mouratidis and Poortinga 2020, p.7).

For me social interaction is still a choice. I may choose to engage with people I know or I don't. I may great them and exchange pleasantries but then go about my business. Even if it is lying in a green space. But if I don't know the people, the chance of an interaction would drop significantly.

Demographic diversity and usage mix

"From the point of view of social cohesion, unity is not a synonym for uniformity" (Taleb 2019, p.27). Diversity and neighbourhood and social cohesion relate to each other on two levels. On a political and on a spatial.

Building on their own analysis, the city of Barcelona holds the opinion, that an area, lacking usage mixture fail to draw in residents with different socio-economic backgrounds, resluating in less social cohesion.

If the cafés of an area are too expensive for a person, he or she will not take it upon herself to make the journey to get there. If an area is filled with office buildings but no restaurants or bars, the streets might be buzzing with activity during the day but be silent and empty during the night. This exclusion of different socio demographic groups can generate unconsciousness, even ignorance towards one another. In extreme cases, it can evoke a feeling of lack of safety or discrimination ignited by fear. Especially when certain political parties aim to "[...] create a scapegoat at the same level as those who perceive themselves as victims" (Taleb 2019, p.27). As displayed in Badalona, the third most populous city in Catalonia, where the right wing party Partido Popular (PP) ran with the slogan 'Locals come first' (in this case Purcell's fifth assumption of the modifier 'local' standing for a more specific group, namely native Catalan citizens, was true). But these fears do not stem from the knowledge one group possesses on the other but rather the lack of said knowledge. Where knowledge and certainty ends, speculation and fantasy take their place.

This fear-mongering is done not only at the municipal but also national and international level, as political figures like Trump, Orban, Putin, Le Pen, the list goes on, display on a basis. But the consequences of sowing fear and hate of others (diversity) is materialised and experienced and leaves its marks at the local level (Taleb 2019, p.28). This makes the local and municipal level the strategic point to counteract the installation of fear of the other, the unknown. It is the local where difference and diversity approximate and "[...] alternatives are created, and a truly communal way of living based on diversity comes into being" (Taleb 2019, p.28). Two things come in to play at the local level. Frist, the proximity of bodies and second the space itself leading back to the importance of encounter in public space. Taleb (2019, p.28) hence argues for the promotion of the bonds connecting individuals. She states: "\...\] if I know my neighbours I won't be afraid of them, and they won't be afraid of me" (Taleb 2019, p.28). Taleb (2019, p.28) argues that the close and the local relationships should be built on the principle of sorority and fraternity.

This ties back to the logic that neighbourhood and social cohesion, social capital, is an outcome of family and kin acting as a mutual support system. What is considered as family and kin does not have to be linked to the sharing of gens though. In the Spanish (language) culture members of a community often call each other tia or tio which means aunt and uncle. Also, primo (cousin) and hermana/ hermano (sister/brother), which is also common in other languages to demonstrate closeness or familiarity between people that are not related, is often used. The Spanish language even connects the words 'we' (nos) and 'others' (otras) in its first-person-plural pronoun nosotras (Taleb 2019, p.28) which I personally find a quite beautiful sentiment. This is why, as already stated, citizenship statues should be achieved through residency and not via a legal status or a national passport (Taleb 2019, p.29). The idea of neighbourliness and togetherness is to be established and having the right documents is not a requirement for being a neighbour. It just requires living in and sharing the same space (Taleb 2019, p.29). That is why in Badalona the city organises meetings and events to bring those marginalised and the 'not in my backyard' people together (Taleb 2019, p.29). Barcelona took part in writing the document Human rights cities in the EU: a framework for reinforcing rights locally from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). The Director of the FRA states, that "Becoming a human rights city means explicitly linking such activities [managing public space, delivering services etc.] to human and fundamental rights obligations. Doing so can have a reinvigorating effect, boosting confidence in local government and fostering public debates that ultimately help make fairer societies for all" (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2021, p.1).

Aristotle's idea of a city: "People that are the same can't make a city. That does not make markets, it does not create any kind of innovation, it does not create any kind of social bond between people. [...] A city is a place where differences come together and they interact. A city is a place of stranger, where strangers meet, rather than an intimate small place [...]" (Sennett 2018, Die offene Stadt/The open City, 7:01).

Instead of propagating an ideal, a utopia, $BCom \hat{u}$ is aware of the challenge of creating a higher level of social demographic mixing and the establishment of a greater variety of uses, will incite conflict. But instead of avoiding these conflicts, the city wants to tackle them head on in the name of equality for all residents. And one way to achieve it is via residential buildings.

Public and Social Housing

It does not matter if it is a transformation or rehabilitation processes, if it is taking an active or a passive role when it comes to shaping the real estate sector. Each action or inaction in the physical structure influences the social structure of an area (Rueda et al. 2012, p.165). An uncontrolled and unregulated housing market may lead to social exclusion. That is why, for the municipal council, it is very important to link programs of residential buildings to social characteristics (Rueda et al. 2012, p.165). That means that in urban renewal and transformation processes, like the *superilla* for example, the socio demographic attributes of the residents of the affected area or neighbourhood are studied, analysed and the resulting findings must inform the decisions of design, configuration and usage of said area. In Spanish, the word 'tejido' is a term often used when it comes to describing the build structure of a city. The term translates into fabric. This understanding of a city, that different parts are woven together to make a whole, fits Cerdàs grid design perfectly. According to the government of Barcelona, superblocks should reflect the socio demographic and historical attributes that make up the ville, the urban of the designated part of the city, but must not ignore its neighbouring islands. The same idea applies to the cite. The typology of a superilla as well as the superilles surrounding it, inform the design, purpose and use of the superblock (Rueda et al. 2012, p.165).

In this fabric of buildings old and new, one or ten stories tall, the *vivienda protegida* (social housing) should play a lead role. According to Rueda et al. (2012, p.165) at least 30% of the constructed residential surface area should be destined for the *vivienda protegida*. The objective is to make hous-

ing more accessible and establish a counterweight to the already existing sectors, equalizing the existing deficit (Rueda et al. 2012, p.165). The attractiveness of these social housings should be further increased by placing them in well situated areas in the city, districts and neighbourhoods. Good accessibility to essential services, green spaces and the public transport network will raise the quality of social housing even more (Rueda et al. 2012, p.166). A mix of different housing options (property, rent, free or protected (social)) should be established on every level of the city with equal distribution: in a group of blocks, within a block and even within a single plot. An equal distribution of different forms of residential space supports the neighbourhood relationships (Rueda et al. 2012, p.166).

Solutions for dwindling social cohesion

Since the level of neighbourhood and social cohesion is influenced by many factors and affected on multiple levels, there is no single, isolated solution and definitely no quick fix to the problem. Instead a mix of solutions, a toolbox with a diverse set of instruments, is needed to tackle the issue of dwindling social cohesion.

One of these instruments, according to Alexander von Hoffmann (1994, p.240), may reside in our past: the urban neighbourhood of the late 19th and early 20th century. For Hoffmann social cohesion in a city needs to be analysed by a multilevel approach, dividing it into three layers. The city as a whole forms the first of these, followed by the city-region and the last is the afore mentioned neighbourhood. These are in his view the three pillars on which social integration, in a city, rests upon (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.996). Back then, at the turn of the last century, the neighbourhood was the backbone of the city, social cohesion and therefore society. The neighbourhood was a cell within a growing organism that "[...] combined associational activity, local economic growth, a dense organisational life and a responsive political structure" (ibid., p.996). This may no longer be the case (for all neighbourhoods) today, but what once was may arise again, it only need-be the goal, the common value, of its residents.

Of course, there are more factors then the ones listed above influencing *social cohesion*. There are also socioeconomic factors, tax and labour policies, the strength and development of social policies as well as cultural differences and integration. But as a spatial planner and not being able to analyse tax and other policy factors because of time constraints, the usage in an area and its diversity or lack are the main subjects of investigation. Also, the use of a building, a block or an area is determined, in most cases, by the municipality. Other factors, like the labour policies for example, are decided on state or national level, leaving very little room for cities to act in.

SUPERILLES

The superilles initiative is an important piece of the puzzle to complete the BComús image of a more cohesive society and increased neighbourhood cohesion within the local areas. The superilla is the manifestation of the ideals and the new municipalist vision of a different future for Barcelona. Its political ideas, its stance on democracy and participation, towards the feminisation of politics and towards the climate crisis as an ecological and social issue, all come together in this initiative. "La cohesión social [...] está relacionada con otros principios de la sostenibilidad" (Rueda et al. 2012, p.164) 'Social cohesion [...] is related to other principles of sustainability' (translation by Herrnstadt).

Building their future is a project, a very holistic and complex one. So, in order to get people's attention, get them interested, exited and even partake in this endeavour, it is much easier to have something tangible. Participation plays a major role in the grant scheme of BComú and the superblock initiative is intended to get the ball rolling, the reason for residents to get together and assemble. It is intended to be the spark to think the city anew, to question the old believes and collaboratively come up with new values, common values. The practise of planning, designing and building a new ville should bring people together and the new ville by forming a new cité in turn even closer.

HISTORY OF THE SUPERILLES

BIRTH OF AN IDEA(L)

The idea of a superilla is nothing new, nor is the goal of limiting through traffic of motorised vehicles in neighbourhoods. Barcelona made its first steps in that direction in the 1980s, by pedestrianising the city's old quarter (Ajuntament Barcelona 2016, p.10) but the idea already emerged in the 1970s yet did not hold the title superblock (Zografos et al. 2020, p.4). As in other projects aiming to reduce motorised traffic, so too was the project met with concerns of commercial decline. But these soon had been dismissed after the first re-developments of Portal de l'Àngel and Plaça de la Catedral. This paved the way for the expulsion of private traffic in a large part of the innermost district, the city centre named Barri Gòtic (Ajuntament Barcelona 2016, p.10).

Proving its worth, this model was adopted and implemented in every centre of the old towns that Barcelona absorbed due to its expansion during the 19th and 20th century. Again, they aimed at removing private traffic from narrow streets providing a variety of different uses and activities (Ajuntament Barcelona 2016, p.10).

FIRST SUPERBLOCKS IN BARCELONA

The first superblock that would hold the title of superilla was established in 'Vila de Gràcia', a district due north of the city centre (Barri Gòtic). This was made possible in 2003 with the introduction of a Mobility Plan for the entire district (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.10). Gràcia is located closer to the mountainous area. It is 'separated' from the centre by Cerdás Eixample area. All of these three parts (Gràcia, Eixample and historic Barri Gòtic) of Barcelona have a different typology. This can easily be seen in an orthophoto of the city. While the Eixample follows the additive block grid of Cerdá, as explained in chapter 1, Gràcia is built in a more compact, dense way. With



its long, stretched buildings, there is very little space for inner courtyards and resembles the old working-class district of Barceloneta. Another defining feature of Gràcia and Barceloneta are the tight streets that criss-cross in a rectangular fashion through the area. Most of the sidewalks only provide space for two people to stand side by side. Bollards need to separate cars from people (or people need to be secured by bollards from the cars) because the level of the sidewalks and the street is more often the same height than not. These were conditions in which the implementation of a superblock made sense.

So, streets that serve as public transportation arteries and direct road traffic were identified. Changes of direction, the erection of obstacles and physical changes to streets implemented to regulate access points. The result was a decline in private transport (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.10).

The actions taken in Gràcia got the ball rolling and debates were held over whether this system of reducing private traffic by analysing and identifying functions and uses of different streets could and should be spread out into other districts and if the isotropic grid model (= every street should provide vehicle traffic) was outdated. The argument was put forth, that no two streets are the same, even in Eixample the streets differ in width, use etc. (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.10ff).

The debate has shifted over the years towards road prioritisation and away from the isotropic grid because of two initiatives: The new orthogonal-grid for the public transportation bus lines and the expansion of the 30 km/h speed limit thereby becoming a 30 km/h city.



Figure 11: Proposal for new orthogonal running Bus Lines that will shape the superilles initiative

The expansion of the 30 km/h speed limit zones had been implemented over the course of the last years, separately from the superblock initiative. So, at the end of 2019 Barcelona had accomplished to convert half of its traffic network into streets with a 30km/h limit (Ajuntament de Bar-

Må

celona: Barcelona for climate - Speed limit of 30 km/h for all streets with single traffic lanes). By 2020 that number was pushed by to 67,7% of the whole city road network and thereby the city got a step closer to their goal of becoming a 30 km/h city (ibid.).

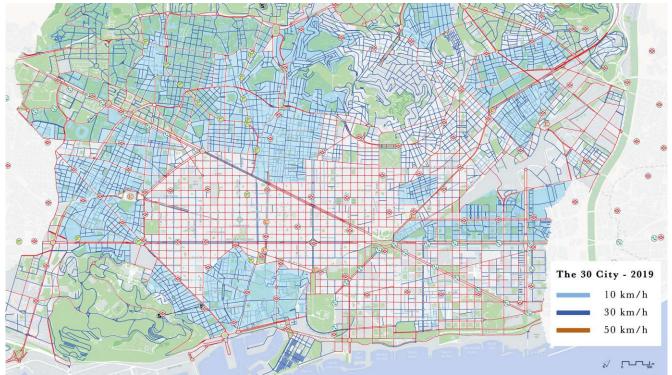


Figure 12: The 30 km/h City in 2019

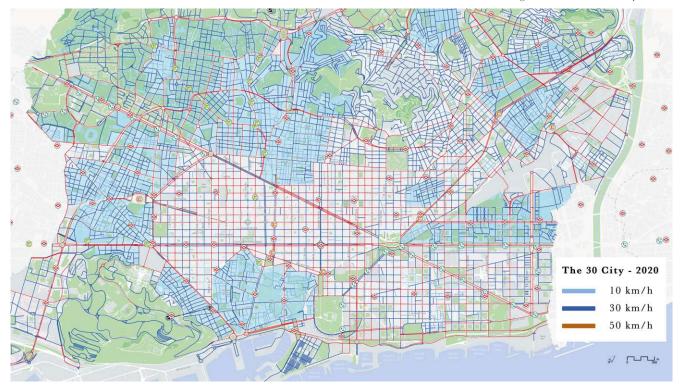


Figure 13: The 30 km/h City in 2020

It was this shift, that allowed for the approval of Barcelona's Urban Mobility Plan (PMU, 2014), in which the mobility of all people in the city is to be organised according to the idea of the superilla (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.10).



The PMU purposefully paints a large vision for Barcelona's future with 503 superblocks:

- 21% car traffic reduction,
- increase and restructuring of public transportation and cycling infrastructure,
- noise level reduction,
- reduction of premature deaths linked to air pollution (3500 per year),
- converting space dedicated for motorised vehicles (around 60%) into pedestrian friendly places with a variety of uses fostering resident interaction, local activities and leisure (Zografos et al. 2020, p.4) and
- reduction of the heat island effect (Zografos et al. 2020, p.5).

Since the *superilles* initiative not only aims to reorder the traffic system but also mitigate the negative effects of the climate crisis, it is not only anchored in the PMU but also Barcelona's Climate Action Plan and the Barcelona Commitment to Climate initiative (Zografos et al. 2020, p.6).

From a historic standpoint, the superblock was just a mobility concept. Every political party (or political movement) holding most power in the municipal council took the mobility aspect as a base and added to it its desired visions. Therefore, when we talk about superblocks in Barcelona we cannot talk of *the* superblock concept, but rather of versions of the superblock concept.

POLITICAL ASSIMILATION OF THE SUPERBLOCKS

So, the purpose and design, as well as the area of implementation differed heavily depending on the political ideology of the ruling party. Most concentrated around reducing traffic speed but without mayor disruptions to the established system. As mentioned above, superblock projects were local, district wide initiatives. This changed when centre-right parties took over the municipal government after 22 years (1979-2011) of socialist rule with the *Partido de los Socialistas de Cataluña* (PSC-PSOE) at the helm. Despite having sufficient time to pass a superblock initiative at the municipal level, it was Xavier Trias form the conservative party *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) and mayor of Barcelona until 2015 who passed the Urban Mobility Plan 2014 (Zografos et al. 2020, p.7) and not the socialist party.

His vision for the *superilles*, though carrying the same name, differed stark from the *new municipalist* concept that we have today. Not the quality of life or environmental actions stood at the forefront, but the economy. It was in line with the 'smart city' model and aimed at attracting top of the market real estate developers high end residents using technological innovation (Zografos et al. 2020, p.7). Traffic reorganisation under mayor Trias meant increasing urban mobility choices but concentrated on the roll out of electric cars. He was able to put the PMU with the superblocks into law, because he enjoyed the support of local economic sectors (ibid., p.7). The expansion of the superblock into a city-wide initiative has to be seen as a neo-liberal competitive discourse, which is to be interpreted as the ratification of "[...] ideas and structures of community development, entrepreneurialism, business vitality, place attractiveness, and competitive advantage. In this sense, growth machines operate through the construction of a storyline [...]" (Russo 2017, p.5). But before this conservative story could be brought onto the stage of life, the built environment, the script was rewritten in 2015.

Barcelona en Comú won the municipal election, Ada Colau became mayor and the vision of the superilla was adapted to fit new municipalist principles. The new municipalist superblock differs from the ones that came before in that it aims to be a true urban transformational adaption. Christos Zografos et al. (2020, p.2) put together a list of five characteristics, that emerge out of the literature, that need to be present for an urban adaption to be transformational:

- 1. "First, transformational actions involve non-linear alterations at an enlarged scale or intensity that reorder and/or relocate systems, transform places, and shift locations.
- 2. Second, they address "underlying failures of development, including increasing greenhouse gas emissions by linking adaptation [and] mitigation" (IPCC, 2014 quoted in Pelling, O'Brien, & Matyas, 2014: 2).
- 3. Third, they seek fundamental alterations within a system (like a city) that itself produces climate change vulnerability both elsewhere and within its contours. [...].
- 4. Fourth, they confront generative causes of vulnerability to climate change by engaging with the politics of managing risk.
- 5. [...] [fifth,] it reshapes existing local politics in order to overcome barriers embedded within entrenched institutional norms protected by uneven power structures, often supporting growth (Zografos et al. 2020, p.2).

What sets the new municipalist *superilles* apart from the ones that had been implemented before, like Gràcia for example, is that its Mobility Plan only aimed at the traffic pacification within the district. The pilot superblock in Poblenou on the other hand is part of a city-wide Mobility Plan. Therefore, the *superilles* initiative can be considered an urban transformational adaption (Zografos et al. 2020, p.4).

Testing this vision, this adaption of the superblock was made possible by the 25,21% of voters who cast their ballot for *Barcelona en Comú*, beating the CiU (22,72%) by 2,49%. This resulted in 11 seats for *Barcelona en Comú* out of a total of 41 city council seats (El País: Elecciones Municipales – Resultados 2015). Zagrafos writes that only controlling a quarter of the city council, despite being backed by popular enthusiasm, meant that political rivals would use a situation that divides public opinion to their advantage and would leave Colau somewhat vulnerable. In addition, a term in Barcelona is only four years, so time was an additional important factor for the new administration to make a good and hopefully lasting impression. The pressure of these two factors became apparent in the SB9 project and revealed itself in the way the pilot project was handled from the start by the administration. This pressure of implementing the first *new municipalist* superblock fast but still successfully was transferred from city's administrative directors to agency staff (Zografos et al. 2020, p.7). "Those pressures were then channelled into a struggle for political credit, which influenced reactions to superblocks all through the implementation of the project" (ibid., p.7).

That the *superilla* is a highly politicised project is also underlined by the fact that every party that lost the majority of the city council accused the following administration of steeling the idea. The socialist (PSC-PSOE) did so after the conservatives (CiU) took over and the conservatives did so after May 2015. The CiU had already planned their version of a superblock in Poblenou but it was not yet implemented. So, in order for the CiU not to take credit for the *new municipalist* superblock, the *BComú* administration decided to move their pilot site a few blocks from the site chosen by the CiU. Although this change of location gave more legitimate claim of the project, it also meant that ownership was favoured over meticulous planning (Zografos et al. 2020, p.8). The old site had been analysed and planned and could probably have been adapted to *new municipalist* principles. Changing the location, even by a few blocks, meant dealing with a totally new situation.

Probably knowing what this shorter planning process entailed, the decision had its merits. Being able to take credit for the *superilla*, if successful, could ensure and increase political power. If rolled out over the entire Eixample, this would be the most defining urban transformation of Barcelona since Cerdà himself. The Catalan capital is quite famous for its urban design projects and is often looked upon for reference. Zografos et al. (2020, p.8) write that the coverage by the media and its



scope would even bring legitimacy for the administration outside the borders of Catalonia, Spain and Europe. The differences from the human centred approach of the Colau administration vs. the business-friendly vision of Trias are obvious, but if the project had been implemented on the same site, it would have made it a lot easier for the CiU to try to take credit.

That *BComú* was aware of the media coverage to reach international scope is for me also evident in the way they positioned themselves in the *new municipalist* movement. Although found in cities all over the world, Barcelona took a leading role, displayed by hosting the Fearless Cities Summit(s). The SB9 is in my opinion not just a pilot project for an urban transformational adaption but the representation of the new form of politics that is *new municipalism*. It is the flagship that has the ability to grab the attention of the media, as the ideas behind *new municipalism* alone never could.

The cementation of this political form was feared by the establishment in Barcelona, so leaving the credit for the SB9 to Colau was not an option. Winning this struggle for public perception would also have far reaching effects for the future of superblock initiative for it was also a struggle for what transformation itself meant (Zografos et al. 2020, p.8). *BComú* staying in the city council also entailed for the conservative right-wing parties that they would have to deal with an anti-capitalist, Marxist, de-growth orientated political opponent. So, political opposition was not as much against the SB9 itself (it was just an area of 3x3 blocks), but more against what it, the *BComú* administration and *new municipalism*, stood for. Adding to already mentioned principles this meant a "[...] rejection of a Barcelona city model tailored to the interests of entrepreneurs, star architects, real estate investors, and tourist industry business owners" (ibid., p.8).

Colau found herself in the crosshairs, when the opposition started to paint her as "[...] anti-private vehicle [...]" (Zografos et al. 2020, p.8) obsessed and dangerously radical in her pursuit to rid the city of cars. Although not true, this narrative sowed mistrust amongst left-wing parties. The ERC (Republican Left of Catalonia) stopped supporting BComú's projects. The SB9 became a symbol of the Colau's administration and was thus dismissed by everyone not sharing BComú's ideology. The superblocks of Barcelona were rebranded as the superblocks of Colau, deepening the resistance against the superilla initiative. Even for those considering the urban transformational adaption a good idea, but harbouring resentment against the mayor herself (ibid., p.8).

So, looking at Barcelona's city council I think it is safe to assume, that the superblock project has not increased the cohesiveness of its members. Neither did the rise of *new municipalism* in form of *Barcelona en Comú* as a party that is anti-capitalist/establishment and that also split the left into two camps. One calling for Catalan independency (ERC) and one that distanced itself from the matter (BComú).

This political bickering left its marks. It polarised residents so far that a local business owner said in an interview that all right-wingers opposed the *superilla* just because it was proposed by Ada Colau's administration (Zografos et al. 2020, p.8).

Now that we know the history of the *superilla* and that it is a highly politicised project that cannot be separated from party politics and ideological affiliation, and its acceptance of the public is influenced by a variety of factors, we are going to take a look at what the *superilles* initiative is when it is combined with *new municipalist* principles.

New Municipalist Superblocks

Although increasing *social cohesion* is the fourth of the five pillars (main goals) of the superblock project, the other four also influence the cohesiveness of society, although maybe not in such a direct way but as a side-effect.

- 1. "public spaces as a common asset;
- 2. protecting neighbourhoods from through traffic;
- 3. reducing pollution and accidents;
- 4. strengthening pedestrian rights and social cohesion [...]
- 5. renaturalising new public spaces with planted elements and soft (permeable) surfaces [...]" (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.2).

As Rueda et al. (2012, p.164) write: *social cohesion* refers to the level of coexistence between different people and groups. These factors are considered and *social cohesion* is interwoven with other aspects of sustainability. Since the stance of *BComú* is that every ecological and social issue are just to sides of the same coin and addressing one has knock on effects on the other, I will now take a closer look at the reasons behind and for the implementation of the *new municipalist superilles* initiative.

Reasons behind and for implementing Superblocks

"[...] "municipalism is not an end in itself. It's a means by which to achieve [our] vital goals" (Russell 2019, 991 from Roth and Baird 2017).

The city of Barcelona faces numerous problems that affect the health of humans and the environment. These include elevated noise levels (Mueller et al. 2020, p.2) (above EU recommendations) and air pollution problems (Mueller et al. 2020, p.2). It is a compact city displaying one of the highest densities in Europe (Ajuntament Barcelona 2016, p.7 & p.11). This is due to the fact, that Cerdà's plan allowed the city to grow inwards and become more compact. Although compact cities have many benefits "[...] social and environment advantages: local approaches; minimal use of the territory; economies of scale in services, public transport and inter-activity relations; less energy waste etc." (ibid., p.12), in Barcelona there is a lack of green spaces (7m2 per inhabitant; 1.85 m2 in Eixample and 3.15 m2 in Gràcia) thereby creating a heat island effect. Also, compactness has its limit (ibid, p.12). All these issues combined are the cause of many different illnesses and pose a huge risk for the health of Barcelona's residents (Mueller et al. 2020, p.2).

