Master thesis

Car-free Intervention in Practice
A case study of the Superblock in Poblenou

By Miroslav Borisov

MSc04 URB

May 2017

Title

Car-free Intervention in Practice
A CASE STUDY OF THE SUPERBLOCK IN POBLENOU

Submission date:
18-05-2017

Project period:
01-02-2017 – 18-05-2017

Supervisor:
Claus Lassen

Number of page:

85

Number of copies:

5

This is where it all started

Table of Contents

Abstract

Car-free intervention in practice is a project that address the necessity of car-free practices which are provoked by the negative outcome of the car use within urban environments such as lack of green and open spaced, air pollution, congestion etc.

The study offers an overview of the car-free practices in Barcelona, where the focuses precisely on the Superblock in Poblenou. It further shows that the car-free practices, despite of being aimed at the public good, have the ability to generate social and spatial exclusion generated through the limited access to car mobility. Moreover, the study emphasizes on the uniqueness of the individual car-free intervention in inter-urban sense and the necessity to be treated individually.

The findings are based on theoretical-analytical approach where the power actors (from above and below) are in the core of the discussion.

Entry pages

The chapter presents the acknowledgments to the people who took has an important role in the outcome of this project and thanks to whom I become more informed and aware and of the problems of car mobility, planning, application of the car-less idea in practice. Furthermore, the chapter says a word about my personal motivation which was the fuel of this project.

In the second part of this section, an introduction of the whole work is presented so that it gives a broad perspective - 'the bigger picture' as I like to call it – what the whole thesis is about in a compact form. The aim is to introduce the reader to the thesis chapters with references to what he or she can expect in terms of discussion, theories, methods, findings, analysis, conclusions.

And lastly, this chapter presents the problem formulation and the research questions – the backbone of the thesis.

Entry pages

Acknowledgements

Motivation

I have always been interested in topics like mobility and urban planning. These interests developed much in the last two years as I have got to work with various urban challenges and issues. One of these issues happens to be the car mobility and particularly the role of the car in the city. Thus, what I would like to address in this work is the relationship between the car and the city and to emphasize on the importance of the automobility for the urban development.

This relationship is rather strong and interesting. Like any other kind of mobility, the car mobility happens everywhere regardless of location or conditions (political, economical, geographical) and in pretty much every city. Yet, the relationship between the city and the car is not exactly a healthy one but a relationship under attack, especially in the larger cities and metropolises. It is not a coincidence that the car limiting policies are born there, provoked by the continuously raising number of vehicles on the road and the following negative outcomes such as sacrificed open spaces, lack of green areas, lack of clean air and increased public health and safety issues. Therefore, it can be said that the car-less ambitions of the planning departments of many big cities arrive as a natural and logical response to the thread of the car and so the question: 'Can we live in cities with less or no cars?'.

In an earlier work, I had the chance to explore deeper the topic of car-less (also called car-free) interventions which are gaining popularity among many European cities. They are all different and tight to a specific context. However, they all share some common values like healthy and sustainable living with fewer or no cars in the city and focus on alternative modes of transport. In this work, I would also like to extend my investigation focusing on one particular example – the Superblock in Barcelona. The Superblock is a project that I managed to connect with and I find it extremely interesting for two reasons:

First - unlike the other car-free interventions which I came across with, the Superblock is 'happening' at the moment, it has physically taken place and has sparked a lot of public resistance and discussions over the outcome of the so-called 'car-free' intervention which extend beyond the (only) positive idea of car-free living;And second – I had the opportunity to visit the site, explore and identify potential problems and establish a relationship with the place which I don't have with any of the other car-less aimed cities I came across with (i.e. Oslo, Madrid, Hamburg).

Moreover, Barcelona is a great example to explore because it is a city with long and bold traditions in urban planning. It is also a city that is among the largest and densest in Europe which is a clear signal for eventual mobility challenges and respectively challenges linked to car mobility. Therefore, I believe, it certainly has some lessons to teach. Also, going abroad is a chance to replace the Danish context which had a central role in all previous projects I have been working on. As a foreign student in Denmark, I value my experience in here but it is worth saying that the problems of Denmark are not the problems elsewhere in the world. Thus, foreign experience is the key factor to better understand the world and the problems related to topic I investigate – urban planning and mobility. As the American psychologist Abraham Maslow writes "*if you only have a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail*" (Maslow, 1966:15). The hammer here is a metaphor of the Danish context which cannot be applied to a situation elsewhere and it should not be used as a universal tool. And gaining more tools in this sense is equal to work with issues from the outside world, which in my case – Barcelona and the Superblock.

What particularly grasped my attention when I visited the Superblock (in Poblenou) last year was the fact that the new liberated from cars space was totally deserted where students and journalists were the only representatives of the urban life in the area. Also, there were plenty of banners hanging out of windows and balconies saying "*No superilla*" – clearly a sign of public disagreement and another evidence that the Superblock is not working well. This first impression *from 'below'* inspired me to come down there once again and seek the answers of why the Superblock fails to succeed the optimistic and hedonistic reality of car-free urban living. Having Jensen's Staging mobility model as a foundation, this time around I will be seeking the truth *'from below'* but also *'from above'* hoping to find out what stumbles the healthy urban living with no cars in Barcelona and perhaps – elsewhere in the world.

Mirolsav Borisov, Aalborg,

2017

Introduction

This work is inspired by a previous study of mine which I called *The car and the carfree cities*. It is a new interesting take on car mobility spreading among many European cities which are trying to achieve more sustainable urban living with no or less cars. The study examined a variation of car-free polices which do not have a lot in common besides the idea of displacement of the car and its substation with more rational means of transport.

This is the case with this study too – a story of car displacement happening in Barcelona. The project known as *Superblocks*, *Superilles* or *Supermanzanas* is a plan that divides the city into compartments each constituted by merging 9 blocks of the existing Cerdà plan where the idea is to transform the streets in between to open urban spaces for recreation and in that way re-vitalized the idea of Cerdà.

The mobility, and the automobility specifically, has a big stake in the implementation of the idea because it is what occupies the space in between the blocks. In order to create a more sustainable urban commute, the plan predicts displacement of the car from the core of the Superblock which is a triggering point for the discussion.

The theoretical basis for this project is based upon the Staging mobility model of Jensen and the notions '*from above*' and '*from below*' emphasizing the different power relation and attitudes towards the project. Moreover, *the Mobilities turn* and the notions about car mobility of Mumford and Urry theoretically stress on the significance of the mobility in spatial and socio-cultural sense. The theoretical discussion is concluded by the place-space discussion and the production of space and the spatial inequalities which have tight relationship with mobility 'happening' in there, and thus to the case of investigation.

The problem is examined in phenomenological approach with the aim at putting the personal perception of the change as tool to explore the implementation of the Superblock and its affect. Inspired by Jensen's model, the polar position of the actors in different power possession is examined qualitatively with the use of interviews and survey.

Discussion of the problem

General discussion

The car mobility has been blamed for the biggest threads for the humanity, which concern the health urban life and the human in particular. The car is regarded as one of the most influential contributor to the green gas effect which is linked to the Global warming and the climate change. With '*business as usual*' the green house gasses could treble by the end of the century (Urry & Dennis, 2009: 6). Having said that, if the car use continues to be this dominant, the humanity will face serious challenges and suffer from reduced qualities of life.

The car affects not only the air quality but the physical environment where the car seems to be ever so dominating the landscape. It penetrates everywhere and interrupts and suppress other modes of mobility. The result of that is tremendous number of injuries and deaths caused by accidents on the road. Having in mind the polluting nature of the car, too, the car invisibly becomes the cause of premature deaths caused by the air pollution coming out of the dirty combustion engine of the automobile.

Especially challenged by the car mobilities, supported by the processes of urbanization, are the big cities because with the growth of the population, the demand for mobility grows too. And because in many cases, the city is not capable to respond to the demand for the ever growing mobility, the car happens to fill that gap. It is also there, in the big cities, where the population is very vulnerable and exposed to the hazard of the car mobility, being concentrated over relatively small territory with large amount of automobiles on the street.

Other than that, the modern automobile takes over an incredibly big amount of space, suppresses outdoor activities and urban life. Therefore, the car happens to be a big thread and a new way of thinking is required to respond to this urban mobility crisis.

However, it is not all dark. There are cities who have taken the bold step to rethink their mobilities so that the car becomes less present, displaced, or re-placed by more sustainable and suitable for urban commute means of transport. Cities like Oslo and Madrid have taken the initiative to

completely ban the car use in their city centres, where Oslo – by 2019, and Madrid – 2019 with the hope to completely ban the use of diesel-driven cars (Garfield, 2017). Other cities, like Helsinki and Hamburg predict in their future plans to create urban environments where the car simply isn't needed. The concept the Helsinki predicts is an on-demand mobility service, where as in Hamburg the goal is to create city where it is "*easier not to drive in*" focusing on alternatives like cycling and walking (Peters, 2015).

These ideas are aimed at the future and perhaps, being somewhere are the start of their application. Barcelona, however, has taken a step forward introducing a new way to tackle the car problems which, unlike the other cases has taken places. It is called the Superblock.

Barcelona and… Superblock?

Barcelona is the second largest city in Spain and among the largest cities (and densest as well) in Europe. As discussed earlier it is precisely the big city that suffers most the negative outcome of the automobility. And Barcelona is no exception. The city faces serious pollution problems exceeding the requirements of the EU for NO2 emissions in the air (Valerio, 2016). Large contributor to this is the car use in the city. Besides, it is estimated that around 3,500 are the premature deaths are caused by the high pollution rates, which is a call for help and a sharp evident there is need to change (Valerio, 2016).

Barcelona covered in smog

The traffic in Barcelona

Therefore, the City Council has taken a step forward to tackle this problem by the introduction of the Superblock. Without diving into detailed explanation, the Superblock adopt the idea of plan Cerdà that comprises of equal sized urban blocks (l'Eixample). The initial idea of the Cerdà plan was to create extensive plan for the expansion of the city with strong focus on ecology, urban space and good urban environment. Unfortunately, due to varies factors this idea was harassed and neglected to reach the modern day challenges of pollution, lack of space, green space and healthy urban living (Ramos, 2012).

Aerial view over l'Eixample
https://www.discoverwalks.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/eixample-barca.jpg

The idea of Cerdà is embedded with the idea of the Superblock, where the Superblock combines 9 of the existing blocks in a unity where the streets in between the blocks have to be released of car traffic so that the space to be re-produced to public space for recreation and outdoor activities.

The block functions so that it does not radically forbid the use of the car inside of it but limits it and under certain routes. The block is a complex idea that involves mobility, urban space, ecology and public health.

Road hierarchy in a Superblock model

CURRENT SITUATION

SUPERBLOCK

400 meters
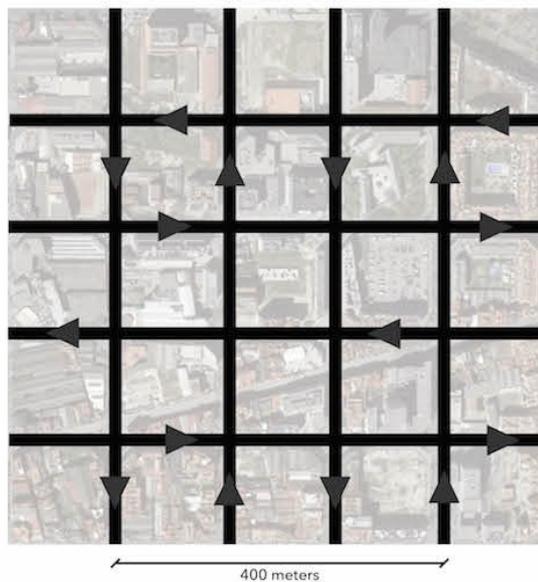
■ Basic network: **50 km/h**

SOLE RIGHT: DISPLACEMENT.
HIGHEST AIM: PEDESTRIAN.

400 meters

■ Local network: **10 km/h**
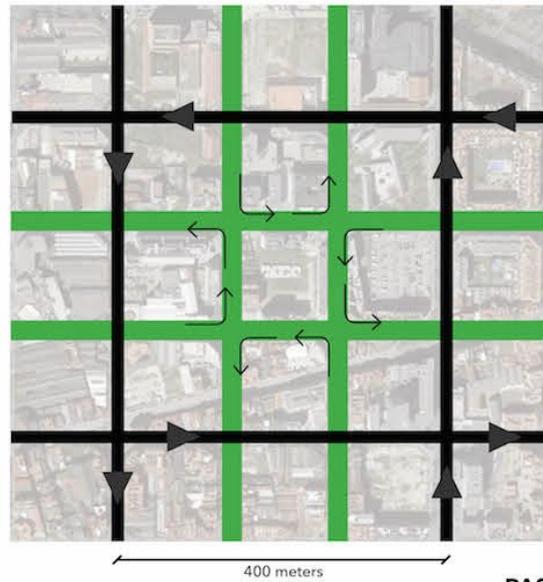
PASSING VEHICLES DO NOT GO THROUGH

EXERCISE OF ALL THE RIGHTS THAT THE CITY OFFERS. HIGHEST AIM: CITIZEN.

http://static3.businessinsider.com/image/575ed6f6dd0895f57d8b4c28-1109/01%20esquema%20superilla.jpg

Yet, the project has sparkled a big discussion over its 'positive' outcome of the car-freeing in the city. Many locals at the pilot Superblock in Poblenou have strong negative opinion towards the project being blamed for loss of businesses and jobs, and overall disturbance of the local economy; for

creating spatial inequality internally (inside the block) and externally (on city scale) by the limitation of the car use.

On the other hand, the project has its lovers who really embrace the idea for car free-living, enjoying the less disturbed and acoustically pleasant, and safe environment the block creates. It very much divides opinions which is an interesting phenomenon.

The fans of the Superblock say "YES" to it

Others say 'NO'

It is particularly exciting to find why this project attracts polar opinions towards itself. Therefore, my goal will be to go down there and find out how is it perceived by the users' as well as by its planners. By doing so I hope to find whether the car-free idea will find itself at home and Barcelona (entirely in the city) and since it happens to generate tensions – where does the planning of the car-free blocks fail to succeed?

Research questions

Since briefly explained what a Superblock is, to provide deeper understanding on that matter and to explain its relationship to the mobility topic the first question to be answered has to be:

What is a Superblock and how is it linked to the topic of mobility?

Since the Superblock in Poblenou appears to be the source of public resistance, central for this research will be identifying the key challenges '*from below*' which stumble the process of implementation, and more importantly – how do the planners respond to them. Inspired by Jensen's staging mobility model, the discussion will focus on the different perceptions, namely 'from below' and 'from above'. Thus, the second research question will be:

How do planners and users perceive the car-free urban living in Poblenou and what are the current challenges implementing the Superblock?

Lastly, in order to explain the importance of the pilot Superblock and the car-freeing effect for the entire city of Barcelona and not for the area of Poblenou alone, the third question will be:

What makes the successful implementation of the Superblock in Poblenou a key factor for the sustainable car-free future of Barcelona?

Theories and their application

Introduction

The following chapter will explain the theoretical framework for the research project. The aim is to address theories which do have relation to the problem of car mobility in urban areas and its effect on the city and the urban life.

Particularly interesting is the relationship between the mobility and the other realms (i.e. politics, culture and social life etc.) which are strongly affected by the absence or the availability of certain mobility mode which in this case – the car mobility. In order to underline and understand the multi-disciplinary nature of the mobility, the *Mobilities turn* will be the first theory to be introduced with the aim of giving a broader perspective of how significant and influential the mobility is for the urban development.

Secondly, since the Superblock is a car-freeing intervention, the car (mobility) has a central role for the project. Thus, naturally, the car mobility will take place in the theoretical discussion. The discussion will be cantered towards the material and the social mean of the car.

The mobility in general, and the car mobility specifically, is perceived differently – *'from above'* and *'from below'* as Jensen's Staging mobility model suggests, meaning that the stakeholders in different power possession perceive the mobility differently. Certainly, this statement holds true when linked to the case of the Superblock (in Poblenou) where this is especially evident. Planners and policy makers perceive the extraction of the car from the city (or from a part of the city as it shall be investigated) as something positive and a key factor for achieving more sustainable urban living. One the other hand, users do see the car limitation as a burden, limitation of rights, inequality (compared to the non-car-free areas) in a mobile sense, in a social sense and even in a spatial sense. This perception *'from below'* shows that not only the car-limiting policy is perceived differently depending on the power relation, but more importantly – the lack of understanding between the stakeholders at different level and perhaps communication which: 1) results public disagreement; and 2) - questions the success of the idea for healthier urban living with less cars achieved through the implementation of multiple Superblocks.

Space is, too, an important element when discussing the car-freeing and the Superblock. Being developed in one of the densest and congested cities in Europe, the Superblock has strong ties to the idea of production of space achieved via limited access for cars (immobility). However, the space, just like the mobility, is perceived differently by the different stakeholders which, just like with the mobility, suggest variations of meanings. And the meaning is what transforms space to a 'place' (Cresswell, 2015). According to planners, a superblock is a place that has positive meaning and effect for the entire city, and it is seen as a solution for the serious challenges of the city like congestion, lack of clean air, green spaces and sound comfort. On contrary, the users perceive it differently *from below'*. For some, the space is an opportunity for outdoor activities and recreation and thus – positive; for others it is a meaningless free area with no practical use; and for thirds – space, generated through immobility and limited access to the city which has a negative effect on the use and the attractiveness of the neighbourhood (the Particular 9 blocks as we shall later see that constitute the Superblock of Poblenou).

To understand the opposed opinions towards the Superblock and their contribution to the production of the place, this chapter will also try to explain theoretically the concepts of place and space and to expose the relation between the two terms. Having in mind the fears of spatial exclusion, the chapter will, too, touch upon the issue of spatial inequality.

The choice of theories reflects the ambitions of answering the research question at the start (see figure 1.2). The theoretical analytical take has a role in the answer of the questions as well as for the understanding of the problems related to car mobility.

The logic behind the chosen theories

The theories which are part of the theoretical framework have logical links between them (figure 1.1). The links are not resulted by absolute coincidence but by structuring arguments with relation to the problem of car mobility.

Central for the discussion is the Staging mobility model and the perceptions *'from above'* and *'from below'* which can be associated not only with mobility (and specifically car mobility) but with the place too, as discussed in the earlier section. Since the term 'mobility' seems too broad to the discussion on the Superblock, the automobility (as a precise mean of mobility and central for the project car-free intervention) will build on the more general discussion offered in *the Mobilities turn*.

As we shall see later, space and place require each other for definition and thus both will have to be presented - supplementing and explaining one another. Defining the term 'space' is also important to the definition 'spatial inequality' which is associated with the problems at the Superblock in Poblenou.
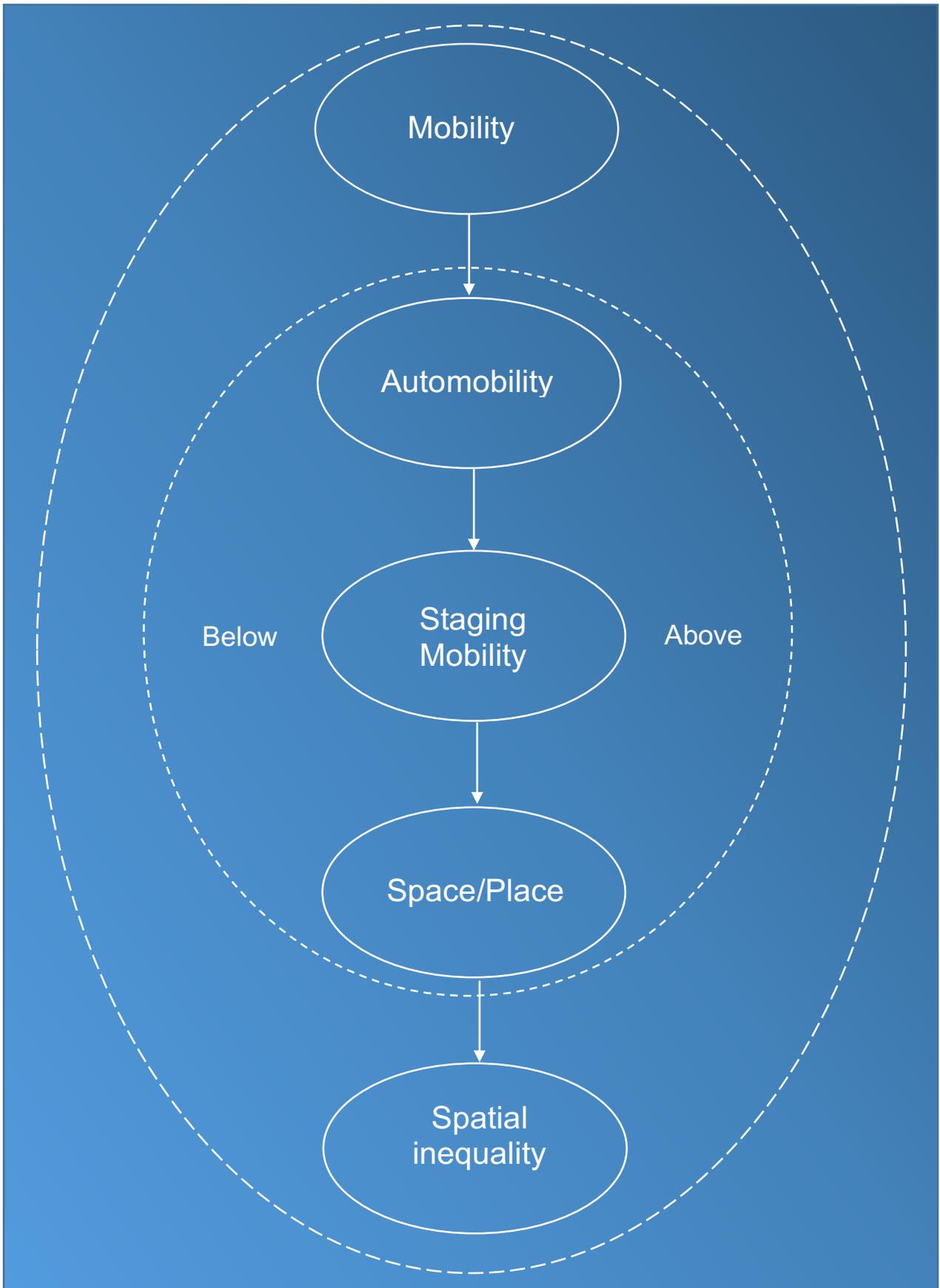
(figure 1.1)

The relationship between the choice of theory and the research questions

The theories and their contribution to the problem solving are, here, expressed in diagrammatic form. The idea is to offer the reader a visual way of understanding how each theory is related to a particular research question.