Finding solutions for the issue of mobility is *the* key component in the *BComú* superblock. Because compactness in Barcelona already has reached critical levels, the public space is the only space left that can provide measures for a better quality of life, but is currently mostly occupied cars. The municipal council aims to tackle this issue on three sides: increasing the quality of public transport, making roads safer and substantially more pedestrian and cyclist friendly (Ajuntament Barcelona 2016, p.13).

Noise Pollution

The map on the following page illustrates the noise levels that were reached in every street in 2017:





Figure 14: Noise Pollution Map 2017

Noise has a tremendous effect on the quality of life of every human. As in other cities the biggest perpetrator in Barcelona is the motorised vehicular traffic. The European Union as well as the WHO consider 65 decibel (dBA) to be the noise limit over which humans should not be exposed to during the day. 40,25% of Barcelona's population suffer from noise levels that exceed this recommendation. Children are most affected by this type of pollution. For them chronic noise exposure can lead to increased arterial pressure (this interferes with their ability to concentrate, to communicate orally and to learn to read). Adults exposed to elevated noise levels can expect a higher risk for respiratory and cardiac diseases (again children are more effected) (Ajuntament Barcelona 2016, p.13).

AIR POLLUTION

The following three maps demonstrate the air pollution reached in the city of Barcelona for every street. The maps show the situation in the years 2018, 2019 and 2020. In 2020 there is clearly a decline in pollution levels visible. This is most likely due to the expansion of the 30mph limit and the Covid related measures caused by the Corona pandemic, like stay at home orders by the Spanish government.

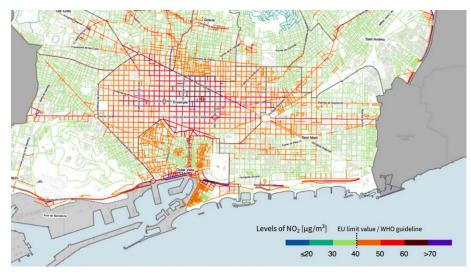


Figure 15: Annual mean of NO2 Immission Levels 2018

Also, the expansion of remote working and its wider acceptance may have contributed to the dip in pollution.

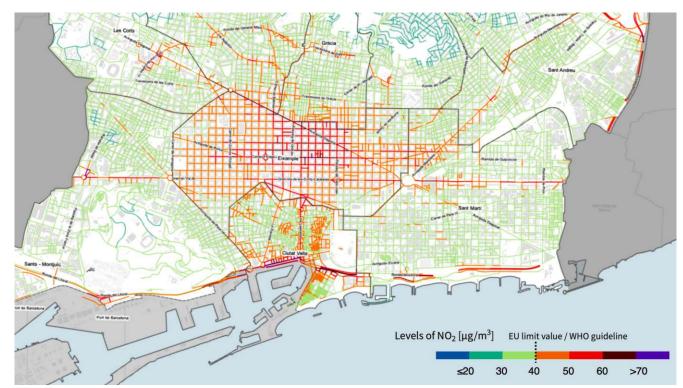


Figure 16: Annual mean of NO2 Immission Levels 2019

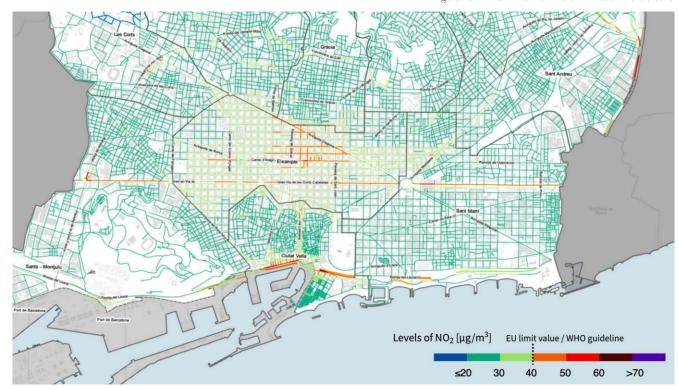


Figure 17: Annual mean of NO2 Immission Levels 2020 $\,$

Even though a betterment in air quality can be perceived in the last years, recommendations of the World Health Organisation (WHO) are still not met (Mueller et al. 2020, p.2). It is estimated, that exceeding the set threshold of the WHO costs around 3,500 lives each year and takes its toll on the life expectancy of everyone. Air pollution also effects the brain connectivity of children in their school-age, as recent studies have revealed (Ajuntament Barcelona 2016, p.12ff). In addition to the life toll, air pollution causes around 1,800 hospitalisations due to cardiovascular reasons, 5.100 adults and 31.100 children to have chronic symptoms of bronchitis and around 20 percent of all pulmonary cancers (BCN Ecologia: porque supermanzanas).

FLOOD ENDANGERED AREAS

Barcelona faces the problem of sealing the soil it is built on. This increases the likelihood of flooding. According to the Pla Clima Document concerning flooding (Montlleó et al. 2017, III, p.7) the percentage of the city's impermeable surface area has changed from 45% in 1956 to 72% in 2009.

Four steps that the city should take that could mitigate the risk of flooding are, increasing the infiltration through sustainable drainage systems, the use of permeable materials, the greening of buildings and the erection of ponds etc. (Montlleó et al. 2017, III, p.64) and introduce improvements to the sewer network (Montlleó et al. 2017, III, p.65)

HEAT ISLAND EFFECT

Barcelona is also no exception to the rule of the heat island effect. Meaning that the concrete of the streets, buildings and dark, none reflecting materials absorb the heat of the sun, store them and act as radiator. Central heating if you will, because the heat island effect is strongest in the

centre. In Barcelona the centre reaches up to 8 more degrees than less urbanised surrounding areas (Mueller et al. 2020, p.2). This is due to Barcelona's aforementioned density. Around 1,6 million people live in an area of around 100km2 making the available space for greenery and parks scarce (Mueller et al. 2020, p.2).

Trees and greenery could alleviate the problem but according to the World Health Organisation Barcelona's residents only have 7m² of green space per capita to their disposal. Differing from neighbourhood to neighbourhood some don't even have 2m² (Zografos et al. 2020, p.5). Montlleó et al. (2017, I, p.82-83) recommend the installation of green roofs and the greening of walls and facades, the use of the appropriate materials on the external surfaces of buildings and streets and the promotion of natural ventilation.

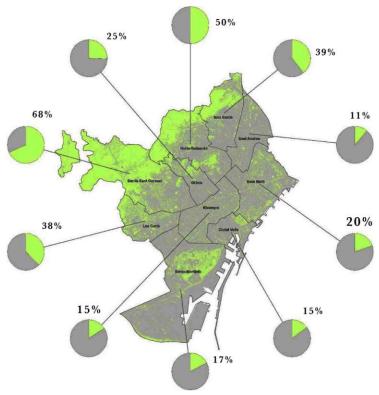


Figure 18: Percentage of Green Infrastructure for every District of Barcelona

The superblock initiative aims to increase greenery within the city planting trees and plants that provide a lot of shade in spaces (intersections), that will be freed up by the reduction of parking spaces as well as creating green corridors throughout the entire *Eixample* area and eventually the whole city (Zografos et al. 2020, p.5).

CURRENT ROAD NETWORK

In the year 2015 over 9,000 accidents had been registered in which people had been injured. In these 9,095 traffic accidents, 27 people lost their lives (Ajuntament Barcelona 2016, p.13). The numbers have not changed significantly in the last years. In 2018 there had been 9,180 and in 2019 9,251 accidents, which amount to around 25 per day (Ajuntament de Barcelona – Road accident figures for Barcelona in 2019).

The approved original version of this thesis is available in print at TU Wien Bibliothek

The Urban Mobility Plan (Plan de Mobilitat Urbana de Barcelona) from 2013-2018, the official document outlining the different actions that will be taken to reorganize the urban fabric into superblocks, planned on reducing mortised vehicle use by 21% (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.22). The New Urban Mobility Plan 2019-2024 plans on reducing it even further from the current 26,04% to 18,48% by 2024 (Ajuntament de Barcelona: Plan De Mobilitat Urbana 2024 2020, p.4)



Figure 19: Road Network, Situation before Superilles Implementation

CURRENT CITIZEN ACCESSIBLE SPACE



Figure 20: Citizen Accessible Space, Situation before Superilles Implementation

The prioritisation of pedestrians does not only intent to reduce the number of road accidents, but also to encourage people to walk more as a mode of transportation and increase their health. Children are again at the centre of this initiative. Almost 1 out of every 5th child or teenager is at the brink of becoming overweight or is already obese (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.13). This is also a question of social justice, because children living the poorest areas and neighbourhoods of Barcelona are twice as likely to fall into that category (31,4%) then children and teenagers growing up in more prosperous parts (15,6%) of the city (ibid., p.13). Although diet plays an undeniably important role, when it comes to the issue of overweight and obesity, the municipal council believes that for most children, walking or cycling to school and back would already decrease the number of cases. But the city also wants to provide children with the freedom to play and move around the streets, so children can burn even more energy (ibid., p.13).

Apart from the physical health aspects, exercise also helps with mental health, alleviating stress and lowering the chance of depression. Creating the environment in which children are enabled to walk to and from school by themselves yields many secondary benefits. The parents save time, if



before they brought them to school by car, they save money, reduce their carbon footprint, increase air quality and reduce noise levels by driving less. The extra minutes gained by the parents even might help alleviating some of their stress. By being able to walk or play by themselves in the public space, children might learn to be more independent, have a better risk assessment and through negotiations at the playing grounds might come in first contacts with democracy.

As already stated, the mitigation of the climate crises effects on the city and the health of its residents through the superblock initiative is not just about the creation of a sustainable city. It is viewed by the municipal council as a crucial part for achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG) set out by the United Nations in 2015 (Mueller et al. 2020, p.3). The 11th SDG aims to "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" (United Nations 2015, p.14). Mueller et al. (2020, p.3) interpret SDG 11 as a "[...] leverage point to overcome global challenges related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, peace, and justice". These are all factors influencing social cohesion, on a planetary scale as well as the cohesiveness of a municipal society.

GENERAL DESIGN OF THE SUPERBLOCK

"The municipal government stresses that it seeks a "new urban model" (Barcelona City Council, 2017), and the superblock project questions the current paradigm of urban development based on car hegemony over public space" (Zografos et al. 2020, p.6).

The rethinking of "[...] the city through new ways of grouping, based on traditional blocks [...]" (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.2), the superilla is the cornerstone for the giant's task of increasing the quality of life in almost every aspect. The concept behind the superblock is to take nine building blocks (Spanish: manzana). These are configured in a three by three grid (not in every case as we will see in the selected case of my study). This results in a superblock of about 400x400 meters (Zografos et al.2020, p.3; Mueller et al. 2020, p.3). So, most of the superblocks in the Eixample area will consist of four streets going around them and four streets crossing them. Two vertical and two horizontal running streets. The inner will have a maximum speed limit of 20km/h and the outer streets a maximum of 50km/h (Mueller et al. 2020, p.3).

The inner streets will be cut off for through traffic. If a car enters a superblock (there are four possible entry points) it is forced to make a right turn at the first intersection and a second at the second intersection, leading the car to one of the four superblock's exit points.

But the new municipalist superilla should not just generate reduced traffic, but also be "[...] made up of an integrated network of relationships that highlights today's neighbourhoods [...] and activities; and which promotes the reclaiming of public space and a sustainable mobility system for connecting all these. Citizens' *lives* are also changing, through better access and the promotion of local social relations" (Ajuntament Barcelona 2016, p.2). This quote describes the holistic view and approach of BComús superilles undertaking and sums up the afore mentioned five pillars of the new municipalist superblock.

In addition to the one-way streets, resident parking only will allow the implementation of trees, benches, city-bike stations, art, picnic tables etc. The intersections will be turned into plazas. These are very spacious due to the cut-off building corners, originally designed by Cerdà for the horse

TU **Sibliothek**, Die appro WIEN Your knowledge hub drawn carriages. These plazas can be designed and configured according to the needs of the superblocks residents.

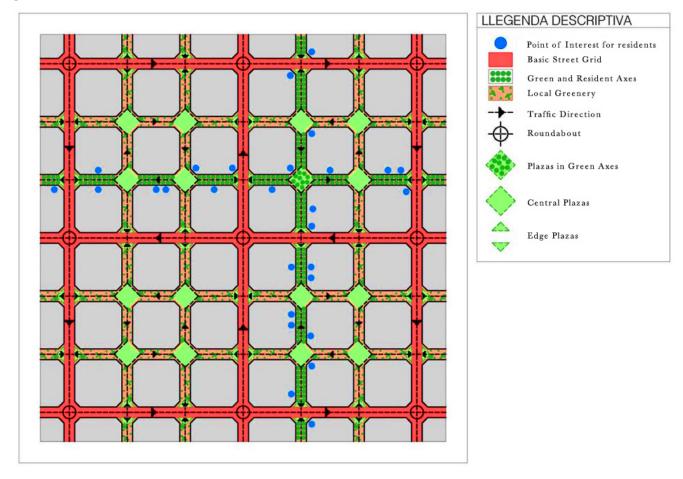


Figure 21: Superblock Concept

The additive grid of the Eixample, that had been designed almost over two hundred years ago, proves very versatile. In light of its different use cases over the course of time it needs to be seen as a tool. And like any tool it is itself not political but can be used to promote and further a political agenda. In New York for example Cerdà's original idea for the additive grid had been perverted to serve the capitalist agenda. In 1811, plans for the city that never sleeps saw never ending rows of blocks that "[...] treated the individual lot and the block, the street and the avenue, as abstract units for buying and selling, without respect for historic uses, for typographic conditions or for social needs" (Sennett 2018, p.39 from Mumford 1961, p.421). BComú aims to give this additive grid yet another spin with the superilles initiative, furthering an anti-capitalist, feminist, socio-ecologist agenda.

Cerdàs grid allows a fairly easy integration of the *superilles* into the existing structures of the Eixample, but at the same time for the individual superblocks to be flexible and adaptable. Plans, tools and concepts should always reflect and tend to the needs and proposals of the residents inhabiting the space defined by the three by three block area (Ajuntament Barcelona 2016, p.2). The government puts the idea behind redesigning the streets like this: "This is about a diversification of streets which is based on recognising and boosting their earlier features and adding the various networks to them. There are hubs that are important for their continuity, functionality, spatial hierarchy (section), capacity to link places or buildings or their personal history which define urban systems that cover and connect places and activities" (ibid., p.16).

Although as of this moment (2022) there are only three *new municipalist* superblocks (in Poblenou, Sant Antoni and Horta neighbourhoods) implemented (Mueller et al. 2020, p.3), *BComú* holds fast to the plan of its predecessor (Trias) to create not single-cell superblocks but be a multicellular

system with street hubs acting as binds and bridges from island to island (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.15). Streets should be redesigned in light of their purpose and part of a greater system, contributing to the city's functionality as a whole. So, each street becomes a more colourful thread and each *superilla* a new pattern in the urban fabric that Ildefons Cerdà started to weave two centuries ago. Since Barcelona has grown and not built just in the additive grid design of Cerdà's *Eixample*, the superblock design will deviate from the three by three principle in certain areas of the city (Mueller et al. 2020, p.3). These areas are mostly found in the districts embracing the *Eixample*.

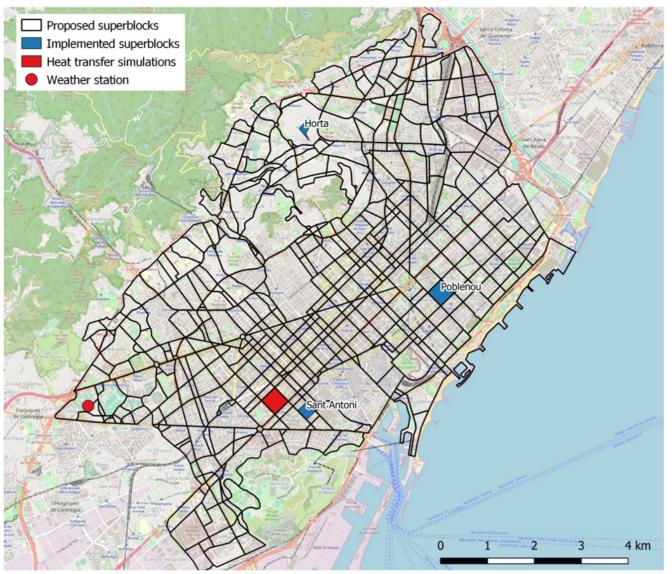


Figure 22: Barcelona's 503 proposed Superblocks. The General Design in the Eixample Area and it's Deviations in for the Surrounding Districts

The *superilles* concept is simple in theory, but as in all urban transformation processes the devil is in the detail. Planning, designing and getting people to participate takes time. Especially when it has to be done for an entire city. In order to coordinate and fuse 503 super-islands into a cohesive city *BComú* has established eight guidelines for the implementation of the *superilles*.

GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW SUPERBLOCKS

Barcelona's guidelines for the implementation of the Superblocks:

- "Maximum participation in diagnoses, proposals and implementation.
- Prioritising functional changes over physical changes. Tactical urban planning.

- Deployment throughout the city, giving priority to the Cerdà area (Eixample, Gràcia and Sant Martí).
- Ensuring maximum consideration of cross-sectoral issues. Integrating all views.
- Implementing at several speeds: flexibility according to the stage and complexity of the programme for each area in each district.
- Two intervening scales: initiatives with a city-wide impact and initiatives with a local impact.
- Establishment of measurable indicators to monitor the development of the change.
- Start of a continuous improvement process for public spaces. The Programme is not an isolated event but rather the start of a process of change" (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.27).

These guidelines represent the open system thinking that Barcelona under new municipalist leadership is taking. Forming an open environment and open residents. So, what does this openness mean in urbanistic terms? How does it translate into the built environment and how does it affect its residents?

OPENNESS VERSUS CLOSURE

One of Barcelona's strengths for urban transformation has been the additive grid, but it also can have its drawbacks. In his intent to create equal conditions for every resident Cerdà designed a monoculture. The problem with monocultures is that if one part fails to function, there is little to stop the malfunction to spread. In the natural environment diversity is the best remedy against malfunctions and the urban environment is no different. This entails a mix of different typologies. In some areas in Barcelona (the old industrial district of Poblenou) this is possible to create because buildings can or must be knocked down and rebuilt, but in other areas this is not an option. In those cases, diversity and resilience can be created through different uses and people. The superilles initiative allows for such diversity to sprout, but for it to actually flourish an open-system thinking is needed (Sennett 2018, p.42ff). Barcelona en Comú is taking with its participation processes and approach to urban development this open stance. By helping, informing and guiding residents to plan and design 'their' superblock BComú aims to diversify the monoculture Cerdà built and create a colourful mosaic so that "[...] the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts" (Sennett 2018, p.43). Principles of an open city are

- 1. Diversity in infrastructure, use and socio-economic characteristics of residents.
- A participatory approach to planning and designing.
- 3. Viewing urban planning and urban projects as a never fished and open-ended processes
- 4. A porous design of the city, its blocks and buildings.
- 5. Allowing a certain degree of informality.

So, before I go into how a complex system like the city of Barcelona can be opened up, how new things can arise there, how it can evolve in nonlinear, flexible fashion and create synergies between its different parts, I want to give example of what a closed system looks like.

THE VILLE

THE CLOSED CITY

Examples of a closed system can be found all over the world and it manifests itself in a variety of forms. One of these manifestations can be seen in the type of buildings and the mix of different uses of the public space a city implements:



Formality affecting residential buildings, the public space and the way humans dwelling in cities.

It is a closed space because it does not allow different uses. It is just for dwelling and the public space consists just out of sidewalks and streets. This lack of public space and isolation, results in psychological problems for, especially the elderly and young children (Sennett 2018, Die offene Stadt/The open City, 14:16).

The structures remind of the plan 'Voisin' of the modernist Le Corbusier for Paris:



Figure 23: Bejing Workers' Housing



Figure 24: Le Corbusier's Plan 'Voisin' for Paris

In this case we can see quite clearly a feature of closure in urban systems: additivity. In the plan 'Voisin' all the towers stand on their own, they are in no way connected and therefore there is no interaction. "The system is just the sum of its parts" (Sennett 2018, Die offene Stadt/The open City, 7:01). One could extend this tower structure all over the city therefore these towers are additive but still not interactive (Sennett 2018,

Die offene Stadt/The open City, 17:34). The space between them was conceived as parks and gardens for recreation and leisure purposes and saw no diversity in use.

CLOSURE THROUGH DESIGN AND RIGIT FIT

Brazil's airplane shaped city, Brasilia, is a good example of closure. It was built on a site with no previous settlements, on a deserted plane in the middle of the amazon jungle. According to architecture professor Federico Flósculo, Brasilia was not planned but designed (Kampmann 2011, p.38). This becomes apparent, when viewed from above:

It is a closed city because architect Lucio Costa did not plan for the changes, the evolutions and chaos that inevitably arise wherever life ex-



Figure 25: Brasilia, the Airplane City

ists (Kampmann 2011, p.38) or involved the public in the design process.

CLOSURE THROUGH LACK OF PARTICIPATION

The space in between the residential buildings has playgrounds, open greenspaces and shops, but was designed (top-down) in a way that did not work with the way people were living and socialising in Brazil (Kampmann 2011, p.42).



Figure 26: Superquadra in Brasilia, First Person View

CLOSURE THROUGH INFRASTRUCTRE

Another manifestation of closure is the literal closure of space. This can be done by building walls or less obvious structures like streets or highways.

In this example, the system is closed literally in two ways. First, the highway traffic is planned and does not allow people to get off the highway wherever they want, it is literally closed. This means that the actual space it's not accessible to the people where they want (Sennett 2018, Die offene Stadt/The open City, 13:20). The access to the usable space is planned, regulated and secured by the city government. Second, the highway and underlying streets divide spaces for residents not traveling by car. They become closed off from each other not only visually but physically. Formality only allows for the crossing of these borders on specific locations and time through traffic lights.



Figure 27: A system being closed by a Highway in central Shanghai

OPENNESS VIA INFRASTRUCTURE

On the one hand one of the mayor difficulties/complexities but on the other one of the great features of the superilles initiative, is, that no superblock, apart from its parameter, will be like the other. This is called a type-form. It is cause for intensive planning but it provides the opportunity to give every neighbourhood exactly what it needs.

That is exactly were participation comes into play. The collective experience of the neighbourhood needs to be harnessed and planners and politicians need to recognise their potential knowledge. The people should be able to "[...] take the solutions to their problems into their own hands" (Sharp 2019, p.19). For different socio-economic groups are in need of different solutions.

A neighbourhood may harbour many elderly residents and the best design of their superilla would include a small 'elderly care centre'. A small building with basic medical supplies and an around

the clock nurse and doctor. In another *superilla* there might live a plenitude of families and they need playgrounds in front of their buildings. Another *superilla* might be buzzing with young adults or students that want to make 'botellons' (the practice of gathering outside to drink alcohol) and stay up late.

Purcell (2006, p.1931) views critically that local residents and neighbourhood groups rather than city-wide bodies have control over how neighbourhood space is produced. In the case of the *superilles*, the municipality is still involved in the planning. They still control the overall concept of the *superilles* initiative. But how the, from the cars, freed-up space is to be used and made into a place should be up to its local residents. "The basic relationships are defined [...] physiologically in the urban body; the maker [...] creates variations within these constraints" (Sennett 2018, p.232). Sennett (2018, p.236ff) also calls this form of urban development seed-planning: "Instead of masterminding the whole, seed-planning seeks to create 'pocket of order' in open-systems terms. The essence of seed-planning is minimum specification of how form relates to function; this leaves room for maximum variation and innovation". In the case of who is allowed to decide how the public space is designed and used, the question must be asked: who is getting the most use and with which function? Is it a parking spot providing space for commuters or a space for greenery and a bench providing a leisure place for local residents (This point was raised by one of the Members of the Col lectiu Superilla Poblenou during my interviews)

"Parking, parking. But apart from the fact that all of this was a white parking zone, so they didn't pay, they didn't pay, so, many workers who came from outside left their cars here and took public transport to get to any place in the centre" - Member N.1

"Parking, parking. Pero aparte de que todo esto era zona blanca de estacionamiento, que no pagaba, que no pagaban, entonces muchos trabajadores que venían de afuera dejaban el coche aquí y tomaban el transporte público para llegar a cualquier lugar del centro [...]" – Member N.1

Coming to designing a city. What is important, before and when residents partake in a design process, is that they can imagine the city first. *New municipalism* wants to empower the people to do exactly that (Sharp 2019, p.19). To think about and paint the city of their dreams and then come together, enlighten one another with different ideas and perspectives and then built it. The municipal structure is not there to tell and show the people the city that they 'want', but must be seen as a tool aiding to make their present visions of their city the future reality (Sharp 2019, p.19). Of course, as the *superilles* initiative must be seen as a *type-form* the basic structures like perimeter of the *superilla*, 20km/h speed limit etc. are pre-given.

I think the process of coming together has something beautiful about it, in general. But for me the act of sitting down together to plan one's neighbourhood, the place where one lives, even more so. I believe it to be a beautiful exercise of the mind. It is creative and makes one think about the things that are truly important on a daily basis. I think it is an exercise that makes people reflect on many things they would normally not have the time or energy for. I also believe that imagining a vision of the city also ties in with the creation of a *common value*. For me the city is a reflection of the values of the ones who built it. So, the process of imagining one's own vision for the city is at the same time a reflection process of one's own values. By now bringing those people together, with smoke coming out of their ears from all the wheels turning in their heads, or not, that's fine too, a collective, collaborative vision of the city and the future can be formed. And thereby a *common value*. Sharp (2019, p.19) concludes his point of residents imagining a new city and the institutions helping them achieve it by stating: "It is here that our local political project will achieve its greatest value and reach."