The answer to research question 1 **(What is a Superblock and how is it linked to the topic of mobility?)** is reflected in the notions of *the Mobilities turn* and the notions of Urry and Mumford on the automobility on the one hand; and on the other – the co-related Place/Space theory. The intention is to logically "marry" the city and the car and by doing so to emphasize on the relation between a place and its mobility.
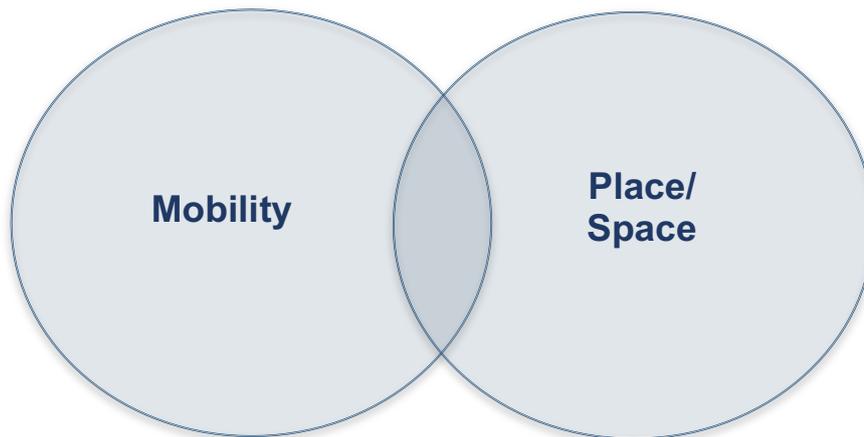
(figure 1.2)

Research question 2 **(How planners and user perceive the car-free urban living in Poblenou and what are the current challenges implementing the Superblock?)** suggests a central role of Jensen's Staging mobility model and the notions *'from above'* and *'from below'* applied to both mobility and space (figure 1.3). In addition to the trio (mobility, staging, place-space), spatial inequality is added, too, to suggest a mental relation between the challenges from this research question and a challenge related to space.
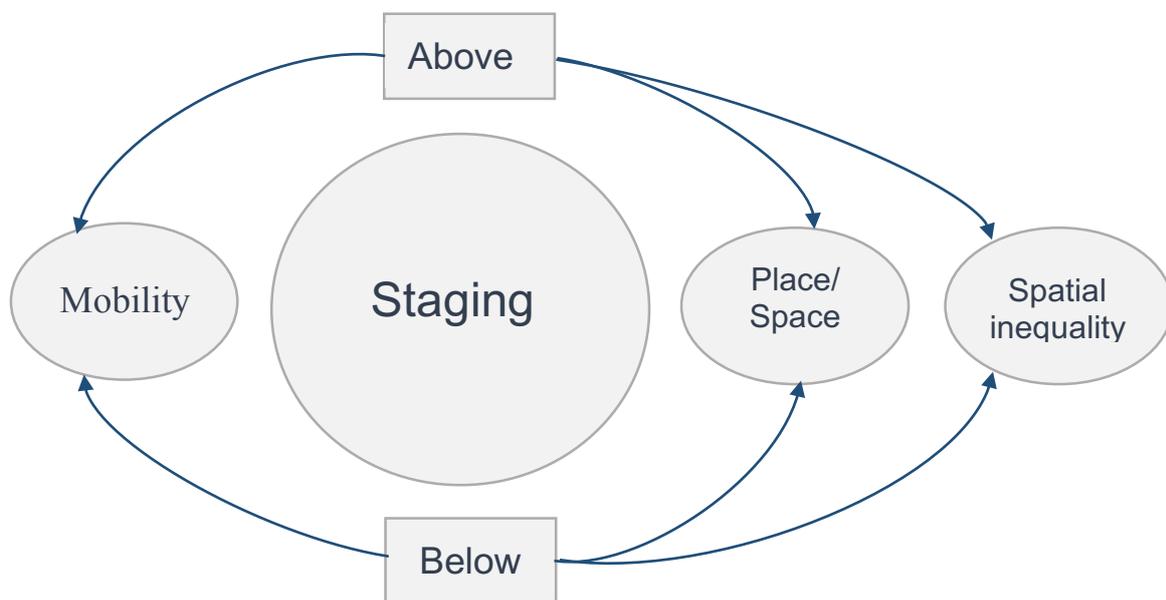
(Figure 1.3)

Question number 3 **(What makes the successful implementation of the Superblock in Poblenou a key factor for the sustainable car-free future of Barcelona?)** requires answer achieved through analysis and thus, the answer has to be sought at the end where conclusions and concluding remarks are situated.

Introduction to Mobilities turn

Mobility is all around us in our daily life, however, it seems somewhat neglected and taken for granted. But it is, in fact, important to be known and to be studied as well as appreciated because the mobility happens to be more than A to B (Urry, 2007, Cresswell: 2006; Jensen: 2014). The mobility is more related to the answers to questions like 'what happens between A and B?', 'why movement between A and B is necessary?', 'what is the consequence of the movement from A to B?' and many more.

The definition *'mobility turn'* means that there are different ways of thinking on mobility embedded in economic, social and political relationships (Urry, 2007: 6) which sort of underlines the dominant position of the mobility in different spheres and disciplines and the necessity to be studied multi-disciplinary.

What Cresswell writes about mobility is that it is

"…more central to both the world and our understanding of it than ever before. And yet mobility itself, and what is means, remains unspecified"

(Cresswell, 2006: 2)

It is worth saying that the mobility is a very broad definition, just like the term space as we shall later discover, which allows a lot of interpretations and associations depending on the person whom the term is presented to. Therefore, it is needed to specify what 'mobility' means in the context of the chosen study case. Looking at the car-free intervention the Superblock in Poblenou, it is interested to know how the space and the mobility are inter-linked and what the role of the mobility is in the production of space; how the mobility and the immobility is perceived by the different actors – or how the mobility is planned and lived at the chosen location; how powerful and significant is the mobility for the urban development or *contra* – for the urban exclusion. In a more compact definition, it is compelling to examine the relationships 'space-mobility' and 'human-mobility'.

Let's focus on the human-mobility relationship for a moment. As we shall see in the case of Poblenou, the locals have special relationship with their mobility and since a new de-autmobilizaiton is going on in the area, provokes certain reactions of the public. But why the limited access to cars becomes a problem?

Urry argues that '*Moving between places physically or virtually can be a source of status and power, and expression of the rights to movement*' (Urry, 2007: 9). Certainly, this is a valid point considering the limited mobility alternatives to the car in Poblenou seen through the lenses of the daily user. Then, logically, the car becomes the only source of power for some of the people living in and around the Superblock in Poblenou.

Thus, the reaction of resistance by the public seems rather natural considering the possibility of the neighbourhood (and the residents in it) to be socially and spatially excluded due the limited access to mobility and ability to re-connect with the rest of city. This hides, indeed some negative consequences for the locals to fall from '*the fast*' to '*the slow*' lanes of social life (Urry, 2007: 11).

So then, without diving into a deeper discussion, the meaning of the mobility and the meaning of the power are linked to the everyday life – the life 'from below'. Looking from above, however, the mobility may be understood as a tool to integrate a neighbourhood to the others, or as in this case to unintentionally disintegrate (due to immobility generated through limitation of car presence) and create inequality (mobile; and spatial since the mobility happens over space).

This shows that the mobility has its foot-print over the space too, as the immobility in the form of de-autmobilization (car-freeing) is a form of spatial arrangement achieved through limited access to mobility. There is then the positive outcome of the immobility which is a production of space. This helps to understand the inseparable nature of the space and the mobility that takes place in there.

The Mobilities' turn is a way to dissolve the boundaries between the 'natural' science (focusing on the objective side of the mobility) and the 'social science' which explains the social relation the individual establish with his or her mobility (the subjective focus on mobility) (Urry & & Dennis, 2009).

The following chapter will address the particular mobility which is the triggering point of the production and the execution of car-freeing policies – the automobility.

Automobile – notions of Urry & Mumford

In this chapter, notions of Urry and Mumford about the cars will be presented so that to contribute to the general discussions – car-city, space-(auto)mobility, human-(auto)mobility.

The car in material-spatial context

The American urban historian writes that the *car shapes and forms our cities*, and it appears to be the *chief architect of our cities*, the *most influential of all city planners* (Mumford, 1963). His sharp and meaningful definitions refer to the ability to shape the cities in a negative way, focusing on spatial and architectural interventions to satisfy the demand for automobility. During '*the century of the car*' was when new architectural innovations such as shopping-malls, and car-cinemas, motels which not only have left a trace over the architectural heritage but as well shall see on the development of a new culture and cult towards the car.

In terms of space, the automobility is a mode of transport that is constantly demanding space where '*no other form of transport is more greedy for space than the modern car*' (Mumford, 1963). Mumford calls this ever growing thirst for space Parkinson's *law of traffic – it will always feel the space for it and then demand more* (Mumford, 1963)

Not only that, but the car mobility in many ways was prioritized over the good city quality, open spaces and sidewalks where the urban life 'to be hosted'. In relation to that, R. Rogers write that it is '*the car which has played the critical role in undermining cohesive social structure of the city… they have eroded the quality of the urban space… the car has made viable the whole concept of dividing everyday activities into compartments, segregating offices, shops and homes*' (in Urry & Dennis, 2009: 42). Thus, the car does not simply connect two points from one another but in fact is what creates the necessity two points to be connected (the suburb and the office; the house and the shopping mall, where both the suburb and the shopping mall are products of the autmobility).

The dominance of the car in the urban areas, however, it has deep historic routes. The car and its related industries were largely supported by governmental subsidies so that the car became national goal (Urry & Dennis, 2009; Mumford: 1963).

An interesting story of how the car became dominant is an example of the US where companies like General Motors, Mac (trucks), Standard Oil and other dominating the motoring industry joined so that they shared investment and activities to proceed in buying and then destroying streetcar lines; and by doing so to leave the gap for the car to conquer the city being left with no competition (Urry, & Dennis, 2009: 35). In the early 20th century Lewis Mumford wrote too that *most western 'metropolises' had encouraged the 'wholesale invasion of the automobile'* and thereby *suffered from the effect of traffic queues, personal frustration, excessive noise and polluted air* (in Urry & Dennis, 2009: 46).

However, an interesting notion is that the car is then not by-itself destructive and bad, but the focus on one particular mean of transport (Mumford, 1963).

Therefore, the newest strategies, as we shall see in the case of Barcelona, are angled at enrichment of the possibilities for urban commute so that the car can be substitutes by other means of transport. By providing such, the city benefits from the natural displacement of the car and its substation with more purposeful and ration mobility arrangement. But the car is dominating not only the spatial reality, but it is too embedded with the every-day life.

The car in social context or the personalizing of automobile

The car is often referred as social machine where it happens to be related with social life and use. In the beginning, the car was primary regarded as a *speed-machine,* a hobby and manifestation of power especially by young men (Urry & Dennis, 2009: 39). Later on with the development in the automobile industry and the open access to cars to the wide-public (not the wealthy ones only) it has reached a stage where the speed and power was replaced with more rational and grown-up ability to travel in *timeless fashion* (Urry & Dennis, 2009). This timeless fashion travel has inspired a lot of structural changes but more importantly changes in human behaviour and social relations.

The automobile in the contemporary society is often associated with family life – when one has got a family or a kid shall have car suggest a grown-up thinking towards the car associated more with collective use and not necessarily individual one. Moreover, Urry writes about a new car-based sociability which is associated with the *giving-a-lift* to a colleague or friends or family which further emphasize on the collective but at the same time social use of the automobile (Urry & Dennis, 2009: 40). Thus, from there one can seen that the car is not only a transport from A to B but ability to be social and establish human-human relationships while on a move.

Nevertheless, the car has become very much a symbol and manifestation of freedom and individuality where one can travel limitlessly and as free as long as there is road. Thereby, the car becomes an object of desirability, allowing 'freedom' and individuality; also, the car has been associated with the romantics of the road and the travel as pleasure (Urry & Dennis, 2009). Unlike for instance any other means of transportation, became a life-style and entire culture (Urry & Dennis, 2009: 41).

The car, too, is seen as many manifestation of power (of wealth or social status) which unlike the power to connect distant places, here the power seems like unnecessary demonstration of selfishness and irrationality. However, such investment of meaning exist which contributes to the social embedding between the automobile and the human being.

Besides, the car in capable of connecting the dots and providing a smooth continuous and interrupted ride, independently in terms of time-tables and time constrains on the one hand, but also the car allows longer trips so that no modal shift is required. This, therefore, creates the feel and association with the car as independence and unconstraint travel to wherever and whenever (Urry & Dennis, 2009).

The modern car has more practical side, being a *shield* against the elements, providing not just a transportation but comfort as well (Urry & Dennis, 2009). Yet, it is not only the elements that the car protects the driver from but 'from the outside world' and all the dangers it may hide – criminal activities, terror attacks etc. Thus, the car becomes associated with the meaning of an-island of security too.

So besides the rational power of the automobility to be the connector of distant place and to provide mobile affordance to the driver (and the passengers), the car has undeniably less rational side which,

however, the human-being is very much attached to, and even dependant to some extend. Therefore, the switch from car-full streets and places to car-less once will undeniably have an affect over the social reality which the absence of the car will create because the car happens to be a lot more than A to B.

'From above' & 'From Below' – Jensen's Staging mobility model as point of departure

A mobility situation is a complex one. It is an assembly which involves an array of factors and agents due to which the mobility becomes possible. This is confirmed by Ole B. Jensen who writes that a mobility "*do not 'just happen' or simply 'take place'*" (Jensen, 2014: 15). Instead, as he further insists, it is "*planned and and designed 'from above'*" as much as is is "*performed, and lived 'from below'*" which illustrates the different power relations to a mobility situation. Also, it underlines the plurality, including more than one actor, and the complexity of the mobility which is achieved in collective actions – namely planning (allowance or restrictions) of mobility and performance of mobility.

According the model, the staging is a process of designing the material, the temporal and the social scape of a mobility situation where each of these factors are affected 'from above' and 'from below' (Jensen, 2014: 15).

http://www.altinget.dk/images/article/137577/18223.jpg

Having a mobility situation in mind, or perhaps it is more it is more relevant to be regarded as immobility situation, referring to the intention of the authorities in Barcelona to minimize the presence of mobility in the area of investigation (The Superblock in Poblenou), I would like to draw inspiration from the model of Jensen. It is due to the fact that it seems relevant to the case and suits and the intention to answer on the first part of the research question. 2 - *How do planners and users perceive the car-free urban living in Poblenou and what are the current challenges implementing the Superblock?*

The model comprises of elements which are directly related to the case of investigation. Thus, it seems rather good in explaining the power relation in an (im)mobility situation which I also refer to in my studies. Furthermore, the interior factors such as material setting, embodied performance and social interaction appear, too, relevant to the study case. However, I would like to reshape slightly the model so that it is adapted to the particular case of investigation. Therefore, I would like to consider the (im)mobility situation, and respectively the Superblock in Poblenou, as case where material (space, physical environment) and immaterial (car (im)mobility, and mobile interactions) meet and thereby constitute an immobility situation. Staged this way, as Jensen suggest in the original model, the factors are perceived by stakeholders in different power possession whose power have the ability to shape the situation.
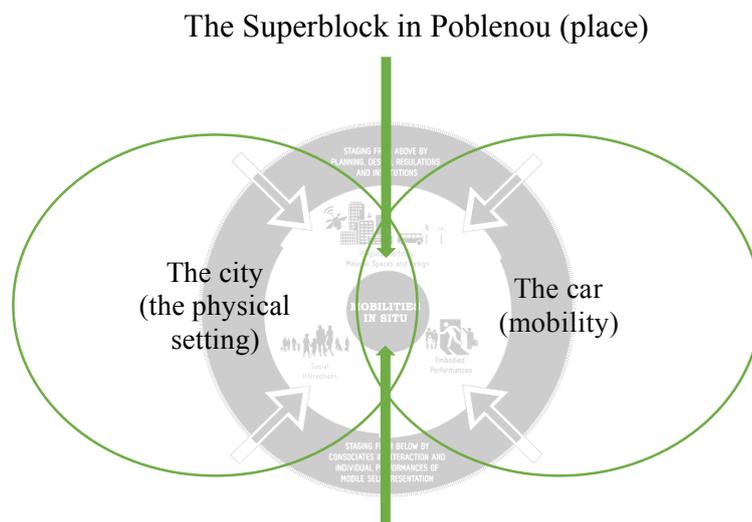
The relationship between the car and the

(Figure 1.4)

Following this slightly modified version of Jensen's model, the data collection and the analysis will later continue in the configuration: the place (the Superblock) where materiality and (im)mobility meet; and where stakeholders *'from above'* and *'from below'* perform their power and by doing so-transform the place constantly.

Place, space and spatial inequality

Place

'*Place'* is a word with broad meaning and widely used in various fields of studies. Indeed, one of these is the mobility field. This is well illustrated by the statement used by authors like Urry, Jensen and Cresswell who often refer to the mobility as more than [*movement*] from A to B (Jensen 2013; Urry 2007; Cresswell 2006). What is particularly interesting here in this chapter is how to understand what is A and what is B. In his *introduction to place*, Cresswell writes that place is *"a word we use daily in the English-speaking world*" (Cresswell, 2015: 6). However, escaping the everyday terminology and focusing on deeper academic understanding, the definition of the word 'place' requires more holistic approach. Such holistic approach Cresswell presents in chapter 1: Defining place. According to this approach, the place is composed of few key elements such as *meaning*, *power*, *locality* and *materiality* which each help to understand places.

Besides the earlier mentioned factors, Cresswell also emphasizes on a particular relationship between the place and its mobility which helps to explain both in correlated sense: mobility as action, practice and process which happens at places (static or mobile ones as we shall see) with unique *meaning*, *power, locality* and *materiality*; and the place as 'home' of actions, practices and process like mobility which do take part in the constant process of production and transformation of the place itself. This, once again, underlines the multidisciplinarity of the topic of mobility and its important role in the understanding the world.

The meaning of the word '*place'* can be understood differently. For example, one can understand the meaning of it through the relation between the place and the human. For example, ownership. The definitions 'my' car and 'your' apartment suggest that a place (a mobile one, or an immobile one) could be understood through personal possession (Cresswell, 2015: 7). Moreover, a place too, could

be understood through common sense - suggesting something is particularly good or bad where based upon common opinion of individuals (Cresswell: 2015: 7). For example, saying: "this restaurant is good because of the food and the service quality" or "the Superblock is bad because it is composed of meaningless space with benches and trees in a deserted area where nobody goes".

These examples prove that a place is a product of the human ability to create meanings and to emotionally attach to objects or locations. They also prove that the ability of the human to communicate meanings is, too, influential to how places are produced and understood (Cresswell, 2015: 14). The communication of meanings allows creating of a larger group of individuals sharing the same meaning which adds an element of plurality and a sense of community towards the construction of a place through common meanings. As we shall see later in the text, the sense of community resulted by an accumulation of common meanings is very important factor to the continuation of the idea of car-free living achieved through multiple Superblocks, an importantly – to the ability to oppose the idea.

The plurality or the ability to understanding of a place as an accumulation of shared meaning also reflects upon the notion of Cresswell that places are defined (as well as understood) by power (Cresswell, 2015). Here, the power is represented by a large number of people sharing common meaning and opposing a certain idea, physical change or political decision. When explaining how power and place are related, Cresswell refers to some great struggles of humans expressed over virtual space. An example of such is the Berlin wall where the place around the wall is what hosted the event of opposition and thus allowed an association to power (Cresswell, 2015: 4). In a much softer sense, this example somewhat mirrors the situation at the Superblock as a place defined by the collective resistance performed *'from below'*. Yet, this example is not directly linked to the same form of resistance (human bodies and crowds performing the act of opposition) but in the form performing resistance through material symbols manifested over a place (Poblenou) which helps associating it with power.

The power of resistance is what adds meaning to the place so that the Superblock (in Poblenou) becomes not only the place where cars cannot pass but the place where the banners saying "*No Superilla*" are; where the tensions and the protesters of the car-freeing idea are. Such power performance *'from below'* certainly has an effect on how the place is perceived and also makes it more noticeable and recognizable.

The power according to the *Staging mobility model* (Jensen, 2014) come too '*from above*' which applies similarly when staging places. The power *'from above'* in place production is somewhat related to the way the planning is organized; to whom planning does give access to power and how the decisions are made. For example, the different practices in public involvement, participation, and partnership differ in Northern and Southern Europe which certainly can have an impact on how one understands a place having institutional power as a point of departure. Such take exposes the possibility of creating mental ties between power 'from above' and location as well – to distinguish between here and there (A and B) or to associate with one of the two.

The word 'place' is often used to refer to a location in a daily talk (Cresswell, 2015: 13). However, the terms place and location have quite different meaning. But the location may be used as a way to relate to or explain places. For instance, the location is defined by parameters like coordinates, address etc. emphasizing on the fact that the place is static (in this particular example but not always) and that it exists somewhere there (as Cresswell calls it meaningless site, Cresswell, 2015). The definition 41°23'59.8"N 2°11'41.0"E (coordinates showing approx. the center of the Superblock in Poblenou) perhaps mean nothing to most, just as much as the names Carrer de Badajoz, Carrer de Tànger, Calle Pallars or Calle Llacuna but they are certainly ways to understand places through their location. Location, too, gives the possibility to situate a place on a map – physical or mental, and by doing so, to provide visual geographical understanding to ones unfamiliar to a place in any other sense (material, meaning etc.). In daily speak, the location may be used as a tool for understanding the place through distinguishing between other places – here and there, A and B.

The material is too a way to associate with and comprehends places. Objects like benches, textures, coloured roads help to materially understand a place. The places are constructed by materials in many cases (sometimes by imagination or virtual simulations). To illustrate, let's think of a house for example to and its material elements (bricks, tiles, windows etc.) which are capable of creating the material frame for a place to be nested. However, they do not produce the place alone. The place itself is defined by the meaning invested by the human and the social relation with the material (Cresswell, 2015). If not so – the house is just a meaningless piece of infrastructure which to become a home requires meaning; or emotional attachment. Thus, it can be said the material has an impact on how humans understand places but the material alone is not enough to produce the place.

In order to fully understand what place is one shall also understand the mobility 'happening' at that place. Somewhat, Cresswell does suggest that when saying that a place is not always (and only) static giving the example of the cruise ship – a mobile place which comprises and may be understood through the all above-listed elements – locality, materiality, meaning and power (Cresswell, 2015: 13). In chapter. 3 Cresswell further states that the mobility is central to place and help in the production of sense to places (Cresswell, 2015: 62) He also argues that places are produced and reproduced in a mobile active way rather than in static one which underlines the importance of the mobility for the definition. In a similar manner, confirming the mobile nature of places John Urry writes:

"Places we might then say are like ships that move around and do not fixed within once location"
(Urry, 2007:43)

In conclusion, can be said that the understanding of places require a large set of lenses backed up by a broad understanding of different disciplines which can help one to largely comprehend the concept of place. Also, important to the definition of place is the sense of mobility which is bonded with the place; which continuously create and re-create places and which explain how a place is not static one but rather active, mobile and transformative category. Thus, logically, the formula for an understanding of place is:

Place= meaning + power + locality + materiality + mobility

where each component should be considered equally important and in inseparable unity with the others.

Space and spatial inequality

"the ideas "space" and "place" require each other for definition"

"if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is a pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place"

(Tuan in Cresswell, 2015: 15)

Often in daily talk, people tend to substitute and use the terms space and place so that loaded with the same meaning. However, this is not quite correct, as argued, in the earlier section, and thus, the two shall be distinguished. But what is space and how different it is to place and what is the connection between two will be the focus of this chapter. Also, particularly important is to coin and explain the term spatial inequality and its relationship to the Superblock but to do so, the first required thing is to explain what the words space and place mean.

The criteria for distinguishing between space and place is the invested meanings (Cresswell, 2015). Cresswell writes too that '*space is more abstract than place'* (Cresswell, 2015: 15). He also claims that the concepts of place and space which required one another for definition and thus are logically linked (Cresswell, 2015: 15). Yet, at the same time, he suggests that both place and space are related to mobility – where space in mobility means movement; and where a place in mobility means pause (Cresswell, 2015: 15). To exemplify this in more practical manner, let's particularly focus on car mobility. Following the logic of the definition, the road (space) is then related to mobility, whereas parking lot (place) to a pause in mobility. Since this chapter is only about spaces, the following explanation will only concern the road-space.