What is also important to note is, that the infrastructures and the design of the public space and its vision influence how many common activities are performed in it, what recreational function it has, its resilience or it capabilities to adapt to the climate crisis but also on its aesthetical appeal (Muller et al. 2020, p.2). This can change over the course of time. Aesthetical appeal may be different in 20, 30 or 50 years, as may be the problems the city residents face. This is why Richard Sennett (2018, p.230) notes that an open city needs to be flexible and ever unfished. In combination with the type-form the superilla offers the potential for adaption and renewal. Giving the residents of a neighbourhood a continuous reason to sit down together and plan and design. It's not about pure process though, seeking every day to 'finish' the project. It must be viewed as an unfinishable, imperfect project that gets revised and adapted in cycles.

An open-ended practise to test out, to have the ability to revise, adapt or totally change the design of the urban public space is tactical urbanism, as already explained.

THE BEAUTY OF CO-CREATION AND IMPERFECTION

For me there is beauty in imperfection as well as personality. On a city walk through new urban development sites in south of Vienna, Austria, this become even more clear to me. The majority of the sites ('In der Wiesen Ost', 'In der Wiesen Süd' and 'Carré Atzgersdorf') seem like they have been planned down to the last detail by architects, planners and landscape architects. To me they seemed too perfect. Through this 'perfection' everything in the public space felt artificial, not used and not appropriated by the residents. Because of this 'perfection' I was hesitant to use the benches or sit under the pergola because it seemed to me more like art, something to be looked at rather than sit down on. This feeling was surely amplyfied due to nobody using the space at the time of my visit (during a workday and in the morning) but I guess even full of life this space would have left a bitter taste in my mouth.

Later that day I was able to put my experiences of 'perfection' into better context. The last stop of the walk was a co-op plot that was developed and planned by its owners (40 plus residents) together with an architecture firm. Immediately stepping into the courtyard, surrounded by the four buildings of the Baugruppe WILLDAwohnen (in the heart of the 'Wildgarten-Areal'), I felt like I'm invited. Invited to sit down at the chairs surrounding a little table, or to lay down at the freshly sown grass. I got this feeling because the space itself seemed used. I was not afraid to touch something for it did not seem perfect and me touching or using it, like the chairs, did not tarnish this perfection. Instead of an art gallery, I felt like I was in a place where people live. Some of the walls were not fully covered by climbing plants, some parts of the facade were not painted to let me catch a glimpse on the raw material the buildings were made of and some flowers just started to grow. Because the residents tend to the garden themselves, the flower patches and the inner courtyard personally, the "[...] process of creation seems ongoing [...]" (Sennett 2018, p.231) suggesting to me change, dialoge, maybe conflict but also resolution, and identity, hence life being present in this space. Therefore, transforming it into this place that just felt so inviting.

If places, inviting ones, are established throughout the city it is important to make them accessible. They need to be opened up to the public. Getting to them or just getting through them must be made easy and convenient in an open city. But cities tend to be full of walls, literal ones and other structures acting like and boundaries. So in order to open the city its walls need to become more permeable, the city must become porous.

CONCEPT OF THE URBAN NETWORK - THE POURS CITY

IMPERMEABLE WALLS

As the example of the Highway in Shanghai showed, infrastructures can close cities. Also Brasilia relied heavily on the car. Thereby the social function of the street was erased, in reality and in word. The in Brazil normally used term *rua* was changed with *via*. *Rua* represents the relationship between the building and the soil, a possible destination and *via* represents the path, the way to get the desired destination (Kampmann 2011, p.41). Brasilia was so car-centric that "[...] pedestrians felt out of place [...]" (Kampmann 2011, p.41).

So, if a city can close itself off by fixating on the car as a mode of transportation and erecting highways and streets that act like impermeable walls, how can a city be opened? A city is opened by poking holes of varying sizes into those walls and even tearing sections of it down. Walls, for they will always exist in cities, need to be made porous.

Porosity

What is porous? Porous is a physical structure that although more or less fixed in its state, allows for material or particles to pass through, like a sponge or an artery in our body. It is something that serves a function, holding blood in its place and getting vital compounds for life, like oxygen for example, to the cells. To fulfill this dual function, veins need to have walls, walls that are leakproof but not impermeable. These walls do not act like boundaries but more like borders with checkpoints that permit migration (Sennett 2018, p.219) if one has the correct papers like oxygen does.

In the porous city no documents are required, but the idea is the same. Buildings, blocks, highways or train tracks should not act like boundaries but like borders. The idea is to create interconnections and openness into a rigid structure. Making it adaptable like the sponge that can be squeezed a little bit and giving people options and variety to choose their path leading to the desired destination.

In Caracas for example a highway slices the city in two, separating the poor from the rich not only by the physical structure itself but by the motion and speed of the cars and buses (Sennett 2018, p.220). Movement (of vehicles) is used as a barrier to control and keep human movement in check. Sennett: "This is the use of motion as a way to segregate people in space" (Sennett 2018, Die



offene Stadt/The open City, 20:05).

Figure 28: Highway in Caracas, Venezuela, separating and segregating Poor from Rich

Such boundaries stand in contrast to an open-system and a more cohesive society, because this segregation of different socio-economic groups results in isolation. And as Sennett (2018, p.220) puts it, isolation does not allow for much stimulation from the outside world. This hinders people get to know one another and a mix of the variety of lives that different people live. And not knowing the reality of the situation and the hardships other people face, makes it harder to empathise with someone.

So, a porous city is not only porous in a physical sense but also a social one, since it creates spaces for people to meet. Making city structures permeable can be done in different ways. One is the example of the deconstruction of the train tracks in the industrial part of Barcelona as part of the Olympic Games. The physical boundary of walls and movement separating Sant Martí's residents from the potential pleasures of the Mediterranean coastline was replaced with a park. A green permeable border fulfilling the promise of leisure and sociability that beaches hold. Another, not that invasive, way of creating social permeability is displayed by the repurposing of Paris's city walls by Louis XIV. In 1670, he converted the ramparts into promenades for non-military personal. The physical boundary remained in its physical form but became porous in its function and social sense (Sennett 2018, p.221).

A city as a whole becomes porous via the interconnects of public spaces. Giovanni Battista Nolli drew the first figure-ground diagram, that depicts how a porous city can look like. It is a 2D representation of a city depicting buildings in solid black and streets and outdoor public space as white. Nolli's map is showing Rome in the year 1748 and what is interesting is, that he chose to paint the indoor public spaces, like churches or forums, not in solid black but only their wall layout with a thin black line. This makes for a stunning image of a city looking like a black sponge.

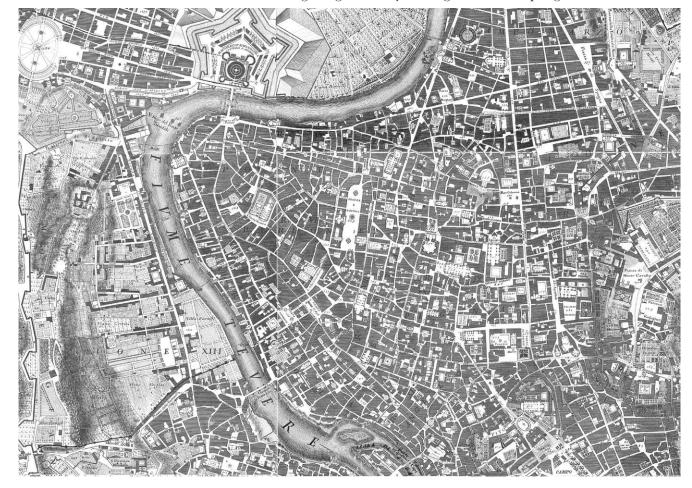


Figure 29: Giovanni Battista Nolli's map of Rome in 1748

This level of interconnection of little streets and plazas that crisscross the city of Rome in all directions may be difficult to achieve an in additive grid like Cerdà's. But still, even the already built physical environment can be made more porous. The buildings that make a block, its walls acting like boundaries, need to be converted into borders. These walls need to be converted into membranes. This transformation can be accomplished by cutting doors and windows into said walls and if done so in the 'right' dimensions, can bring more life into the streets (Sennett 2018, p.222). To open up the city in a literal sense. Another way of making a city more porous is more along the lines of the repurposing of function as Louis XIV did with the rampart. Public space that is now dedicated to motorised traffic can be turned into playgrounds and places of leisure (ibid., p.223). The natural lower speed by which bodies move, for example in a playground (by foot or bicycle etc.) compared to a street (cars or moped etc.), makes these forms of uses much more permeable and open.

According to Sennett (2018, p.227-229) another route to increase porosity is through incompletion and the ability to change and transform, what he calls the *shell type*. This idea corrolates with the use of *tactical urbanism* or more permanent infrastructures still adoptable to change.

A porous city also keeps its edges in mind. *Edge condition* is the thinking of placing critical infrastructure, like schools or hospitals for example, not in the centre of a neighbourhood or district, but at the edge. This allows people from different walks of life to come in contact with each other and furthers the interconnectedness of different, adjacent neighbourhoods (Sennett 2018, p.222).

The concept of the porous city in relation to the *superilles* can also be described by the metaphor of a cell. A cell is part of and makes a larger organism. It works in a co-dependent relationship with other cells, each serving specific functions. Superblocks must be seen in the same light. More than super islands (to keep with the metaphor of its name), patches of soil separated by water without an inherent need of relationship, the cell analogy fits better. A city is a multicellular organism and Barcelona aims to partition itself into supercells, (translated into Catalan by Herrnstadt: *supercèlules*) that allow for the free flow of people and establish and upkeep relationships through its permeable borders, creating a porous city-wide network.

WALKABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY, PROXIMITY

The prioritisation of the connections for pedestrians and the accessibility of all public space for people with reduced mobility is a key element for *social cohesion* (Rueda et al. 2012, p.140). Walkability and accessibility are key factors for an open, porous city.

The idea of filling the streets with life is not limited to the plazas (former intersections). It also refers to the streets that will still serve as connecting network of the city. *BComú* is tackling the usability of Barcelona's streets on two scales, the local and the municipal. On two fronts, design and connectivity.

First let us take a look at the municipal scale. *BComú* is envisioning a *porous* and *walkable* (Rueda et al. 2012, p.131) city. In their vision streets maintain their role as arteries of transportation and accessibility. But in the redesign of the streets, the focus shifts towards residents moving with public

transport, by foot or other climate friendly and space saving vehicles like the bicycle. According to Gehl (2013) this boosts urban vitality, which can be understood as "[...] the extent to which a place feels alive or lively" (Mouratidis and Poortinga 2020, p.1 from Montgomery 1998, p.97). Increasing these modes of transportation helps residents with reduced mobility and gain more autonomy (Rueda et al. 2012, p.132). According to Marquet and Miralles-Guasch (2014, p.259) walking and cycling is the most democratic form of transportation in a city.

The idea is to make every corner of the city accessible without a car. Establishing a network of pedestrian friendly streets, promenades and ramblas that are also visually connected via the plantation of greenery. These green corridors should also connect the existing greenspaces situated in the city with the peri-urban areas (Rueda et al. 2012, p.133). The following illustration displays the green network that would develop under the proposed superblock initiative for the *Eixample* area.



Figure 30 & 31: Existing Green Spaces (A) versus Green Network consisting of Green Spaces and Green Corridors under proposed Superblock Imitative (B)

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This network should not only be a functional network, but also feel and be perceived as one. In terms of *social cohesion*, the greenery should be planted in such a way, that it fosters resident interaction and recreation (Rueda et al. 2012, p.133). In the Eixample area, the proposed superblocks would bring the percentage of green space form 6,54% (from 2010) of the total area up to 19,6% (Mueller et al. 2020, p.9) which represents an increase of almost 300%.

Barcelona should not only become more porous for its residents but also more permeable for natural elements and wildlife (Rueda et al. 2012, p.133).



Figure 32: Future Citizen Accessible Space under Superblock Initiaitve

Mueller et al. (2020, p.6) calculated, that the proposed 503 superblocks would change the modal split, increasing travel by foot from 32,30% (= 420,490 persons per weekday) to 35,10% (= 456,941 persons per weekday) totalling in 36,451 more people walking during weekdays.

According to Mouratidis and Poortinga (2020, p.2) there are many studies, the latest one by Mazumadar et al. from 2018 that provide relevant findings that walkability as well as accessibility to destinations increase *neighbourhood cohesion*.

In the *superilles* vision street space also becomes a place, its use is intended to be more than just that of passage. This requires attractors. In the case of the *superilles* this will depend on the location of the superblock, its surroundings and its demographic composition. In the case of the *superilla* in Poblenou these attractors are picnic tables, playgrounds for children, benches and chairs, table tennis tables, a running track and greenery providing shade and cooler, fresher air.

Increasing Walkability means reducing Distance and Speed

Haussmann's Paris is an example for the prioritisation of space over place (Sennett 2018, p.35). Humans were connected spatially, but not with the 'places' they were passing through. This experience of the public space as a place is diminishing at the same speed as motorised vehicles drive. "The faster you move, the less aware you are of the particularities of the environment. [...] Increasing speed orients the body forward: you need to stare straight ahead, and edit your peripheral vision so that you take

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account only of what impedes you or allows you to hurtle." (ibid., p.35).

When people are walking they can take in much more visual information and have a better sense of what is going on around them. Which is quite helpful in an already chaotic environment (other people, cars, bicycles, skaters, public transport, traffic signs, commercials, traffic lights etc.). As Sennett (2018, p.36) states, reaching one's destination by foot, by wandering, can be quite pleasurable and may lead to great things. Maybe it leads to the idea for a book, as happened to Friedrich Engels who caught a spark of creativity for his book 'The Condition of the Working Class in England' while walking the streets of Manchester. Roaming around can provide people with helpful first-hand information or as in Engels case the information to write a world changing book (Sennett 2018, p.36).

As I see it, when one walks around, maybe even more stress free because there are less cars and less noise, one has a better capacity to gather information about his neighbourhood and district. He or she might notice graffiti and urban art, the beauty of a facade of an old building, the little details architects and urban planners preserved in a changing, modernising area in order to bridge past and future. They might notice the joy that stems from watching children play without a care in the world or be reassured by an elderly, sitting together with friends on a bench, chitchatting and gossiping about the passers-by. As one becomes more aware of one's surrounding, unconsciously, whether he/she likes it or not, one becomes more familiar, more attached to that place. And attachment becomes identification.

The effort to increase walkability and other forms of transportation seeks to spread people's movement out over more streets. And these streets will be calmer and more spacious due to the push-back of the car. Instead of everything and everyone rushing by so fast, blending into a homogeneous blur, spaces morph into places and regain their uniqueness and their character (Sennett 2018, p.36). This may also relevie residents of the feeling of *Abstumpfung* that Simmel described.

Getting more residents to spend more time in the streets, filling the streets with life as the slogan goes, can boost urban vitality (Mouratidis and Poortinga 2020, p.8). They came to the conclusion that increasing walkability through *small-scale* initiatives and interventions makes it possible to increase *social cohesion* (ibid., p.8). For me therein lies a key point of the whole *superilles* initiative. The superblock can be, from my viewpoint, be considered a fairly small-scale intervention having the potential to boost urban vitality and *neighbourhood cohesion*. But because of having a city-wide plan for the location of these small-scale interventions the opportunity lends itself to create a municipal-wide network, while at the same time reaping the benefits that these local-scale interventions provide. *Type-form* meets *shell-type* equalise *open* city.

Increasing the walkability and enhancing the feel of the public street space often goes hand in hand with giving pedestrians more of said space. So, when the public space is to be redistributed, as *BComú* has set out to do because space cannot be created, it is worth looking at what currently dominates the streets of Barcelona, the motorised individual vehicular traffic.

TRAFFIC

Not only do slow speeds and other modes of transportation apart from the car have a positive effect on the way we take in information from our surroundings, but high speeds can alter the state of mind. Before horse drawn carriages and motorised vehicles, people were accustomed to



slow movement (foot speed). Traffic jams in small, narrow streets were no cause for anxiety. Today traffic congestions evoke anxiety that can lead to anger, because now car drivers get the feeling that something is off, that the city is malfunctioning (Sennett 2018, p.36). The alleged freedom that comes with speed and 'total' control of, when and where to, someone is moving is a "[...] formula [that] diminishes the sense of dwelling in a place, knowing is viscerally; you are just passing through. Hausmann's legacy in this is perverse: the networked ville has diminished the cité" (ibid., p.37).

The reorganisation of traffic and the way people roam around in a city is a mayor question of equality. Since the responsibilities for most women (grocery shopping, taking children to school etc.) and men are still vastly different, their movements and modes of transportation are different (Pérez 2019, p.24). Car users are more likely to be male, white and have higher incomes and holding on to a car centric model of the city only serves to reinforce economic, ethnic and gender inequalities (Reimer et al. 2019, p.112). That is why BComú has taken inequality caused by mobility into account, when planning the transport network (Pérez 2019, p.24). The reorganisation of traffic is also about equality of age. Children normally do not drive cars and could thereby use a playground much more than a parking spot. In addition to addressing health concerns, Mueller et al. (2020, p.10) write that the redesign and fair distribution of space via the superilles can have positive effects on independent and safe child play, stating that "[...] Play Streets (i.e. street closure from traffic to foster child play) showed that children's PA levels significantly increased, enhanced their sociability and reduced parental safety concerns".

The Barcelona Urban Ecology Agency suggests that a sustainable urban design cannot afford to devote more than 25% of its public space to accommodate motorised traffic (Mueller et al. 2020, p.2). Under the superilles initiative the surface area of the public space dedicated to the car will be almost cut in half:



Figure 33: Future Roadwork under Superblock Initiative

This plan would reduce the road network from the previous 912km to 355km which signifies a reduction of 61% in length and 45% of the total area covered. By reorganising and reordering traffic and implementing superblocks, the city aims to reduce CO2 emissions per resident by 40% until 2030 (Zografos et al. 2020, p.6). According to Mueller et al. (2020, p.3) the municipal council expects, that the reduction of public space dedicated to motorised vehicles, will decrease motorised traffic in general, increase traffic flow and cause less congestion. According to their calculations the percentage of car and motorcycles used will go down from 26,10% (= 339,777 persons per weekday) to 21,10% (= 274,685 persons per weekday), resulting in 65,092 less people using motorised forms of traffic (ibid., p.6). This means motorised traffic is cut by 19,2%. This reduction translates into a reduction of NO2 Levels by 24,3% (47.2 µg/m3 -> 35,7 µg/m3) and below the recommendations of the WHO. It also results in a decrease of noise levels by 5,4% (54,2dB Lden -> 51.3dB Lden) (ibid., p.9).

But most importantly for *neighbourhood* and *social cohesion* it opens up new spaces for residents. Converting these spaces through parks, plazas, greenery, infrastructures and new designs into places (ibid., p.3). Converting space of traveling into places of gathering. These plazas and parks, spread out more or less equally throughout the city, would have the knock-on effect of tacking pressure of the traffic and mobility system over all (Plank 2019, p.10)

"We have to challenge the idea that driving is a right, stand up to the car lobby, and work to shift public attitudes and our transport culture. We want compact, walkable and cyclable cities, with public transport that is powered by renewable energy and accessible to all" (Reimer et al. 2019, p.112).

In total it is estimated, that the implementation of the 503 superilles could prevent 667 premature deaths every year (Mueller et al. 2020, p.9) thereby creating economic impact of 1,7 billion Euros per year (ibid., p.10) and an increase in LE (life expectancy) of around 200 days for adults (ibid., p.10).

THE CITÉ

MEANINGFUL CONTACT AND THE RIGHT FOR ANONYMITY

I have written about impersonal spaces before, how important those spaces can be for the integration of new residents or visitors. This duality of creating personal yet impersonal spaces is a difficult task. In my point of view this must be done via different stages. In the Gründerzeit buildings in Vienna (buildings that had been built around the turn of the 19th to 20st century and can be compared to the typology of the Eixample) public transforms into private in two or three steps. Outside the building, outside the main entrance, there lies the realm of the public, the space for all. Stepping over that threshold and into the inner courtyard a sort of semi-public communal space can be found (the spatial extend and use of this space varies from building to building and inhabitants to inhabitants). It may be used as a garden or just for parking bicycles or trashcans. One step further and through another threshold, and there resides the calm of the private space. All these spaces are borders and the necessary documents to go through it are either a key or an invitation. From the private space another form of quasi semi-public space can be stepped in, depending if that space exists in the building, the balcony (like in Barcelona or Madrid). It is private in the sense of access to it, but public in the sense that it allows its user to have a vista on public life and in turn for the attentive public to get a glimpse of something private. "Impersonal city streets make anonymous people" (Jacobs 1961, p.57) and personal city streets make inviting places.

The goal of the public space in a *superilla* must not be, and is not, to create a little village with obligations for its residents within a city but create a superblock neighborhood in which it is possible "[...] to know all kinds of people without unwelcome entanglements, without boredom, necessity for excuses, explanations, fears of giving offense, embarrassments respecting impositions or commitments, and all such paraphernalia of obligations which can accompany less limited relationships" (Jacobs 1961, p.62).

IDENTITY

Identity, or at least identification with a block, a neighbourhood, a district or the city as a whole, is something very crucial for the well-being of citizens. Identity is not something that can be forced, it needs to grow over time. That is why, in my opinion, history sits at the centre of identification. The history of a place and a person's history with that place intertwine and create an affinity, a relationship, a bond connecting built space and human perception of it.

Identity influences community building, safety concerns and the stake that residents have in the public space in front of their respective homes. Not only people make a house a home, the identification with its surroundings plays a crucial role. History is made every time the watch hand moves. So not only the history of a place creates identification with it but also the very instant it is perceived, felt and lived. According to Mueller et al. (2020, p.10) the implementation of the 503 superilles would, through it's reduction of disturbing factors, have a positive effect on place attachment, safety and in doing so increase the formation of identify.

COMMON VISION, COMMON GOALS AND COMMON VALUES

What does this idea, this grant plan of the *superilles* initiative have to do with social cohesion? For the answer lies in the creation of hope for a better future, the coming together for the development of a common vision, the partaking in setting common goals and the emergence of new *common values*. I will explain:

As new municipalism tries to change the way humans live and interact with each other, their environment and the planet as a whole (increase social cohesion within the city, openness towards all human beings and a more sustainable lifestyle), their actions take effect on two levels. Telling a tale of two cities means in this case telling a story about the same city, but from two different points of view: a physical and a mental. The way a city looks and the way the same city feels. I already touched on that topic in the chapter of the history of municipalism: The cité vs the ville. The built city vs. the felt and experienced city.

The use of these terms and their distinction is fading like the colour of a facade. Although they are closely connected and influence each other, or precisely because of that, it is worth taking up this distinction. Because the *cité* does not only mean the way people act and live in a city but includes the way people might want to live as a collective (Sennett 2018, p.2). In Paris, during the turmoil of the 19th century, some argued for the development of a new *cité*, referring to it as a new political mentality (ibid., p.2). So too does the *new municipalist* movement in Barcelona aim for a new political mentality and new values. The circumstances have vastly changed in the last two centuries so the two cases are hardly comparable, but both lay bare the desire, the *hope*, that out of the ashes of crises may arise a different politics. A politics that in Barcelona should be built on the principles of Égalité, *Sororité & Fraternité* and *Humantité & Environnementé*.

New values can be created trhough the *ville*, because the *ville* in turn can alter the *cité*. To illustrate this, I will go back to the example of the pissoir, the urinal that spread all over Paris in the late 19th century. Up until then it was the norm for men to relief themselves whenever and especially wher-

ever they pleased. Streets, walls, trees, the world was their toilet. But with the installation of the city urinals a shift in value began. A shift in the cité manifested by a feeling of shame accompanying those men not using the health technology of their time, the pissoir (Sennett 2018, p.23).

But new values cannot just be done via the ville. Bärnthaler et al. (2020, p.134) write that rethinking value (in an economic sense) cannot be imposed from above but must be negotiated democratically. For me this should be true for all values. We as a society must figure out together how we want to live our lives in relation to the natural environment and in relation to each other. New municipalism is a politics in the tradition of the ancient city-states, in which politics was a moral calling (Bookchin 2019, p.14). Community and rationality played a huge role (Bookchin 2019, p.14) and must do so again if the climate crisis should be averted. Debbie Bookchin touches on the goal of creating a common value in one of her descriptions of municipalism as a "[...] democracy in which people act together to chart a rational future" (Bookchin 2019, p.14). In order to create new common values the old ones need to be put in question.

According to Russo (2017, p.18) BComú successfully managed to 'co-produce' visions on tourism from the bottom up by building a powerful narrative and using strong images. So maybe Barcelona en Comú can do it again with neighbourhood and social cohesion.

"Being brave in politics today means accepting the fragility and interdependence of the human condition as the basis of all our action. It also involves rebelling against a system based on the false idea of individual omnipotence and the domination of the strongest over everyone else" (Pérez 2019, p.25) and the establishment of new common values like gender equality, preservation of the natural world, participating in political process and not being an *idiōtēs* and that we are all in this together (whatever it is that we call life).

How one superilla looks like, we know right now. The superblock of Poblenou. BComú's pilot project in the district of Sant Martí can already proved us with a glimpse of what the future in Barcelona may hold.

THE SUPERBLOCK OF POBLENOU

I can only imagine how hard it must be to see the space you grew up in to be altered so swiftly and radically. Even I was confused the first few days upon my arrival in Poblenou, because I did not understand where I found myself to be, what this place was that had no consistency, no common thread in its building mass or street design. One second I felt I was strolling through a Mediterranean city, but turning just one corner I felt I was teleported into the United States of America. It took some time getting used to and knowledge of its history, but I came to fall in love with this space. The richness this mixture of old and new, of the young and elderly, local and international, modern and traditional appealed to me. Taking a walk was never ever boring but always yielded a surprise, something new to discover. There is so much going on, architecture, shops, restaurants, graffiti's, empty plots of land, buildings currently in construction, leftovers like chimneys as reminders of a different past and humans from every walk of life, that taking the same route as the day before, leaves you with a different experience.

Some historic context is nesseary, not only to understand my first experience of Poblenou, but the people living in this quarter.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The barrio of Poblenou is situated right at the heart of the district of Sant Martí, the old industrial area of Barcelona that was transformed during the Summer Olympics of 1992.

In the aftermath of the games, the plans for the quarter were to become a 'knowledge-economy district' (Russo 2017, p.10). Before that, and even before the extension of Cerdà's additive grid, Poblenou was a town on the outskirts of Barcelona. From the 18th until the 20th century, this area was vital for Barcelona's industry but remained outside Barcelona's municipal jurisdiction. This was about to change due to Cerdà's Eixample Plan of 1859 (Akaltin et al. 2019, p.8).



Figure 34: Cerdà's grid superimposed over Poble Nou

Poblenou's visual character was shaped on the one hand by old historic roadways connecting the industry to the city center of the Catalan Capital and fabrics and warehouses (it was even nicknamed 'Catalan Manchester') and on the other hand by a mayor residential and commercial street running straight through the town, the Rambla of Poblenou (visible on the Ill X). Times changed and global forces pushed heavy industries to the east. In the 1960s the industry of Poblenou was affected as well and with industries braking camp so too the workers left Poblenou leaving behind abandoned factories and warehouses (Akaltin et al. 2019, p.8).

In 1992 Poblenou was transformed due to the Olympic games. This transformation included the dismantling of the old railroad, the extension of the Rambla of Poblenou, a new waterfront with beaches, a park and promenade.



THE @22 PROJECT

"The impression became widespread that the endless beautification of the city pursued by the political elites, whatever their color, was instrumental to appeal to the former group as the new dwellers of the city, while the latter was silently abandoned to its destiny" (Russo 2017, p.12).

The idea for this project started to form in the 1990s, around the same time the Olympics were held in Barcelona. The project was in line with the general course the city wanted to take at the end of the old and beginning of the new millennium: competitiveness against other global cities, seduce international capital and investors with huge transformation projects and putting Barcelona on the map branding itself anew with the help of major events. Apart from the brand as a tourism utopia and the smart city Barcelona aimed to position itself as the city of technology and the city of

knowledge (Bottero et al. 2020, p.4). Therefore the, until then, biggest urban transformation project in a city was approved in 1999: the 22@ innovation district project. The total area spanned over 198.26 ha and was situated in the old industrial quarter Poblenou (ibid, p.4).



Figure 35: Affected Area of the 22@ Project

The plan for this area, that was/is characterised by old industrial brick buildings, sought to transform the face of the neighbourhood. To give it a facelift by increasing the density with high-rise buildings instead of the one to two story fabrics and warehouses. To create a compact fabric with mixed uses (new greenspaces, public facilities, social housing (Akaltin et al. 2019, p.9) and attractive transpiration options to appeal to highly skilled international workers. Since the transformation of the waterfront in light of the Olympic games, Poblenou had offered (new) residents a beautiful promenade, a park and city beach.

The companies the 22@ project should attract, design firms, media and energy companies, medical technology firms or university facilities (Bottero et al. 2020, p.4) were in stark contrast with the old economy that built Poblenou (metal and fabric industry).

This top-down decided project (ibid., p.4) is still ongoing and since 2016 the nine blocks of the pilot superilla SB9 are situated in the area of the 22@. The economic crisis did not only hit people but companies too, which stalled the further development of the plan. With BComú moving into the municipal council the project was deeply questioned and turned on its head, so to speak. Because in 2017 Colau democratised the form of decision making process. The 'Repensem el 22@' project was initiated with the goal to collectively decide on how and with what the remaining empty plots of land should be rebuilt (Bottero et al. 2020, p.4). About half of the land is yet to be developed and the paradigm has shifted away from tech-companies towards residents partaking in the processes, towards a mix of uses and towards social and affordable housing (ibid., p.4).

The attraction of international capital and skilled workers has brought with it a socio-demographic change in the population of Poblenou. In the year 2016, it was estimated that due to the project 56.000 more people, around 50% with university degrees, worked in Poblenou (Adorján 2016, p.8). While the average rents in Barcelona increased by 30%, from 2014 until 2018 in the 'innovation district' they rose by 37% (Akaltin et al. 2019, p.10). At the same time household incomes from Poblenou residents only increased by 6,4% (2014-2016) keeping pace with the general increase throughout Barcelona (ibid, p.10). So, although most residents of Barcelona had to pay a bigger and bigger portion of their income for rent, the burden in Poblenou was even bigger.

So, the barrio *Poblenou* is situated in a district with a very interesting and complicated history. It is probably the place that represents the struggle between the not so distant past and edging closer future of Barcelona like none other in the Catalan capital. This clash of future and past can be seen on every corner and even the beach promenade is a (solid) reminder, that the district has lost parts of its appearance, its purpose, its culture, its character and its tradition. The relocation of the textile and steel industry out of *Poblenou* to other parts of the world and its transformation since then left its scars on the identity of its residents, not only effecting the ville but too the cité.

SB9 - THE SUPERILLA OF POBLENOU

The first new municipalist superilla is located in barrio de Poblenou, in the district of Sant Martí.



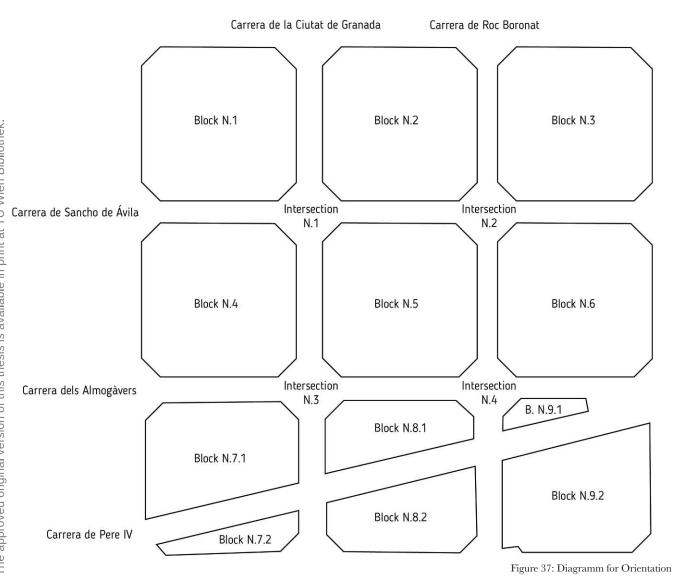
Figure 36: Area of the Superblock SB9 (Green) and Location for Superblock under Trias (Red)

The site chosen has a diagonal street running through it so the superblock deviates from the three

by three *type-form*. Also, due to the route of the public bus, the street (to the east) running from north to south is a through street allowing traffic to go all the way through the superblock.

According to the municipal government 1.538 people live in the *superilla*, the number of active economic activities on the ground floor has risen form by 30,7% and the surface area occupied by cars reduced by 48% (Ajuntament de Barcelona: Participació ciutadana - Amb la Superilla, el Poblenou ha guanyat més de 25.000 metres quadrats d'espai per a les persones). The number of vehicles that enter the superblock has gone down from 2.218 to 932, while the number of green area has almost doubled (from 9.722m2 to 18.632m2) and 176 new trees have been put in the street space (64 of them planted and 112 in pots) (ibid.).

Legend of Streets, Blocks and Intersections



Infrastructure and utilities

There are different elements that on the one hand influence how intensive the use of a public space can be and on the other that can make it into a public place in the first place. Carmona (2014) lists them as follows: "levels of transient use; presence of local amenities; elements such as fountains, public art and public furniture; presence of grass to sit on; and microclimate" (Mouratidis and Poortinga 2020, p.2).

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Infrastructure:

Seats, benches, tables and potted plants have been placed all over the *superilla*. These can be found in most of the streets within the superblock. The diagonal street is an exception. The streets host a variety of activities ranging from table tennis, a running track, art and other games painted on the pavement.

The Inner Block N.4 has been equipped with large green spaces and trees, ponds and a community garden.

Intersection N.1 has been equipped with a playground for children, a water dispenser and the north-west corner of the inner block is equipped with greenery.

Intersection N.2 has been equipped with a playground for children.

Intersection N.3 has been equipped with benches. The south-west corner of the Inner Block N.4 has been equipped with greenery, solar panels, a meter displaying the energy generated and the building has facade greening.

Intersection N.4 has been equipped with benches and greenery. It also serves as outdoor seating for the restaurant situated at the corner of the intersection. It also still provides parking spots.

Carrera de Sancho Ávila has been lined with benches, tables and potted plants. Its section between Block N.3 and N.6 has been closed completely for car traffic. The section hosted art (scultpures), differnet paintings on the ground, tables, benches and a station of Barcelona's public bike service.

Carrera dels Almogàvers has been lined with benches and potted trees. In its section between Block N.3 and B.7.1 tabletennis tables have been installed. In its section between Block N.4 and N.8.1 a running track has been placed and in the section between Block N.5 and N.9.1 the strret level has been elevated to the sidewalk level, cars are only allowed for loading purposes. Also, greenery, trees and a playground has been installed.

Carrera de Roc Boronat features in its section between Block N.2 and N.3 a charging station for electric vehicels, potted plants and seats and benches. In its section between Block N.4 and N.5 also tables have been installed. Due due to protests of residents adjacent to the superblock, in the C. de Roc Boronat through traffic is allowed in north-south direction.

Carrera de Ciutat de Granada has in its section between Block N.1 and N.2 benches, seats and potted plants. At its superblock perimiter the street level has been raised to sidewalk level and a small plaza was created with additional benches and greenery. In Inner Block N.4 on the side of the C. Ciutat de Granada there is currently construction work done, so there is no space for the installment of greenery or places to sit.

The implementation of the superilla has freed up around 8.000m2 (Ajuntamient de Barcelona: Air Quality - The Poblenou superblock fills with life) at the intersections and 25.129m2 in total of additional space for pedestrians, cyclists etc. So now reaching 56.665m2 the superilla has almost doubled the space for this demographic (Ajuntament de Barcelona: Participació ciutadana - Amb la Superilla, el Poblenou ha guanyat més de 25.000 metres quadrats d'espai per a les persones).

"[...] everything they have put in, everything is used, including the table-tennis table. And when they did the construction work they removed them because they were here. They removed them and people missed them" - Puppeteer

"[...] todo lo que han puesto, es utilizable todo, incluso la de pimpón. Y cuando hicieron la obra lo quitaron porque estaban aquí. La quitaron y la gente le echaba en falta" – Puppeteer

ANALYSIS

What effects the pilot superilla in Poblenou had so far on neighbourhood and social cohesion will be analysed by looking at the two different versions of the same city, the ville and the cité. The analysis of the ville will be done by comparing the changes of the neighbourhood because of the implementation of the superblock with the criteria the literature and the city (as explained in the chapter:

The changes to the cité will be analysed with the criteria the literature and the city (as explained in the chapter: Social Cohesion and Superilles) itself view to have an influence on the cohesiveness of its residents. If the changes lead to the desired outcome will be analysed, by data collected at the site through a quantitative questionnaire, three qualitative interviews conducted in the superblock, a literature and document analysis as well as my own personal experiences.

The changes to the cité will be analysed with the same data and the criteria for neighbourhood and social Cohesion.

Personal Experiences

I stayed in Barcelona from the 3.8.2021 until the 5.9.2021. This was not the optimum time to see life in full blossom in the superilla because in the month of August there are holidays in Catalonia. Due to my job, it was not possible for me to go at another time. The last few days (first few in September) let me get a glimpse of how life would look like in mid-September when the schools would welcome back their pupils. So, in retrospect being there during the holidays maybe even allowed me to form contacts I otherwise would not have since the superilla was calmer and people had more time. Time, they could therefore give to me.

I stayed a few blocks, five minutes walking distance away from the superblock, on the Rambla of Poblemon. I visited daily and during different hours the superilla to conduct my research using these methods:

direct observation,

diary studies,

audio and video recordings

photography

listening to conversations,

writing of field notes,

unstructured interviews

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

The qualitative interviews were conducted with relevant actors within the community. Due to my limited time window, I was left with only a few available actors answering my inquiry for an interview. The first was conducted with the chairwoman, the vice chairwoman and the former chairman of the Col lectiu Superilla Poblemon. The second was conducted with a resident who started to conduct a puppet

chairman of the Col lectiu Superilla Poblenou. The second was conducted with a resident who started to conduct a puppet show for the children in the superblock.

The third qualitative interview was conducted with two adolescents. This was unplanned and spontaneous but nevertheless very important, since during my stay I came to find that the sociodemographic segment the two represented, was underrepresented in the design of the project. All interviews were held within the perimeters of the superblock. All quotes from the interviews were left in Spanisch as they were said. In the translation double words or verbal errors are left out.

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

The quantitative approach was intended to give broader insight on the effects of the superblock on neighbourhood and social cohesion. During my daily visits, I conducted spontaneous interviews with fixed questions from a questioner I developed. The answering of these questions sometimes led to an unplanned, unstructured interview. Due to the corona pandemic, a distance of 1,5 meters was always kept, masks were worn and I filled out the questionnaire.

For the questionnaire, a set of questions were chosen to cover the different aspects influencing *neighbourhood* and *social cohesion*. The questions posed were:

- 1. Do you live in the Superblock or in the area of the Superblock?
- 2. Do you work in the Superblock? Is your workplace situated in the area?
- 3. Do you know this area before the implementation of the Superblock?
- 4. Did you take part in the participation process of the Superblock?

The questions N.1-N.4 served the purpose of being able to further deepen the analysis. For example to see if there is a difference between residents and people just working in the superilla. The third question served the purpose of finding out how the questions N.9 and N.11 were posed.

- 5. Did you get to know new people because of the Superblock?
- 6. Did you form new friendships because of the Superblock?
- 7. Did your sense of community increase because of the Superblock?
- 8. Does the Superblock have a positive effect on your conviviality?

The questions N.5-N.9 served the purpose of finding out the effects of the *superilla* on the formation of weak and strong ties, social capital and social cohesion in general.

9. Do you feel safer in this area after the implementation of the Superblock? And Why?

Question N.9 was posed with the purpose of finding out how safe people felt and if conflicts exist. When people did not know the area of the superblock before its implementation they were asked to compare the *superilla* to the surrounding area. Apart from the Rambla of Poblenou the area, although not the same, can still be compared to the design of the superblock area before its transformation.

10. Do you take a more active role in the community since the implementation of the Superblock? / When you see an urban transformation project like the Superilla, are you inspired to take a more active role in your community?

Question N.10 was posed to find out if Bcomú managed to engage people in participatory processes with the superilla or via the dicidim.barcelona platform.

11. Can you now identify more with the area? And why?

Question N.11 was posed to find out on the one hand if people can identify themselves more with the area after the implementation and on the other to derive hold values.

The answers were converted into an excel sheet for the analysis. Similar answers given for N.9 and N.11 in relationship to 'And why', were brought together into categories.

THE VILLE OF THE SB9

USE MIX (ZONING AND INFRASTRUCTURE)

The superblock hosts a variety of uses ranging from residential to office buildings and from commercial to cultural. In a lot of zones commercial use of the ground floor is allowed and there are three schools and one municipal government building within the *superilla*.

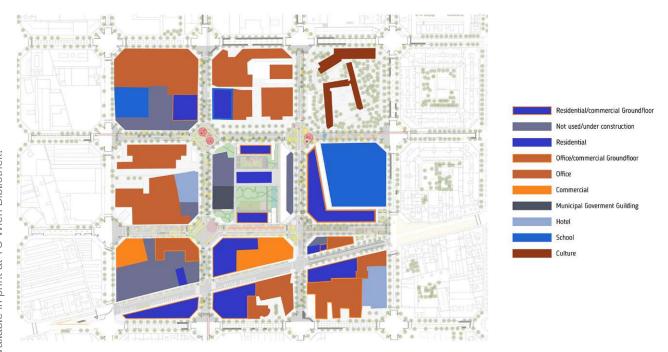


Figure 38: Land Zoning in the Superblock

The physical proximity of facilities, houses and flats and economic activity is certainly given but not the distribution of land use within the superblock. This is effecting the use of the public space and its success (Akaltin et al. 2019, p.39) since it influences the proximity of people in need of public places and public space.

Concerning residents. The residential buildings in block number 5 and 6 are relatively new and 6 stories high and almost all or all flats seem occupied. The residential buildings located in the blocks 9, 10, 11 and 12 on the other hand are old constructions, vary in height from 2 to 5 stories and are scarcely occupied or completely abandoned. In the blocks number 1 and 7 there are either construction sites and a lack of residential buildings. This makes for an unequal distribution in residents throughout the superblock. This is reflected in the use of the public space. Intersection number 2 and the Carrera de Sancho de Ávila were the most populated spaces in the superblock and can be considered the most successful space (Akaltin et al. 2019, p.38)

Office workers were also mostly found in this part of the *superilla*. This may be contributed the fact, that the office buildings in block number 11 and 12 are in closer proximity to the Rambla which hosts a plenitude of cafes and restaurants. In addition, the intersection Number 4, the closest to these office buildings is due to its design (it still functions more as a parking lot then a plaza and there is a lack of greenery) not as attractive as intersection Number 2. During the first two weeks

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in August the café Sopa was closed and many office workers went via the Carrera de Sancho Ávila to the restaurants situated at the intersection of said street and the Rambla. But as soon as the café Sopa opened, less people made that journey and tended to stay at the intersection number 2 or the café at the inner block section of the Carrera de Roc Boronat. So, I concluded that for office workers two reasons affected their choice of restaurant. The first and most important is proximity, followed by the attractiveness of the establishment and its surrounding public space. It must also be noted, that more office-workers flocked to the Carrera de Roc Boronat during their lunch breaks, due to the picnic tables. Many brought their own food from home and decided to enjoy it in the open air. The study by Akaltin et al. (2019, p.38) found that intersection 2 is the most successful public place due to its diversity of amenities and activities it provides for the different users (tables, playground, shade, café). This correlates with my observations. In the whole Carrera dels Almogàvers no picnic tables can be found.

The land use is affecting the density and the socio-demographic mix of an area and thereby the use and time of use, its liveliness, of the public space (Akaltin et al. 2019, p.41)

DENSITY

The study conducted by Akaltin et al. (2019, p.41) compared the population density of the four blocks surrounding the intersection N.2 of the superilla in Poblenou with an intersection in the superilla of Sant Antoni. They found that the Poblenou superilla had significantly less dwelling units, only 630 compared to the 1017 in Sant Antoni, is there for less dense (ibid., p.41). The two superilles stand in quite a contrast to each other due to their differing histories and locations. Although they are both designed in the additive grid of Cerdà San Antoni is located right next to the city centre, the Barri Gòtic, and those not have the industrial history of Poblenou. There is also a huge, famous market, 'Mercat de Sant Antoni' sitting at the heart of this quarter.

> "But I think that the San Antonio project can be extrapolated to Barcelona to make others in Barcelona, because there is more population, more housing. It's totally different" - Member N.2

"Pero yo creo que la de San Antonio es más extrapolable para Barcelona para hacer otras en Barcelona, porque hay más población, más vivienda. Es totalmente diferente" Member N.2

I visited the superilla in Sant Antoni once during my stay and the different atmospheres between the two superilles could be felt instantaneously. Especially the higher density of human bodies was quite obvious, but also the intersections felt like places. It was defiantly livelier.

The unequal distribution of density also effects the use of the intersections within the SB9. The study done by Akaltin et al. (2019, p.47) found Intersection N.2 to be the most used, Intersection N.1 to be medium used and the Intersection N.3 to be under used. These findings concur with my observations during my visit in Barcelona.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC MIX

"[...] there are children, there are mothers, there are fathers and grandfathers and grandmothers, there is life, there is a neighbourhood, there is a good relationship" "And before that we had parking spaces" - Member N.2

"[...] hay niños, hay madres, hay padres y abuelos y abuelas, hay vida, hay vecindario, hay buena relación"— Member N.3 "Y antes teníamos un parking" – Member N.2.

According to the study from Akaltin et al. (2019, p.36) there is an inequality of representation within different demographic groups. Based on their counts at the Intersection N.2 75% are age 25-64, 16% are age 15-24 and only 9% are of age 65 and more (ibid., p.36).

"[...] we have always thought that it is lacking. There is a lot of playgrounds for children, there are recreation areas for older people, but there is a lack of space for young people" - Member N.2

"[...] siempre hemos pensado que falta. Hay mucho parque infantil, hay zona de estar para gente mayor, pero hace falta para jóvenes" – Member N.2

From my observations, I could tell that different socio-economic groups used different parts of the superblock. Children and their parents mostly used the playgrounds. The families concentrated more in the Intersection N.2 of the Carrera de Roc Boronat and Carrera de Sancho de Ávila. Families also tended to use the picnic tables in the Carrera de Sancho de Ávila east of the intersection, not exclusively but more often than others. During my stay children used to play more often in the playground at the Intersection N.2 than in the one in the Intersection N.1.

"[...] most of the superilla is in this street and not so much in the one below, it's because there are more installations" - Member N.1

"[...] la mayor parte de la superilla está en esta calle y no tanto en la de abajo, pero porque hay más instalaciones" – Member N.1

The higher frequency of use of this playground can be contributed to the fact that adjacent to it is the café Sopa. So, parents can sit at the outside tables of the café and enjoy a drink or meal and chatting with other parents while at the same time still keep an eye on the children. The higher frequency of use of the picnic tables in the Carrera de Sancho de Ávila can be contributed to the fact, that the entire street is closed for motorised traffic and all the other streets still allow for cars etc. to pass with 20km/h. In this part of the *superilla* children could run and play quite freely without the need of constant observation.

"This was a road with parked cars and the pavements in Almogávares were not two metres long either, not even a meter and a half. What I mean to say is no, no we didn't live in a place where we could go out on the street and meet anyone."

"[...] esto era una carretera con coches aparcados y tampoco las aceras de Almogávares hacían dos metros, no llegaba metro y medio. Quiero decir que no, no vivíamos en un sitio para salir a la calle y encontrarnos con nadie"

— Member N.2



Figure 39: Carrera de Sancho de Ávila

The playground in the section of the Carrera dels Almogàvers between Block N.5 and Block N.9.1, a section that had been converted into a shared space, was also used more often than the playground in the Intersection N.1. The distribution of children and their parents can also be contributed to the location of the residential buildings.



Figure 40: Carrera dels Almogàvers

Children that were a bit older (10-14 years) also used a space not dedicated to play. The section of the Inner Block N.4 of the Carrera de Sancho de Ávila is at the north side more spacious. On this side there are no residential buildings, just offices and a school. One of the buildings has a large wall without a window, that was therefore used by the children to play football. Two against two or three against three with one goal. They could also be found in the Inner Block N.4, using a building fence as a goal.



Figure 41: Spacious Sidewalk in the Carrera de Sancho de Àvila

Adolencents were the group that was most spread out throughout the superblock. In terms of seating there was no section that seemed to be more favored than others and all tables along the Carrera de Sancho de Ávila were used. They could more often be found though at the table tennis tables in the Carrera dels Almogàvers. The use of the table tennis did not lead to a significantly higher use of the underused Intersection N.3. They also used the inner block section of the Carrera de Sancho de Avila, especially the space between the two office buildings either to practice dance moves, skate, play badminton, listen to music and rap etc.



The space between the two office buildings acted as a kind of unofficial multi usable space for the different groups. It even was used for a pupper show conducted by a resident for the children of the superblock and the surrounding areas.

"So they dance" - Member N.2

"Así que se ponen a bailar" – Member N.2

Adults used mostly the street space of the whole Carrera de Sancho de Ávila and the Carrera de Roc Boronat between the two intersections. This distribution can be contributed to the location of the office buildings as well as the cafés, restaurants and shops. But in general it can be said, that adults, especially the ones working in the superblock, used the tables in front of their respective offices no matter the location during their lunch or other breaks. So, the spaces created in the intersection at the edges were also used.

Based on my observations I concur with the findings of Akaltin et al. (2019, p. 41) that there is a lack of diversity among users in the *superilla* of Poblenou. This is reflected in the design of the public space and probably reinforces the lack of demographic mix. While there are two playgrounds for children, the table tennis tables can be considered the only attractors tending more to the adolescents. The lack of dedicated space for the adolecents is additionally shown by the fact, that they need to appropriate space for dancing and playing that is not dedicated for such use.

"Perhaps the young people are lacking. [...] well, we have also asked for basketball courts" - Member N.2

"Falta quizás la la gente joven. [...] bueno, nosotros hemos pedido también unas canchas de baloncesto" - Member N.2

The two adolescents I interviewed told me that the atmosphere of the *superilla* is more for families since the infrastructure is more tending to their needs, like the picnis tables.