The road-space in such sense allows movement to happen; it is an affordance so that a car can drive from A to B. Thus the space-road means power (to connect people, goods etc.). The roads and the

transport infrastructure as a whole (the space that affords the movement) are associated with economy growth and the economy with power. This is proved by Banister who writes:

"there has always been an assumed link between the quality of the transport infrastructure and economic growth"
(Banister, 2011: 1)

So space, just like a place, may be associated with power in a sense that power is an element of the space production, as it in the place production.

The road too is composed by materials – most commonly tarmac or gravel, paint and traffic barriers. Having said that, it is now evident that space is a materially linked category.

Also, the road is linked somewhat to locality. Such relation one may see through the names humans tend to give to roads (i.e. Nordjyske Motorvej) which suggest an association between the region (Northern Jutland) and the road that goes through it; the association between the local setting and the road-space. Another relation between the locality and space is that the road inevitably part of the landscape and the landscape is, in many ways, local but also unique. For example, the scenery a driver experience while driving on Nordjyske Motorvej is unique comprising of flat green fields, grant wind turbines, landmarks and sings inviting to landmarks of Nordyjlland. This landscape in combination with the road-space constitutes a sense of uniqueness and of locality. The road may look the same or similar to a road in Southern Europe and used in exactly the same way, however, the locality is an element that helps to distinguish and relate to a particular road.

The road-space has also meaning. It is not there for no reason but to connect people, businesses, ideas whatsoever. The general meaning, thus, is to connect unite people who live or work separately from one another. The road-space, in smaller human scale, also have certain meanings. For example, the connection between an office and a kindergarten (between places) or the connection between a mother and a child (between human-beings). Then the road-space is not meaningless. Nor it is the space alone.

As now evident, space and place are related not only in a mobile sense but also in a way they are produced. Certainly, spaces are meaningful – a meaning is attached to them. Meaning is also attached to places. So what is the difference between the two, and is it still incorrect to substitute the terms place and space? The difference between the ideas of space and place originates in the way they are perceived and sensed – stationary or in motion. Places are perceived and sensed while stationary; and spaces are perceived on a move.

The body senses as it moves
(Urry, 2007: 48).

Now when we know what space is, and the fact that it is meaningful and not meaningless, and that is perceived and sensed on a move, and it associated with mobility, let's bring the term spatial inequality to the discussion. But first of, what is inequality?

According to urban theory inequality is

"... what sociologists like to call a relation concept: someone or some social group is always in an unequal position in relation to some individual or group who has more: more money, more access to resources such as good education, health care, and so on."

(Harding & Blokland, 2014: 124)

This uneven access to different assets is demonstrated and manifested over space so that the inequality can be seen and measured over space (neighbourhoods for example) – and thus we speak of spatial inequality or *inter-urban inequalities*.

Historically, spatial inequality has been part of our cities ever since. However, if we look at the more recent history of the humanity, an example of spatial inequality is the production of neighbourhoods during the industrial area *'where quarters for the working classes were purpose-built'* (Harding & Blokland, 2014: 121). This clearly illustrates the power is manifested over space and thus create spatial inequalities, where in this particular example is about the power of money; the dominant

position of the *bourgeoisie* over the working-class based upon the possession of capital which creates the inequality in space. However, inequality (and respectively spatial inequality) is not only about having money or not. Money alone is an important but not sufficient resource to develop capabilities (Hadrding & Blokland, 2014: 125). As Harding further writes: *'sociological literature likes to turn to Bordieu's (1984) notions of positions defined not jut by money but by economic, social, cultural (and in some conrners of the debate, politica) capital'* which leads to a conclusion that the inequality is a product of various forces and agents and the space is just the arena where they all meet, clash, communicate and so forth.

What is interesting in the study case – Poblenou – is how the space is produced and how this constant shaping and re-shaping of the space create the spatial inequality. Adopting the three points of departure of Harding on space, where:

1) space is produced through spatial practices (material);

2) space as produced by government surveyors and planners, by architects and scientist reflecting their power position;

and -

3) space as produced through the way it is lived and experienced (Hadrding & Blokland, 2014: 128) suggest and interesting sequence which mirrors to a large extend the model of Jensen where the mobilities are shaped through the way they are lived *'from below'* and planned *'from above'* (see Staging Mobility Model). Presented this way, demonstrates how mobilities and place are produced and lived; and that they are not separated categories from one another, but on contrary, linked and dependent to one another. The mobility happens in space; and space is shaped through actions in a mobile environment (not a static one).

Theory of science and methods

This chapter describes the position of the empirical case in relation with the theory of science and the mobile methods employed in the data collection in relation with the study objective. The first part of the chapter provides a theoretical take on phenomenology, emphasizing on how and why phenomenology is used to understand the particular situation seen from the different actors' lenses.

In the second part, the chapter opens-up with a description and argumentation of the chosen methods and their implementation in the study context.

Lastly, the chapter present a reflection over the use of methods and the empirical outcome gained through the data collection process.
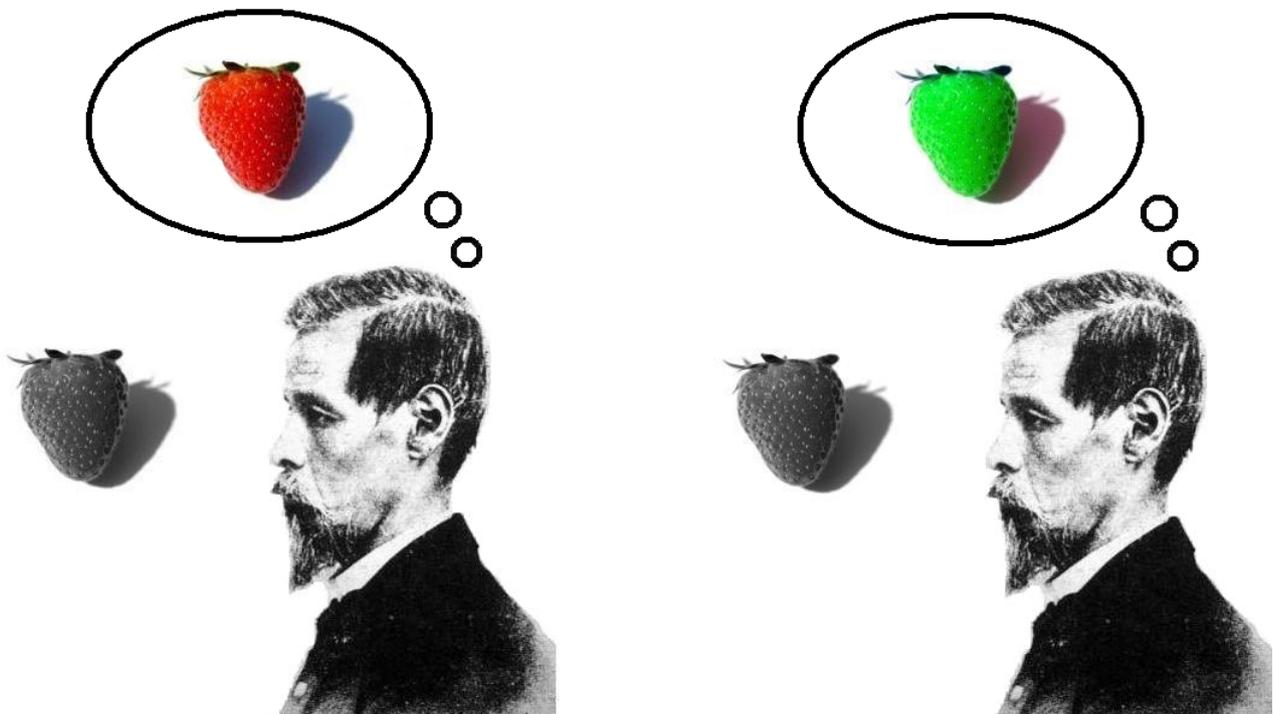
http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-c1ggrSviP3c/T0A3ILQ5t1I/AAAAAAAAAGo/Hfj9jF6V5kk/s1600/Inverted_qualia_of_colour_strawberry.jpg

Phenomenology

Phenomenology attempts to understand the world through the *phenomena* or what meaning the human beings invest in the world they find themselves in. Therefore, central to the phenomenology is the *persona,* the individual and the way the individual perceive the reality. However, the phenomenology is interested not only in one individual but in individuals whose collective meaning participates in the construction of the reality; and since the *persona* is unique and different to the others, the collective meaning in this sense, has to be understood as a variation of meanings. Thus, phenomenology focus on the role of the variation of meanings in the reality production.

The variation of meanings, namely, is what defines the interest in the Superblock in Poblenou and eventually the need to be studied. It is a contrast pallet of meanings invested by the humans in it (planners and users) – them who *live, act, work and think in there* which has specific relevance to the social reality (Schutz, A., 2003/1954: 141).

The interest in the different perceptions, is also demonstrated in research question. 2 where asked: *How do planners and users perceive the car-free urban living in Poblenou and what are the current challenges implementing the Superblock?* This reflects the ambition to grasp not only the users' perspective, or the phenomena based on how is it lived, but also how is it planned and what meaning is invested '*from above'* the planners.

Interesting in the case of Poblenou is the act of resistance and opposition which has certain negative tone to it which has to do with the every-day understanding of the individuals in the world. As Schutz write in this regard: *By a series of common-sense constructs, they (human beings) have pre-sleeted and pre-interpreted this world which they experience as the reality of their daily lives.''* (Schutz, A., 2003/1954: 141). These series in this case, as we shall see, may be based upon their ability to move or upon their perception of being excluded and somewhat neglected. Thus what the study is interested in is to define the every-day user phenomena based upon the 'arrival' of the Superblock at their home or work.

The relationship '*from above*' and '*from below*' suggest a social reality of various stakeholders who do live, work and think in the same world; but they do also communicate in the same world. Then,

the terms phenomenology and sociology should be understood in co-relational sense because the social reality (composed of various actors in terms of power possession) is perceived differently by the different actors which suggested various phenomena. Andersen refers to it as *phenomenological sociology* where she adds that *"the phenomenological sociology examines as mentioned the social reality, as it is experienced, learned and shaped by the social actors'* (Andersen, 2016: 46 in Zahavi & Overgaard, 2014)".

The epistemological basis in phenomenology or what we can know about the reality is based upon analysis of intentional structures (Jensen, O., 2015). The structures in this case being represented by the meanings of the actors in high power position and the everyday user.

Phenomenology offers an array of methods for capturing the meanings of the individual. The following chapter will explain the choice and the use of methods.

Methods

The use of phenomenology suggests a wide-open use of methods for gaining empirical data. Typical methods of a phenomenology-based research are among others, interviews, individual talks, meeting, personal texts, participant observation (Lester, 1999: 2). What draws a contrast between the phenomenology and the other means of research is that the phenomenology is based upon qualitative outcome which reflect the individual's perspective, where the *persona* is central object of investigation - how the world is seen through the lenses of a human being.

Phenomenological approach can be applied to single or deliberately selected cases where the use of phenomenology in single-case studies is able to identify issues which illustrate discrepancies and system failures (Lester, 1999: 1). Precisely, identifying the failure of the system was the initial goal of the investigation, or finding the answer to the question: Where does the Superblock in Poblenou fail; and why such resistance to a positive, at first glance at least, idea like the Superblock? To get to the answer on that question, me as a researcher, aimed at getting the perspective of planners and people in power, to find out how is it seen '*from above*' or whether or not the resistance is triggered by a horrible planning or political mistake. It was also to crucial to gain the other perspective - '*from*

below' - and to do so, I decided to go down there myself, to look for any particular signs that one is capable of seeing when only present on site. By doing that, I was hoping, too, to get in touch with the locals so that I get the broader perspective of the everyday user.

Considering the different characteristics of the two target groups, there was need of two individual approaches in order to get to the desired information. Having in mind the fact that the everyday users are hard to reach and hard to engage in conversation considering my language incompetence, I decided on developing a survey. The survey is a good way to get to the information in more causal and leisurely way requiring no specific time, nor meeting and at the same time eliminating the awkward moment of strangers (foreign to each other) dealing with the language barrier.

The approach towards the people *'from above'* was though different where the chosen method was a personal talk or an interview. By choosing the method of the interview I was hoping for a more detailed in-depth outcome and longer conversation with the people who know most about the project. Unlike the everyday user, the people *'from above'* are generally more accessible and able to deal with a conversation in English. Thereby, the language barrier was not of a problem to the same extent. However, the interviews, unlike the survey require more preparation, planning and engagement. Also, there was a moment of insecurity since I had a rough idea of who I wanted to talk to based on my pre-knowledge. But what I did not know was who of these people was capable and willing on having me there for an interview on short notice. Thus the next step was to communicate my access to the information I was hoping for – *'from above'* – and to plan for it before arriving at Barcelona.

Interview
First step

Prior to the study trip, there was need to identify potential informants whom to be addressed and contacted in order to test who eventually may and will contribute to the data collection. The overall idea, was, as mentioned earlier, to get a wide array of qualitative data *'from above'*. Thus, the first step was to specify what does *'from above'* mean in the particular context – planners, politicians, policy makers, architects etc. with a relationship to the Superblock in Poblenou.

Since I knew already people who do have relationship with the project, they turned to be the first one to be referred to – Jordi Martín Oriol from ATM (Metropolitan Transport Authority) and Carmen Mendoza form the architectural department of International University of Catalonia (UIC). Both informants have different professional background which suggested an interesting multi-disciplinary start on data collection. Both showed interest in participation in an interview which was later arranged and confirmed, so that they became the first two informants.

The next step was to identify others '*from above*' having relationship with the project. Since the name Salvador Rueda appeared in many of the articles about the Superblock, it clearly indicated that his perception might be a valuable one for the study. Being the director of the Urban Ecology Agency of Barcelona (BCNecologia) and tightly involved with the Superblock it was interesting to hear his opinion and explanation on the topic. Thus, I decided to contact him, explaining the initial idea of my thesis and my interest in having an interview with him about the Superblock in Poblenou, to which, he responded positively.

At the same time, I was, too, interested in contact with the City Council of Barcelona and specifically on finding out about the process of implementation and the challenges related to it. Thus, it was logical step to request a meeting with a representative who can explain more about the process of implementation and share 'hands-on' experience. Gladly, I received the opportunity to have a talk with informants from the Urban Ecology department of the City Council.

I was, too, suggested that I may use the expertise of Maria Sisternas who used to be in charge for the planning department in the City Council. It was a possibility to get a perception '*from above*' that is independent (not grounded by the working relation to the project) which could eventually lead to interesting discussion and outcome. Fortunately, it was possible to arrange a meeting there too.

By the end of the planning phase, there were five arranged meetings which was a great success considering not the number of the respondents alone but their various backgrounds which certainly enriches the sample.

Mobility planning Architecture Ecology planning Independent planning perspective
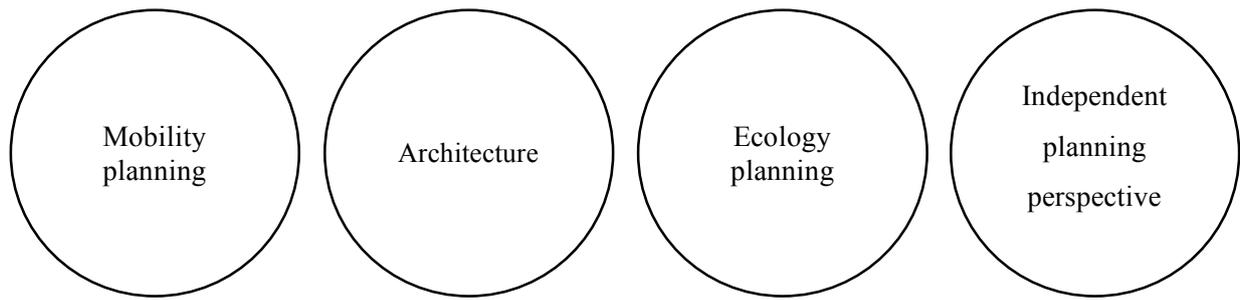
Multi-disciplinary perspective 'from above'

(Figure 1.5)

The process of identification and communication with the informants was hard and time-consuming. Besides, the successfully arranged meetings, there were plenty of failed attempts to reach some of the potential informants. Having the short period of time to arrange the study-trip and logically, the interviews, inspired a strategy of 'as-many-as-possible' so that there was higher chance to reach the initial goal of getting rich qualitative data '*from above*'. Also, when the sample grew too large, there was a possibility to select and prioritize informants. Approached otherwise, there would have been a risk of failure or at the very least insufficient data and thereby poor overall outcome.

Interview in phenomenological research

The interview is a main data collection procedure associated with human scientific research (Englander, 2012:13). The reason why phenomenological researchers choose on the interview is due to the fact that they show interest in the meaning of the phenomenon that is perceived by the others (the subjects), it is natural to think of the interview as a way to approach the subject (Englander, 2012). Also, the focus on interview is relevant and rational because of the fact the interview provides description of the phenomenon.

Unlike the methods used by the researcher in the traditional natural science, the interview suggests another connection between the researcher (subject) and the researched object which happens to be the phenomenon - an expression of a human being. Therefore, the interview suggests a relationship 'subject-subject' and not 'subject-object' (Englander, 2012). However, it has to be said that it is the phenomenon that is in the focus and not the person. By investing efforts in participating in an array

of interviews the idea was to grasp how planners perceive the Superblock without focusing on the on the *persona* of the informant. The genuine goal was to investigate the phenomenon, individually – or whether and how the particular informant perceives the Superblock reality and Poblenou. It was also interesting to investigate the possible emergence of the (same) phenomenon in intersubjective community (namely people planning and perceiving the project '*from above*' without necessarily living in it) which is what phenomenologists consider important (Englander, 2012: 15 in Zahavi, 2001a).

The use of interview in phenomenology, and not only, is beneficial so that it does give answers to questions of 'how' and 'why' and explains the phenomenon. Thus it is often used in phenomenological studies.

Survey

The survey was developed in attempt to grasp the perception of the everyday user living (and/or working and/or using the space) in the Superblock. In order to achieve in this, an online questionnaire was developed in Survey-xact where each of the potential informant could get an access link and thus contribute for the data collection (see appendix).

https://www.surveyxact.dk/LinkCollector?key=VXQCUSCV3N31)

In order to make the survey easy and convenient to connect with the target group, it was translated to Spanish so that the informants did not feel discriminated in anyway which could have potentially scare them away and thus spoil the sample (i.e. partly filled surveys; incorrect unintended answers caused by misunderstanding). When developing the survey, there were thoughts invested in how long time the survey must take for completion so that it does not become too boring and unpleasant to fill. Thus, the limit was set to about 5 to 6 minutes where this was announced at the starting page of the survey.

The information that was pursued through this survey was qualitative with emphasis on the individual relationship to the Superblock in Poblenou (working, living, going through etc.); situational relationship (central, peripheral, neighbouring); the change in habits and practices (before and after

the implementation of the Superblock). The questionnaire, too, asked the typical question such as gender, age but also whether the person's having a children or not. In order to keep the anonymity of the participant, yet, to prove somewhat that the person is real, there was question requesting the initials of the contributor.

The questionnaire consists of 8 question where 6 of them with closed (singular or multiple choice) answers, one requesting the initials in written form, and one – an open question for a free answer. The idea of the open question was to get, on the one hand the chance to 'hear' something individual and untold that might have a valuable and important point which no one has heard before. On the other hand, the open question was aimed at comforting the respondent, to make him or her feel important by being asked for their opinion, and not only to be a part of a survey for the researcher's good sake.

It is very important to establish a good empathy when seeking depth of information, especially when the respondents have a strong personal stake (Lester, 1999: 2). Therefore, the overall attention to detail is high, hoping that this way, that the respondents will feel comforted which is particularly the goal so that the questionnaire become more attractive.

On field-study (gaining *empiri* through personal experience)

The ontology, or the ability to define reality when using phenomenology suggest existing in the world and participating in the reality (Jensen, 2015: slide 16). This is also confirmed by Delanty, who writes:

"...(logical positivism) focuses on sensorily observable overt behaviour, social reality or the life world (Lebenswelt) is an intersubjective word of meaning which is carried in interaction or intercommunication and understood from the inside by participants, including the social scientist." (Delanty, G. and Strydom, P. (2003): 91)

To join the flow and to experience the life world on 'my own body' was necessary in order to gain an idea of how the life at the Superblock in Poblenou looks and feels like. This helped to gain a broad perspective; to sensorily experience and whiteness whether and how the people use and oppose the

Superblock. This individual perception facilitated the opportunity to communicate and reflect over the perceptions of the others (the everyday users) and thereby to become intersubjective.

While in Barcelona, me as researcher, could benefit from the opportunity to experience more than the particularity chosen study location (in this case the Superblock in Poblenou) and to investigate beyond. Since the Superblock idea comprises of multiple units some of which have, too, already 'taken place', I decided to go and visit some of the other Superblocks with better reputation.

By witnessing how the everyday users (the others in relation to the researcher-self) perceive the Superblocks in Les Corts, Les Glòries, Gràcia, and background case - Poblenou, the social researcher (self), can constructs social reality through individual interpretation of (own) behaviour and actions (Collin, F., 1997: 112).

The motivation of escaping the context of Poblenou was to establish a perception of the 'outside' world, so that to distinguish between the different examples and to stress on the uniqueness of the cases. Furthermore, the investigation of the Superblocks is aimed eventually at pointing similarities between them but also to support the answer of research question.1 which require more holistic approach.

Other means of data collection

Besides the traditional for the phenomenology methods, another approach employed in the research aimed at understanding the perception of the human being in the life world was to re-view the media. The media, just as a social researcher, investigates the opinion of the human beings in the world, where based on that, the media becomes capable of constructing realities. It is a potential, indeed, to seek what is on the media, and particularly the words of the individuals and their meanings tight to context of the Superblock in Poblenou. As we shall see later, there are plenty of examples where the media refers to individuals '*from below*' or the everyday users.

Despite of being used as primary source of information and at the very beginning of the explorative investigation, the media is a good way to validate the outcome of the survey and draw some conclusion – whether the results and the media compliment each other; whether the media and the

results totally, partly or somewhat differ. The combination of own (self) investigation and the media investigation does give a broader picture based upon a bigger sample.

Other than that, the explorative investigation in the beginning focused on document analysis aiming at familiarizing with what the Superblock institutional characteristics. The documents that took part in part of the explorative investigation were the Urban mobility plan of Barcelona 2013-2018 (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2014); Government Measure (Commission for Ecology, Urban Planning and Mobility, May 2016); Consell Assessor del Pla de Barris (own translation: Advisory Neighborhood Plan, Barcelona City Council, 2017); 1r taller de participació entorn al programa de superilles (own translation: First participation workshop, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2014).
The content and particular use of the documents will be considered in the analytical part of the project.

Case study

The Supeblock in Poblenou is a small local example, an island of disagreement towards the car-free idea in Barcelona. That location has to be studied individually and contextually due to the fact that, namely, in there started the discussion over the negative outcome of the Superblock application in Barcelona and not elsewhere. Thus, it will be impractical and irrelevant to study the block in Poblenou in a collective manner treating it as equal to the others. Evidently – it is not according to the meaning attached to it. As we shall see later, not only the meaning requires the mega block in Poblenou to be study alone in its own context but other factors as well.