"It is also more of a family atmosphere because of the park and the picnic tables" - Adolescent N.2

"Tambien es un ambiente más, familiar. Familiar que cómo está el parque, las mesas de picnic" – Adolescent N.2

The other adolescent remembered that parents stayed sometimes at least until nine in the evening celebrating birthdays at the picnic tables:

"Sometimes because I remember meeting someone, passing by the superilla and finding myself in a group of older parents when the restaurant was closed, having dinner, celebrating, young children's birthday parties" - Adolescent N.1

"A veces porque yo me acuerdo de quedar con alguien, pasar por la perilla y que fueran sobre las nueve y encontrarme en grupos de padres mayores cuando la restaurant estaba cerrada, cenando, celebrando, cumple de niños pequeños" - Adolescent N.1

But its not only lack of the attractions in the *superilla* dedicated to the adolecents, it's the number of young peole in the area in general. A part of the lack of diversity comes down to the placement of schools and to which age the tender. In that way, it becomes a political problem, because most of the facilities are kindergardens or primery schools. Leading to a socio-demgrahic imbalance in the superblock.

"[...] es una cuestión estructural y que ahí también pueden ayudar algunas medidas políticas. Ahora, pensando aquí han traído 12 escuelas infantil y primaria y se han llevado una secundaria" – Member N.1.

"[...] it is a structural issue and some political measures can also help here. Now, thinking about it, they have brought 12 nursery and primary schools here and taken away one secondary school"

OPENNESS

PRIVACY AND CONVIVIALITY

"A good city street neighborhood achieves a marvel of balance between its people's determination to have essential privacy and their simultaneous wishes for differing degrees of contact, enjoyment or help from the people around" (Jacobs 1961, p.59).

The Superblock in Poblenou is designed in a way that are different degrees of privacy within the public space. In the Inner Block (N.4) the municipality has built a community garden, a green space and a pond. This place is accessible to all (exept the community garden). But since it is 'shielded' by its sourrunding buildings it feels more secluded and more calm. The Inner Block N.4 is very porous and the palce can be excessed from five entry points. From there the public space becomes (how it feels) more public and opens up towards the outskrits of the *superilla*. Other more secluded places can be found in the park in Block N.3 or in the not so busy streets around Block N.1.

Nolli Map

Making a figure-ground diagram of the pilot superblock in Poblenou can provide a first glimpse on how porous Barcelona could become. We need to keep in mind though, that the superblock does not exactly follow the 3x3 formula and the centre block is comprised out of old as well as by the city of Barcelona newly built buildings. The street space, because it has a potential to act either more like a boundary or more like a border and is a rather unsocial space, has been painted in black signifying a boundary. The public space for pedestrians etc. acting as porous space has been kept in white.

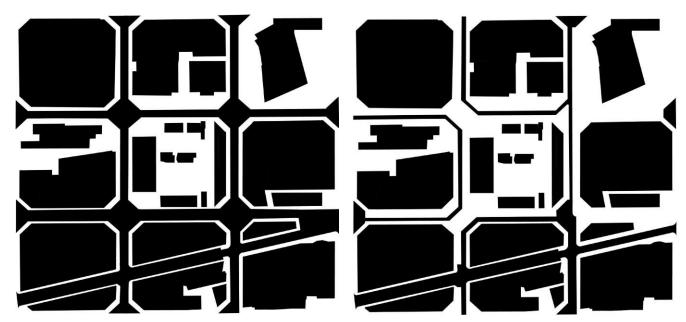


Figure 42: Difference in Permeability Before and After the Superblock Implementation

Especially the new plazas open up the space from the centre into all directions. The difference between intersection N.1 and N.3 compared to N.2 and N.3 is quite clear. The inner streets connect the plazas further to the edges of the superblock. Without the diagonal street cutting through the superblock, a person could get from one end of the *superilla* to the other without having to cross a street.

At the SB9, because of its special configuration, the completely pedestrianised streets in the east of the *superilla* act like a bridge connecting the super island to the Rambla of Poblenou, situated one block further to the east.

While the porosity within the superblock has increased and connections to the Rambla of Poblenou are being emphasised by the two pedestrianised streets, how porous Barcelona as a city will become can only be analysed when and if the *superilles* initiative has been sufficiently rolled out. What can be looked at now though is the edge condition of the superblock and how the implementation of 'edge plazas' (term by Herrnstadt) make for a perceived connection between the SB9 and its surroundings.

Edge condition

Since the edges of the buildings were cut off by Cerdà, they have the potential to either be porous plazas or boundaries filled with parked and moving cars. Due to these cut off edges and the width of the streets in general these spaces are quite spacious in a literal sense. If used in as a parking lot, the Cerdà's design of the rounded buildings becomes a bit annoying (at least for people like me who are not used to this typology). I got annoyed because every time I reached an intersection, I had the feeling that I had to make a little detour to get to the other side. I could never walk in a straight line and take the shortest path. The little 'edge plazas' would eliminate this and would allow the pedestrians to cross intersections directly. The SB9 does not have these 'edge plazas' implemented at every exist, but were they are, the change can be noticed instantly.

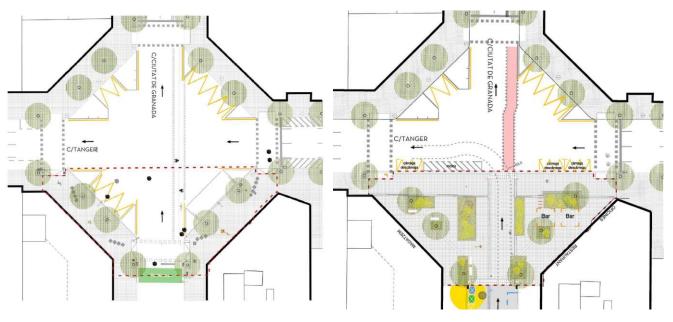


Figure 43: Edge Condition Before and After the Implementation

Apart from creating direct pathways, the plazas act as leisure spaces for residents and workers. These spaces have other qualities as the intersections within the *superilla*. Although they are adjacent to a street, they are quite calm places because they less filled with life if one prefers a bit

of 'solitude'. Even if implemented only on one side, the 'edge plaza' connects the SB9 with its surroundings.

"These days there are members who live outside the superilla and they are good, because they come here, they see it, they know it, they like it and they want to become members" - Member N.3

"Es que en estos días hay socios que viven fuera de la superilla y que son bueno, pues porque vienen aquí, la ven la conocen, les gusta y se quieren hacer socios" — Member N.3

THE ACCESSIBILITY OF PUBLIC SPACE IN ITS ENTIRETY FOR PEOPLE WITH REDUCED MOBILITY

The *superilla* de Poblenou has brought some improvements on that matter, especially for the elderly. Reducing car traffic and implementing speed limits as well as the implementation of the pedestrian zone in the Carrera de Sancho de Ávila and the shared space in the Carrera dels Almogàvers were important steps. But there is still a lot to be done.

"[...] for the elderly it is perfect because they don't have to look at their cars, the street, Calle de Almogávares, was also reformed and has become a unique platform. [...] What is true is that more reforms are needed [...]" - Member N.2

"[...] para la gente mayor es perfecto porque no tienen que estar mirándose el coche si de coches, la calle, la calle de Almogávares, también se reformó y ha quedado plataforma única. [...] Lo que sí que es verdad que hacen falta más reformas [...]" - Member N.2

Member N.3 has to use a wheelchair and is a person with reduced mobility. Speaking from own experience Member N.3 told me that the city as a whole is improving in accessibilty, step by step, also due to the *superilles* since they are part of Barcelona, but these improvements are nothing special.

"I think Barcelona as a whole is improving in terms of accessibility. Little by little and the superilla too because it is part of Barcelona, but it is nothing special" - Member N.3

"Yo creo que Barcelona en su conjunto, está mejorando en accesibilidad. Poco a poco y la superilla también porque forma parte de Barcelona, pero no es nada especial" — Member N.3

QUALITY OF PUBLIC SPACE IN TERMS OF NOISE AND AIR POLLUTION

So far there is no data available for the air pollution levels in Poblenou after the implementation. But the reduction in traffic is clearly visibile. Also the speed that cars drive with is strongly reduced, lowering the noise levels.

Public Housing

One of the measures to create a social mix apart from diverse attractions in the public space, is a mix of residential buildings with different owners, buildings with affordable flats and apartments that can be rented (affordably) and must not be owned. The city of Barcelona has as of writing this thesis, 84 new public housing promotions, 17 of them in the district of *Sant Marti* (Ajuntament de Barcelona: Housing – Public Housing Stock). These are of varying types like renting, co-housing, social development and cooperatives, leasehold and APROP (Provisional Proximity Accommodations). In close proximity to the superblock three completed buildings and one under construction can be found. One of the completed buildings (leasehold) is located at the centre of the inner block of the *superilla* and provides 68 homes. The one currently under construction (rent) will be built at the Intersection N.3 and provide 18 homes. The other two already completed (rent, capacity 47

and 105 homes) are within one or two blocks away from the superblock. Also within this distance two buildings are in progress. One of them will be provide 85 homes (rent) and the other will be a APROP building (Ajuntament de Barcelona: Housing – Public Housing Stock). It will have 42 homes for 110 people, include communal spaces like a laundry room, a communal garden or cultivation patch and a neighbourhood facility at the ground floor. The homes will be awarded to 50% to families in urgent need for permanent housing and the other 50% to young people (Ajuntament de Barcelona: Housing – Two new APROP temporary housing blocks in Sant Martí and Sants-Montjuïc). Provisional Proximity Accommodations (APROP) are a new tool employed by the municipal council. It is a "[...] new quick-built model of quality sustainable temporary flats to fight gentrification [...]" (Ajuntament de Barcelona: Info Barcelona – Come and discover APROP homes).

"[...] the people, well..." - Member N.2 "...Yes, they formed connections, in the parks, well, I don't know, now in the garden itself. The garden was also a super big element for cohesion, a tool [...]" - Member N.1

"[...] la gente, bueno que..." – Member N.2 "...Si, genera vínculos, en los parques, bueno, no sé, en el mismo huerto ahora. El huerto también fue un elemento de cohesión súper grande, una herramienta [...]" – Member N.1

HISTORIC BUILDINGS (IDENTITY)

Although the district is transforming very fast, the government of Barcelona endeavours to keep certain relicts, that remind residents of the past, intact. The chimneys of the old fabrics still stand proud between modern buildings of the 22@ project. The city of Barcelona not only keeps them intact, but also their visibility is very important. Buildings will be erected in such a way that they highlight these relics of the industrial past of Poblenou. One example is the Campus del Poblenou, the location of a university and a library.

Also, some old brick buildings are being preserved and repurposed. There are still old industrial brick buildings that have not been knocked down yet, reminding of 'Catalans Manchster'. These could be preserved and used as a bridge between past and present, between the industrial Poblenou and the Poblenou of transition (and maybe constant change, always a collaborative project and never finished).

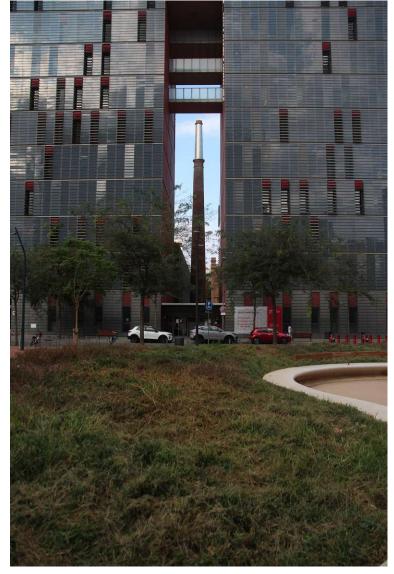


Figure 44: Old Industrial Chimney in the Campus del Poblenou

Poblenous history and future combined in one spot.

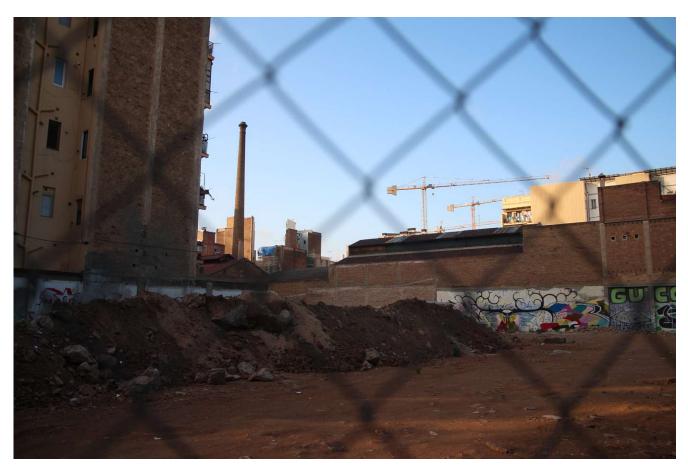


Figure 45: Old Industrial Chimeny in between Construction Site and Dwellings



Figure 46: Old Industrial Building in the Heart of Poblenou



CITÉ OF THE SB9

POLITICS BEHIND URBAN TRANSFORMATION PROCESSES

At the beginning of my thesis I wrote about *new municipalism* as a new form of making politics. In theory a more inclusive, participatory way of transforming a city. Since transforming the urban landscape is a political act (and the superblock initiative had already been very politicised as mentioned in chapter Superilles), I have to take a closer look at how the implementation process unfolded in the Poblenou superblock. But first I will examine different obstacles that can delay, halt or hinder a transformative urban project. These may come to effect on a personal level, but our personal feelings, concerns, beliefs and values translate into politics at the ballet box.

Zografos et al. (2020, p.2) mention in their paper on urban transformational adaption endeavours, such obsticals. Many have to do with a lack of communication, education and mediation.

One obstacle on a personal level is, that a person effected by the adaption may be unable to see the benefits or level of benefits for him or herself (Zografos et al. 2020, p.2). This may never change and the person may indeed have nothing to gain by the implementation of the project but I think this is seldom the case. For me, my personal experience comparing the superblock space to its not transformed surrounding, and from my interviews conducted in the *superilla*, the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.

Negative or unexpected side-effects also may hinder the role out of an urban transformation (Zografos et al. 2020, p.2). The major problem in SB9 is that it's the first of its kind. There is very little information and experience to draw upon. The superblocks that came before were not intended to be transformative. They did not aim to change that many aspects of people's lives. The *superilla* in Poblenou is *the* pilot project, hence it is the site that should provide data and information, also on negative or unexpected side-effects. Another problem, when dealing with side-effects, is that every case in a city is unique. If we take a glance in the future to a point in time in which the SB9 has provided sufficient information to relief some of the concerns of residents living in future superblock sites, many case specific attributes will not allow a hundred percent adoption. Even though concerns may never be fully dismissed, a broad informational/educational process beforehand can help make a transformational adaption a success.-

Another hindrance presents itself in form of institutions with aims contradicting the goals of the transformative adaption (Zografos et al. 2020, p.2). In the case of Poblenou a front against the implementation was formed by the automobile dealers in the area.

Personal values and beliefs (Zografos et al. 2020, p.2) of residents may stand in the way of adaption. The car and the feeling of freedom and perceived convenience it conveys can be such a personal value. In this case the economic dimension does not play such a big role as in case of the car dealerships. It has more to do with views on personal rights, identity and/or a disbelief of one's effects on the climate or the climate crisis itself.

In my opinion, another hurdle that Zagrafos et al. do not mention is habit. Habits are difficulty to break out of. The *superilla*, from my experience talking to residents, if dismissed was not done so because there is more greenery, more children in the streets, more public space, less noise, etc. but because there are less parking spaces available and one can not drive through.

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An additional point hindering transformational adaption according to Zografos et al. is the complexity of these adaptions (Zografos et al. 2020, p.2). This complexity is inevitable in a project that aims to transform multiple aspects of a city like the human experience, socio-economic aspects and flora and fauna. The *superilla* project falls into that category.

These are obstacles that can, in my view, be dismantled to various degrees by broad participation, mediation and measures like tactical urbanism or tools like *dicidim.barcelona*.

Whether an urban transformational adaption is successful or not, at the end what it comes down to is power, no matter its form. Unequal power relations and solidified systems that are preserved and shielded by special interests can be the maker or breaker of change (Zografos et al. 2020, p.2). In case of the SB9 power relations shifted twice during its implementation. First the power of turning the neighbourhood in Poblenou into a *superilla* lay in the hands of the municipal government. After the initial implementation, the power shifted towards the car dealers, car enthusiasts and special interests with the media backing them. The media can play a big role in such conflicts since it "[...] legitimizes hegemonic ideas about what is "good" in the politics and policy of local (economic) development [...]" (Russo 2017, p.5). In the case of the SB9 'good' meant the return to the status quo and remove the elements that made the public space into a superblock. But this anti-superilla initiative gave rise to the initiative Col lectiu Superilla Poblenou and the power shifted again.

PARTICIPATION

Changing politics as usual is one of the core goals of *new municipalism*. In their view, this change involves using, politics of proximity, flattening hierarchies and growing accountability and participation.

The SB9 pilot project could have been a valuable example on how to conduct participation and analyse its benefits for the project overall (not just in terms of cohesion). But as I mentioned before, due to political gameplay and time constraints a participation process was hasted and not well timed.

The implementation of the SB9 began in the middle of 2016 summer. The timing is questionable because it was at the end of the holidays and many residents as well as local business owners were taken aback when they came back to Poblenou and without little to no announcement or warnings found a *superilla* in front of their buildings (Zografos et al. 2020, p.9). So, what had happened?

The space had been 're-designed' practically overnight, on the 5 of September, by around 200 architect students from various universities, with proposal already in mind (Ajuntament de Barcelona: Air Quality – The Poblenou superblock fills with life). Via *Tactical Urbanism* the four intersections had been dedicated, by the students, to four different uses. Intersection N.3 was ironically dedicated to democracy and participation, Intersection N.2 to



Figure 47: Design for Intersection N.3 (Democracy and Partisipation) via Tactical Urbanism

recreation and leisure (basketball hoops, football goals and children games), Intersection N.4 was dedicated to exchange and commerce and Intersection N.1 to culture (Ajuntament de Barcelona: Air Quality - The Poblenou superblock fills with life).



Figure 48: Design for Intersection N.2 (Recreation and Leisure) via Tactical Urbanism

The space of the Intersection N.3 was designed, via paintings on the concrete and artefacts like chairs etc., as a space for debates, to take part in the conversation, have their voices heard and even organise public votes (Ajuntament de Barcelona: Air Quality The Poblenou superblock fills with life). The intersection was also the place were four public debates were held between the 12 and 22 of September in 2016.



Figure 49: Design for Intersection N.1 (Culture) via Tactical Urbanism

The first debate was held seven days after the initial implementation giving general information about the superilla. The topics of the other debates were: gentrification due to superblocks and tourism and public space; lifestyles, the sharing economy and sustainable forms of life in the information age; sustainable mobility (Ajuntament de Barcelona: Superilles – Debates a la Superilla del Polenou). Additionally, a suggestion box and a face-to-face information point was installed as well as an event held on the 28 of September to evaluate and bring fourth further proposals (Ajuntament de Barcelona: Superilles – Participatory open day on Poblenou's Superblock).

> "[...] the City Council informed us. They came once to one of the corners to explain to us what the superilla was and why. And we were about 80 people, 50, I don't know. And immediately there were two sides. One for, which were us, and the other against the superilla" - Member N.3

two sides. One for, which were us, and the other against the superilla" - N

"[...] el Ayuntamiento nos informó. Vino una vez en una de las esquinas para explicarnos que en

por qué. Y éramos unas 80 personas. 50, no sé. Y en seguida se crearon dos bandos. Uno pro estát

y otro en contra" -"[...] el Ayuntamiento nos informó. Vino una vez en una de las esquinas para explicarnos que era la superilla y por qué. Y éramos unas 80 personas. 50, no sé. Y en seguida se crearon dos bandos. Uno pro estábamos nosotros y otro en contra" – Member N.3

starting point for the development of the superilla in Poblenou. About the inclusion of the residents, the Deputy Mayor for Urban Ecology said: "We want residents to make the area their own and The approved original version of this thesis is available in print at TU Wien Bibliothek.

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this pilot scheme is a chance to fine tune it so that it's done in the best possible way", adding "we're listening to everyone and working to prevent any inconvenience which might arise" (Ajuntament de Barcelona: Air Quality - The Poblenou superblock fills with life). While the sudden implementation of the superblock by BComú had its political reasons as explained in page 82, the implementation via tactical urbanism by the students was done with good intentions. None-



Figure 50: Design for Intersection N.3 (Assembly) via Tactical Urbanism

theless, although invited to the development of the SB9, the residents felt blindsided, only being invited to participate 7 days after the implementation.

So, the implementation was followed by immediate backlash. Opposition rose in the realm of civil society as well as the political arena. Critique was expressed about failings on the technical and organisational side of the implementation as well was a " $\lceil ... \rceil$ lack of citizen participation during the planning and design process" (Zografos et al. 2020, p.4). The lack of participation and given information about the project itself was stated by many residents I have talked to and no one of the 96 people questioned in the questionnaire have taken part in the participation process.

Many of the residents rejecting the pilot project claimed a feeling of being left out of the participatory process to be the reason for their SB9 dismissal (Zografos et al. 2020, p.9). Zografos et al. cite a member of a neighbourhood association who in my opinion captures in his statement quite well how the implementation unfolded: "We deny that a participatory process has happened. [...] [At the beginning of September] some placards began to appear in our neighborhood, but the municipality did not explain the superblock. They explained it eight days later more or less [after implementation had happened]. [...] If there were a real open participatory process, surely [...] the acceptance would have been much bigger. [That] would change the situation for businesses as well" (Zografos et al. 2020, p.9).

Similar critique was voiced by owners of automobile venders and car repair shops who felt that without a participation process they were not given a chance to discuss possible business impacts and possible solutions. For them, especially the repair shops, the reduction of through traffic resulted in a loss of revenue and therefore came very vocal in their disapproval (Zografos et al. 2020, p.9). This backlash should have been anticipated by the BComú administration because in the chosen site for their first superilla (although Colau is not anti-private vehicle obsessed, the initiative is still aiming to



Figure 51: Businesses Based on Motorised Traffic in/around the Superblock

reduce individual motorised traffic drastically for good reasons, it is nonetheless a threat against the livelihood of the owners and workers of these shops) and it's immediate surrounding is home to nine shops with car centred businesses.

Many factors influence the chosen site of an urban transformational adaption but a different location with less businesses depending on the very thing the new municipal administration tries to reduce, could have (maybe) spared them such resistance and backlash since "[...] local automobile-oriented businesses became a center-piece of the opposition adding strength to wider efforts from pro-growth interests and the pro-independence left to undermine the Administration with critiques of the participation process" (Zografos et al. 2020, p.9). Together with residents they created the narrative that the SB9 was forced on them by planners, technicians, intellectual and pencil pushers who were unfamiliar with the site. They denounced the 'radical', new municipalist version and top down implementation of the superblock and sought to challenge Colau's hypocrisy of preaching citizen driven urbanism but not delivering with a referendum. A resident put it this way: "The referendum is a political lever [...]. [It] also serves to put in contradiction the fundamental speech of Colau. Grassroots participation, referendum for everything, it seemed like Switzerland. Now we are expressing a contradiction in her basic discourse" (Zografos et al. 2020, p.9).

This critique of the participation process is not shared by everyone though. The members N.1 and N.2 participated in the processes and they felt, although the communication was not that great, that the city government was really thinking of the citizens.

"[Barcelona] was becoming very, very impersonal. So, when you look at the neighbourhoods, the neighbours, the people here, for me that was like the most positive thing that happened, so I said, ah, ok, how cool is that, they ask us and they think of us" - Member N.1

"[Barcelona] estaba como muy volviéndose, como muy impersonal. Entonces que miras en a los barrios, a las vecinas, a la gente de aquí, a mí eso fue como lo más positivo que que que paso, que dije, ah, vale, qué guays no, nos pregunten y piensan en nosotros" — Member N.1

Member N.2 criticised the opposition, saying that because they were against the project anything could be critiqued. She referred to the critique of the small signs that were handed out announcing the implementation. She made the argument that every change to the public space has been announced this way, but only in this case it seems to be a problem. Though I can understand the line of argument, the *superilla* saw changes to an area of three by three blocks, which is a huge area, and *BComú* has the aspirations of doing better participatory processes than their predecessors.

"Well, but it is also an argument that has been used a lot and really when they put in a road with those [bycicle] lanes they also put up a sign saying that they are going to do works and nobody complains about the communication. [...] It's true that the communication was not good, it was like that. But it's also true that when they made the changes they made a square for people to go to and talk" - Member N.2

"Bueno, pero también es un argumento que se ha usado mucho y realmente cuando te ponen una carretera de ese carriles también te ponen un cartel que dicen que van a hacer obras y nadie se queja de la comunicación. [...] es verdad que la comunicación no fue bueno, fue así. Pero también es verdad que cuando pusieron los cambios hicieron una plaza para que la gente fuera y habla." – Member N.2

It is true that the participatory approach BComú claims to take in urban transformation projects has

not been deployed in the case of the *superilla* in Poblenou. The potential to bring residents together, to approximate bodies, and increase neighbourhood cohesion via a broad participation process, tactical urbanism and implementation of the outcomes that may have resulted out of the approximation of ideas and visions of the residents, was missed to a large extend due to the poor communication. Although different elements of participation were used, the timing of deployment was off. That is not to say, that the process in general had no positive influence on the cohesiveness of the people living and working in the superblock, but by blindsiding the people, not providing enough information and not at the right time as well as not taking the proper time a proper participatory process needs, its potential was not fully exploited. According to Member N.3 the municipal government later acknowledged that the communication of the SB9 implementation was flawed: "But in any case, the municipality acknowledged that the communication was not well done. It did not communicate well and they recognised that. In later superilles, I think communication has already improved. But well, it's not to defend or attack the city council" - Member 3.