In relation to the use of phenomenology, Bent Flyvbjerg states that "…*cases small local context gives … phenomena their immediate meaning.*" (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 136). When the *phenomena* (the reality constructed in variation of meanings and social relations) is concerned with how the local context as a mean of local perceptions of both users and planner with relation to the place, the common sense may not suggest other approach but a contextual one (a case) to understand the reality properly and rationally.

Reflection and methodological discussion

The combination of methods was beneficial so that it allowed good overview understanding of the meanings as well as their attachment to the case. Furthermore, particularly, the personal contact (subject-subject or the researcher-informant contact and subject-context or being in the context) had a great positive outcome for the research in various ways, where perhaps the most significant one for the study was the ability to re-connect with other (unintended additional) informants. Moreover, the personal contact was beneficial so that deeper understanding was possible to achieve, whereas if the problem was only approached via methods like literature study for instance, the researcher (myself) would have remained distant able only 'to scratch the surface' and gain only general understanding. Possible, too, seeing the case from the distance, was to fall into confusion and misunderstanding, as well as to remain blinded for the ground local knowledge which is a very important one.

The use of phenomenology was natural considering the overall goal of the research – to identify the problems in the system called Superblock which is opposed largely in Barcelona, where this is especially evident in Poblenou. The problems in this case – the opposition and the rejection of the project by the public – is related very much to the personal perception of the stakeholder, namely, the everyday user and the response (perception) of the planners and people in power to this rejection.

What the phenomenology does in general, as well as in this case, is that it gives possibility to study the *persona* and the meaning investigated by the *persona* objectively and subjectively.

Key method to understand the meanings of the person was by participating in room-interviews. Schutz calls that *'the most adequate understanding of another person' which 'resides in the immediate participation in his ongoing thought that occurs only in face-to-face contact'* – the 'we-relationship' (Collin, F., 1997: 113). That 'we-relationship' prove an interesting moment when meeting different stakeholders '*from above*' since they were the only group addressed this way. The face-to-face contact proved that certain opinions may be guarded by the tight working relationship between the person and the project. This makes the manning of the informant dishonest – and the reality constructed by such meanings - questionable. Flyvbjerg, in this regard writes that *"narratology, understood as question of "how best to get an honest story honestly told", is more important than empistemology and ontology"* (Flyvbjer, 2001: 137).

The interview is where it becomes somewhat possible for the researcher, to distinguish between the honestly expressed meaning and the one that it isn't. In a face-to-face communication, other values beside the meaning become very influential such as body language, intonation and vocal control etc. which are subjective characteristics (linked and unique to the *persona*) but largely affective for the proper understanding of the ontology.

What is also interesting about the interview, is that the outcome is restricted sometimes by the informant's opportunity explain and narrate intentionally (with strong focus on the self) so that the interview becomes a monologue and not a conversation. This limits, the chance for gaining the intended by the researcher outcome. As in my case, I did prepare a list of questions which I was particularly interested to have answered. However, it happened sometimes, that I was not given the possibility to ask due to the informant's dominant presence in the conversation. Limiting factor to the interview's outcome is the strict time-frame for the interview to happen. Lester writes in this regard that "*the result tends to be a compromise where a phenomenological approach is used, but the methods used are more structured and contrived than is ideal. (Lester, 1999: 4)*"

Unlike the interview, the survey lacks the constraint of time, being able to be accessed and filled-in at will. The issue with the survey, however, is that it does miss the moment of personal contact and the chance for the researcher to read 'between-the-lines'. The answers, generated through the survey have to be taken for granted – honest or not, which opens a gap to interpret the reality in a wrong way. And while the interview profits from trust conceived in pre-conversational communication (emails and phone calls) as well as in presence at face-to-face communication (human-to-human), the survey lacks this moment.

In this particular approach there is an interesting link between the interview and the survey. I was not precisely sure how to approach the everyday user since I had limited time in Barcelona and considering my language incompetence to approach one (or more) at random when being in the location. However, when having a conversation with Jordi Martín from the ATM (interview 5) about the life in the Superblock, he mentioned that he had a contact with a resident of the Superblock which eventually was used later on to distribute the survey.

In that way there was a sense of security about the right sample (namely the people who use the block on daily basis: living or working there, or crossing by etc.). Also, instead of seeing the survey as a request coming from anonymous person (myself), when distributed by a person the informants know there is certain trust relation established which would not have been the case when distributed by myself alone.

The data collected from being in the reality, is presented by images taken at Poblenou (as central case) and Les Corts, Gràcia, Les Glòries. The implementation and the use of this sort of data is to visually demonstrate and clarify what the life looks in there, how the users connect with the space and deal with the materiality of the Superblock. This is especially important for the reader to establish the visual relationship with all said, to comprehend through images and scenes the researcher witnessed.

In conclusion, the application of the methods was beneficial and composed a large sample of qualitative data reflecting on how the everyday user perceive the Superblock; how planners of various fields and relations perceive the Superblock and how does the Superblock looks through the lenses of a researcher. The outcome of involving stakeholders '*form above*' from various fields strongly benefited the research backed-up with multi-disciplinary take.

The survey, managed to succeed a limited 6 responses mirroring the reaction of the public related with the Superblock. This limited sample, thus cannot be used to generate concrete statements but to draw attention on how the user's see their life before and after the 'arrival' of the Superblock to their daily lives.

Overview of research design (Schema)

The following scheme shows the relationship between the chosen theories and the methods and their contribution on the answering of the research questions. Furthemore, the scheme offers a diagrammatic overview of how the research is structured, so that to lead eventually to the answers of the research question.
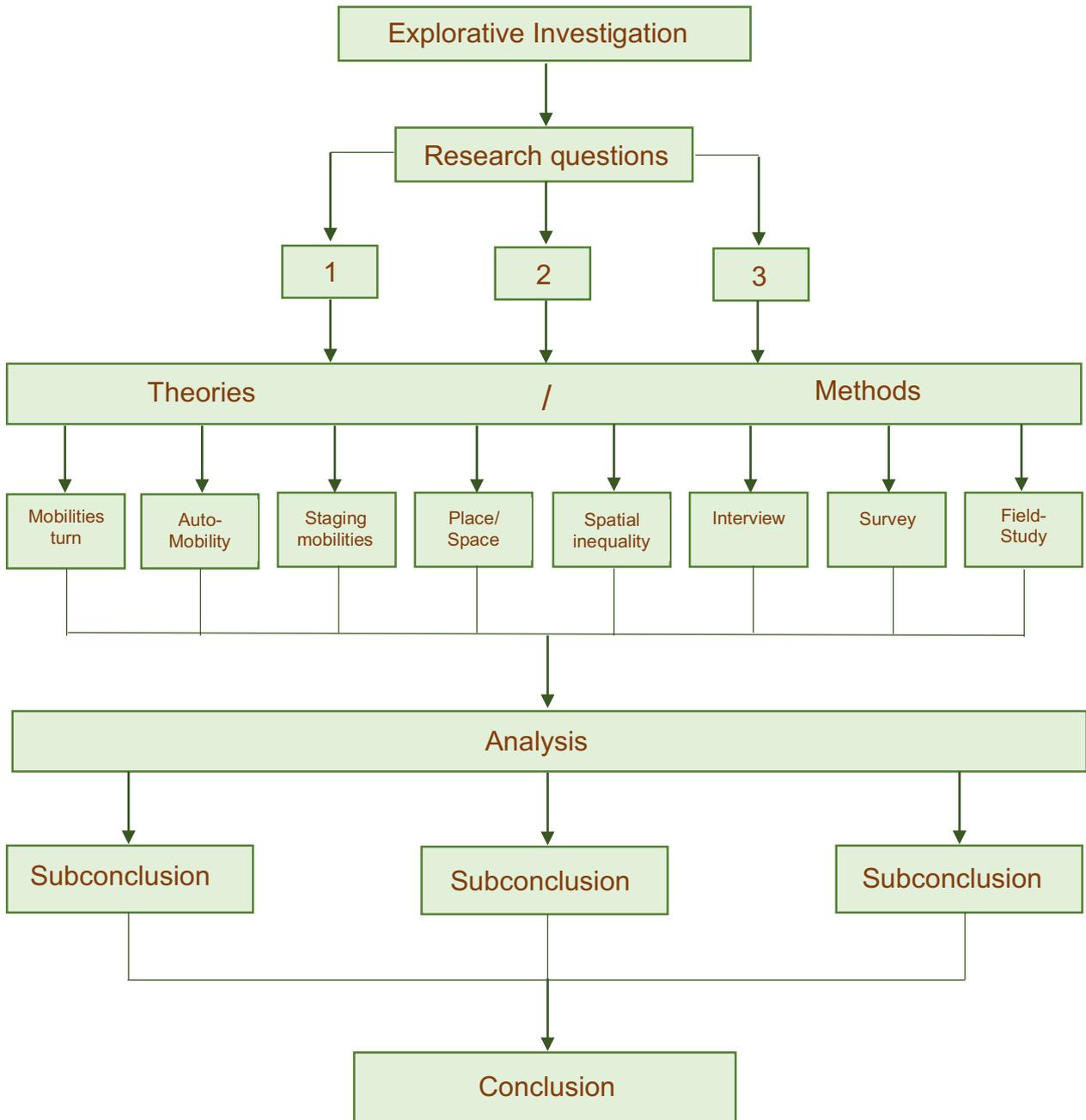
Superblock – the bigger picture

It is rather difficult to give a straight and single-meaning definition on what a Superblock is. This is due to the fact that the Superblock is an organization of grid-locked units which comprise of specific mobility (switch in mobility) where the car is pushed away from the centre of each unit and where the periphery is served by public transport. The cells represent new regulatory framework that is broader and more complex than the current development regulations in effects and aimed at more sustainable urban living (Rueda, 2014: 53).

The Superblock is not only a system that is transforming the mobility of the city. The characteristics of it allow more flexible and open planning so that it can accommodate new models of housing buildings; but also to establish parameters that will fit the block to the new models of mobility and public space (Rueda, 2014: 53).

The model has been developed by the Ecology Agency in Barcelona and it is specifically focus on mobility and ecology. This, for Barcelona, is something new where previously the plans were developed in urban planning departments and not in urban ecology. This plan, however, it is a mobility plan which has to be transformed into and urban one because urbanism is more than just mobility (Mendoza, 2017).

The new mobility plan composed by blocks (green) and roads (white)

The ambition of the Superblock is to reduce the spaces occupied by the traffic and by doing so to battle the lack of space which the city is currently experiencing. This is achieved in optimization of the personal and the public transport which will be limited by the implementation of multiple Superblocks allowing cars and busses to go around the periphery of the new Superblock. By doing so, the length of the total road work used for transport purposes is to be reduced dramatically – to – 61 per cent; and the surface area – to -45 per cent (Rueda, 2017).

The road network currently and after the implementation of the idea in (Rueda, 2017)
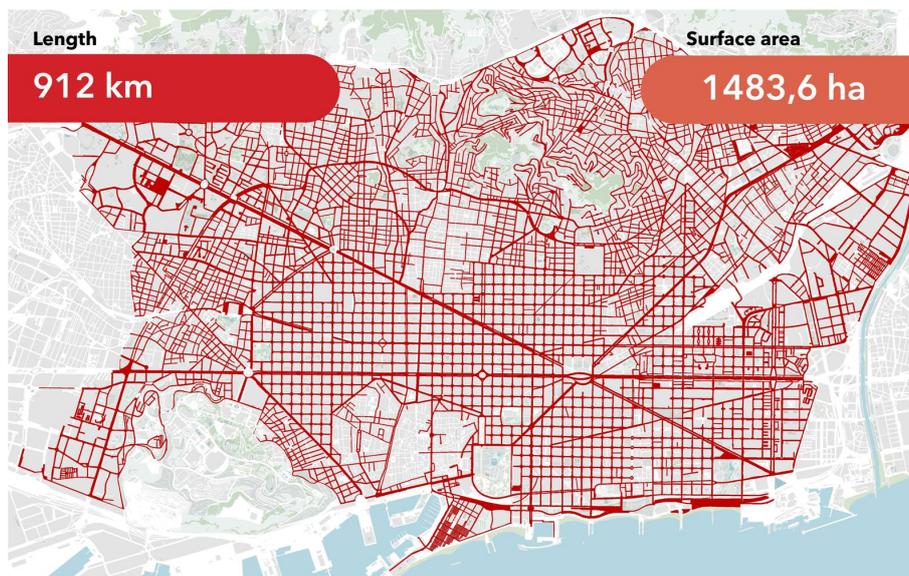
Barcelona road network (streets and sidewalks)
CURRENT SITUATION
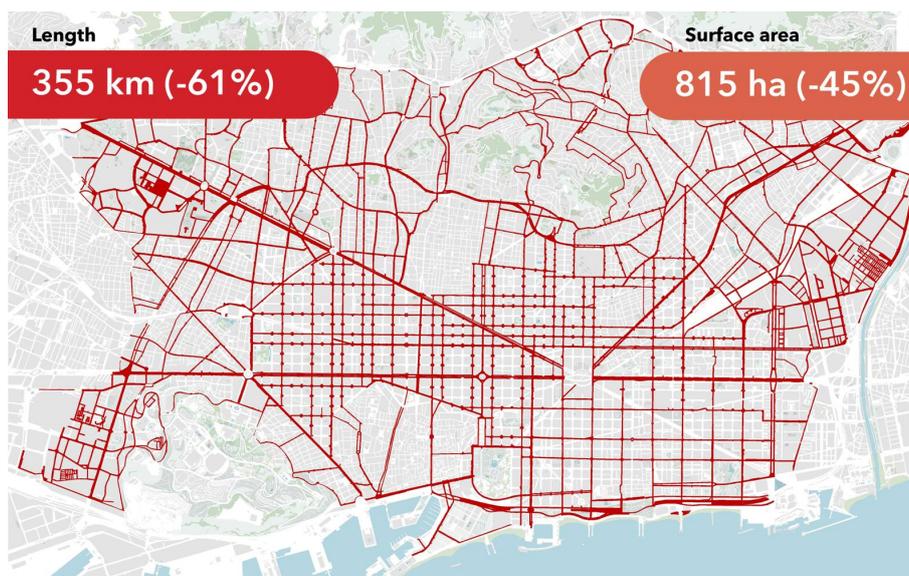
Barcelona road network (streets and sidewalks)
FUTURE SCENARIO WITH NEW SUPERBLOCKS

The limitation of the traffic and the displacement of the transport at the periphery of the blocks will constitute a whole lot open space which can be dedicated for necessary outdoor activities and urban life to which the current access is rather limited. This is further aimed at enhancing the urban ecological parameters like better air quality, improved sound environment and introduction to more green spaces which are substantial for the good quality urban life (Rueda, 2017).

The current and the predicted access to space (in Rueda, 2017)
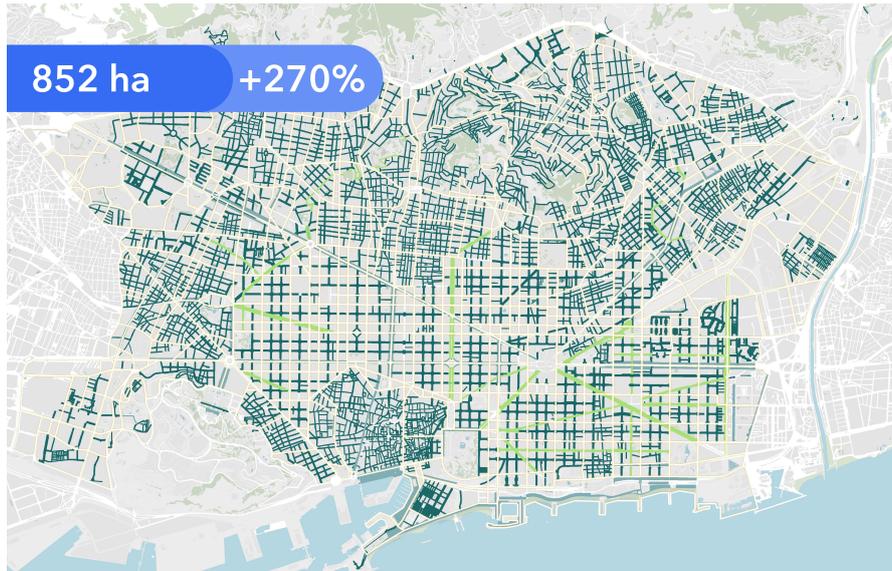
Citizen accessible space - FIVE RIGHTS
FUTURE SCENARIO WITH SUPERBLOCKS
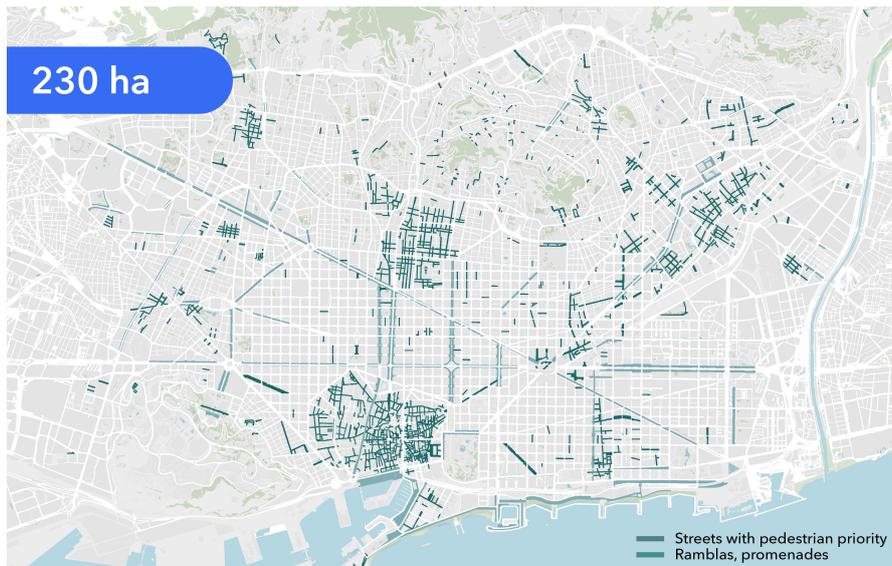
Citizen accessible space - FIVE RIGHTS
CURRENT SITUATION

Constructed over the mobility of the city, the Superblock plan is aimed at tackling the challenges the city is currently facing hoping to create a system of more sustainable urban living.

The Superblock is then evidently a mobility project which spreads all over other aspects of the urban life and certainly raises a lot of questions concerned with land management and city functions. By limiting the access to cars, certain areas will struggle to keep up with those who still benefits from having access to cars, this will become a great challenge at the areas where the public transport services are limited. Moreover, since the mobility is power as argued in the theoretical chapter, the power will simply pass by the periphery of the Superblock along with the other means of transport so that some may be forced from the '*fast*' to the '*slow*' lane of social life considering the deeper meaning of the mobility (Urry, 2007: 11).

Superblocks in small scale

This is a large mobility project which is the target to be achieved in the upcoming years. So far, there is only few blocks in the whole city which have undergone the transformation from car-full to car-less. It has been a governmental decision to test the project in the different districts of the city where each receives a superblock or a *pilot* (test Superblock) (Miquel, 2017: 3 interview)

Map of the implemented at early stage Blocks where el Poblenou/Ambit St. Marti (Furthest right); Les Glòries (Second right to left); and Les Corts (Furthest left)

As a bare eye could see, the Superblock differ in size, shape and location or simply said, they are unique in this systems that tries to unify by restricting their access to car. However, they are uneven, as we shall see, and they will respond and adjust to the switch (from car-full to car-free or car-less) differently. In this section, it is the aim to examine and stress on the difference between them all. Based on pre-investigation, self-experience and seen through the eyes of planners (phenomena of the person in planning position).

But first of all, what is a Superblock in a singular meaning?
The Superblock is a functional unit of territorial organization based upon mobility (Rueda, 2014: 98). It has approximate size of 400x400 meters where they are cantered to a perimeter of traffic which circulates around the Superblock, and where the interior space is free for urban activities. The access to the interior is allowed for residential and emergency services where there is limitation on the allowed speed which is 10 km-per-hour (Rueda, 2014).

Examples of Superblock – Les Corts, Les Glòries, Gràcia and Poblenou

Les Corts

Les Corts is a place near the Camp Nou stadium being located in the western part of the city where the more wealth *barcelones* live (Sisternas, 2017 interview). The place has suffered from lack of space and congestion especially when an event (match or other) held when the space appears to be insufficient to accommodate the local resident and the visitors to the neighbourhood. The area comprises of a lot of residential entities which suggested the implementation of a Superblock in the area since there was a lot of pressure of car (Sisternas, 2017: 3 interview).

What makes the Superblock in Les Corts interesting is that it is located in a relatively wealthy and old (historically) area with a lot of residential entities which requested the application of the Superblock due to the elevated traffic. It is clear indication of the problem '*from below*' and not '*from above*' as in some of the other examples. Also, the fact that the Superblock in Les Corts does not limit car mobility but the ability cars to be parked (immobility) by transformation of the parking space to

an open space, the car naturally becomes displaced from the area. In the idea of this Superblock is the space particularly that is requested and achieved by parking limiting actions, which is not the case elsewhere.

Les Corts Superblock from below

Les Glòries

The Superblock in Las Glòries is very orientated towards the mobility in the area. The area, currently in construction, used to accommodate a large roundabout infrastructure which was built for the Olympics (Sisternas, 2017: 7 interview). Building such infrastructures, to which Rueda refers to it as *an error*, are now being dismantled as an attempt to fix the error, where Les Glòries is a good illustrative example (Rueda, 2014: 55).

However, now the idea is to facilitate the traffic horizontally and vertically so that easier access for the car is allowed without unnecessary detours ant thus less gas emissions generated through traffic. The traffic, however, will be facilitated underground via tunnels and therefore the surface of the old roundabout allows change and transformation.

The new traffic solution after the demolition of the roundabout
http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/glories/wp-content/uploads/vehicles1.jpg

Even though under construction, the space around that is already free has been introduced to the people via small low-cost interventions like paintings on the surface, plantings (which to be planted into the new park once the de-construction of the roundabout is fully completed) etc.

The idea of this Superblock is not to radically constraint the car mobility in the area but rather to introduce new infrastructural solution so that it will allow quicker and more convenient (and logically environmentally friendlier). It is an intervention which combines both, good quality urban space and mobility without one being built on the expense of the other.

The idea of this Superblock is not radically constraint the car mobility in the area but rather to introduce new infrastructural solution so that it will allow quicker and more convenient (and logically environmentally friendlier). It is an intervention which combines both good quality urban space and mobility without one being built on the expense of the other.

Gràcia?

Both Salvador Rueda and Ariadna Miquel (interview 1 & 2) refer to Gràcia as a Superblock. On contrary, Maria Sisternas and Carmen Mendoza disagree on this definition. However, I would like it to be brought to discussion due to the fact that it seems a good example of car-free living. It demonstrates that the life without cars can be rather charming and well functioning. However, it is not precisely a Superblock.

Unlike the Superblock that is the core of this thesis, Gràcia does not have the same morphology and it is not part of the district of l'Eixample. Back in the days Gràcia used to be an old town being further north from the town walls which were eventually torn down so that the city could expand following the plan of Cerdà – the block structure. As the city grew bigger it reached Gràcia so that it was assimilated and later considered part of the city.

What makes Gràcia unique from the more recent blocks, is that it has the urban morphology of an old town, being densely built, with taller buildings, narrow roadways and accommodating larger number of residents (Sisternas, 2017; Mendoza, 2017 interview). Also, what makes Gràcia unique is the many smaller and bigger squares that are dotted all around which were part of the development going on in the 1980's. This development, unlike the Superblock was targeted at developing the neighbourhood as meeting place where the focus was set especially on public space; whereas in this case – prior is the mobility and not the urban space (Mendoza, 2017: 10-11 interview).

So what makes the difference between Gràcia and the other example is: 1) it's location (being not part of the detract of l'Eixample); 2) being more densely built; 3) being historically older and therefore comprising of supporting the car-less idea (like the narrow road system).

Furthermore, Sisternas argued that unlike many other parts of the city, Gràcia benefits from being well-connected to public transport services and thus the car becomes less needed and displacement happens somewhat naturally (Sisternas, 2017: 9 interview).

Gracia from above and in comparison with l'Eixample (on the right)
Image from Googlemaps, accessed on 17 may, 2017,
https://www.google.dk/maps/@41.4014642,2.158124,1516m/data=!3m1!1e3?hl=en

Gràcia from below - One of the many public spaces embraced by the people on a sunny day

Gràcia from below – The typical narrow street profile

Poblenou

At the time of the Olympics the area of Poblenou was industrial land casted at the periphery of the city (Sisternas, 2017). Nowadays, the area is in transition being still home of some small industries. Unlike the other Superblocks, the one in Poblenou has caused a lot of controversy around the outcome which compared to other examples lacks behind. Unlike the previous mentioned cases, Poblenou does not comprise of big nor strong residential entities, it is recently redeveloped and redeveloping area from its industrial heritage (Sisternas: 2017, Mendoza: 2017).

The urban morphology of the area comprises of the blocks of Cerdà being evenly distributed. However, the area does not have the mobility access which are seen in some of the previous examples. And since, the area is poorer, hosting some business activities, and devoid of alternatives to the car the area has been seriously challenged to keep with the rest, being largely dependant on its car mobility.

Unlike the other cases where the traffic is displaced or re-shaped so that it provides more free space, in the case of Poblenou, the space is generated over the expense of the car; the space becomes prior to the mobility. This Sisternas calls a "huge political mistake" because: 1) the Superblock

implementation is not focused on rationality but on individual decision, meaning that a space is provided over the expense of the car mobility where the space is in fact not needed (Sisternas, 2017) 2) The limitation of the car where is needed (in peripheral and post-industrial areas) is the source of public discontentment which may affect the further implementation of the blocks since the project fails to proof that it is good for the public. And above all, having in mind the sense of community between the different neighbourhoods).

Poblenou from below

Poblenou from above
https://www.google.dk/maps/@41.4008456,2.1952981,1477m/data=!3m1!1e3

Statistical overview (Barcelona City Council, 2017)

Les Corts

Density of population	524 inhabitants / ha
Green spaces per inhabitant	1,2 m2
Economic activities	333 activities

Gracia

Density of population	348 hab / ha
Green spaces per inhabitant	5m2 per inhabitant
Economic activities	189 activities on the ground floor

Poblenou

Density of population	886 habitants / ha
Green spaces per inhabitant	3,4 m2 per habitant
Economic activities	-

Conclusion

To sum-up, all the Superblocks examples differ in any possible criteria beside the common name they have been given. They are uneven is size, form, mobility, economy, densities, landscape and perhaps more. They are unique where in each individual case, the Superblock was implemented with different purpose and strategies, and where the outcome, too, varies within the different locations.

Therefore, it can be concluded, that the Superblock is an intervention that is based upon mobility (whether limitation, displacement or re-placement of automobiles). However, the way the mobility is perceived is differently in each case which stresses on the fact discussed in the theoretical chapter that the city is product and a producer of inequalities, and that nothing is even or equal – even in an inter-urban context (Harding & Blokland, 2014).

Even before the introduction of the Superblock the neighbourhoods were different, where after the arrival of the Superblock the inequality is further enhances – where the mobility or/and the space at some places achieve higher or lower quality; where somewhere is invested more in detriment of other cases due to power relations and other factors.

This illustration of the different Superblock further emphasize that the case should be investigated individually because of the large difference and uniqueness of the cases. Because of their specific characteristic generalizing them is not rational and very much unhelpful to understand the car-freeing – where, why and how it happens. Therefore, the study has to be contextualized.

Poblenou as study a case or why to focus on Poblenou?

Poblenou is an interesting case because unlike the other examples it seems somewhat neglected in terms of its mobility; it seems like an arena for power demonstration of politicians, lacking somewhat the sensibility and the rationality of the other cases which earlier discussed – why to add more space to a place where there isn't need for that (due to the relatively low density), but too – why to limit the car mobility to those that perhaps mostly needed in the city?

Unlike the other cases, it is easy to see from the sky with a bare eye that Poblenou is less developed and therefore the mobility as power source to the neighbourhood shall be preserved to assure the area will remain on the development tracks since it is an area in transition.

The difference between the poorer eastern and the wealthier western side of the city from above
https://www.google.dk/maps/@41.4008914,2.1807329,3390m/data=!3m1!1e3

There are popular claims and signs of disagreement which are not present at the any of the other locations - not at the current moment at the very least. There's been a big discussion over this 'problematic' piece of the puzzle where businesses and citizen complaint of the arrival of the Superblock with strong claims for exclusion, social and spatial inequalities and not particularly benefiting from the Superblock. This is some thing interesting. Considering also the fact that this Superblock may eventually stumble the whole idea with otherwise good intentions for sustainable urban living. Poblenou is where this can fail. Therefore, it is an interesting example.

Unlike Les Corts, where the Superblock was requested by the residents themselves, the Superblock in Poblenou was forced by power – the political insistence of the mayor without sensible meaning - to provide space to this finely populated urban area. Why is that insistence? And shall the Superblock be built on the expense of the peripheral areas?

The look 'From Above'

To get a perception on how is planned, what are the causes, the consequences and challenges on the implementation of the Superblock I did ask people who are more clever in the 'Superblock' discipline, being the authors, the lecturers and students of it. The idea was to see what they see – the phenomenon on the Superblock '*from above*'.

He said, she said

The combination of perceptions of the various stakeholders is an intriguing one. The various phenomena sometimes complement one another, where sometimes is rather contradicting. However, there are certainly elements and reflections over the concept which underline the issues of the project commonly seen as such.

Poblenou covered in political coat

The problem of the Superblock is related and dependant on political decision. This is confirmed by the 'father' of the Superblock who sees the political scenario as the only obstacle in front of the implementation of the idea. In this regard, he says:

'*...the main problem of the superblocks is the political scenario. It's not a technical problem.*' (Rueda, 2017: 4)

Similarly, this is confirmed by other actors which predict that the failed implementation of the Superblock may eventually question the re-election of the local mayor; and thereby to question the

further implementation of the Superblock concept which depends on continuity. And continuity is only secure if the power relations remain unchanged.

There are critics to the implementation of the Block in Poblenou due to the fact the choice is based upon unpopular (uneducated) decisions. When the idea does not mean the requirement and needs of the local communities it risks to be opposed and thereby to affect the further implementation of the block as a complete concept.

The block should be able to prove its good for the community as well as for the city when tested for the first time. Otherwise, it will be harder to change the negative first impression so that the idea becomes accepted and wanted in the rest of the city.

'So what I know - the danger of this mistake (I think it is a big failure) is that it can influence negatively other superblocks in other parts of the city... Because now there have been fears, opponents, people who have even put papers on their balconies. And these people are organized and they are influencing other people in other parts of the city.

...

I think, in urbanism, we call it when an idea is burned. I don't think the idea is going to have any kind of happy future. That's my opinion. And it is pity because of the policy itself, I don't think this was the place. The big mistake – nobody asked for a superblock here but there are other parts of the city in which the people would like to have it.'

(Sisternas, 2017: 6)

An interesting aspect which Sisternas talks about is the communication of the problem and its distribution to the others. And when the negative idea becomes nested in the local communities around the city, it will further complicate the implementation of the Superblock in the future.

Poblenou in communication with the locals

The Superblock acts as an explanation to the public and as a translation of the political decision into every day language. Since there is a gap in the communication between planners and users, where important decisions are taken autocratically (top-down; no public involvement) a certain explanation to the public is required.

The design of the interior of the Superblock in this example was the triggering point for public involvement which did not happen at earlier stages. It was also to introduce the locals to the new concept and plans for the city.

'... (it) was an opportunity for expression and also for the neighbours to see that something was happening there because sometimes ideas are easy to understand from the academics, from a lot of technical people but the people on the ground – you really have to explain to them and they see it, they understand the dimension, you know. So I think this is what happened. This was a catalyst to see what was really going to happen in that space' (Mendoza, 2017: 3)

This underlines the fact, that there was a lack of communication between the authorities and the residents which were not involved at the early stages of the project but at the very last being somewhat involved in the design of the interior, where in the early stage they were neglected. The solution was very 'top-down' decided 'from above in an autocratic manner. The result of this was a resistance and opposition which eventually adopted more democratic principles in decision making and public participation.

This is confirmed by Ariadna Miguel from the local municipality who says:
'...here we don't have this culture of participation. We are learning – the planners, the government, and the citizens are learning how to do this' (Miguel, 2017: 7)

Poblenou in private and public mobility

There's been a shade of criticism towards the project in regard of the mobility solution – concerning both the car mobility and the other means of transport. The criticism concerning the car is that the car mobility, on the one hand is the only source of transport for the local community since the access to other means of transport is limited. On, the other hand, there's been concerns about the de-polluting effect of the car-freeing which does not happen in real life. Being a barrier for the cars to cross the Superblocks creates contra effect – requiring more detours and longer stays in traffic and therefore – generates more pollution. Besides, Maria Sisternas links this car mobility issue to a more significant

problem – colliding with the existing public transport system which experiences delays being stuck in the traffic which worsens the quality of the service. So shortly said, the Superblock harms mobility – personal and collective.

'So, basically what happens every time we get out of this building with the parking and many people are in the same situation as me, we come at the superblock that doesn't allow us to cross in that way (The distance between Imagina and the superblock in Poblenou is only a few blocks). So basically to go and take La Ronda we have to do a huge ride. What is the criticism? The criticism is actually that we are polluting more. That's the easy criticism' (Sisternas, 2017: 1)

She further explains the relationship between the public transport and the car in relation to the Superblock:

'So, I would cross the street here with no problem and go slow with my car. When the superblock started I couldn't use this. So I have to make a huge turn and go around. The same in the mornings – I have to take Tanger and then come back here. The traffic has increased' (Sisternas, 2017: 12)

…

'And there is one thing worse – since there is a lot queue on this street, Tanger, it collides with the tram so the tram has to stop' (Sisternas, 2017: 12)

This problem has specifically relation to the crossroads at the external part of the block and the periphery where the cars spend more time in traffic which is related with ecological issues on the one hand, but also with the acoustic environment around the perimeter of the Superblock (Martin, 2017).
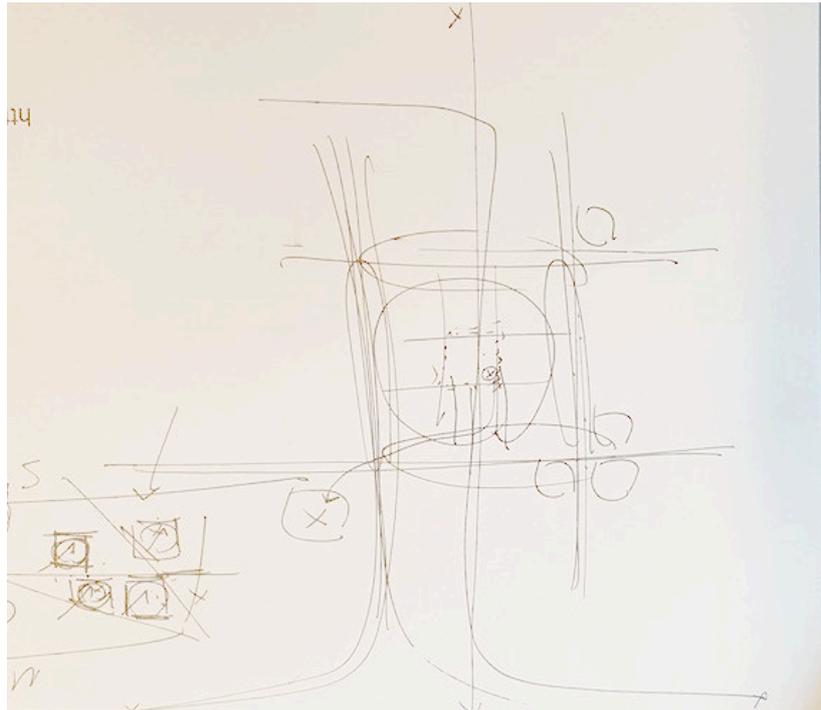
The problem with the noise and the increased traffic reflects upon the notions for spatial inequality in small scale (eternally for the block). Where more cars are relocated from the centre to the periphery of the block the ones living in the centre will eventually benefit from acoustically more comfortable urban space and also - less polluted. On contrary, the one living at the edge of the block will be more exposed to the hazards of the autmobility in terms of noise and pollution.

This, however, was denied by Ariadna Miguel who works in the municipality with the words:

'Now a lot of the streets are on the limit of their capacities. So more it's impossible to reach. The traffic reaches its maximum' (Miguel, 2017: 5)

This, however, sounded very unreasonable to my 'independent' ear. Therefore, I decided to test whether this is true or not by visiting the periphery of the block at different times. Evidently, there was more room for traffic to fill in and thereby to supress the current urban conditions, which is one of the popular public claims.

Carrer de Pallars during the week – One of the peripheral streets of the Superblock

The same was confirmed by Sisternas who elaborates on the necessity of being more transparent to the public so that detailed information is provided. Otherwise, such statements become unreasonable.

'I think this counter should be provided. And they are hiding it. And that's what is not correct. To me everything is correct. They have the right to try to do this. But they should be publishing the data. (Sisternas, 2017)

Poblenou – in commercial mobility

Poblenou is a place which is associate with its irrationality being placed where not needed, nor requested. But simply because of the structure of the neighbourhood. Due to its relatively small size, density and activities it is a lot easier to be transformed to a Superblock that it would be elsewhere. However, Poblenou is a poor place with presence of commercial activities and small industries which depend on good access to car as and delivery vans. And this is where the car mobility becomes a great challenge – to sustain the local economy.

'Another challenge is the commercial and the transport companies. It's difficult to solve it because they want to drive next to the shops with their vehicles' (Miguel, 2017 : 6)

'Do you know who complains here? The poor people… Because they own small factories of cars '

(Sisternas, 2017: 11)

'Salvador wants them to close the shop. But it's their business. They have been selling cars forever and ever and the city has a contradiction. It has people who have to deliver food, it has people who have to have old people. What happens to old people that cannot access their home by car? ' (Sisternas, 2017: 11)
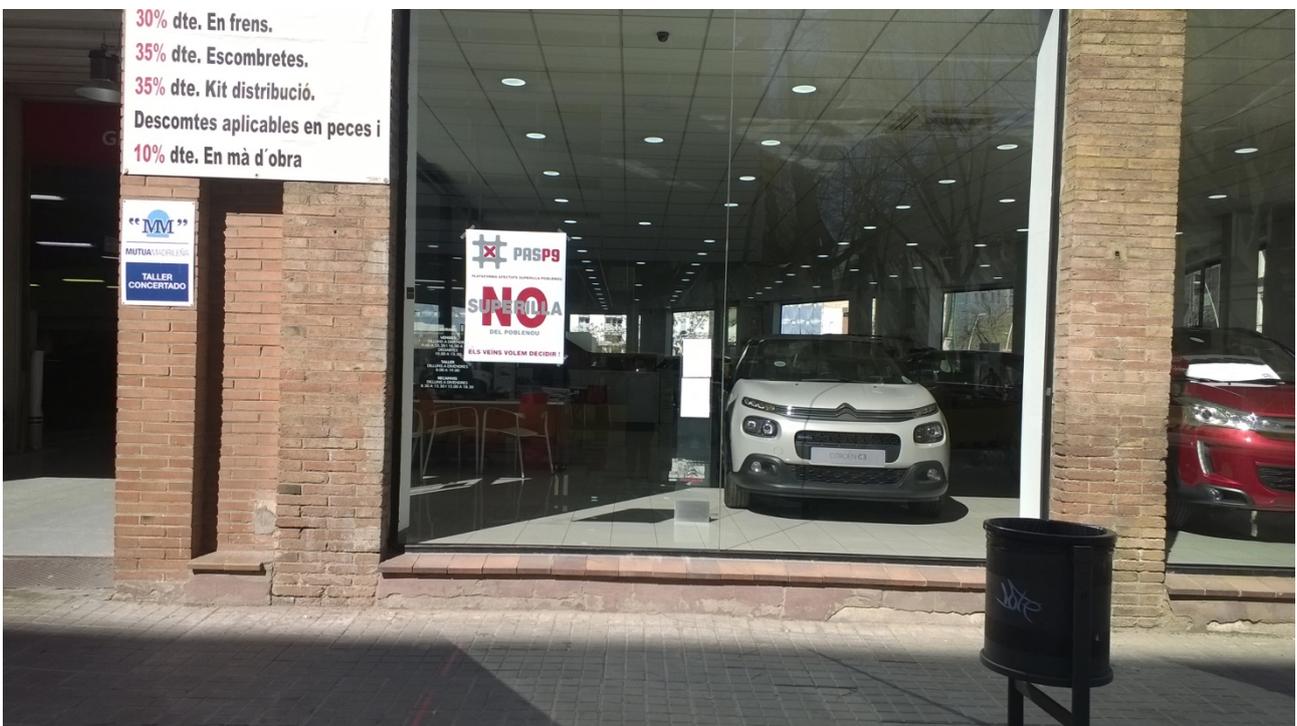
Cars shop at Poblenou says "*No Superilla*"

Poblenou – easy or rational

Many '*from above*' have argued that Poblenou was chosen not for any practical or rational reasons but because it is easy to achieve. This logically leads to public resistance being supressed by political determination without particular sense or benefit for the local context. On contrary, when implementing a Superblock where it is not needed leads not only to public resistance and risk of future failure of the idea, but as argued earlier – to serious mobility challenges.

' I think it was easy to do it there. That's why I think it was clever of them to start there because the city is not totally made.The Poblenou is still redefining many of its uses, transforming industrial area. It's in transformation. So when you were doing that there, I think it was the only place you could do it right now without collapsing the city because the rest of the city is very dense, full of activities (Mendoza, 2017: 8)'

We have to begin somewhere. We don't have another way of doing it. (Miguel, 2017: 8)

Here in Poblenou, which is a district that is planned more recently, is an easy structure... They want to do it rapidly, so they chose this ambit (Miguel, 2017: 4)

The stories '*from above*' draw a picture where the mobility is not a stand-alone but dependant on other factors like politics, space, inequality and economy. Eventhough it originates from a mobility plan the Superblock has to grow to a level that adopts the other means of the urban planning and management.

'...it is a mobility plan. Now I think its going to be transformed into an urban plan because urbanism is more than just mobility. So now they are in that phase of becoming an urban planning in which you have to talk about activities, you have to talk about land management' (Mendoza, 2017: 4)

As argued, the different perceptions of the planners show that Poblenou as well as the success of the whole Superblock concept requires consistent power and political dedication. Moreover, the project has to have a level of understanding of the local context so that it becomes meaningful and purposeful. The practices of opposition due to the political stubbornness of the mayor may be the cause of the failure of the project and its further implementation. The decisions shall be popular and informed by the public perception so that there's cooperation and rational application based not only political decisions.

Perceptions from below

Survey

- I think the superblock is a good initiative but it should be explained better and it should have a more attractive final use for the people that live neighboring the spaces inside the superblock

- A good initiative launched prematurely.

- I hope soon there will be more activity in the area.

- I consider the superblock project is a brilliant idea and that over time will consolidate as an alternative to minimized the traffic. It will bring new uses to the public space, more activity and a new paradigm in the way of understanding l'Eixample. From the idea of universal mobility proposed by Cerdà, the coexistence between pedestrian and vehicle will no longer be a relationship between vehicle and citizen but a relationship among citizens.

- The superblock is a great idea, but very poorly done!! No parking for bikes.

- Overall, I'm happy with the implementation of the Superblock.

The sample of the survey offers an array of answers where the dominant perception is that the project has a good point, yet it is and prematurely done. These perceptions are reflected as well in the media proving that the overall attitude toward the project is positive. However, there are gaps to be filled especially in terms of public involvement and rational execution of the idea.

Media

The media is a reflector of the public opinions where some positive, and other negative; and thirds – humoristic. There are plenty of publications on the Superblock embracing the inappropriate application of the Superblock and poor choice of site which generates a wide-spread of public rejection (Bayle, 2016). It is '*A good idea- bad implemented*'. Due to the objectives shared by all such as good living conditions with less cars, yet it is needed to reconsider the location of the Superblock to a more rational one. In the article of Bayle, Àngel Gordo, a neighbour of Tangers elaborates on the fact that the traffic has increased dramatically after the implementation of the block

around the periphery by saying: "*It has been a quiet place where we used to enjoy our terraces, we slept until waking-up with the noise of seagulls and sparrows. In 6 months everything has changed: immense traffic, increasing pollution, a street of 20 meters wide that supports 6 bus-lines, firemen… and all because of the Superblock.*" (Bayle, 2016)

Quim Monzo writes about the splendid self-praise of the '*owner*' of the Superblock referring to the municipality who's praised their own 'achievement' over public space (and car restriction). However, he (the owner) does not mention anything about the limited access to bus-stops, the ambulance that cannot reach the patients at their front-doors, the cleaning service finding themselves in the maze of the so-called Superblock (Monzo, 2016). There is no reference, he writes, about the violation of the public opinion which should have been informed on forehand and to come as *post factum*.

Because of the introduction of the Superblock bus routes has changes which has caused some traffic issues. Due to the relatively new concept of the block and the short period for adaption to the changes has happened that a driver has driven through the Superblock, and when realizing that motor traffic in the area is restricted, he tried to back-up which caused a damage to the cones of the *Superilla*. This act of 'violation' of the Superblock rules was recorded and sent to the social media (Bosch, 2016).

Others like Manuela Rosero focus on '*the bigger picture*' and not on the Superblock itself where she suggests a look over the whole good of the city. Regardless of the changes in terms of traffic and spatial arrangements the citizen should focus more on the overall outcome for good and healthy urban living and not on the challenges the Superblock creates (Rosero, 2016).

Own perception

The Superblock idea is genuinely good, yet it is too visionary. It should focus on small scale and on particular context so that it can become possible to achieve brightly in the future. What it lacks is the public involvement and rational educated choice. The choices shall be very aimed at the public good considering the seriousness of the challenges Barcelona is facing. The case of Poblenou is inappropriate in a way that it is planned to suit the needs of the planners to be easy to compose and

conduct. However, it should be in mind, that Poblenou lies at the periphery of the city and so it comprises of poor currently developing quarters which do reside small business that cannot be simply neglected (nor their mobility needs). The implementation has to be sensible and not encourage spatial and social inequalities. The area has to be carefully selected too, so that after all becomes useful and properly inhabited.

lots of potential in Poblenou or loads of meaningless unnecessary space – depending on individual pereception

Conclusions and discussion

The problem of the car mobility is not a problem of Barcelona particularly but a problem of many cities and metropolitan areas in the Global North and South. There are clear signs as well as expectations that the problem is about to continue to grow enhanced by the processes of urbanization.