> "Pero de todas formas, el ayuntamiento reconoció que la comunicación no la hizo bien. No se comunicó bien y ellos lo reconoció eran otras superilles posteriores la comunicación creo que ya han mejorado. Pero bueno, no es defender ni atacar al ayuntamiento" – Member N.3.

The lack of an initially well-coordinated and conducted participation process, as BComú actually intends to use and establish (in the future?), put three of the obstacles, as laid out by Zografos et al. (2020), into the path of the superilla de Poblenou, hindering it to be more successful and accepted.

The first is: A person effected by the adaption may be unable to see the benefits or level of benefits for him or herself. Without receiving information about what the superblock even is before the participation process starts, hinders people's ability to recognise its potential benefits for themselves and that they have a better chance of further increasing those benefits by partaking in the processes. The superilles initiatve is as I explained nothing new in Barcelona and has gotten a lot of media attention over the years. But still not everyone knows about it. Those who do could see its benefits for themselves, those who did not know it could not imagine any benefits from it as the interview with the Col lectiu Superilla Poblenou proved. Member N.2 stated that she saw a small poster on the 1. September for the implementation and thought: good, very good.

> "I don't know if it was on the 1st of September that they put up a little sign. A week before they were going to, they were going to implement changes and of course, I thought fine, everything good" -Member N.2

"No sé si el 1 de septiembre puse un cartelito. Una semana antes de que iba, de que iba a hacer implementar cambios y claro, yo me lo tomé como que bien, todo bien" – Member N.2

Member N.1, not knowing what the *superilla* is had a different reaction. She just thought to herself what is a superblock and that the communication of the project was poorly done.

> "The communication was a bit poorly conducted, wasn't it? Because I was like: what is this superilla thing?" - Member N.1

> > "Fue como un poco pobre la comunicación, no? Porque era: que es esto de la superilla?" — Member N.1

The second is: Negative or unexpected side-effects. I think there are only a small number of things that can be as unexpected in a public space as waking up one Monday morning, step outside of one's building and find the entire space in a three by three block radius unrecognisable. People were getting back from their holidays, schools had not yet begun, but even still, many routines were broken on that day with small, but negative side-effects.

"And on a September like today, five years ago we came back from the holidays like today, and we found paintings and some changes of direction [for car traffic], and so on" - Member N.3

"Y en un septiembre como hoy, hace cinco años volvimos de vacaciones como hoy, y nos encontramos pintadas y algunos cambios de dirección, etcétera." — Member N.3

The third obstacles the *superilles* initiative ran into is: *institutions with aims contradicting the goals of the transformative adaption*. By not involving the companies that are dependent on the motorised vehicles, they made the project more vulnerable to be attacked and scrutinised by their owners and certain media companies backing them.

Although no one I interviewed took part in the participation process, I wanted to know if the *superilla*, the changed space, had an effect on the willingness to participate to partake in future urban transformation adaptions, neighbourhood associations or other activates for the neighbourhood. The results split the questioned roughly in two. 58,3% agree that the superblock increased their willingness to partake in future participation process while 41,7% disagreed (totally agree = 36,5%; agree = 21,9%; disagree 14,6%; totally disagree 27,1%). A positive effect for participation on people living in the superblock seem to be greater than those just working within its perimeters. Exactly half of people asked, totally agreed and further 15,2% agreed, a total of 65,2%, that the *superilla* increased their willingness for participation (disagree 13%; totally disagree 21,7%). While still over half of the people working in the superblock agree that their willingness to partake in future participation process only 24% totally agreed (28% agree) and thereby less than half compared to the 50% of people living in the SB9 that that totally agree.

Apart from activating its residents through urban transformation projects, the municipality tries to involve and make it easier to participate via the platform *Dicidim.Barcelona*. While more than a third (37,5%) knew the platform only nine people, not even 10%, had been using it. This shows, that the promotion for the platform seems to work quite well but the engagement, the real participation, still needs to be increased. It also needs to be said that an increase in willingness does not necessarily translate into an increase in actual participation. Many stated that due to work and/or family there was simply too little time to be active in the community or politically. No matter how much they want to take an active role in shaping their neighborhood.

The members of the Col lectiu are using Didicim. Barcelona as a tool for their proposals.

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"Yes [...] as a participaion tool" - Member N.1
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"Sí, [...] como herramienta para [...] la participación."- Member N.1

"[...] to make the proposal for improvement" - Member N.2

"[...] para hacer la propuesta de mejora" – Member N.2

One goal, in terms of participation, that *BComú* can consider achieved, is that the process is still ongoing. It is being contuined by *Col ·lectiu*. They organize meetings every first Friday of the month and question and discussions can be held via the media platforms. They are open to everyone and every idea but the members are open about it and don't conceal the fact, that with the request for more parking space one would not get far. That the ideas have to be in line and the concept of the *superilla*, of filling the streets with life.

"[...] we have the platforms that sometimes get asked on and then we always tell them to come to the meetings we organise. In theory on the first Friday of every month. And yes, there have been a lot of people who have come and also given" - Member N.1

"[...] tenemos las redes que a veces nos preguntan y entonces siempre les decimos que vengan a las reuniones que hacemos. En teoría el primer viernes de cada mes. Y sí, ha habido mucha gente que que bueno que ha venido y ha dado" – Member N.2

"Of course, the collective is always open, to any kind of proposal and if it coincides with the values of the association, then we go ahead with it. Obviously, whoever comes up with the idea or the initiative, what we also ask is that they develop it and [...] of course they get involved and we support them and help them in whatever is necessary, but it is open" - Member N.1

"Claro, el colectivo siempre está abierto, cualquier tipo de propuesta y si coincide con los valores de la asociación, pues se tira para adelante. Obviamente que el que trae la idea o la iniciativa, lo que pedimos también es como un poco como que la desarrolle y [...] claro que se implique y los secundamos y apoyamos en lo que sea necesario, pero está abierto" – Member N.1

POLITICS OF PROXIMITY

"Every Greek felt connected to his polis by an attachment so strong that he was often prepared to sacrifice his time for its administration [...]. [An] awareness of belonging to a human community bound together by a shared past and a future to be constructed in common." (Wolff 2014, p.801).

The ideas then got passed on to the municipality and after that the ball is in the court of the municipality. It is up to the government to make changes, but they are still possible.

So, the the participation process is open ended, never finished.

"We propose to the Municipal Council and then the Municipal Council does what it can, what it wants or what it feels like. Haha" - Member N.2

"Nosotros proponemos al Ayuntamiento y luego el Ayuntamiento hace lo que puede, lo que quiere o que le da la gana. Haha" – Member N.2

For example the idea of a space for the adolencents has been propsed to the municipality from the start almost five years ago, also via the platform dicidim.barcelona, but so far the members are still waiting for it.

> "It is a proposal from the beginning, that we asked for a youth zone. That was five years ago" - Member N.2

"Es una propuesta desde el principio que pedíamos una zona para jóvenes. Pero desde hace cinco" — Member N.2

"[...] and that was proposed in the participatory budgets of Barcelona through DECIDÍM and well, this proposal has stayed on the platfom and well, that is to say, we are still waiting" - Member N.1

"[...] y que se propuso en los presupuestos participativos de Barcelona a través del DECIDÍ y bueno, y ha quedado y ha quedado esta propuesta ha quedado adentro y bueno, o sea, ahí esperamos" — Member N.1

When I asked if Barcelona en Comú is complying to its ideals od participation and new form of politics, the answer was no. They are doing more than other politicians but they could do more and also be more organised.

"No. It is doing more than other politicians. But no, I think it lacks a bit of street and neighbourhood

outreach. Sometimes they do hold meetings to see what you think about certain issues, but they have to be a person who is very involved, who wants to go to the meeting" - Member N.2

"No. Está haciendo más que otros políticos. Pero no, yo creo que le falta un poco, falta un poco pisar la calle y los vecinos. A veces sí que hacen reuniones para ver qué te parecen ciertos temas, pero tiene que ser gente que esté muy implicada, que quiera ir" — Member N.2

"They came as if they were very disorganised, they did the session. I personally got the feeling that they collected, that they collected information. Now they are acting, but there was no feedback from that meeting, there was no one thing" - Member N.1

"Vinieron como muy desorganizado, hicieron la sesión. A mí personalmente me dio la sensación de recogida, de que recogieron información. Ahora están actuando, pero no hubo un retorno de esa reunión, no hubo una cosa"

— Member N.1

Since BComú plans to roll out the superilla all over the city, the SB9 being the pilot, I was interested if the municipal government was in contact with the Col lectiu because for me their members seemd like a good source of information. But when I asked, if they try to get information about what works or does not work, I was a bit surprised that the answer was a no.

"No, they know. They see it." - Member N.3

"No, ellos lo saben. Lo ven" – Member N.3

Member N.3 told me that they know, because some of members of *Barcelona en Comú* live in the *superilla* themselves.

"There are people who work in the municipal government, who live in superilla" - Member N.3

"Es que hay personas que trabaja en el ayuntamiento, que viven en superilla [...]" – Member N.3

"No, they don't ask us much" - Member N.2

"No, no nos preguntan mucho" – Memner N.2

Member N.1 summed up what is working well on part of the municipal government and what is not. What is being proposed gets implemented, but the communication with the government seems to be a bit difficult.

"Our words and our concerns are getting somewhere, but it seems to me that the communication part is still a bit difficult" - Member N.1

"Nuestras palabras y nuestras inquietudes llegan a algún sitio, pero lo que es la parte comunicativa me parece todavía como un poco dificil" — Member N.1

The puppeteer did not participate in the participation process when the *superilla* was implemented. At the end of our interview I asked him, if another participation process would occur, if now he would take part in it. The anser was a firm "Yes, yes of cource" - Puppeteer.

"Sí, sí claro" — Puppeteer.

"Thus, in terms of effectiveness of political institutions, a society might be said to be cohesive if its citizens subscribe to a common view of how to conduct collective affairs [...]" (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.997). A small but not decicive indicator that BComú did not achive a more cohesise society, on municipal level, and that subscribe to a common (new municipalist) view is that they did not manage to gain more votes.

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Instead of the 176.337 votes they received in 2015, it only got 156.157 votes in the 2019 elections (El País: Elecciones Municipales – Resultados 2019). But four years is not a lot of time to convince people of one's ideas and ideals. The next elections may be a better indicator on how *BComú* fares in its endeavour to increase social cohesion view politics of proximity.

ALL COMPONENTS FIT

For Kearns and Forrest the kernel of a cohesive society is that "[...] all component parts somehow fit in and contribute to society's collective project and well-being [...]" (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p. 996). The superilla could be viewed as the neighbourhood's collective project. The term 'fit in' can be used for a socio-demographic group in relation to other socio-demographic groups or be taken literally and meant as fit in the physical space of the superblock. In Poblenou this can be seen in the design of the area: three playgrounds tend to the children (also children not living in the superblock), the restaurants, cafés and the more secluded space within the inner block tend to the adults, the picnic tables tend to the people working in the superblock as well as to families and friends that gather together for birthday parties etc., the park benches tend to, amongst others, the elderly passing through on their way to the grocery store or the running track for the athletic. But in the design, there is one socio-demographic group that seems to be underrepresented, the adolescents.

Another crucial point influencing cohesion within the group (Kearns and Forrest 2000, p.996) is conflict or better put the absence of conflict. Kearns and Forrest see a cohesive society as a society that shares the same societal goals. A society in which conflicts between different groups seldom or not arise at all and disruptive behaviour of individuals is kept at a minimum or does not exist at all (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.996). During my interviews in the *superilla* conflicts were seldom even a topic worth mentioning. Most of the people saw little to none conflict between different socio-demographic groups. But if conflicts were addressed, they always involved the group that seems to be forgotten in the design, the group that does not quite 'fit' in the SB9. The adolescents and teenagers, gathering in the evening or night to make a 'botellon', a collective drinking session. The complaints revolved around the noise level generated by these 'botellons' and the trash (empty bottles, beer cans, cigarette buds etc.) left behind at the picnic tables. Of all interviewed, four people, they all live in the *superilla*, voiced those concerns (that's 9% of all residents of the superblock interviewed). Two of them (4%) stated that in the night they do not feel as safe as during the day.





Figure 52 and 53: Remnants of a 'Botellon' in the Middle of the Superblock

"[...] you need to search for life and since there are tables here and when there are not many people here, well we make it [birthday parties] here" - Adolescent N.1

"[...] tenías que buscar la vida y como que hay mesas y depende como no hay mucha gente, pues lo hacíamos aquí" - Adolescent N.1

In the interview conducted with two adolescents they told me that they do not come often to the SB9. Most of the time they just pass through on their way to the 'Plaça de les Glòries Catalanes', a major plaza with good public transport connections. "[...] no veníamos tanto por aquí, pero sí que pasábamos para ir a Gloria [...]" - Adolescent N.1. "[...] we didn't come here often, but yeah, when we passed through to go to Gloria [...]" (translation by Herrnstadt). This changed though because of the redesign of the space and due to the covid lock downs. "Y ahora, desde que se ha hecho el parque, pues venimos más, porque hay más ambiente." - Adolescent N.2. "And now, that they made the park [superilla], we come more often because it has more atmosphere" (translation by Herrnstadt). The lock-down due to Covid-19 and the following restrictions made it more difficult for young people to 'go out'. They stated: "Y más con el covid que no podemos ir a ningún lado." - Adolescent N.1. (And more still due to Covid because we cannot go anywhere" (translation by Herrnstadt) and so they came to the superilla and set down at the tables, especially birthday parties were celebtrated here: "Te sientas aquí con amigos" - Adolescent N.2 "Sobre todo fiestas de cumpleaños. Sí, hemos celebrado aquí" - Adolescent N.1 "One sits down here with friends" and "Over all we celebrated birthdays here".

When asked about the 'botellones' they confirmed that young people gathered here to listen to music and drink alcohol. "[...] normalmente vienes y te vas encontrando grupos de gente. Pues con las bebidas o con música. Lo que pasa que es sí que es más problemático porque al fin vengan vecinos. La poli también va pasando, vigilando. Aquí no puedes tampoco beber porque lo pueden considerar botellón. Te dicen que es, que te vayas, que escondas las bebidas" - Adolescent N.1. "Normally when you come you will find groups of people with drinks and with music. What is happening is that it's more problematic because at the end residents are coming. The police is also passing through, watching. Here you also cannot drink because they [police] may consider it a 'botellon'. They say that you have to leave and conceal the drinks".

Asked if they know of any conflicts they said that they never had any, but they could imagine, depending on the group that conflicts between adolescents and residents arise. "We no, but I imagine that at best it depends on the group […]" and "[…] if you are calm with music, no, nothing usually happens" - Adolescent N.2

"Nosotros no, pero imagino que a lo mejor depende de cómo algún grupo [...]" - Adolescent N.1, and "[...] si estás tranquilo con música, no, no suele pasar nada" - Adolescent N.2.

According to the *Col lectiu* it also depends on the design of the superilla. They stated, that the adolecents have no space dedicated to their needs in the superilla and that they were trying to get a basketball court installed. But so far this has not happened. The members see the adolecents in SB9 project as the forgotten part of the socio-demographic spectrum.

"Yes, because we always think that they are the forgotten ones, they are only criticised for making party, but they are not given any kind of option for them to have. [...] So, of course, we are finding many complaints from neighbours that they make noise, which is the case, but what we should do is give them other leisure options that, I don't know, are places where they can be, of course, but I do think that this is what is missing" - Member N.2

"Sí, porque siempre creemos que son los grandes olvidados, solo, solo se les tiene para criticarlos, que si hacen botellón, pero tampoco se les dan ningún tipo de opción para que tengan ellos. [...] Entonces, claro, nos estamos encontrando con muchas quejas de vecinos de que hacen ruido, que es que es así, pero lo que habría es que darles otras opciones de ocio que, no se, son sitios donde puedan estar claro pero y eso sí que creo que falta" – Member N.2

As I stated above not many voiced safety concerns due to the young people drinking in the night. In general, most of the people felt safer after the implementation of the superblock.

Little over 70% agreed that they feel safer after the implementation (totally agree = 41,8%; agree = 28,6%; disagree 16,3%; totally disagree 13,3%). People lining in the superilla do not agree to that degree that the superilla has made the neighbourhood safer. 60% agreed and 40% do not feel safer.

> "Yes, I think so, I think there is more security because of that. Because there are more people, but there are no cars or places where thiefs can hide" - Member N.2

"Sí, yo creo que sí, que hay más seguridad por eso. Porque sí también hay más vida de gente, pero no hay coches ni sitios donde se puedan esconder los chorizos" – Member N.2

I put the reasons for an increased feeling into different categories to better be able to analyse them. For example, reasons like: 1. Menos traffic (less traffic) 2. Menos coches (less cars) and 3. Coches mas lentos (cars drive more slowly) were summarised in the category less traffic/cars. So, eight categories emerged out of the data:

- 1. Less traffic/cars
- 2. Better for children/families
- 3. More calm/comfortable place
- 4. General design
- 5. Better for pedestrians
- 6. More atmosphere/ambience
- 7. More lively
- 8. Negative effects

Every participant could give more than one reason for agreeing or disagreeing and not all could put their finger on why they felt this or that way. But from the data collected the reason 1. Less traffic/cars was given by 41 people, that's 42,7% of all people interviewed. The second most often voiced reason was 6. More atmosphere/ambience by 19 people, almost every fifth person asked. 6 people could name negative effects. Four of them involved people drinking in the night, one involved cars and bicycles using the same space after the implementation and one just voiced his general dislike of the *superilla* by saying it is bad for cars.

The two adolescents described the new situation, comparing it to the surrounding area like this: "At most, every five minutes a car passes by" - Adolescent N.1. "There are also a lot of tables together, not so many right here, but in this space they are all together [pointing to the fully pedestrianised section of the Carrera de Sancho de Ávila, Ill X:...]. There is also the park next to it. (It is more controlled - Adolescent N.1). It's safer than maybe another part of the neighbourhood and more for families. The trees, the drawings over there and the figures on the ground. They are for children's games, maybe in other areas of the neighbourhood it doesn't exist" - Adolescent N.2 "It's super spacious. It's very big. You're not limited to a park like this, but you have the whole area to use." - Adolescent N.1.

"Cada cinco minutos a lo mejor pasa el coche" - Adolescent N.1, "También hay muchas mesas juntas, aquí no tantas, pero en ese espacio están todas juntas. También está el parque al lado. (Es más controlado - Adolescent N.1). Es más seguro que quizás [...] otro parte del barrio y más familiar. Los árboles, los dibujos que hay ahí delante y las figuras en el suelo. Son para hacer juegos para niños tal vez en otros espacios del barrio no existe" -Adolescent N.2 and "Es súper amplio. Que es muy grande. No te limitas a un parque como esto, sino que tienes toda la zona para utilizarla." - Adolescent N.1

The members of the Col lectiu said that there are two reasons they feel safer now in relation to the car/traffic situation. The first being that the velocity was reduced and the second, that without the parked cars, the space becomes more open and visibal.

"Almogávares was a motorway. The cars were passing by very fast [...]" - Member N.1

"Almogávares era una autopista. Pasaban como muy fuerte los coches [...]" – Member N.1

"And in my case also because there are no cars parked, because you see everything, like [...] you have more visión" N.2

"Y en mi caso también por el hecho de que no haya coches aparcados, porque lo ves todo, como [...] tienes mas visión" – Member N.2

The biggest conflict still seems to be the one between car owners (they are not thrilled by the new parking situation and the new design of the public space) and the residents that see the superilla as an improvement of their quality of life.

There had been attempts by the Col lectiu Superilla Poblenou to build relations and convince car owners and the owners of car companies. "Yes, yes, yes, we tried, we tried, we tried to talk to the merchants, the ones who had car shops" - Member N.2

> "Sí, sí, sí, se intentó, se intentó, se intentó hablar con los comerciantes, los que tenían tiendas de coches" — Member N.2

When asked if the opinions of people who were against it, they replied that some have come around, but not all. At first, they kept actively engaging with people that were still against the superblock, for example people who put up signs on their balconies against the SB9 or when they meet them in the park or while sitting at the picnic tables.

> "But not all of them yet. In other words, they continue to defend the idea of no to the superilla and you ask, well why? I mean, tell me. But now we meet those people who had banners against superilla on their balcony and now, I mean, they can be at the next table or in the park, or enjoying it or participating in the same garden [...]" - Member N.1

"Pero no todos todavía. O sea, se sigue defendiendo una idea de no a la superilla y tu dices bueno, pues por qué? O sea, dime. Pero actualmente también nos encontramos con aquellas personas que tenía pancartas en contra de la superiIla en su balcón y ahora, o sea, puede estar en una mesa aquí al lado o en el parque, o disfrutando entonces o participando en el mismo huerto [...]" – Member N.1

But now they say that there is no more point in communicating with them because there is no base for negotiations. There is no compromise from the group against the superilla insight, its either all or nothing.

> "There could be no communication because from our position, as I mean, we can negotiate, maybe there can be a car lane and we can say well, the bus has to go through or what happens, well, for

people to park their car. But they didn't, they wanted to remove everything and go back to, well, what was there before, four lanes of traffic, two for cars and two for parking" - Member N.2

"No podía haber comunicación porque de nuestra postura, como quiero decir, que nosotros podemos negociar, que a lo mejor haya un carril de coches y podemos decir bueno, pues tiene que pasar el autobús y en qué pasa bueno, gente a su parking Pero ellos no, ellos era quitarlo todo y volver a hacer ah, bueno, lo que había antes, cuatro carriles de circulación, dos de coches y dos de aparcamiento." – Member N.2

But they also said, that as soon as the pandemic is over they will start to organise gatherings and parties in the streets again to form connections and everyone who wants to be there is invited.

> "I imagine that when Covid is over, we'll go back to doing things in the street. [...] Well, more to create a little bit more of a connections between those who want to be there than to convince others" - Member N.2

"Me imagino que cuando acabe el Covid volveremos a hacer cosas en la calle. $\lceil \ldots
ceil$ Bueno, y más que para para convencer, para bueno, para crear un poco más de vínculo entre los que los que quieran estar" — Member N.2

When I asked them if the relationship, on a personal level, between members of the two groups was good or if it even has improved, for example when they meet each other on the street, they replied that most people who are against the superilla do not live within the superblock perimeter.

> "They don't live here. Most of the people who were against the superilla, live outside the superilla" - Member N.2

"No viven aquí. La mayoría de la gente que estaba en contra de la superilla, vive fuera de la superilla" – Member N.2

In May 2017, the opposition initiated a referendum on whether the SB9 would be dismantled. The majority of the residents voted against the continuation of the pilot project but the referendum was legally not binding and only around 25% participated. Although this is a low turnout, the result of the neighbourhood referendum got a lot of attention in the local media covered and was the talking point in political debates (Zografos et al. 2020, p.4). When asked about the referendum, the members of the Col lectiu Superilla Poblenou replied that the process was not transparent, that it was organised sole by the group that was against the superblock so they looked for people in favour of their agenda. Member N.3 is sure that if a legit referendum would be held now that the majority would vote in favour of the superilla de Poblenou. "Well, of course, apart from, I mean, they are going to look for, I mean, the voices they are interested in supporting, right?" - Member N.1

> "Bueno, claro, aparte de, o sea, de que van a buscar, o sea, las voces que le interesan para que apoyen no?" — Member N.1

"[...] if we had made, a call for a real referendum. [...] I'm sure we would have won, and after five years, even more so" - Member N.3

"[...] si hiciéramos realmente una, una convocatoria para un referéndum. [...] Estoy seguro que ganábamos y después de cinco años, mas." – Member N.3

Kearns and Forrest describe what they take disruptive behaviour to mean. In case of the superblock, what disruptive behaviour would entail is the interference with the activities conducted by pedestrians and quality of life of the residents, since they are the main focus of the project. In the time I was there, the most disruptive behaviour was that of cars, driving faster than the allowed speed limit through the the superblock via the Carrera de Roc Boronat.

Other disruptive behaviour that is not created by any citizen is the repainting of the decoration of the *superilla*. Spaces are given a specific use or indicate a pedestrian-only-zone via circles, lines or squares etc. on the pavement. At the end of august the previously drawn signs had lost their colour and had to be redrawn. During this period, the spaces in need of renewal had to be 'closed down' and were out of use. In addition, the works generated noise, the big truck used by the workmen occupied a large area of the open space and the fresh paint released an (chemical, for one's nose not very pleasing) odour. The same is true for the varnish for the benches and tables. These disruptive behaviours may have a temporary effect on the well-being of the residents and therefor the cohesiveness of the group, but since they are limited in time and their source does not come from within the group, the effects are small and only temporary.

WEAK TIES, STRONG TIES AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

One of the dimensions I wanted to explore was the building of social solidarity and the formation of weak and strong ties. Questions five (Did you get to know new people because of the superblock?) and six (Did you form new friendships because of the superblock?) were dedicated to find out if weak or strong knots between people had actually been tied.

Concerning weak ties, of the 96 people questioned, 30 replied with yes and 66 with no. So almost every third person made new connections due to being (living or working) in the *superilla*. Keeping in mind, that no one of the people questioned had partaken in the participation process.