What the study shows is that there are positive aspects of the world's move towards the city. The large concentration of people and functions over a small (small in comparison with urban sprawl for instance) and compact territory requires re-thinking of the urban system especially in terms of mobility.

The benefit of living closer together in dense urban environments suggest that a new way to commute is possible to be established so that it makes, firstly, economical sense; and secondly – sense in terms of sustainable living (optimum use of land, less energy consumption and logically – less CO_2 production etc.).

The example of Barcelona is certainly a proof. What is particularly interesting is the morphology of the city which is very important factor of the realization of such project. Comprising of blocks with equal size, the city benefits of the opportunity to establish equity seen as equal access to transportation (and eventually continuation following the same pattern). However, as discussed, the blocks nor the Superblocks are the same. Their urban fabrics are different (perhaps very similar but still different); their densities and logically the need for transportation is different; the economic activity in each is different. The list is long. So naturally comes the questions: 'Is then the Superblock rational?', 'Is it rational to add resources where not needed, or at the very least - where not needed as much?' (mobility as resource). And concerning cars in this regard – is it rational to limit the access to cars where sort of mostly needed - in the periphery that lacks mobility alternatives?

The rationality and the power go hand-by-hand as Flyvbjerg suggest, and the power is the force capable of creating realities (Flyvbjerg, 1998). And the power comes from different levels - *'from above'* (politics and others in high possession of power) and *'from below'* – the users (Jensen, 2014). Considering the amount of power that the different levels can express and perform, lets focus for a moment on the perception *'from above'* and how the politics created the Superblock –the so called *pilot ambit* in Poblenou.

An interesting moment, for me as researcher, was to find out how the area was chosen since I could not see myself any valuable reason for such decision. It is as an area in transition that lacks the mobility opportunities and access to the city compared to other neighbourhoods in the city (Sisternas, 2017). So why then limiting the access to the city even more? My ambition to get the answer on that led me to one: *'because it is easy'*, because is evenly distributed structurally; because it comprises of low density and low economic activity (compared to other neighbourhoods); and because cars are less present. This quality of Poblenou, namely, being easy (or easier compared to others) to plan leads a sensible mind that the political decision was provoked by the quick outcome considering the time for implementation in not so complex urban environment (area). Not rational, indeed, seen from any other perspective, but *'from above'*, reflecting the ambition of a politician(s) to be re-elected and re-united with power in future moments in time based on previous achievement (Superblock or something else).

Also, the definition '*easy*' seen from the lenses of an urban planner demonstrates the hypocrisy of the people in power possession '*from above*'. Such decision is a symbolic manifestation of power where the outcome seems orientated '*from above*' – '*to above*' – a design and an application angled towards the planners' (or politicians') good sake and not towards the users '*from below*'. Yet, worth saying is that certain users benefit from the Superblock particularly well. However, the implementation of a Superblock would have undoubtedly made more sense elsewhere considering '*the bigger picture*' – the demand for space or the more intense traffic in some other areas of the city and all that goes hand-in-hand with it (the more complicated process of implementation and negotiation etc.)

The case of Poblenou impresses very much, too, with the demonstration of power '*from below*' which may, eventually, have really strong affect over political decisions and thus shall not be underestimated. The decisions shall be more informed and popular aimed at the public good (Sisternas, 2017). Otherwise, they risk to face the public resistance. Indeed, the public resistance was the force that transformed the implementation from an '*easy*' to 'complicated' one. This transition certainly has left its footprint over the economic, political and socio-cultural aspects.

The public voice of opposition towards the Superblock is the one that provoked more meetings and public involvement and thus encouraged more people to participate in the planning process. Done this way, the distance between the power groups '*from below*' and '*from above*' is somewhat reduced. This also reflects the ambition for more integrated and informed decisions where the public has the opportunity to participate in the decision making before the actual implementation. This, however, is a time-consuming process and logically – costlier too.

This proves, once again, that the mobility is not a stand-alone discipline but rather a connection between the disciplines. And 'simple' at first glance mobility (immobility) project has an impact spread over space, politics, economy, ecology and more. As we shall see further down, it has also escaped the local context and affected other parts of the city too.

So how then to plan and design car-less?

- **Multi-disciplinary and in consensus with the audience which the carless idea is addressed to. Public involvement**

Planning for no cars, for more cars, for no mobility or less mobility is a complicated process. It is too, a process that requires multi-disciplinary approach, a lot of negation and communication between the different parties – whether it is local (citizens) organization, unity of car owners, local businesses, politicians and policy makers, architects, planners etc. They should be gathered together in the pre-implementation process and not afterwards. This will surely have a positive effect over the implementation and the desired outcomes.

It should be looked upon different angles in terms of power relation and possession where both planners and users should have the word. Otherwise, as seen in the case of Poblenou, the process of implementation becomes very hard; the implementation itself may require a sacrifice from the initial idea or '*killing the darling*' of a planner or a politician whose initial intention was aimed at the public good.

- **Small scale proposals and having continuity in mind; good first impression (rationality and practical sense)**

Particularly important in the case of Barcelona and elsewhere, I do believe, is that the car-less implementation should happen at small scale because the automobility as system, is the most complex of all (Urry, 2007). Being this complex does not allow to be radicalized and utterly denied. Instead, the change shall be gradually achieved and importantly - it should allow continuity. And to assure continuity, the first attempt should be successful and well-accepted by the public - the local residents and users.

In the case of Barcelona, and the small piece of the carless (Superblock) puzzle – Poblenou, one may see that the implementation of the idea did not exactly go seamlessly. It, on contrary, sparkled the fire of resistance which is spreading all over the city. Banners saying '*No Superilla*' can be found almost anywhere in the city at random and especially in proximity with the Superblock which means the bad new has spread and the negative attitudes towards car-freeing are reality. Having said that, this is certainly not good for the continuation of the idea because firstly - it will be harder to convince the public in the positive effect of the Superblock (indeed, not impossible since the people are getting more informed and aware of what is happening); and secondly – the troubled implementation of the

Superblock may be considered by some as failure of the politics of the mayor Ada Colau and thereby question her re-election. Whoever else is her successor in power, he or she may, or may not continue the course of car-freeing the city. And this questions whether or how the city will then proceed with the idea of car-less living.

The answer of research question 3 or 'What makes the successful implementation of the Superblock in Poblenou a key factor for the sustainable car-free future of Barcelona?' is the ability to encourage continuation. Since the Superblock in Poblenou is the *pilot*, it has the heavy responsibility to prove that it is good for the city so that it gets the public approval for further implementation in other areas. In case it fails to convince the public in its positive outcome, the project will be opposed by the neighbourhoods waiting for their Superblock to 'come' on the one hand; and on the other hand – it may question the re-election of local mayor which is directly linked to the continuation assured by the unchanged power coming '*from above*'.

Back to the discussion over how to plan for no cars, an important notion is that:

- **Nothing is equal nor even to other – the neighbourhoods have their own special relation to their mobility, whether it is cars or other means of transport**

The city is a product and a producer of inequalities (Harding & Blokland, 2014: 128). These inequalities are created through the manifestation of power, economy, culture etc. over space; through the form of the city itself and other factors discussed earlier in the theoretical discussion. The result of the inequalities is that the different parts of the city, and respectively the different dwellers in each of them have different and uneven access to resources, to jobs and importantly – to mobility.

Each city comprises of inequality to certain extent where in some cases the unevenness might be less striking but somewhere really sharply presented. And Barcelona is no exception. Poblenou is part of the district of L'Eixample and composed of the blocks of Cedrà. However, as discussed previously, there is difference between Poblenou and other areas in the district being less developed, not so densely built (nor populated as much) and not so well-connected to public transport as some other areas. These are factors through which one can witness the underprivileged position of the area.

The limited access to public transport service suggests that the residents of the area have more special relationship to their cars where for some the automobile might be the only access to the city (i.e. elderly, parents with children). Furthermore, since Poblenou still retains its industrial identity being home of some industrial activities, suggests that the area largely rely on the good access to cars and vans which can assure the untroubled functioning of the local economy.

When planning for no cars, planners should be aware of the particular relationship with the car that the citizens or the businesses (of the area where the car-free policy applied) have established over the years. The car-freeing should be done in a way that it helps minimizing the inequality between the areas instead of sharpening it.

- **With the context in mind. Each context is unique and the Superblock is not a universal tool**

The study shows that the context is at the essence. The example of Poblenou may be regarded as relevant by other cities or neighbourhoods with similar car-free ambitions in the country (Spain) or the region (Catalonia) considering the common planning practices and regulations, the landscape, the urban fabrics, the culture or the attitude towards the car. However, each city and each neighbourhood is different form one another, and more importantly – unique.

Poblenou is rather different compared to Les Glòries or Les Corts, for instance, despite of being located in the same city and following the same car-free model. Each of these cases are unique in *locality*, *materiality*, *meaning*, *power* and *mobility* and thus, requires individual approach with the particular context in mind.

The Superblock certainly is not a universal planning tool nor the right recipe which anyone can use to achieve car-free urban living. However, it is a good example of car-freeing in practice which can be used as a guideline towards car-free implementation, an example of what may eventually go wrong and how to deal with it. It is an experience to be learned from.

Bibliography

Maslow A., (1966) *The Psychology of Science. p. 15.*

Garfield, L. (2017) *12 cities that are starting to go car-free* (last access: 16.05.2017), Available online: http://nordic.businessinsider.com/cities-going-car-free-2017-2?r=US&IR=T

Peters, A. (2015) *7 cities that are starting to go car-free*
Available online: https://www.fastcompany.com/3040634/7-cities-that-are-starting-to-go-

Valerio, P. (2016) *Barcelona Tackles its Traffic, Pollution With Parking Policies and Superblocks*
Available online: https://www.planetizen.com/node/89590/barcelona-tackles-its-traffic-pollution-parking-policies-and-superblocks

Martín-Ramos, A. (2012) *The Cerdà effect on city modernisation.* Town Planning Review, 83,

Jensen, O. (2014) *Designing Mobilities*. Aalborg University press

Cresswell, T. (2015) *Place: an introduction*. Second edition. West Sussex: Wiley and sons

Cresswell, T. (2006) *On the Move: Mobility in the modern western world*. New York & London: Routledge

Urry, J. (2007) *Mobilities*. Cambridge & Malden: Polity Press

Urry, J. & Dennis, K. (2009) *After the car*: Polity Press

Mumford, L.(1939),*City,Part2:TheCity:CarsorPeople?*[online] https://www.nfb.ca/film/lewis_mumford_on_the_city_part_2/ last accessed 16.05.2017

Andersen, N. (2016), *Seniors Imoobility*, Aalborg University

Banister D. "*Transport and economic development: reviewing the evidence*", Transport Reviews 32

Harding, A. & Blokland, T. (2014), *Urban Theory. A critical introduction to power, cities and urbanism in the 21st century*, SAGE

Lester, S. (1999) *An introduction to phenomenological research*, Stan Lester Developments, Taunton

Englander, M. (2012) *The Interview: Data Collection in Descriptive Phenomenological Human Scientific Research*, Journal of Phenomenological Psychology 43

Schutz, A. (2003/1954): *'Concept and theory formation in the social sciences'*, in Delanty, G. and Strygdom, P. (eds.): Philosophies of Social Science. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Delanty, G. and Strydom, P. (2003): *'The Interpretative Tradition*', in Delanty, G. and Strygdom, P. (eds.) Philosophies of Social Science. Berkshire: Open University Press

Jensen, O. (2015), *Philosophy of Science - What is it, and why should we pay interest*?

Flyvbjerg, B. (2001), *Making social science matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*, Cambridge University Press

Flyvbjerg, B. (1998) *Rationality and Power: Democracy in Practice,* by The University of Chicago trans.StevenSampson,pp.225-36, 272-5

Rueda, S., Cáceres, R., Cuchí, A., Brau, L. (2014) *Ecological Urbanism Its Application to the Design of an eco-neighbourhood in figures*

Rueda, S. (2017) *A new model of mobility and public space in Barcelona, based on Superblocks*, BCNecologia (presentation)

Ajuntament de Barcelona (2017), Information Superblocks
Available at:

http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/superilles/es/superilla/gr%C3%A0cia-0

Bayle, J (2016) *The apple of discord* own. translation (La manzana de la discordia), el Periódico
Available   at:
https://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?depth=1&hl=en&prev=search&rurl=translate.google.dk&sl=es&sp=nmt4&u=http://www.elperiodico.com/es/noticias/entre-todos/radar-supermanzana-discordia-5382429&usg=ALkJrhgcu0TqqgJS4MNCUP9bUfbc61lT8Q

Monzó, Q. (2016) *The Superblock* own translation*,* (La supermanzana) La Vanguardia
Available at:
 http://www.pressreader.com/spain/la-vanguardia-1%C2%AA-edici%C3%B3n/20160917/281878707838327

Bosch, J. (2016) The lockout of a bus in the Supeblock of Poblenou (El despiste de un autobusero en la 'superilla' del Poblenou; El Periódico
Available at:

https://translate.google.com/translate?depth=1&hl=en&prev=search&rurl=translate.google.dk&sl=es&sp=nmt4&u=http://www.elperiodico.com/es/noticias/barcelona/superilla-poblenou-circulacion-autobus-5374986

Rosero, M. (2016) Yes to the '*Superilla*' of Poblenou Sí a la 'superilla' de Poblenou, El Periòdico

Available at:

https://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?depth=1&hl=en&prev=search&rurl=translate.google.dk&sl=es&sp=nmt4&u=http://www.elperiodico.com/es/entre-todos/participacion/superilla-poblenou-90961&usg=ALkJrhgs49uiCZ_rtZybghAv6rp4UVLFXg

Images

https://assets.euractiv.com/lazy-load/img/crop/16x9/666.65625/https://www.euractiv.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/03/shutterstock_551704969-800x450.jpg

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/b/b9/AAU_logo_2012.png

http://www.altinget.dk/images/article/137577/18223.jpg

https://www.discoverwalks.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/eixample-barca.jpg

http://static3.businessinsider.com/image/575ed6f6dd0895f57d8b4c28-1109/01%20esquema%20superilla.jpg

http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-c1ggrSviP3c/T0A3ILQ5t1I/AAAAAAAAGo/Hfj9jF6V5kk/s1600/Inverted_qualia_of_colour_strawberry.jpg

http://www.bcnecologia.net/sites/default/files/proyectos/banner-rotativo/pmu_barcelona_supermanzanas-slideshowtrue38slideshowautofalse38slideshowspeed400038speed35038transitionfade.jpg?slideshow=true&slideshowAuto=false&slideshowSpeed=4000&speed=350&transition=fade

https://i2.wp.com/www.sciyent.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/cinc-superilles-pilot_1247885471_6982313_1233x596.jpg

http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/glories/wp-content/uploads/vehicles1.jpg

Access link to sound files

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B0BrGvlOXeFsejNRTU5pQzFXd0U?usp=sharing

Access link to transcribed documents

https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B0BrGvlOXeFscmQtN2xxNXRWRjg

Access link to image files

https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B0BrGvlOXeFsS3J0bGtoSDdpbGM

Access link to questionnaire and result sheets

https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B0BrGvlOXeFseWd5SGJwRk1iTnc

Access link to planning tools

https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B0BrGvlOXeFsTnZxM0FHeldWVWs

Appendix

Interview.1

Barcelona City Council, Urban Ecology

Participants:

Ariadna Miquel Amengual
amiquela@bcn.cat

Neda Kostandinovic
nkostandinovic@ext.bcn.cat

Date and time:

16-03-2017

Location

Av. Diagonal, 240, planta 4

Pages: 11

Neda:
So for now, you will probably have some questions, like more precise, so I don't have to explain to you all the content (Government measure report).

Miroslav:
No, you don't have to go through the content all over again because I've read so many things already. So maybe, I think I should first introduce myself. And maybe you can introduce yourself as well so we know who we are. I am Miro, I come from Denmark. I am an architect and now I am studying urban planning and management (to avoid confusion since I do not work with actual design). This time around I am going to be doing a project about car mobilities, and particularly car impact over urban areas. And specifically, I would like to work with the Superblock in Barcelona. That's going to be my target area to investigate and that's why I came here (in Barcelona). My point is going to be to find out how people perceive what's done and what they find odd, what they find strange, what they find impossible to understand, impossible to live with; and on the other hand - how planners see the bigger picture. So that is it. You can now maybe say something about yourselves.

Neda:
I am Neda Kostadinovic. I am an architect. I recently started working here in international collaboration in networks. I am a primary contact for C40 network, among others. Basically, my work is meant to help all urban ecology area. We are now at urban ecology area. It's an area where we work altogether: urban planning, mobility and infrastructure, ecology and environment, and city services. So I am like one department which is helping to all the sub-areas in international tasks.

Ariadna:

I am Ariadna Miquel and I am the head of the department of the perspective urban model. Urban model is a transversal department that is implementing strategic projects in a transversal way. I am sorry for my English. I studied years before and I am not used to talking in English.

Miroslav:
I understand.

Ariadna:
But I understand you.

Miroslav:
That's great.

Ariadna:
Neda will help me if needed.

Miroslav:
Okay.

Ariadna:
One of these projects is Superilles or the Superblocks. And we are implementing other projects but most of out energy is in this project – Superilles.

…

You are interested in people and how do the people perceive this (project).

Miroslav:
How they perceive what is done and how planners plan it; what they see behind the idea – not only the car mobility but as well the improving of the urban conditions, urban life, social relationships and that sort of thing.

Ariadna:
How do we do it? We are implementing it in two scales at the same time, at the city scale. We are working with city entities, like accordance for mobility. That is a group where there are big associations of neighborhoods, automobilists' club, transportation, cyclists. It's a lot of people and these several specialized groups – mobility and ecology. We are discussing the criteria (the city criteria) with the people from there groups. And we are also working with all the areas. We have a mobility plan that was approved in 2014 (in fact 2013). It was presented in the government and voted for, and then approved that this mobility plan designs the strategy for the next years (until 2019, in fact until 2018). After that, we have to write a new one.
In this plan, the Superilles are part of it. The plan says that Barcelona should develop this way. It's designed which are the most important streets that should have the transit and the

others that should not. This is voted for and it is designed. We have this, the general image, the general criteria discussed with associations and experts. When we develop in a local way (context) we discuss, we present and we work in a local way. With a local look. And these two things are at the same time. Maybe there is an adjustment or some things that will change the city criteria. This is how we design the process but it is not the way we have done it in this superblock (referring to the block in Poblenou). This was a little bit different in the way we implement it. We are searching to test another thing. It's a pilot project.

Miroslav:
I have a question then. I have seen a map where the are few blocks marked on (the map). Who decides that is going to be those 4 or 5 chosen blocks? What are the criteria behind?

Ariadna:
The first criteria were politic criteria so that it was one for (each) district. In Barcelona, we have 10 districts and our government says: "we want one ambit (area) in each district". Then, with our technic knowledge, we say: "maybe in Ciutat Vella (old city) now it is not necessary" because it is working like a Superilla, yet. So, maybe, we will let it like this. And then, inside the 9 districts, we'll talk about it with the local government. Each district has a local mayor. They chose each place. What are the criteria that they choose? - it depends on the district.
For example, in Gràcia, the old village, it is like a Superilla. It is the same idea like the Superilla. And they chose this area that is the only unique area that it doesn't' work like this. Because It is not pacified. All the streets are with traffic and the same and it is a tissue like l'Example. The urban tissue is like l'Eixample and they choose this.
In Sant Andreu, they chose the old town. We have to do it so it works like a Superilla. For us, it's the easiest part of Sant Andreu because it is already working like this more or less. The major part of the streets is 30 km per hour zone.
Each district is different and the criteria were different. And in l'Eixample, for example, they choose to prior a small ambit (area). That was Sant Antoni. And then Consell de Cent. Why? Because in Sant Antoni we are doing the new market. So it's a good opportunity to change the mobility. And, here, in Consell de Cent - because they are a lot of people/neighbors which are associated and they reclaim this change in mobility. And when we began, there were other zones that demanded this transformation. Here in Poblenou, which is a district that is planned more recently, is an easy structure. It's the same tissue like l'Eixample, the blocks of Cerdà. They want to do it rapidly, so they chose this ambit. But now, when we implement this, the district wants to do it very fast. That's why we do it differently. Now you will ask me: "how the neighbors feel after this implementation?". We are doing it slowly. It's a change of habits and it's very difficult. We have to do it very slowly and with a lot of participation. Yesterday night we were working with neighbors and it's difficult.

Miroslav:
So basically, for each of the blocks is the local government that decides how they want to implement and in what time?

Ariadna:
In theory, we design the method.

Miroslav:

So it is the same method for each of the blocks?

Ariadna:
It's the methodology design in general. But here, it was different because in this case, the local government thought that it would be easier. And it wasn't.

Miroslav:
I had the chance to read many articles, both in Catalan and in English, and there are many responses to that. The people are against it, especially the local business owners or the people who live there and drive cars. And they are really against it. There were many banners hanging (from the balconies) saying "No superilla". And there's been very big international attention to this specific project – the one in Poblenou. So let me just go with some more questions. How many stages does the process contain? How many stages do you go through? I read that you restrict the traffic, then you begin to involve people, and then the third thing – what happens next and what happens next? And when can we say, that the Superilla is completed and works in the way it is supposed to?

Ariadna:
Completed means that all the ambit is composed by a lot of Superilles. For example, there are a lot of Superilles in Sant Antoni. Completed, for us, would mean that the mobility works like we designed it in all the ambit and it's urbanized. We don't know when we would have this completed because it's a lot of money to change the urbanization. But our aim is, that some parts of the Superilla work like this in mobility (perspective). And for that, we have 3 types of actions – one of them is basic actions (related to mobility, traffic lights) and the more radical is to re-urbanize the streets. We are changing the streets, the section. Mainly we design the unique platform.

Neda:
Like you see in the old city center. You can see there is no sidewalk and then the typical section sidewalk. They are all at the same level which we call plataforma uniqa, it's like a unique platform let's say. It's a special design for the streets.

Ariadna:
In each ambit, we draw a plan that is an action plan between the mobility change and the transformation. We have the tactical urbanism. That is basically what you saw here – change of the mobility and the section with not a lot of money. Not physically, but we change the use of these streets.

…

In each ambit, we draw this plan of the how the mobility must work and which are the actions that are necessary. It's basic actions. We don't aim of having it completed at this step. It's a "try and see" process. We discuss it with the neighbours and then we decide: "we'll begin from this street" for example. We decide with the people which will be the first and second etc.

Miroslav:

What kind of challenges do you face while trying to implement it? What is the biggest problem for you as planners?

Ariadna:
There are 2-3 things that are difficult for us. Here in l'Eixample, the people don't understand the gentrification. They are afraid that those who live in the peripheral sides will live in worse conditions than the others who don't.

Miroslav:
That's one of the discussion points of my work. That really works in this way because the cars are not going to disappear. They are just going to move around the block. So they (the people) are going to receive more noise and more pollution.

Ariadna:
It's not like this. They feel like this. Now a lot of the streets are on the limit of their capacities. So more it's impossible to reach. The traffic reaches its maximum. And we are implementing another strategy to reduce these cars. The intention is to reduce the traffic with 21%.

…
Miroslav:
But then we have another issue? The one that's in the middle it's gonna have better conditions, still than those who are around it (in the periphery).

Ariadna:
No. The benefits are not local but they are global.

Neda:
And you will also breath cleaner air.