In my interview with the members of the *Col lectiu* I asked what they think what impact these weak ties, these brief random sidewalk contacts had. Member N.3 anserwed this: "Of course, to know the name of that person. If they have a young child. I don't know, I think it creates links, it creates community".

"Claro, conocer el nombre de aquella persona. Si tiene un hijo pequeño. No sé conocer, yo creo que eso sí, crea nexos, crea comunidad" — Member N.3

The number changes significantly when only people living in the superblock are taken into account from 31,3% to 43,5%. So almost every second person living in the superblock has made weak ties due to the redesign of the public space.

Strong ties are harder to form then weak ties. This is reflected in the data of the questionnaire. Only 13,5% replied with yes to question number six. More than every tenth person having formed new friendships is still, for me, impressive to achieve with the reorganisation of traffic, the installation of different infrastructures and the holding of events within that space.

The number increases to 17,5% for people living in the superblock.



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"I see it in my neighbours who have children, they go down to the street, they have the park and you see, well, that they talk more, they know each other better, they know the children's names. I also know their names from hearing them and then, of course, it's not the typical staircase where I used to live, where it was hello, goodbye, and let's see if this one is going to rob me, I don't know, it's different, it's different" - Member N.2

"[...] yo lo veo por mis vecinas que tienen críos, bajan a la calle tienen el parque y ves que que bueno que hablan más, se conocen más, se saben el nombre de los niños. Yo también me lo sé de oírlos y entonces claro, no es la típica escalera donde yo vivía antes que era hola, adiós, y a ver si este me va a robar no sé, es diferente, es diferente" – Member N.2

Since strong as well as weak ties is the foundation on which social solidarity can be built upon, I assume that the superilla has a positive effect on the third dimension of social cohesion.

When I asked the two adolescents if they got to know new people or make new friendships, they relied, that they come with friends and the groups of the teenagers don't really mix and socialise but they believe that in this space children and families socialise more: "No, because with our group of friends we are all together. We stay in small groups. We are not here to socialise, it's to be chill (calm)" and "Maybe it's more for children or families" - Adolescent

> "No, no, porque que con el grupo de nuestros amigos estamos todos juntos. Se separa más por grupitos. No es para socializar, es para estar tranquilos." – Adolecent N.1 and "Quizá más en niños o familias" – Adolescent N.2.

Earlier in the thesis I wrote about that social networks spread out more in big cities, they spill over the neighbourhood perimeter. So, the question of scale arises in the context of weak and strong ties. Where should cohesion be increased? In the city, the district or just the superilla? When asked if they are in favour of a superblock where they live, the two adolescents stated that when they go out, they don't look for a nucleus like the superilla. They prefer to walk 15 minutes because they want to isolate themselves from their respective homes. Adding that staying with a large group of friends directly in front of one's home is not that comfortable: "Como es yo es que al final al salir de casa no busco un núcleo así, porque al final lo que quiero también es aislarme un poco de lo que es la zona de mi casa. Entonces también si puedo caminar 15 minutos e irme a un sitio un poquito más aislado, nada mejor que enfrente de mi casa. Pero también ir con un grupo grande de amigos cerca de casa no es igual de cómodo. [...] no quedarme siempre en el mismo ambiente." - Adolecentes N.2. "I don't look for a nucleus like that when I leave my house, because in the end what I also want is to isolate myself a bit from the area around my house. So, if I can walk for 15 minutes and go somewhere a bit more isolated, nothing better than in front of my house. But also going with a large group of friends close to home is not as comfortable. [...] I don't want to always stay in the same place". How far one's radius to move around the city is, depends, among other factors, on the age of a person. Adolescents prefer a change in scenery and to 'get away' from their parents (understandably) while their parents may prefer to go to the restaurant next door or to meet their friends on a picnic table in front of their building because they have to get to work in the morning and don't want to do long commutes.

I wanted further to know if the potential for the future formation of weak and strong ties had increased because of the superblock by asking whether or not the SB9 had a positive on their conviviality, 79,2% agreed that their conviviality had increased due to the redesign of the space. 51% even agreed totally. Only 5,2% totally disagreed that the *superilla* effected their conviviality (15,6%) disagreed). Between people working in the superilla and living ther is no significant difference.

I also was interested if their sense of community had changed. 55,2% agreed while 44,8% diagreed. There was no significant difference between people who lived or people who just worked in the superblock. In both cases just al little over half the people said that their sense of community has increased.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

"I wouldn't know how to use the right verb, but there must be a verb that says, it is one thing to live, to have neighbours, and another thing is to have a community. The difference between one thing and the other is that the superilla helps a lot in this área. If you go to another areas, I don't know, but here the superilla has been very important for creating community and I think it is the most important value for me" - Member N.3

"Que no sabría utilizar el verbo adecuado pero tiene que haber un verbo que diga, una cosa es, vivir, es tener vecinos y otra cosa es, tener comunidad. La diferencia entre una cosa y otra ayuda mucho la superilla en esta zona he. Si te vas a otra zona, no lo sé, pero aquí ha sido muy importante la superilla para crear comunidad y es creo que el valor para mí más importante" — Member N.3.

Two examples of the formation of *social capital* due to the SB9 became apparent during my interviews with the members of the *Col lectiu Superilla Poblenou* and the resident who performed the puppet shows for the kids. The *Col lectiu Superilla Poblenou* consist of a group of people who got together to keep the *superilla* and not have the space return to the way it was before the implementation. They now can be considered as friends, that do activities together outside the realm of the superblock and outside of its original purpose. The resident started the puppet show during the lock-downs due to Covid-19 restrictions to bring joy to the children, their parents and himself.

"Well, the collective was formed five years ago. And why was the collective formed? Because the superilla was implemented in the Poblenou, in Barcelona" - Member N.3

"Bueno, el colectivo se formó hace cinco años. Y por qué se formó el colectivo? Porque se formó la superilla en el pueblo, no, en Barcelona" – Member N.3.

"That we had to fight against those who didn't want it because, hallo, because they could take it away" - Member N.2 (while interviewing them they greeted a friend that passed by at the moment)

"Que teníamos que luchar contra los que no la querían porque, hola, porque lo podían quitar" – Member N.2

Col ·lectiu Superilla Poblenou

So, the *Col lectiu* was formed due to a government initiative (the *superilles* initiative), but the collective had no ties to the government, they for themselves believed it was necessary for them to get active in order to keep the *superilla*.

"No [referring to if the collective has ties to the administration], we know each other. So, we thought we had to work for the superilla to move forward, because we saw an opposition" - Member N.3

"No, nosotros nos conocemos. Entonces pensábamos que teníamos que trabajar para que la superilla tirar adelante, porque vimos una oposición" – Member N.3



This 'lucha', this fight as it is called in Spanish, brought new people together, people that before did not know each other. These ties were formed because people form the Col lectiu started to write letters to the newspapers and they meet in the government assemblies.

> "I didn't, I didn't know anyone at all. We met as a result of the struggle, so to speak, we started writing letters to the newspapers and going to municipal council meetings and then we got to know each other and formed the group" - Member N.2

"Yo no, yo no conocía absolutamente a nadie. Nos conocimos a raíz de la lucha, por así decirlo, que empezamos a escribir cartas a los diarios a ir a plenarios del Ayuntamiento y entonces nos fuimos conociendo y formamos el el grupo" — Member N.2

"We were living, but there was no relationship. And it was thanks to the superilla and the collective that a neighbourhood network was created. I know a lot of people, a lot of people know me. They greet us. In other words, there is a very, very interesting, very positive neighbourhood relationship. Since the collective, since the superilla" - Member N.3

"[...] vivíamos, pero no había una relación. Y fue gracias a la superilla y al colectivo que se ha hecho una red de vecindario. Yo conozco a mucha gente, a mí me conoce mucha gente. Nos saludan. O sea, hay una relación vecinal muy, muy interesante, muy positiva, desde. Desde el colectivo, desde la superilla." – Member N.3

The superilla made the area more lively in general. An argument against the implementation was, that no one would use it because so far no one has used the public space.

> "[...] it was also one of the points that the opposition made [...] to say it is not necessary here. [...] Why? I mean, of course, there was no commercial axis, there were no groups or anything like that. So, well, all this was formed due to the superilla, from our perception" - Member N.1

"[...] fue también uno de los puntos de que la oposición [...] para decir no es necesario aquí. [...] Por qué? O sea, claro, no había un eje comercial, no había así como grupos ni nada. Entonces, bueno, todo esto se formo a partir de la superilla también, desde nuestra percepción" – Member N. 1

Teatro de títeres

During the pandemic and the mandatory lock-down a resident of the superilla started a puppetshow for the child of a neighbour. With time, more and more children wanted to see the show and now around 15 to 20 children wih their parents are watching it. The resident is performing around once a month, usually in the space between the two office buildings section of the inner block of the Carrera de Sancho de Ávila. When I asked if this shows/events would have happened if the superilla would not have been implemented, the answer was a clear no.

> "No, I haven't, no, because this was a place for cars [...] There was no room to play or to share" -Puppeteer

"No, no he ha pasado no, porque este era un sitio de coches [...] No había espacio para para jugar ni para compartir" - Puppeteer "I know [now] many neighbours that I used to see before, but I didn't [really] know. In other words, we have created neighbourhood cohesion" - Puppeteer

"Yo conoció a muchos vecinos que antes los veía, pero no los conocía. O sea, hemos hecho cohesión vicinal" — Puppeteer

The puppeteer did not just get to know these people but formed close friendships with them.

"Fuertes, fuertes fuertes. [...] hemos hecho un grupo que nos reunimos aquí justamente para tomarnos un refresco, una cerveza o una buena noche a cenar" - Puppeteer

"Strong ones, strong ones, strong ones [...]. we have made a group that meets here just to have a drink, a beer or a good night's dinner"

So, I asked if this relates back to an increase in sense of community, which was immediately and heavily answered with a yes.

"Sí, mucho, mucho, mucho, mucho, mucho. Porque claro, hay espacios infantiles donde los niños vienen, los padres se familiarizan, entonces [...] que haya más cohesión vecinal. Los espectáculos que hago yo ayudan, pero también es la superilla que sin la Superilla no hubiera existido" - Puppeteer

"Yes, very, very, very, very, very much. Because of course, there are children's spaces where children come, parents get to know each other, so [...] there is more neighbourhood cohesion. The shows that I do help, but it's also the Superilla which without the Superilla wouldn't have existed"

The project also draws people from outside the superblock into the redesigned space, connecting residents from different neighbourhoods.

"Están viniendo gente de fuera. [...] Ya hay gente de allá, de allá, gente que viene de otros sitios" - Puppeteer

"People are coming from outside. [...] already people come from there, from there, people are coming from other places".

I was also interested if connections between residents and people who work in the *superilla* were formed, but that seem to seldom be the case due to the time difference of being in the superblock.

"Vivan en diferentes tiempos y modos, la gente que viene a trabajar se relaciona exclusivamente con con la gente de trabajar y los vecinos con los vecinos" — Puppeteer

"They live in different times and modes, people who come to work relate exclusively to people who work and neighbours to neighbours".

When asked if more spontaneous encounters between people that don't know each other are happening, the puppeteer answered that it happens at his shows. That people pass by, wonder what it is, ask about it and sometimes stay to wach.

"Si hay. Un ejemplo, lo de los espectáculos, que hay gente que pasa. Entonces no saben bien qué es. Si hay que pagar, no hay que pagar. Es privado, no es privado. [...] Entonces se queda y luego pregunta y esto se le explico. [...] pues entonces como hay como más interacción" — Puppeteer

"Yes, there are. For example, there are people who pass by the shows. So, they don't know what it is. If they have to pay, if they don't have to pay. Is it private, is it not private. [...] So they stay and then they ask and I explain it to them, [...] so there is more interaction".

Families

Families have seen major benefits due to the implementation of the *superilla*. Because the playgrounds are so close to their respective buildings. The study by Oscilowicz et al. (2020, p.14) found that families using the playgrounds in the superblock trusted each other. This is reflected in the fact that 64% of residents asked in the study stated that they believe their wallet would be returned to them if lost at the playgrounds (Oscilowicz et al. 2020, p.10). The study quotes women on how she perceives the superilla: "I think my kids have a more relaxed life now. There's no noise from cars, no pollution, it's a place that feels like an extension of your home. We don't have a terrace or a garden at home. This is our outdoor space. They feel like they have more space to be with their friends. We invite our friends to the Superilla. The kids are more social, they play with stranger neighbor kids and they meet lots of other kids because they have this space" (Oscilowicz et al. 2020, p.14).

FEELING OF A SHARED PROJECT

"I wouldn't have met the neighbours if there hadn't been the superilla and I don't know if it was because we had to fight or because or if I would have met them in another way, because of course, I am in this and I work all day, but I do see that the people who have children who come here know their neighbours in the top, in the bottom" - Member N.2

"[...] yo no hubiera conocido a los vecinos si no hubiera habido la superilla y ya no sé si porque tuvimos que luchar o porque o si los hubiera conocido de otra forma, porque claro, yo estoy en esto y todo el día trabajando, pero sí que veo que la gente que tiene niños se viene aquí pues conoce al vecino de arriba, de abajo" — Member N.2

The rushed implementation of the superblock left a bitter taste in the mouth of its residents. Due to being blindsided and not properly informed and invited to join the project the feeling of shared project did not arise. It was again perceived as a top-down initiative forced upon them by the municipal council. Those who partook in the design process after the initial changes though the tactical wrbanism measures taken by the students may harbour this sentiment of owning this project, but since no single person I interviewed was one of them it is hard to say if that is true.

But over time the feeling of 'this is my superilla' arose as evidenced by the Col lectiu of people that rallied together to 'save' the pilot project after it came under attack by the media and car depended businesses.

"I think that the defence of the super island also kind of brought us together" - Member N.1

"Yo creo que la defensa de la súperiIla también es como que nos unió" – Member N.1

"That at the beginning also the activities of the collective were focused on inhabiting the superilla, you know? Yes, of course, to say and demonstrate its meaning, you know? So, well, many things were done in the streets, that is to say, we are occupying and saving the superilla. Of course, now we are in a more relaxed period" - Member N.1

"Que al principio también la actividad del colectivo se centró en habitar la superilla, no? Sí, claro, para de decir y demostrar el sentido, no? Entonces bueno, eso se hacían muchas cosas en la calle así, pero de decir bueno, estamos ocupando y evitando la superilla. Claro, ya, ahora ya estamos en un periodo más relajado" — Member N.1

IDENTITY

"Well, I've already told you that I'm from the superilla. [When someone asks] Where do you live? In the superilla de Poblenou" said Member N.2 smiling and laughing happily" - Member N.2

"Bueno, yo ya te digo que soy de la superilla. Donde vives? En la superilla de Poblenou. haha" – Member N.2

"Yes, yes, yes, yes, there is a neighborhood identity" - Member N.2

"Sí, sí, sí, sí, hay una identidad de barrí" – Member N.1

When looking at the question of identification the data of my questionnaire showed that almost 80% agree (33,3%) or totally agree (45,8%) with the statement, that they could identify themselves more with the space after the implementation or with a space that is designed like the superilla in comparison to the surrounding area (the Rambla of Poblenou excluded). When asked why, the answers were often in line with the answers given to the question of why they feel more safe or they were exactly the same. The reasons included the general design of the space (more space for pedestrians/children, more greenery, more comfortable), the increase in people and life in the public space and the reduction in traffic. Some gave more specific answers like because of the picnic tables, the area feels younger, it is a place in which birthdays can be celebrated or that it now feels less like a big city.

In turn 20,8% of people asked cannot identify themselves more with the area due to the implementation of the *superilla*. Of the 96 persons, 9 do not agree and 11 totally do not agree with the statement. What is interesting to me is that there is a clear difference in age, whether the people could identify themselves more. Of those 9 not agreeing four were of age 10-19, and two between 50 and 69. Of those totally disagreeing 7 people were between the age of 40-69.

When looking at the why identification was less after the implementation, it comes down to two reasons. The traffic reorganization and the mayor changes that happened throughout the district. People stated that they used to come to work by car, that the accessibility of the area is difficult or that one has to go all around the superblock to park a car. The other issue is that of the transformations that changed the 'Catalan Manchester' into the Catalan Silicon Valley (22@ Project) and before that, the project that created the 'Barcelona Model', that put the city on the map of urban planning, the Summer Olympics of 1992. I had the feeling that people connected the project of the superilla to these other urban transformations because when asked why, they responded talking about the whole quarter: Poblenou has lost its industrial atmosphere; it creates the problem of gentrification; the space has lost its character or directly stating that it is due to the 22@ project.

Richard Sennett (1992) voiced criticism against a trend in the modern city. He holds the opinion, that modern vibrant urban spaces in modern, or modernised cities, remove social contact. Modern spaces are consummation oriented, Sennett goes as far as calling them carefully orchestrated, like a shopping mall, or they are designed for the experience of tourism (Mouratidis and Poortinga

2020, p.3 from Sennett 1992). While talking to the residents of the superblock in Poblenou I got the feeling, when they argued against the superilles initiative, that their resentment was rooted in something different. A lot of the arguments that were raised were along the lines of: I don't recognize the neighbourhood I grew up anymore; It is not what I have been used to and friends are being pushed out of their flats and apartments because of rising rent prices.

Although the superblock defiantly changed the face of the public space and contributes to gentrification, I'm not certain that it could be the (only) cause of such strong feelings of identity loss. The whole district had been undergoing urban transformation processes under the 'Barcelona Model' (which is known to have caused displacement of residents as well as residential services through higher costs of living that being a global-tourist city brings with it (Russo 2017, p.11)). The massive urban transformation project, as part of the Olympic games, changed an enormous part of the district along the Mediterranean Sea. It created better access to the sea, a promenade along the coast and attractive (possibly the most attractive in the whole city) beaches. For me it was hard to imagine, what that space must have looked like only 30, 40 years ago. One of the signs, that the host of my apartment pointed out to me, were the trees of the Rambla de Poblenou, the pedestrianised alameda (boulevard). Standing proudly 20 to 30 meters tall the old trees tower over the newly planted trees that prolong the treeline into and over the transformed space. The area became more and more attractive, luring in residents from all over Barcelona as well as tourists fleeing the crowded streets of the city centre and enjoying the relatively empty beaches.

The @22 Project, as explained above, changed the working-class district even further.

"[...] people who lived, who have lived [here] for many years, older people who have their own community [and] know each other. What the superilla changed, what it has done is to [bring] new comers" - Pupeteer

"[...] la gente que vivía, que vive hace muchos años, la gente mayor que tiene su propia comunidad se conocen. Cambió la superilla. Lo que ha hecho es a los nuevos venidos" — Puppeteer

"[...] all the young people and especially the people with children, yes, they have done it [create cohesion], the older people, they have not done so much cohesion because they have their own little group" - Puppeteer

"[...] toda la gente joven y sobre todo a la gente con niños, sí que ha hecho la gente mayor, no ha hecho no ha hecho tanta cohesión porque tiene su grupito" — Puppeteer

"[...] because they are from the old school, they have known it all their lives, they know their meeting point and their meeting point is different from ours. [...]. So, of course, their meeting point is the same as always. [...] So there is no such thing here. There are no more bars that are older than the La Sopa as a new meeting point. Where do we meet? In la Sopa! That is to say, the people from the superilla, the reference point is that bar [...]. But [...], [la sopa] is right next to a park. Well, on the other hand, the older people's point of reference is another bar" - Puppeteer

"[...] porque son de la vieja escuela plano a lo conocen de toda la vida, conocen su punto de encuentro también su punto de encuentro es otro distinto al nuestro. [...]. Entonces, claro, su punto de encuentro son lo de siempre. [...] Entonces aquí no existe. No hay bares más, más antiguos al sopa desde un punto de nuevo encuentro. Donde quedamos? En la sopa! O sea, la gente de la superilla, el referente es ese ese bar [...]. Pero [...], justamente [la sopa] está al lado de un parque. o sea, en cambio la gente ya mayor pues de referente es otro bar" – Puppeteer That there is resentment against the socio-economic and socio-demographic changes brought to the neighbourhood due to the 22@ and the *superilla* was put on display during my stay at the Café Sopa. The Sopa is a hip new café/restaurant with higher prices than other establishments in the area. While the café was closed during the summer, a person made their feelings towards it and the superilla 'heard' by spraying on it "How do you like the fucking hipster café" and on the adjacent building "Fuck the superilla".



Figure 54 and 55: Café Sopa spray painted with the Words: "Fuck the Superilla" and "How do you like the fucking hipster Café"

The the identity of different groups been effected differently:

When looking just at the data of people living in the superilla, agreement of increased identification goes down to 71,7% (totally agree = 50%; agree = 21,7%; disagree 15,2%; totally disagree 13%).

Opinions on the effect of the *superilla* in people who have known the area before the implementation also differ only slightly (totally agree = 45%; agree = 26,7%; disagree 13,3%; totally disagree 15%).

Also, women (totally agree = 41,5%; agree = 36,9%; disagree 10,8%; totally disagree 10,8%) and men (totally agree = 54,8%; agree = 25,8%; disagree 6,5%; totally disagree 12,9%). Do not differ much.

Kearns and Forrest raise the point that the attachment to a place, although good, can have negative effects as well. People might think in a closed system, a closed neighbourhood, a closed com-

munity. They may share other values then residents from other neighbourhoods (Kearns & Forrest 2000, p.1001).

"It's like, I don't know, that's another of the things that I think is super positive, you know? That this whole area has achieved an identity and you stop living in Poblenou and start living in the superilla. And also, you identify with neighbours from the superilla with whom you share certain habits, tastes and values" - Member N.1

> "Es como que no sé, esa es otra de las cosas para mi súper positivas, no? Que está toda esta zona ha logrado una identidad y tú ya dejas de vivir en el Poblenou para vivir en la superilla y también, o sea, te identificas con vecinas de la superilla con las que compartes ciertos hábitos, gustos, valores" – Member N.1

CULTURAL EVENTS

The Col lectiu has since its formation held different cultural events and activities in the public space. Those were intended to draw residents into the public space of the *superilla*. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic they had to halt all events but they were eager to start organising as soon as the pandemic is over. They were also proud that the next Correfoc (a form of street entertainment involving fire and people dressed as devils) would be held in the superblock.

> "Now for the festival, that I was just talking to Hará about, the Correfoc is going to be held here in [...] Almogávares and Ciudad de Granada in the superilla, so it's like they're extending it, no. Also, well, it's decentralising, what was always the key axis of Pobelnou, the Rambla, to these sides. I mean, I think it's great, isn't it? It's a wink towards us" - Member N.1

"Ahora para la fiesta que recién hablaba con Hará, el Correfoc se va a hacer aquí en Almogávares. Y sí, hay que ser estático en Almogávares y Ciudad de Granada en la superilla entonces como que se extiendan, no. también el, bueno, de que se que se descentraliza, lo que fue siempre el eje neurálgico así del Pobelnou era el la rambla para estos lados. O sea, a mí me parece como súper bien, no? Que es un guiño hacia nosotros" — Member N.1

COMMON VALUES

It is very difficult to state if common values have already emerged within the residents of the superilla. An indication of common values concerning the built environment could be drawn from the how much people could identify with the new space. I for my part believe that values are reflected in the way people want to public space infront of their homes to be. In that case the majority of people asked in the interviews would share common values.

The Col lectiu of course shares common values that are reflected in the superblock project. This is the reason, why it formed in the first place. To save the new public space that better fitted their way of life. I want to leave just some quotes expressing values of the Members of the Col lectiu as well as

> "And that is also one of the values. That is to say that we rescue, not only the superilla as a physical space but as a social space, because we always talk about relationships, some of the collective in depth and that we find ourselves at this point, in this setting for this reason" - Member N.1

"Y ese es uno de los valores también. Osea que rescatamos que no solamente, o sea, se formó o se hizo la superilla con el espacio fisico sino como un espacio social, porque se habla siempre de relaciones, algunos del colectivo en profundidad y que nos encontramos en este en este punto, en este marco por este motive" — Member N.1

"There were positive connotations in terms of pollution reduction, in terms of recovering space from cars, etc., and we were interested in that and we wanted that for our neighbourhood and for Barcelona and for other cities" - Member N.3

"[...] habían connotaciones positivas de reducción de contaminación, en recuperación de espacio de los coches, etc y eso y eso nos interesaba y eso lo queríamos para nuestro barrio y para Barcelona y para otras ciudades" –

Member N.3

Referring to car centric cities Member N.2 began the sentence that was finished by Member N.1:

"But well, I think that these cities have, well, they are over because people are demanding other, other politics of..." "...Quality of life as well. We believe that awareness is increasing and that they are already looking for other types of city models".

"Pero bueno, yo creo que esas ciudades tienen bueno, se acabaron porque es que no, la gente exige otras, otras políticas de..." – Member N.2 "...Calidad de vida tambien, creemos que, que la conciencia va aumentando y que ya se busca otro tipo de modelos de ciudad" – Member N.1

"We are promoting and we agree, not with a healthier life. It is a change of habits. Well, why not? I mean, install these elements to be able to develop that" - Member N.1

"Estamos promoviendo y estamos de acuerdo, no con una vida más sana, más saludable. Es un cambio de hábitos. Bueno, por qué no? O sea, facilitar de estos elementos para poder desarrollar eso" — Member N.1

When asked if the two adolescents like the *superilla* they answered yes, but it depends on what they are looking for, because the space is more for spending time with friends talking than making party:

"In the superilla we have a good time, but it's for being with friends, talking" and "[...] if we have free time we prefer to go to the disco or a bar with music instead of being here, because at the end it is illegal here and you cannot make a lot of noise here". Adolescent N.1

"Y porque en la superilla y ya nos lo pasamos bien, pero es para estar con los amigos, hablando" – Adolescent N.1 and "[...] si tenemos un turno abierto preferimos ir a una discoteca o a un bar musical a tal estar aquí, que al final es ilegal y no se puede hacer mucho ruido".

Because the lived close by but not in the superilla I asked them if they would prefer that their neighbourhood stays like it is now or be changed into a place like this, they replied with yes because it is a space to visit, a place: "Yo creo que así mejor" - Adolecentes N.1 and "Sí, porque al final es un espacio más donde ir [...] - Adolecentes N.2. "I think its better this way" and "Yes, at the end this is more a space to go to".

I also asked them if they could change something in the *superilla* what that would be. They had nothing to add because the most important infrastructure was already in place, the tables in a calm consumption free area: "[...] así que es tranquila, es amplia y que hay una mesa donde me puedo sentar sin tener que consumir en un bar o sin tener que tener prisa por marcharme o algo. [...] Ya me va bien y como está configurada así ya me gusta. Ya no solo por eso, por venir a hablar como estábamos ahora nosotras lo que sea. Así que yo por mí no añadiría nada a la superilla" - Adolecentes N.2. "[...] so it's quiet, it's spacious and there's a table where I can sit without having to eat at a bar or without having to be in a hurry to leave or something. It's

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already working well for me and I like the way it's set up. And not just for that, to come and talk as we were now. So, for me I wouldn't add anything to the superilla". The other adolescents agreed with that statement. So maybe the superilla needs no adaption to lower the conflict of adolescents making a 'botellon' and residents. It would be interesting to see if these conflicts still arise after the Covid-19 restrictions are lifted and bars and clubs are open again. Or alternatively the city could implement zones in parks or on sections on the beach where they are far enough away from residential buildings and 'botellones' are allowed.

At the end, they said something that's sums up quite good whether a person is in favour for the new municipalist superilla and the ideals behind it. They said it comes down to the mentality of a person, his or her lifestyle and their respect to the natural environment:

> "And also, how conscious you are, that you are aware that you don't have to use the car so often and use the bike more. [If] You're very, very set on the fact that you have to use the car, you don't look for alternatives. It also depends on your mentality in respect to the natural environment" - Adolescent N.1

"Y también de lo concienciado que este es con el uso del coche que seas consciente de que no tienes que usar tanto y usas más la bici o estás muy muy metido en que tienes que usar el coche, no buscas alternativas. Depende también de tu mentalidad respecto al medio ambiente." – Adolescent N.1

"Yes, apart from the fact that, well, I don't know, it's also like it's been proven, isn't it, all the contribution of the community to the individual in emotional and psychological terms. It's not the same to be alone as it is to be able to go out and meet others. Apart from the fact that, of course, relationships were formed here in which you don't need to take a metro, transport or something to meet your friend and say let's go for a beer or I feel like talking or something. In other words, yes you meet that friend in the superilla." - Member N.1

"Sí, a parte de que bueno, no sé, que también es como que está comprobado, no? todo el aporte de la comunidad en el individuo a efectos emocionales y psicológicos, entonces eso te refuerza mucho. No es lo mismo estar solo tan sola que bueno que poder salir y encontrarte. Aparte de que claro, aquí se formaron relaciones en que ya no necesitas o sea, tomarte un metro, un transporte o algo para quedar con tu amiga y decir vamos a tomar una cerveza o vamos o que tengo ganas de hablar o algo. O sea, si ese amigo lo encuentras en la superiIla" – Member N.1

CONCLUSIO

In my conclusion, I want to go back to my initial question: How does the new municipalist movement *BComú* interpret neighbourhood and social cohesion and how does it translate into built and lived form?

Interpretation of neighbourhood and social cohesion

Although never really defined by *BComú* themselves, the *new municipalist* movement takes a holistic stance on *neighbourhood* and *social cohesion* and it tries to increase it on two levels: on the political and on the built environment. It seeks to bring people together via these two spheres.

On the political level *neighbourhood* and *social cohesion* should be increased by opening up public instituions, creating inclusive policies built on the feminising politics, being physically close to the residents, building on the principles of participation in the real world and in the digital realm and acting as deligates and not representatives.

On the built environment level *neighbourhood* and *social cohesion* should be increased by increasing the quality of life, the quality of the public space. Measures for an increase include decreasing the use of motorised vehicles (less pollution, less noise), increasing walkability, the public transport system and bycicle network, renaturalising the urban environment and installing attractors for all socio-demographic groups. A mix in socio-demographic groups should additionally be furthered by the mix in land-use and the errection of public- and affordable housing. This measures combined create a cell within the city, the *superilla*. Patricipation also plays a central role at this level and is seen to be the first step in increasing neighbourhood cohesion. These cells should be implemented all over the city of Barcelona, be connected and interwoven and thereby create a cohesive urban fabric that is open and inclusive to all.

How does this translate into built form?

After only five years in office it is hard to asses the influence it had on opening up political instututions. The loss of votes between 2015 and 2019 may suggest that on a political level *social cohesion* has not been increased. When looking at 'poltics of proximity' my research suggests that *BComú* is perceived as doing a slithly better job, but that there is still a lot of room for improvement left. In the case of the *superilla* of Poblenou, the physical proximity of *BComú's* members, even living in the superblock, has not been either noticed nore translated into connections between them and the residents.

The participation process yielded not the intended benefits due to being rushed and not sufficiently well communicated. But nonetheless it sparked real interest followed by active engagement in some, suggesting that if a participation process is held the way *BComú* actually intends the benefits could be far greater.

The translation into the built environment was mostly done successfully. All intended components have been put in place. There is a diverse mix of land-uses and the infrastructure in the public space is catering to different socio-economic groups. Public housing has been built within the superblock of Poblenou as well as in close proximity. Greenery has been introduced all over the space of the SB9 and nature been reintroduced in form of a garden. Spaces with different levels of privacy and anonymity have been established within the public space. Motorised traffic has

been reduced, through traffic almost eliminated and walkability and spaces for leisure increased. The three by three space has been opened up and made more porous and some intersection at the edges already suggest how in the future the *superilles* might be connected. This brings me to how *BComú's* interpretation of *neighbourhood* and *social cohesion* translated into lived form.

How does this translate into lived form?

Was neighbourhood and social cohesion increased? My research and a few studies conducted in the SB9 suggest that its has. But the question of increasing *neighbourhood* and *social cohesion* needs to be followed up by the question: for whom? For the people just working in the superblock? Just for the residents of the superblock? But also, even the residents can not be considered a homogenious group.

In the case of the SB9 generally neighbourhood and social cohesion has increased to varying degrees for different groups. Especcially the *Col lectiu Superilla Poblenou* and families have profited from the superblock by building social capital, social networks, friendships. Adolecents seem to be the group that has been underrepresented in the design of the *superilla* and that is reflected in how they use the space. People who work but don't live in the superblock have not been positively effected in the same degree as residents of the *superilla*. While in most cases the people working in the superilla and people living in it have been effected more or less the same, like sense of conviviality or sense of community, their social capital has not increased. People who were against the *superilla* from the beginning, seem not to have changed their mind and there is little interaction between those in favour and against the superblock. What generally has to be taken away by this thesis, is that the topic of neighbourhood and social cohesion is very complex and influenced by a number of factors. BComú has done an overall good job in increasing the cohesinvess of different socio-econmic groups within the superblock. With more time, better planning and staying more true to its princples, the approach *Barcelona en Comú* is taking has still more potential to increase the cohesivenss of Barcelona's residents even further.

Looking towards the future

The *superblock* is a highly political topic, history has shown that. Future elections will provide answers if *BComú's* ideas find more acceptance within the public or not. Also, only time will tell if the cell of the *superilla* in Poblenou will become part of a multicellular organism and the positive effects yielded will be available for all of Barcelona's residents, thereby increasing *social cohesion* on a municipal level.

FUTURE TOPICS THAT ARE OF INTEREST IN CONNECTION OF NEW MUNICIPALISM AND NEIGHBOURHOOD AND SOCIAL COHESION

As already stated, there is a plentitude of factors affecting the cohesiveness of a society. Not all can be included in a thesis, so further studies would help to better understand how the *new municipalist superilles* initative effects Barcelona's residents.

Gentrification is one of the topics that $BCom\hat{u}$ aims to tackle with the *superilles* initiative. But sofar the implementation of the SB9 has further increased the gentrification in Poblenou already going on.

Since *new municipalism* has a strong anti-capitalist stance and working towards alternative forms of economy, it would be of great interest to analyse economic policies introduced at the municipal level. In addition, it would be interesting to analyse the impact and role of shops, restaurants and

other service providers within a neighbourhood for the formation of cohesion.

The role of identiy is very important, especially in a fast changing space like Poblenou. Further studies into its role and influence of the perception of urban transformation adaptions and neighbourhood and social cohesion could yield interesting results.

Reflection on the Methodology

The government in Barcelona lead by BComú has itself not put forth documents soley concerning neighbourhood and social cohesion. By analysing avaible sources from the government, their position on the topic as well as its approach of increasing the cohesion of Barcelona's residents was put together. A lack of documents made it more difficult to get a clear picture of BComú's approach. In addition, there are only very few studies conducted by the government on the improvemts of neighbourhood and social cohesion within the pilot superilla in Poblenou. In my view, the connection between the superblock SB9 and the topic of cohesion is in general understudied.

That is why the analisis of my case study relied heavily on the qualitative and quatitive interviews conducted in Barcelona. Due to my job, I had a very limited time frame and it was only possible for me to visit the Catalan capital in August. In this month catalan peole have holidays. This had its positive as well as negative sides. People that meet in the public space were very open and took time out of their schedule to answer my questions and chat. By getting a glimpse of how busy the superilla can get in September when the holidays end, in retrospect I am not sure they would have had the state of mind and time for me. But due to the holidays and many residents being out of town, I only received an answer from the Col lectiu Superilla Poblenou for my interview requests.

With the limitations of the methodology in mind, I think it is very important that in the future the topic of how the new municipalist superilles initative influences the built and lived space in connection to neighbourhood and social cohesion, is further studied. Especially looking at the participation process of the implementation of other superblocks, since the superilla in Poblenou does not reflect the potential a proper, well conducted participation process holds. If done right future superblocks may become true collective and shared projects.

I want to end with a quote by Richard Sennett that beautifully ties the different elements of Barcelona en Comú's superillies initaitve together:

"In sum, an open ville is marked by five forms which allow the cité to become complex. Public space promotes synchronous activities. It privileges the border over the boundary, aiming to make the relations between parts of the city porous. It marks the city in modest ways, using simple materials and placing markers arbitrarily in order to highlight nondescript places. It makes use of type-forms in its building to create an urban version of theme and variations in music. Finally, trough seed-planning the themes themselves – where to place schools, housing, shops or parks – are allowed to develop independently throughout the city, yielding a complex image of the urban whole. An open ville will avoid committing the sins of repetition and static form; it will create the material conditions in which people thicken and deepen their experience of collective life" (Sennett 2018, p.240ff)

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APPENDIX

BARCELONA REFUGEE CITY

Barcelona is one of the refugee cities in Europe and has a long history of taking people, in desperate need of help, in. The current municipal government of Barcelona (Barcelona en Comú) recognizes the role it plays and can play in the future. It knows that it is not the epicentre of the many crises all over the planet, but still has a long history of comprehending itself as a sanctuary that is open and welcoming. The city showed solidarity in the Yugoslavian war in the 1990 (under the leadership of the socialist party) and did so again in the Syrian war of 2017 (under the new municipalist government) (AdB: Barcelona Ciutat Refugi – Plan). Since 1999 the city council is providing support through the 'Care Service for Immigrants, Emigrants and Refugees' (SAIER). This service provides subsidies to NGO's working in Barcelona on this topic. Additionally, since 2009, there exists the 'Barcelona International Peace Resource Centre' (CRIPB). Its main focus is the promotion of peace-culture using tools, that the new municipalist movement in the Catalan capital uses: "[...] dialogue, awareness raising, training in crises management and conflict resolution" (AdB: Barcelona Ciutat Refugi – Plan).

This idea of... well municipalism, manifests itself also in the subject matter of immigration and refugees. The municipal council of Barcelona considered it necessary to act because of a lack of action on behave of the Spanish state. So, in September of 2015 (only 4 months after the election of Barcelona en Comú) the 'Barcelona, Refuge City' plan was launched (AdB: Barcelona Ciutat Refugi – Plan) on how to handle new incoming refugees as well as on how to integrate those, who cannot go back to their home countries, long term. (Refuge Cities became a network for bringing cities that consider themselves as refugee-friendly, together (Thompson 2020, p.5)). The four main bodies of the plan are:

- 1. Reception strategy: "defines the reception model and strategy and the implementation stages [...]" (AdB: Barcelona Ciutat Refugi – Plan) and takes refugees rights and needs as well as those of the city's population into account;
- Care for refugees already in Barcelona: this includes the SAIER and the municipal program, 'Nausica', providing care and help;
- Citizen participation and information: includes transparent information tools like websites and newsletters subsidised by the city;
- 4. Action Abroad: this includes the coordination and mutual support of European cities as well as subsidies for NGO's working at the source of the problem (AdB: Barcelona Ciutat Refugi – Plan).

Ada Colau, the mayor of Barcelona, is an active part of Barcelona, Ciutat Refugi and posted this on the 28th of August via on Facebook:



currently waged by Russia in Ukraine while I am writing this thesis (march of 2022), people are again fleeing their country and look for safety in others. The city government assists refugees by providing information (in Ukrainian and English) about the Spanish framework that grants temporary protection and face-to-face legal advice for seeking asylum and refuge (AdB: Barcelona Ciutat Refugi - Barcelona with Ukraine - Landingpage). They provide information and access to the 'Centro de Ur- 0 102.166

Because of the war that is Antes de ayer 50 personas murieron asfixiadas en la bodega de un barco. Ayer más de 70 muertos en el interior de un camión. Hoy nos despertamos con dos naufragios: puede que más de cien muertos. Tenemos un mar que se llena de muertos. Unas fronteras que se llenan de alambres, pinchos, cuchillas... y de muertos.

Hombres, mujeres, niños y niñas, muertos.

Y una parte de Europa llora, grita, quiere que se salven, que no mueran, pero... pero que no vengan, que se vayan, que desaparezcan, que no existan y que no tengamos que verlos en la tele, y menos en nuestras calles, con sus mantas, en el metro, o en las escaleras de nuestras casas.

Algunos de forma irresponsable promueven el miedo a "los otros", "los ilegales", "los que vienen a vender sin licencia"," a gastar nuestra sanidad", "a quedarse nuestras ayudas", "a ocupar nuestras plazas de colegio", "a pedir", "a mendigar" "a delinquir"...

Pero el miedo es sólo eso: miedo. Nuestro miedo a vivir un poco peor contra su miedo a no sobrevivir. Nuestro miedo a tener que compartir una pequeña parte del bienestar contra su miedo al hambre y a la muerte, tan profundo que les ha dado el valor de arriesgarlo todo, para venir sin otro equipaje que el propio miedo.

Miedo contra miedo. Y el suyo es más fuerte. Así que Europa, europeos: abramos los ojos. No va a haber suficientes muros ni alambres que paren esto. Ni gases lacrimógenos ni pelotas de goma. O abordamos un drama humano desde la capacidad de amar que nos hace humanos, o acabaremos todos deshumanizados. Y habrá más muertos, muchos más. Ésta no es una batalla para protegernos de "los otros". Ahora mismo esto es una guerra contra la vida.

Que los gobiernos dejen de amenazar con el "Efecto llamada". Lo que necesita Europa, urgentemente, es una "Llamada al afecto", una llamada a la empatía. Podrían ser nuestros hijos, hermanas o madres. Podríamos ser nosotros, como también fueron exiliados muchos de nuestros abuelos.

Aunque se trata de un tema de competencia estatal y europea, desde Barcelona haremos todo lo que podamos para participar de una red de ciudades-refugio. Queremos ciudades comprometidas con los derechos humanos y con la vida, ciudades de las que sentirnos orgullosos.

9.415 Kommentare 65.496 Mal geteilt

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Figure 56: Ada Colau's Facebook post in favour of compassion and against division.

Emergencias Sociales de Barcelona' (CUESB) with food, clothing, medicine and a place to sleep (AdB: Barcelona Ciutat Refugi – Barcelona with Ukraine - Landingpage). The CUESB is an institution of the government and made of social workers, psychologists, and logistic experts that provide 24h service 365 days a year for citizens (AdB: Servicos Sociales - Urgencias y emergencias sociales). The website also offers the option for people to donate, to provide shelter and volunteer (AdB: Barcelona Ciutat Refugi – Barcelona with Ukraine - Landingpage). On the 25.3.2022 an information session was held, informing Barcelona residents what the city is currently doing to help and what they themselves could do (AdB: Information session: "Barcelona Refuge City. What can you do?").

CIVIC SPACE

In 2015 many residents, businesses, schools, social organisations etc. showed solidarity and asked Barcelona, Ciutat Refugi how they could help, but there was only so much that the city and its residents could do because the power to dictate asylum policy is in the hands of the European Union and its member states. The cities still receive the asylum seekers tough, so Barcelona, Ciutat Refugi knowing that the civic society of Barcelona wanted to help, set up the civic space. It was created "[...] in collaboration with various organisations and associations to channel this citizen solidarity and set up, in a coordinated fashion, avenues for citizen participation to go alongside actions. Since 2017, [...] a new line of subsidies has been opened to promote awareness, participation, and impact actions on the topic of international protection" (AdB: Barcelona Ciutat Refugi – Civic Space). Its goal is to support the integration of refuges via good neighbourliness, acts of kindness and the building of social networks.

"Newcomers have always arrived in cities, and they will continue to arrive. Welcoming is not so much a question of benevolence, but of creating the conditions for conviviality" (Hansen et al. 2019, p.137).

I know that this seems to have very little to do with the superilla or neighbourhood cohesion, but it is important to the overall stands new municipalism is taking. It is important to showcase the ideals and

the culture behind this movement. I will go into detail later on (chapter: Social Cohesion) about what social cohesion is and that it can mean and represent different things, depending on which spatial scale the focus is laid. The municipal council is taking that fact into account and therefore is working with a broad set of tools and measures to increase social cohesion on all scales. From the neighbourhood to, as their refugee strategy displays, the planetary scale.

""When is one at home? [...] When one is welcomed" (Veltz 2019, p.20 from Cassin 2019, p.132).

DIFFERENT FORMS OF NEW MUNICIPALISM AND THE FEARLESS CITIES

The question of scaling upwards is a big one, since particular localism is a huge barrier to overcome for social movements (Russell 2019, p.994) as evidenced by previous attempts of connecting social movements (e.g. World Social Forum) (Russell 2019, p.993f). But it is not just the question of scaling vertically. New municipalism must scale horizontally if it wants to bring the global change necessary for achieving its big goals (e.g. prevent the worst of the climate crisis).

Leopold and McDonald (2012, p.1841) write that this is exactly Lenins critique of municipalism more than a hundred years ago. Its horizontal scalability, its adopting by other municipalities. For example, in Britain during municipal socialism the city of Birmingham invested in a new network of water systems owned and controlled by the municipality. The inhabitants of Birmingham were reaping the benefits of this public investment for 30 years before the same investment, forced by the same health concerns, was made in the city of London (Leopold & McDonald 2012, p.1841). This is also a concern for Russell today with new municipalism. Russell (2019, p.992) points out, that the scalability of these municipal movements remains an open question for scholars as well as the movements themselves since the movement is not one homogeneous group. Given that their movements rose in different settings, from distinct struggles and in countries with very different structures, there are three features that connect and unite them:

- 1. They see the urban or municipal level as the strategic entry point to accomplish their respective goals;
- They spawned out of the need to counter neoliberal austerity urbanism;
- They all have been "[...] inspired by Debbie Bookchin's (2014) anarcho-eco-socialist vision for 'libertarian municipalism''' (Thompson 2020, p.2 form Carson 2017).

Another uniting factor is the willingness to dream and imagine another, (in their eyes) better future. Being born and raised one easily forgets, "[...] that the hegemonic-nation-state-regulated-capitalist-world-market is an historically recent development amenable to change" (Thompson 2020, p.3). New municipalists are therefore thinking outside the box or in this case outside the state.

Although the level and the general goals are quite similar, the way to reach it differs within the distinct new municipal movements. Some take a pragmatic, others a more entrepreneurial approach. Some take reactive while others more proactive measures. Some take a lot of money into their hands planning expensive programs while others constrain their budget (Thompson 2020, p.2). There are three variations of *new municipalism*: Platform, Autonomist and Managed municipalism.

The autonomist version of municipalism tries to achieve self-determination in a stateless polis, in which assemblies, communes and confederated cooperatives work together (Thompson 2020, p.11). This would be more the anti-state form of *new municipalism* Purcell refers to, when talking about the local trap. Managed municipalism on the other hand focuses on the democratisation of the local state and urban economics under and via technocratic principles (Thompson 2020, p.11).

BComú as already explaind belongs to the category of Platfom Municipalism.

The different offshoots of the movemnt are aware of the issue 'particular localism' and work to not fall into the horizontal local trap. This is why the aforementioned Fearless Cities Summit was organised.

This summit was portrayed as the 'coming out party' of *new municipalism* and almost 700 people attended. These 700 people were members of 100 different citizens platforms located in 180 cities situated in 40 countries (Thompson 2020, p.1f) as well as academics (Russell 2019, p.993). The goal of this conference was to gather knowledge on how to best "[...] democratically transform cities to resist growing inequalities, democratic deficits and social injustices" (Thompson 2020, p.1f from Barcelona en Comú et al., 2019), exchange their information and share it. The organisers were not blind to the fact, that every city, every district, every quarter and neighbourhood is different and one cannot just copy paste the measures taken in Barcelona onto other cities, but they still believed that to varying degrees comparisons can be made and learned from every project (Russell 2019, p.993). The term nuevo municipalismo (new municipalism) had been used informally at previous meetings of movements in Spain (Russell 2019, p.993) and started to gain traction at the event.

Since then, many more *new municipalism* gatherings were held. The last Fearless Cities Summit has taken place between the 5 and 10 of July in 2021 and was openly accessible to join (Fearless Cities – Fearless Cities Summit 2021 registration).

In the book 'Fearless Cities – A Guide to the Global Municipalist Movement', Gerardo Pisarello, a member of the International Committee of *BComú*, wrote the introduction. He manages to express the who stands behind this global movement, its diversity and its connections: "It's a movement known by many names, from Fearless (or Rebel) Cities, to Cities of Change, Indy Towns, neomunicipalismo, democratic confederalism, communalism and our own preferred term, municipalism. This varied nomenclature is, in itself, a reflection of who we are: decentralized, diverse and radically pragmatic' (Pisarello 2019, p.7).

Instagram as a tool for community building

The social media platform Instagram, with its function to look for events and social gatherings via photos, can be a tool to improve the users experience of the local community, their relationships with the community and its place. According to Gatti and Procentese (2021, p.6) this is achieved via the increased awareness of spots for social gathering that provide local socialisation opportunities. Gatti and Procentese (2021, p.6) suggest that this function within social media platforms, shifts the focus of its users from a global view back to a local one. This Instagram practice can increase users positive attitude to the places in their neighbourhood, "[...] since such attitude is built upon individual and shared meanings and feelings about what a place is like, which functions it has, which images it conveys, and which activities it hosts" (Gatti & Procentese 2021, p.6). Of course, the photos are only a representation of community places that offer opportunities to socialise. So, for this function to increase a sense of community the places must first exist and then be photographed. But if these places are implemented and photos of them uploaded to Instagram, this function "[...] is able to

foster community members' perceptions of being part of a cohesive community which shares a daily life context, a common past, and an emotional connectedness" (Gatti & Procentese 2021, p.6).

DICIDIM. BARCELONA

The platform *Dicidim.Barcelona* provides the public with an overview of all projects and processes as well as the possibility to participate. The design of the platform is simple and easy to navigate. There are filtering options for districts and projects. For every project or process, a detailed description is offered. These include information about the territory, date and time of meetings, groups and associations involved as well as the names of the respective presidents, vice-presidents and members of each group. Information on the promoter group, on who is allowed to participate and on the process itself will be given. For people not allowed to participate, the option is provided to comment and share their ideas and opinion directly on the platform (Dicidim. Barcelona, accessed: 29.10.2020 at 13:02).

The platform supports the function of personal notifications to keep being updated on a project of interest. Also everyone can start their own initiative on the dicidim.barcelona website.

The platform is managed by the municipality of Barcelona and funded by the European Regional Development Fond (EFDF) (Dicidim.Barcelona, accessed: 29.10.2020 at 13:05).

The priorities of the EFDF (2014-2020) were to strengthen economic and social cohesion within the EU member states. Investments focused on:

- "Innovation and research;
- The digital agenda;
- Support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs);
- The low-carbon economy" (European Commission European Regional Development Fund 2014-2020, accessed: 14.11.2021 at 16:38)

Goals of the *dicidim.barcelona* platform can generally be put like this:

- Overview of projects
- Provision of information
- Monitoring function
- Idea sharing function
- Dialogue function
- Participation at any time and any place