Miroslav:
I understand that. But the thing is, if we take only the middle block beside all surrounding it, they (the people living in the middle) will have better conditions. Let's say we have a block here (at the corner) and they will have more noise and pollution on both sides and the middle one will have noise and pollution on none of its sides. So, basically, this is going to improve the conditions. For sure. If you think of public space for kids or as you say cleaner air. That certainly, at some point, is going to raise the value of the property and there's going to be some sort of disagreement – why the middle one should receive the benefit?

Ariadna:
Nowadays it is working like this. This is theoretical scheme but the streets worked like this ever since (on a larger scale, for the region and not particularly the superblock itself).

Neda:
You already have that.

…

We are trying to introduce more green for this area (the periphery) with the trees that will absorb the CO2. The green in these streets is very important and we use a lot of money for rehabilitation for those buildings, for their facades, their windows. And we are working on faster ways for all mobility kinds (pedestrian and cyclists too) so that they can go through crossings straight.
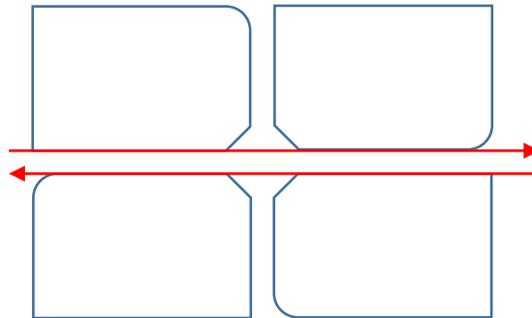
More or less like this, wherever it is possible the pedestrians can cross straight.

…

This is one of the challenges, the hierarchization. We think the l'Eixample is homogeneous. But it is not. Another challenge is the commercial and the transport companies. It's difficult to solve it because they want to drive next to the shops with their vehicles. This we have to regulate because the public space is very limited, we have to share it, they have to park some places for some hours which is difficult for them. These two things for us are very difficult.

Miroslav:
What about the citizens who live there? Do they agree with it already; do they think it is a good idea or a bad one?

Ariadna
I think, in the beginning, they are refusing and they are negative. But with time, the people accept it. It's like in Gràcia. When we did this the people were negative. And now all the people love it but it is a change of habits. It is difficult to accept. You need a lot of time and a lot of work. And you cannot do it faster like here (Poblenou).

Miroslav:
What is the difference between that and the other superblocks? Do they invest more money in it?

Ariadna:
The time of work with the people, the participation. In Gràcia, it was hard work with all the commercials. Apart from that, the people were negative at first and against it. But they have done a lot of work and here (in Poblenou) it wasn't done. And I think this is very bad.

Miroslav:
One of the key moments of my work is also that. In Scandinavia, or Denmark in particular, the public involvement is done in very early stage. So, it is not a governmental decision

(only) but maybe a suggestion. They make forums, gathering people together before implementing it. It's not someone who comes and votes saying: "I want that". They ask the people and when they have this agreement between the public and the politicians it goes easy. If they don't, it comes with many different problems and disagreement as is the case here in different areas. And the problem here is that they (the superblocks) are not homogeneous; they are not the same and every each of the individual blocks has individual problems. They also have individual landscape, individual mobility, traffic maybe – some are more congested (than others) and some are not. So we can't put them at the same level.

Ariadna:
The citizen has to learn to work for the city and not for us. And here we don't have this culture of participation. We are learning – the planners, the government, and the citizens are learning how to this; how to discuss and how to solve the problems not with the local look -for my (own) benefit but for the global (city, larger) benefit. We have to discuss and we have to look; we have to work for the global benefit (larger to city scale i.e. regional, city and above) and not for the individual one. It is difficult to find the people who have this look because the usual is that the people who come and participate want to solve their own problems. I think we are learning to ask, to discuss and finding the solution that is good for all. They discuss between each other.

Miroslav:
But the thing is, if I am the one who lives there, I have my own problems and the other one has other problems, and the third – third problems. It's a matter of sitting down together, talking and sharing. For example, people who drive cars every day they are used to make their work there, or they have a business there they would say: "that's a great idea but my business will die tomorrow if there are no people there. So what do I do?". That's a polar (negative) opinion but it exists.

Ariadna:
It exists. A lot of times this perception is not true. It's a perception but it is not true. We don't have a scientific study proving what we say is true, but we are trying to prove that the economic activity doesn't depend on the cars on the street. We think it is the other way around. The commercial activity in Gràcia has increased. There are sometimes fears that are not true. Maybe the activities will change but they won't die because of the lack of cars on the streets. There are fears to change. When we talk about this part (about the pollution and the lack of green) the people agree but they don't want to change anything. Everybody knows and agrees that we have to make this change.

Miroslav:
But not in this way?

Neda:
But not in my backyard.

Ariadna:

This is the change. This is not Superilles related. It exists in any transformation. Fear and resistance to change.

Miroslav:
Can we speak of (sort of) segregation between the Superilla and the rest of the city? (in both positive and negative way). In a positive way – I do live in the Superilla so I do enjoy the better environment and maybe more green and free space.

Ariadna:
The mobility plan says that the whole city works like this. For us, the superilla is not a closed (insulated) thing.

Miroslav:
For now, it is though.

Ariadna:
For now, it is. We have to begin somewhere. We don't have another way of doing it.

Miroslav:
Who decides which Superilla will come first and which will come second?

Ariadna:
Not in this case (Poblenou) but in the other cases, we decided it with the neighbors. We call it 'group-in-pulso' (pulse group) which is a meeting with the local entities and people from the local government. It is part of the process since the beginning. All the decisions are taken at this meeting. Also the prioritization, the actions, the mobility. We explain and simulate how the mobility works (the technical work) and we do 3 or 4 alternatives. We discuss it and we choose. Then we go to the citizens to explain it. This is the way we are doing in Sant Antoni and now in Horta. If you go to the webpage you can see all the presentations, we did. If you want to see an example of an action plan and the kind of discussion see Sant Antoni and Horta.

…

Miroslav:
So there are individual steps for each Superilla. There all different and have nothing in common and you decide differently on each.

Ariadna:
We decide in this case (Sant Antoni) just steps.

Miroslav:
What about the case in Poblenou?

Ariadna:
This we did in one weekend. We changed the mobility. Here you have to move in a different way. And from one way to another you move differently. The people don't understand it, don't like it, they don't accept it. Yesterday, we talked to some people who 6 months ago

were impossible to talk with because they only shouted. Now we can work, we can talk but for us it has been very difficult to work, having a calm and quiet meeting. We know we didn't do it the right way but we didn't know how to do it (exactly).

There were opportunities for some universities to work here; to make a workshop and to work in the public space. This was a very good experience for the universities. It was the best because they could meet with the people. The work the students did there is very interesting and they are very proud of it and their professors (too). But the people don't understand it.

Miroslav:
Can we say that Gràcia is the raw example, the one that is properly working? And then, can we conclude that the one in Poblenou isn't or not the way it was supposed to?

Ariadna:
We are improving. Now, it's beginning to work. The people begin to understand. They need time to understand. We need time to explain it. Any change of habits demands time. It was (just) too fast. I wouldn't say it isn't working.

Miroslav:
I was here last year in November and it was pretty much empty. It was said that it was wanted to have empty streets and great new environment for the people to do sports or other activities, to plant trees etc. But when we went there with my class, we were the only people there. So the concept says: "we want the people to be there, to experience it" but nobody goes there.

Neda:
If you were there during the week.

Miroslav:
It was the weekend.

Ariadna:
If you go now, you can see the people from the offices around having their lunch. It isn't finished yet. I think, in 2-3 years when it's completed it will work.

…

Miroslav:
So can we say that this (Polbenou superblock) will be the good example for the others to follow where so many things were tried?

Ariadna:
I think it is not a good example. The process is not a good example. We don't like to talk about it. We don't think it was the best way to implemented.

Miroslav:

If we compare this to one in Gracia, can we say that Gracia works better and smoothly than the one in Poblenou?

Ariadna:
Gràcia is an old town. The streets are narrow and there a lot of people living there. So it is very different. But the first months when we wanted to change the mobility, we had a lot of people against it.

Miroslav:
So basically the same thing (happened) in a way?

Ariadna:
In a way yes. The people who worked there at that time says it was the same. But now, you have the computer and the smartphone. Now is more evident because you have the social media.

Miroslav:
It's a good example because now the information (both the good and the bad) flies really fast and everyone can get access to it?

Ariadna:
15 years ago we didn't have this. Maybe there were people against but they didn't have the media (social media) to express it.

Miroslav:
So can we say the media is a good or bad thing here (in planning)?

Ariadna:
The media – depends. It can be both good and bad.

Miroslav:
Do you think it fairly express the opinion of the people or it just wants to say: "we don't want it (too) in support of the people"?

Ariadna:
There are people who support the Superilla using the media. It's amplification of the opinions. They are good and they are bad. It's fast for the good and for the bad things. It just exists and the people use it. I think it is good that the people can say their opinion. For us, it is positive because we get to know what the people feel. It's a good thing even if it's bad feeling. For us is good.

Miroslav:
I have one last question. I read in the report that the Superilla in some cases may not work and so it can be canceled. So in which cases it (the project) can be canceled?

…

Neda:

Maybe about the tactical urbanism. You can reverse, you can change it. But the general strategy for the city is the implementation because it reduces traffic, noise etc. It goes along with other strategies. So it is not so easy to cancel.

Ariadna:
Our mission is not cancel. (We) Make changes, make it more flexible. There was the first implementation when we closed the streets. But after meeting with the residents there were some changes. We do these things on paper. We make a proposal and we are improving it. On paper. But this test we do in the reality. I think they want to test how these things work in reality. We wanted to test different ways of doing it. Not to study it but to test. We did this and what happened – the people said: "we are not a laboratory" and I understand it. That's why the result can be a good example but not the implementation.

Interview.2

Agencia de Ecología Urbana de Barcelona (BCNecologia)

Participants:

Salvador Rueda
rueda@bcnecologia.net

Irene Capdevila

Date and time:

16-03-2017

Location

Carrer de l'Escar 1, 3rd floor

Pages: 10

Salvador:

And also, I am writing another article. But in this case, my intention (my objective) is to develop an urban model based on Superblocks in Barcelona and I am comparing the Cerdà's plan with the superblock plan. This, for me, is very interesting.

Miroslav: Also for me. Today I had a meeting with the municipality. And there we were discussing that the superblocks (the two superblocks) – the one in Gràcia and the one that is just implemented (in Poblenou). And they explained to me how different they are. Like the landscape is different, their form is different.

Salvador:

Totally. We have 4 superblocks already built. One of them is the last in Poblenou neighborhood. But we have 2 places more with 3 superblocks implemented. One of them is in Born neighborhood. It is 10 minutes from here. And 2 more in Gràcia district. In this moment, the municipality wants to implement another superblock in Gràcia. But for me - I don't think if it's the best solution that the municipality wants to implement it in that place because it's not clear. It's not clear because they want to develop different bus lines. And for me, it's not compatible. It's in a process.

Miroslav:

But then who decides where the superblocks are going to be placed?

Salvador:

In the first moment, the place at Born, the superblock that we built (there) - I decided the place with the European program. The investment for this superblock came from the European Union. And secondly, it is also decided by us (BCN Ecologia), our agency related to the municipality and (also) the Gràcia district. It is part of the municipality and the city council. And the next, in Pobleou, is also a decision of mine. In the article, I explain why I decide this is a very good place. And I confirm it's a very good place.

Miroslav:
Because it is very homogeneous. In a way, it's well distributed.

Salvador:
And then, the next is inside of the plan of superblocks. It's a decision of the municipality but it is related with the participatory process in different parts of the city. And some of the superblocks are also related with the last government. Not the current government but the last government. They decided to implement several parts of the city with the superblocks and this government assumed this proposal of the last government. Do you understand?

Miroslav:
Yeah.

Salvador:
Okay

Miroslav:
So they (the politicians) decide, it's a governmental decision?
Salvador:
Yes.

Miroslav:
Do they have some kind of consultancy with the public? Like, a kind of public organization?

Salvador:
Yeah, always.

Miroslav:
Because it was not very clear in the morning (the interview at the municipality). We were talking about the same issue and they said: "well, they voted in the government". But how can they vote for it without knowing the area? How can they just say we gonna place it here? They have to have some background knowledge.

Salvador:
Yes. But you already talked with the government, or nor yet?

Irene:
Can you check what was the name of the person you talked with?

Miroslav:
Yeah, sure.

Salvador:
It is very important. They have several levels.

Miroslav:
For sure they have several levels.

…

Miroslav:
So it was Ariadna Miquel.

Salvador:
She's the chief of the strategy at the municipality, okay. Yes, Ariadna Miquel.

Miroslav:
I have some questions that I want to ask. How do you evaluate the new superblock? Like, its implementation, because (as) she said it was very hard and a matter of a big discussion between the public and the different organizations. And how is it for you – do you think it's working well or is it not, or how it can be changed to work for better?

Salvador:
In my opinion, this superblock work very, very well because we don't have any problem. But in all the experiences related to the implementation of superblocks, always we have about 30% of people in resistance, okay. When the superblock is implemented with urbanistic and structural solutions, the people embrace the solution, particularly old people. Everybody. In this moment, we have a special political situation because the current government only has 11 councils from 41.

Miroslav:
So they can get the majority to vote for them.

Salvador:
And the expectations of this government, after the last general elections in Spain, is very hard - an increase in the expectative and the votes. And the opposition at this moment is very angry. And then all of the activities, projects proposed etc. is rejected from the opposition. But with a lot of aggressive manners. If you read something about the tramway – it's a natural and common sense solution that connect the part of the tramway in Barcelona in the middle of the city. It is silly not to do it.

Miroslav:
And they said no that?

Salvador:
Yes. And the opposition said: "NO!".

Miroslav:
It's always like that with the politics.

Salvador
The funny part is, that in the past they wanted it and when there are in opposition – it's a horrible solution. But the main problem of the superblocks is the political scenario. It's not a technical problem. All the people that resist this idea, the solution of the superblock in Poblenou is always related with the nimble aspects. Always. Because the bus stop is near my house but at the same time in the same room somebody says: "but it is not possible the bus to go on my street". It is contradicting. And the majority of complaints is related to individual problems. And that is not essential. I don't have any real problem. Perhaps, you need to make 100 meters more but this is not a problem because we liberate particularly city actors in the middle of the city. It's another thing.

Miroslav:
There was an article about the resistance, I read. It was in English. And they said there were people who own local restaurants and local cafes. There were complaining: "the streets are now closed and there are not that many people that attend to my business, so I am going to die" (in business/economic sense). Because of the idea.

Salvador:
At the end, this complaint will be virtues solution because this bars and restaurants will be the better place to take something. Because after that, we will have a pace space, a quiet space without noise, without pollution. It will be the best in Barcelona. But today, in this moment, the visualization is not good for them. But when the urbanistic solutions come, it will be a marvellous and gorgeous place. Without doubt. Do you know what the renders related to this?

Miroslav:
No.

…

Irene:
It is, usually, the same with the pedestrianization of areas. The shops are at the beginning already afraid that if the cars don't pass, they won't be going to have the public in their premises. But when you do it you see the contrary. The people like to walk when we have a wonderful weather.

Miroslav:
We have a Danish architect call Jan Gehl and he explains exactly the same story that we should build for no cars and be freeing the spaces.

Salvador:
It's always the same. In the transport manual is always the same. We have some resistance but for a short period, perhaps 1 year, 1 and a half. But after that all changes. This is the solution.

Irene.

Also, in the Poblenou superblock, they are doing some works on the street which can be kind of distortion. I know some business complain that their sales have decreased. But it is probably because of the works on the street.

Miroslav:
And it's the moment, like the period, specific one of construction.

Salvador:
Yes. When it's under construction it is difficult to the shops and for all the restaurants.

Miroslav:
Because it is polluted and noisy so no one wants to go there.

Salvador:
This is the problem. But you have this in a superblock scenario or public works in other situations, okay. It's not specifically of the super block.

Miroslav:
There was a complaint of a woman. She said that there were no people in the evening time. So she was afraid and there were some security issues.

Miroslav:
Yeah. This is not true. This is not true because, perhaps, it is the restaurant in the corner of Almogavers and Roc Boronat.

…

Salvador:
This is our proposal. This is Almogavers. This is Besòs river, okay with a ring corridor. The width of this street is 40 meters. And we connect this park – Besòs park with Poblenou central park and also with the North park. And after that, we connect also with the main corridor in Barcelona, green corridor and we connect also with the Ciutadella park – the biggest park in Barcelona.

…

This is the model. The Cerdà's plan is implementing yet, after 150 years. And then I want to project this. I am working on this solution for all Barcelona, okay, with the new urban model plan.

Irene:
And with the same buildings.

Salvador:
Because this is, perhaps, one of the most important urban recycle project over the world. This is the current situation with our public space. 85% of the public space in Barcelona is related to mobility.

Miroslav:
And car mobility especially?

Salvador:
Yes. Car mobility, motorization also. And with the superblocks, we reduce from 100 km. to 61% less. It is magic. And we can obtain this scenario only with 13% car less. 13% only. It is nothing. And at the end, we have around 70% of the public space liberated. It is a lot. I have some analysis. We will give you this article: The Superblock, a new urban cell for the construction of a new functional and urban model of Barcelona

…

This is possible with 13% car less and perhaps it will be most important urban recycle of the world because we can liberate and recycle public space – about 6.2 million square meters. It's incredible. And this is without demolishing any building. We don't need to. It is only public space and we want to change. In the case of Cerdà's plan. I recommend that you read something about this because he is a genius. He proposed this solution for Barcelona. The grid in Barcelona is right. And after this proposal, different laws proposed this (the blocks as they look nowadays, where free public space is privatized in the form of the courtyard).

Miroslav:
Corruption as well.

Salvador:
Okay. Incredible.

Miroslav:
It's like they privatized the public space. And I have been to those courtyards last year, in the middle of the building and there's nothing there. Nobody uses them.

Salvador:
Today we have this proportion related all to Cerdà's fabric. But this is the superblock solution and we can change the uses inside of the public space in the superblock. And also we propose to change part of the roofs with green roofs. About 30%.

Miroslav:
So it's going to cover even bigger area together with the roofs (as well).

Salvador
Yes. And, also, we propose a change in part of this corridors in proportion about 1500 sq. m. per each courtyard inside of the blocks. If we have this proportions, we will have the same proportion of the green space that Cerdà's proposing in his plan.

Miroslav:
So basically it's going to be rediscovered one more time.

Salvador:

Yes, okay. But without the superblock is impossible. Because if you want to have new public space with new uses, you need (it's obligatory) to change the current mobility model. If not – it is not possible. And we have at this moment in Barcelona an urban mobility plan made for us in this agency from the municipality. It's approved in 2015. It's approved and we want to implement this. With another political scenario, perhaps we will have more implementation of superblocks (technically). But if we have the model, it's very important, to make the things quaintly and surely. Each political scenario has a special spin to develop some projects like this.

…

This is one of the most exciting projects in our case. Sure. And for a lot of people also. Very exciting. There are different cities working with this approach.

Miroslav:

Which are the other cities?

Salvador:

In this moment, we are starting in A Coruña in northern Spain. We redact an urban mobility plan for Vitoria-Gasteiz, you know.

Miroslav:

Was that the first superblock implemented actually? I think somewhere I read it.

Salvador:

Here, in the Born neighborhood.

…

The first was in Born in 1993. And the second was in Gràcia district in 2005-6. The next was in Vitoria-Gasteiz and the next was Poblenou pilot.

Miroslav:

So did you work with every each of those?

Salvador:

Yes.

Miroslav:

So you developed this whole idea?

Salvador:

Yes, and the solution is different. It depends on the characteristics of the fabrics. It is very important.

Miroslav:

They are different and have different user groups, different mobilities, different landscapes, economies etc.

Salvador:
Exactly. It depends. But at the end, it is possible to develop superblocks when we have cities. Not suburbs – it's not interesting in the suburbs.

Miroslav:
The suburbs as concept originates from the car. People going with the car to the city and back.

Salvador:
Exactly. It's not interesting. If you want, you can make this in the end. If you have condominiums, you have similar to the superblock. It is close, it is similar (the idea). It's possible to translate this solution in the suburbs but it is not interesting because we don't have public space in the suburbs. We have urban spaces but not public spaces. The street uses are unique – only for mobility and cars.

Miroslav:
And in the suburbs, we speak of very low densities. And the impact is not going to be as big.

Salvador:
Exactly. Then it's very interesting in the cities and we have very interesting cities here in Europe. It's interesting because we have like Barcelona – compact cities. This is the best morphology, the most sustainable solution for a city, for sustainable cities. Not the sprawl, not the dispersion, not the suburbs. It's not.

Miroslav: Now we pick up the fruits of all those experiments (in urban planning).

Salvador:
And we have also for the superblocks, perhaps one of the main ideas, I didn't talk about before but it's very, very important. The superblock is the base of the mobility and the functionality models for a city. But it's also the base of the urbanistic model. And our urbanistic model is based on this certification. We want in our superblocks to make a little city because, in the case of the Cerdà's fabric, the number of the inhabitants is more than 6000 people. It's a lot. In each superblock. The average population is more than 6000. Like a village.

Miroslav:
Do you have an estimation how much are they right now?

Salvador:
Is an estimation, yes? We have the information about this.

Miroslav:
But how much is it right now? Do you know? Just to compare 6000 to how many nowadays?

Salvador:

Nowadays, it is 6000.

Miroslav:
Okay, how much it was in Cerdà's plan?

Salvador:
In Cerdà's is similar. It's similar but because in the Cerdà's plan the average of each dwelling is around 4.5 per dwelling. In our case is 2.3 people living in each dwelling.

Miroslav:
And it is getting less and less.

Salvador:
Less and less. But it is compensated because the density is high today.

Irene:
We have more buildings but less people living in the dwellings.

Salvador:
More surface in the fabric but less population and people living in this.

Miroslav:
We have it the same in Denmark. We have more buildings and more space per individual in an apartment.

Salvador:
Yes. In our case, we are decreasing more and more continuously.

Miroslav:
It's the same in Denmark. Well, slowly but they have migration to resolve and compensate.

Salvador:
It's the same situation. And this is our approach of the new urbanism, named "Ecosystemic urbanism", okay. I explain this in Harvard and in British Columbia and in other workshops about this new approach, okay. This is the methodology of the new urbanism, and this is a solution for new neighbourhood in Northern Catalonia.

Interview.3

MEDIAURBAN

Participants:

Maria Sisternas Tusell
rueda@bcnecologia.net

Date and time:

20-03-2017

Location

Imagina building | Avinguda Diagonal 177 15th floor

Pages: 14

Maria:
This was Barcelona until the 19th century. In 1859, the town walls were torn down and the city did an extension plan to conquer all the space until the mountains, alright. The extension plan of Cerdà reached the whole region. Now, there was a plan back in the 30's and this was 1859. And in the 30's there was a plan by Le Corbusier and Generalitat de Catalunya that was willing to give some sense to the l'Eixample. The l'Eixample of Cerdà. He was a socialist utopian. He believed that everyone should have the same conditions to live (in). So he even oriented the blocks in a way that everybody had the same amount of sun, the same hours, all the flats had the same conditions of hygiene, whatever. The dream was not achieved in a sense that the market and the speculations changed the conditions and finally, what happened is that basically the west part of the city, meaning Sarrià, la Dreta de l'Eixample the connection to the old town are very, very expensive, very wealthy, the best population, the best whatever. And the east side of the town was underdeveloped, was devoted to industrial activities, had no residences and was completely different, right. So in the 30's, there was a plan to revenant this. And what (2:22) La Masia said was that every 3 blocks (they) would have a fast lane for cars and vehicles and the rest would be pedestrianized. This is the policy that has to inform the super block strategy. It is not something new, it has been there for 100 years. And it is very logic. It means saying, that the grid is too homogeneous, let's bring a quality of life to one every 3 blocks also because there are 3 blocks. The initial plan gave them more continuity and the even traversed the old city, okay. So morphologically it has sense. I suppose, you appointed an interview or you should go to interview Salvador Rueda.

Miroslav:
I was already there, yeah.

Maria:
He is the creator of the latest policy of the superblock strategy. He, Salvador, he is an enthusiast and he is a very nice man. He used to rule Agencia de Ecología Urbana de Barcelona and he took the idea of the 30's and made the whole strategy for the Agency of Ecology in Barcelona. What happened? Salvador is an enthusiast but he is not, unfortunately, someone very competent in the design guidelines. So the criticism on his intervention is, that he superimposes his idea to a reality that is more stubborn. So when we were in office, Salvador came; he has been pushing for the super block strategy for many years. Someone said: "okay, Salvador, let's do the superblock strategy but let's start with those points in the city in which there is a special condition where this can happen. Why? Because our thesis or my thesis is that the superblock strategy should not be the cause of the change of the city but the consequence of the change in the city. Barcelona has a lack of public transportation system – it doesn't have enough metro; it doesn't have enough buses. So I think it is too idealistic to pretend that the people will simply get rid of their cars and will go walking because there is a superblock strategy. It's not gonna happen. And that's the main superblock here (Poblenou). Have you seen it?

Miroslav:
Yeah. I have been there many times.

Maria:
In this building (Imagina building) we are 2000 people working. Many people do not live in this area. Many people live in the metropolitan area, and I live here (up north) and honestly, I hate taking the car. If I could I wouldn't take it. But to get by public transport from my home to here it takes me 1 hour and 15 minutes. If I use my car it takes 30 minutes. I have 2 kids and I want to go back home at normal time. I have a lot of work and I work too many hours. If there was public transport that was competitive, I don't need it to last for 30 minutes but maybe 45 minutes, I would take it. I used my bike many times when I lived in London, before getting pregnant I used my bike a lot but now for circumstances of life, I cannot afford to take another transport but (that is) my car. So, basically what happens every time we get out of this building with the parking and many people are in the same situation as me we come at the superblock that doesn't allow us to cross in that way (The distance between Imagina and the superblock in Poblenou is only a few blocks). So basically to go and take La Ronda we have to do a huge ride. What is the criticism?
The criticism is actually that we are polluting more. That's the easy criticism. And I think, to be honest, there is a problem in this superblock which is: it has no public transport. The Pobelnou area has especially a lack of public transport and secondly – there is no residential entity. This is an office building and there are many office buildings, the center is the university and then we have social housing and a cultural museum. So when we were walking on the sidewalks people didn't feel there was a lack of sidewalks, alright. There wasn't pressure on thousands of people. In the city center of Barcelona, there are places on which you feel the town is super congested.

Miroslav: I have seen that.

Maria:
In which are too many people on the sidewalks. It is not the case here. And that's one of the other criticisms to this superblock (Poblenou). Not to the strategy itself but to the choice of having started of the calloused act in here. I am gonna show you if I find it another...

Miroslav:
But do you know why this particular spot was chosen?

Maria:
Yeah, because they thought.

…

In the last mandate, we also did a proposal for the superblocks, alright. But instead of starting in places in which there was no necessity, we started in Les Corts. In Les Corts, you will have to go and see that superblock. It is behind the Camp Nou stadium. This has a lot of pressure. Why? It's a pity we don't have any pictures but you can see pictures online. But you have to go and see it. This was an area which there is a lot of residential entities, a lot of people are living there. The sidewalks were congested. They are not as big as the ones in the new part of the town and there was a huge problem in weekend times when there was a football match. So what we did was like: "let's make this work as a superblock". The morphology helped, so let's think that the mobility goes around this axis and we pacify the interior of this (area).

…

This was parking. So what did the superilla strategy do? We took of the cars and only with the paintings (on the ground) and the new plantings we changed the configuration. Why? Because there was a necessity, right. There was a popular claim for which people said: "there are too many cars around this area; the cars are using public space". And then it was very logical. We didn't do that. Actually, it was neighbors, the residents here who designed the whole space. Basically what the super block in Las Cors does is connect all the public spaces around (here). And it does the strategy for them.
The new mayor. When she came she said: "you have done it in an area which is not really the enchanting anxiety" (11:20) which is true. So she said: "I want to do it in l'Eixample". And then this was her pilot project. What's happened is that there were 4 superblocks implemented before. One of them is Les Glòries (this square here). Have you visited Les Glòries?

Miroslav:
Yeah. I think it's that one over here, right?

Maria:
So, Les Glòries is another place where there was a (had) huge flyover. We tore it down. You have seen these image, right?

Miroslav:
No, not the images. I just went on the site to see how it looks today. You are lucky because I have a video here.

Maria:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MByl-8gO7dw

So this is how the flyover looked like, and this is how we tore it down and we made the circulation of the cars going around. There were 8 lanes of cars underneath and over. And this area is going to be liberated for a green park.

Miroslav:
But it is now still under construction, right?

Maria:
Yes.

Miroslav:
I have seen a lot of work there.

Maria:
Exactly. Now they are building the tunnel underneath, so it's gonna be a huge park here (meaning the surface of the old roundabout). And this was another superblock. But she said: "I want to do it in the Poblenou area". And it's been a huge mistake, I think, a political mistake because what's happened is that all residents and people that had their life affected by this (the superblock) had complained which is a pity for the city because of the policy itself, the idea of Salvador Rueda was good. What has failed, I think, is the implementation of that because instead of having it negotiated, proposed to the neighbors, decided how the mobility pattern should be like. For example, one of the key issues here was to before doing the works provide more public transport, buses, new electrical vehicles, provide all sorts of bike parking and this hasn't happened. So, basically, they have cut the area for cars and the have put some benches on the street but they are not used.

Miroslav:
Exactly. I have been there and the streets are quite empty now.

Maria:
They are absolutely empty all the time, all times of the year - empty. Why? Because when a person can sit in a park and there's a big park here.

Miroslav:
Why would they do it over there?!

Maria:

Why?! This is the typical mistake of the conductivist design, saying: "we gonna close the lanes for cars and we gonna put benches on the asphalt site, on the lanes. And then the people are going to sit there and they are not going to take the car". Well, it is not gonna happen because the reality is much more stubborn, much more complicated. You should look at the mobility plan of Barcelona. At the share distribution of the transport systems. How many people do you think use car in Barcelona usually?

Miroslav:
I have no idea. Around 1 million?

Maria:
In percentage?

Miroslav:
In percentage – 70 percent?

Maria:
20 percent.

Miroslav:
20 percent?

Maria:
I am going to show you the figures.

Miroslav:
So all the cars here on the streets are only 20 percent of the vehicles?

Maria:
Yeah.

Miroslav:
Okay, so basically there is not enough space for all the cars?

Maria:
So, 32 percent of the people in 2011 are pedestrians. 1.5 percent are bikes (cyclists). 40 percent are already using public transport and only 26 percent are using the car. What the new mobility plan of Barcelona wants to do, is to increase the share of the public transport, increase pedestrian flows and decrease the private traffic which is fine. But this idea that everybody uses the car in Barcelona… probably the people who use the car currently is because they have no alternative. Because to have a car in the city is very expensive, you cannot park anywhere, it is polluting. It is expensive to have it. So, limiting the people who are using the car it is not by cutting the lanes so they are not gonna use it. It needs a more holistic approach and a less naïve approach than the superblock. So what I know - the danger of this mistake (I think it is a big failure) is that it can influence negatively other superblocks in other parts of the city. Why? Because now there have been fears, opponents, people who have even put papers on their balconies. And these people are organized and they are influencing other people in other parts of the city.

Miroslav:
Who are expecting it (the superblock) soon and they are, of course, against it already.

Maria:
Exactly. And that's a huge problem because it's going to be more and more difficult to implement it. I think, in urbanism, we call it when an idea is burned. I don't think the idea is going to have any kind of happy future. That's my opinion. And it is pity because of the policy itself, I don't think this was the place. The big mistake – nobody asked for a superblock here but there are other parts of the city in which the people would like to have it. Areas in which there is a lot of density, in which the streets are more narrow, in which there is public transport, in which this could have been implemented in a more logic way.

Miroslav:
Sensible.

Maria:
Sensible way, yeah. So that's my vision. I think you should look at these figures, look at the mobility plan and facts. Another of the issues I can't explain is that the city council hasn't published how many people are living in the area, where the people live and where they work. Now there is Smart city "going" around, this city has a lot of start-ups. We could have had a project of big data, analyzing the commuting and the flows to these areas. That's my perception and as I said from the beginning – I don't like the current mayor but I think she has a very radical left approach that is very based on weak claims and big slogans. But when implementing things, she completely fails to understand reality and people's perception. So, something that was meant to be from the left side and very progressive turns to be very right and very imposive. That's my opinion.

Miroslav:
How many superblocks are implemented already?

Maria:
They were 4 from the last mandate.

Miroslav:
Because I have been to few of them but I couldn't see much difference (compared to the rest of the city). The one here in Poblenou is the major one and it is also the most discussed in the media. I have been here (Les Glòries) but it is under construction.

Maria:
You should go and visit the one in Les Corts. This is completely built. This is the only real one, the pilot project that was really developed. And then I am going to show you Las Glories. Las Glories is at this point where Diagonal, Gran Via, and Meridian cross and this is why there used to be a huge flyover, right. And the mobility was roundabout from which you could turn different ways. That's why is the circular formula. What happened in practical terms is that this neighborhood (Sant Marti) was separated from this one (l'Eixample – south-north division). So, these neighbors would never cross here. This acted as a huge barrier, okay. And why this happened? For many years, until the 90's, this was built for the Olympic games.

This was the outskirts of the city. The Poblenou area was only industrial land. The last 20 years it has been redeveloped whatever. So, this is why there was the necessity to change this. This was a roundabout for when you reach the end of the city and now it has to be the new door for the city, okay.

…

Some streets were not connected because the connection was circular. What the superblock strategy made was the continuity of the streets.

Miroslav:
Without so much waiting and getting into the circular traffic.

Maria:
Exactly. So, now the whole idea is not to bring the cars to the city center but to use the grid and divide the traffic intensity into the verticals and the horizontals (respectively the vertical and horizontal streets). So, after this what happened? The park is going to take many years because this is only public investment – 500 million euro which is a lot of money for Barcelona. And it's gonna take many years. So, while this is being refurbished, while the tunnels are being built and the park is being built, we said: "with light interventions let's occupy the spaces". And then we painted the car lanes in blue; we put the trees that are going to be in the park in kind of nests. We did a huge participation process.

…

We did several conditionings of the space so that the site can be used as a public space, even before the park exists. This is why we call it the superblock strategy also because the superblock has an idea of doing transitory solutions. For example, we painted some basketball plains for the children to play when they exit the school. This is the old asphalt lane that was only been painted and planted. But it is a very low-cost intervention. We used the concrete from the deconstruction of the highway.

Miroslav: So you refurbished materials?

Maria:
Exactly, to do the new topography of the future park. Then we invented a pavilion for people to know how the transformation of the area is going to look like. And then, at weekend time the people are bringing tables, we organize the festival with the idea to create the new center. So, I think the superblock strategy is more than the mobility issue. I think, one of the biggest criticisms to Salvador Rueda is that he has been very focused on putting out cars. Well, I think, the superblock strategy is more about creating the conditions for the people to use the space than telling them actually how to use it.

Miroslav:
I agree, yeah.

Maria:
It has to be very subtle. And you have to invite the people to do the change not to tell them.

Miroslav: Not force them.

Maria:
Exactly. Because it generates big...

Miroslav: Anger and tension.

Maria:
Yes, absolutely.

Miroslav:
I read, there were many articles, they were foreign newspapers, in BBC where they were focusing on this particular spot (Poblenou) and then they were telling that there is a huge debate in between locals, who disagree with the project. They don't like it. And if you go down there, you see really that the space is underused. It's just empty streets and nothing more than that. And painted roads.

Maria:
Imagine how this is gonna look like in July and August. 30 degrees and more.

Miroslav:
And nobody's gonna use it

Maria:
Nobody. And that's a disaster because I am all for the mobile change in Barcelona and I think, when my children get bigger and there's a bus that brings me here, I will use the public transport, for sure. And I think the city needs to get rid of more cars. But the reality, as I said, is very, very stubborn and you have to really make intelligent decisions about the urban space. And this has had a lot of marketing because Ada Colau (the current mayor of Barcelona) herself has a lot of marketing and she appears everywhere. But the result is not what she expected or what the city expected. Even internally. I have many friends having worked for the city council for many years and everybody says that internally they agree that it has been a huge failure. So we will see.

Miroslav:
What about the other one that you mentioned that is right behind the stadium?

You should go and see it. It is very different than this one (in Poblenou). I invite you to judge it by yourself because there the mobility hasn't been stopped. So, you still have areas for the cars to pass and the bus goes by. But the public space that has been conquered was space that was used by public parking or there were empty plots and all this has been activated. But not against anything. The superblock was implemented, the people liked it and there was no contention.

Miroslav:
So it's a good example of how it can work?

Maria:
Yeah. But you have to go and judge for yourself.

Miroslav:
Okay. Is there any other place where I could go and see something that's already been implemented or not really?

Maria:
I would suggest that you go to Les Glòries and look around how the space is used. This is a project of mobility change. And see it at times when children get-off-to school – at 5 (p.m.) or 9 o'clock in the morning and see how they use the public space that is around. I think it has been a big success because this was an area only devoted to cars. And go and see the superblock of Les Corts.

…

Miroslav:
When I talked to Salvador, he said to me that I should go and visit Gràcia and I went there one day just to see it. Because it is a good example of a superblock. He said that was sort of the first idea of the superblock. So to see how the urban life works.

Maria:
I think this is a tricky argument because Gràcia is an old village. Gràcia was a village that existed before the extension like Sarrià, like Sant Andreu. So, it was one of the exterior villages of that the extension plan annexed to the city. What happens? The sizes of the streets in Gràcia is very small and there are some big squares; and for its morphology, like many old centers of the city already had a mobility pattern for which only the big streets were crossed by cars. So, this is not a superblock. This is a typical mobility of an old town. It happens in Sant Andreu, it happens in Sarrià. To be fair with Salvador, in the 90's there was more use of the car and he was involved with not having to park on the street and putting more buses on the big streets. But to be honest, that's not a superblock. That is the typical morphology of an old village.

Miroslav:
And it can't work this way in any other place in the city. Can we say something that there's difference between the density in those blocks around here and blocks in Gràcia for example?

Maria:
Absolutely. And there is a huge difference between these blocks here and the center of the Ensanche. In the city center of Ensanche, you may have 350 people per hectare, here you might have 150 people per hectare. So, it is 1/3 of the population's density. In Gràcia you have a huge population density as well because the streets are very narrow, there are many houses, there are many heights. So, the users of public space there, I would say by logic, the streets have been pedestrianized. Also, Gràcia is very well connected with public transport. It has 3 metro stops from 2 different lines of metro, 4 actually stops and 3 lines of the metro which is something that doesn't happen in here.

Miroslav:
So basically its connected very much to how much mobility there is there – in a way public transport let's say?

Maria:
So many people living in Gràcia can access the rest of the city by very convenient transport.

Miroslav:
And that's not true for the case here.

Maria:
Exactly. This is one of the main differences. And the morphology of the streets in Gràcia made it possible. For many years ago, the people realized that had non-sense to park their cars on the streets. And this was logical. Nobody had to really plan for that. I think sometimes Salvador is a little bit tricky with his arguments because he is now trying to say: "it happened there, it can happen here in 20 years". Well, no. Because the conditions are different.

Miroslav:
Right. We were talking about the same thing because in every each of those superblocks that are planned, they are different. We speak of different areas, different people, different incomes if you want; different densities.

Maria:
Absolutely. Absolutely.

Miroslav:
So they can't work the same way. There have to be several different strategies for each of them.
Maria:
Do you know who complains here? The poor people.

Miroslav:
Yeah, right.

Maria:
Because they own small factories of cars. Who is the real push for that? It's the Súper – the restaurant here. The restaurant is an organic restaurant. They are all for the superblock and they are very happy because the have gained pedestrianized trade in front of them. It's full of people, it's very nice. The small restaurant that's on the corner, that has not seen an increase in its pedestrian space but has increased its traffic flows with all the cars. They are struggling. They have lost clients and this is very serious. People don't complain because of complaining (itself) but because they suffer.

Miroslav:
They have reasons, of course.

Maria:
Have you been able to talk to any of critics or any of the people living up here?

Miroslav:

No, I hope I am going to meet them tomorrow. I am still expecting some emails. So, hopefully, I am gonna meet them and talk to them. But there were restaurants and few car shops and it is naturally (for them) to be against it.

Maria:

Salvador wants them to close the shop. But it's their business. They have been selling cars forever and ever and the city has a contradiction. It has people who have to deliver food, it has people who have to have old people. What happens to old people that cannot access their home by car? I have a grandmother; she is 92 so I have to drive her by car. She cannot take the bus because she is very fragile. She had her legs broken. So, I bring her by car, park for 2 minutes on the street, go with her up to the top floor and then go down. It happens once a month. But it happens. I think, this new left has become very stubborn and not seeing the complexity of issues.

Miroslav:

I have one final question. A few days ago, I went to the municipality and I talked with two women – Ariadna and Neda.

Maria:

Ariadna Miquel. She is still working there.

Miroslav:

We had a very nice talk but she was sort of, in my opinion, she was not very honest in a way. Maybe because that's her job and she has to say it this way but we were talking about spatial inequality. If we speak of this particular superblock, we have 9 blocks – 3 at each side and one in the middle. The middle one is sort of benefiting a lot if we speak of urban space (quality urban space).

Maria:

You have said it very clearly.

Miroslav:

And those at the periphery will struggle with more traffic and more noise. And in my thesis, I address this as spatial inequality and it is exactly true. But then she said: "it can't be true because the traffic around the peripheral streets is already at its edge and it can't take more traffic". But that's not true. I went there yesterday and there were absolutely empty streets. So if we speak of only one day, which is Sunday, and if there are empty streets and we put 5 more cars that's (already) a problem.

Maria:

To be honest, I have been working here since I left the city council. For 1 year and a half. And this was only implemented in September. So, I would cross the street here with no problem and go slow with my car. When the superblock started I couldn't use this. So I have to make a huge turn and go around. The same in the mornings – I have to take Tanger and then come back here. The traffic has increased.

Miroslav:
Exactly.

Maria:
Maybe not the amount of cars but what has increased is the time of cars waiting on the street.

Miroslav:
Which makes more noise as well and more pollution at the same time.

Maria:
And this is the day time but I think, this counter should be provided. And they are hiding it. And that's what is not correct. To me everything is correct. They have the right to try to do this. But they should be publishing the data. And there is one thing worse – since there is a lot queue on this streeet, Tanger, it collides with the tram so the tram has to stop. So there's actually public transport network that is influenced by the long queues of cars waiting to the U-turn.

Miroslav:
So that's a whole city problem coming from the superblock?

Maria;
Coming from a policy that hasn't had any real benefit.

Miroslav: (and) Sense.

Maria:
Exactly. Do you speak Spanish?

Miroslav: No.

Maria:
Can you read Spanish?

Miroslav:
No, but I have someone to help me with that.

Maria:
I will send you a very nice article from a Catalan writer- Quim Monzo.

http://www.lavanguardia.com/opinion/20160922/41483141820/esto-no-hay-quien-lo-pare.html

It's a parody, a very funny story about the superblocks. It's to laugh about it. He makes the parody so he says: "alright, the superblocks are here. They have come to the city, we welcome them. All the citizens will now consume organic food in enlarged sidewalks". It is very funny. You have to read it. But the critics is very caustic critics. Plus, it says it is not the idea of the pedestrian city, not the Mediterranean public space. In this climate, I know you

know because you are from the same region, it gets really hot in summer time. So, people will not sit there. Children won't play. Children will play in a park where there is a shadow of trees, in which there is water provision, in which they can play with the sand. My children are not going to play at the asphalt at 40 degrees in the sun. Now, in March it gets not a convenient place to be.

Miroslav:
Exactly. That's the same for old people as well.

Maria:
Same for old people. This is why there is nobody. They say it's gonna be full of people. And they managed to do the pictures for the press which it was occupied by people. But these were activities in use of the city council. So, they actually brought students to conquer the space, they brought political acts in here. But as soon as there is no program activity – it's empty.

Miroslav:
I have heard of the same thing. Totally the same thing. I was here in November again with the study trip (group). And we were there just to pass by and there was absolutely nobody. And that was the argument – there was life when the students were there designing the interior of the super block. After they went away it was just nothing there anymore. And that has nothing to do with the temperature if we speak this way. If we say now it is too warm, in November it wasn't too warm. Still, there were no people there.

Maria:
So that's it. We have this mayor. We have to put up with her. She is very popular and she does a lot of marketing things. To be honest, here the problem is that she is very, very popular. She doesn't have much support; she only has 11 percent of the votes so the political composition is very fragmented. But somehow the media love her around the globe and we have to put up with her.

Miroslav:
So how many years she has left in government?

Maria:
Three years and she might win again because the opposition is not ignorant.

Miroslav:
Okay, can I just want to raise one more question about spatial inequality? Can we say that this superblock generates spatial inequality by itself – like the people who are already inside (the block), they are sort of trapped by the other ones (who have access to a car). Because the other ones have more benefits of the car, of the space and that sort of things and those – they don't.

Maria:
You should look at Cenit. C-e-n-i-t. It is a unit of UPC (Polytechnic University). Cenit is a group of engineers that have a long claim and they have argued with theoretical background that is very unequal policy. And what you claim it is going to happen is already happening

because the streets are going to have buses and cars and parking are gonna look very different. Already you can have a look at the housing prices. The main street Gran Via is not affluent street because they have to put up with all the traffic and the pedestrianized streets are raising their prices.

Miroslav:
So that's really bad for the citizens (at Poblenou). They are poor, in a way, and they are gonna lose the value of their property.

Maria:
Absolutely. That's why they care.

Miroslav:
That's why they protest as well.

Maria:
It is very logical. And there is data on this. I am sure, you can find data on housing prices according to streets. If you need any help in the future, I will be happy to appoint you to the right links.

Miroslav:
Well, thank you very much!

Interview.4

UIC

Participants:

Carmen Mendoza
cmendoza@uic.es

Date and time:

21-03-2017

Location

 Immaculada, 22, UIC Barcelona

Pages: 9

Miroslav:
What is your involvement in the project?

Carmen:
That's the 4th year of architecture which is like a year course. And we always work on an urban like topic at first and it ends up with this public facility. And this is what they have to design. So the first four weeks is at an urban scale so we usually like to find places where there is an urban content or where there is also renewal. And so that year I forget how was we start talking about the option that this was coming up in Barcelona and one of the things that we thought was necessary was to rethink these 2000 square meters of open space and how this will change the logic of the city. So the professors of the 4th year which were a group because the first four weeks are urban scale and then is the architectural scale but we always at the end come back because they always have to do the master plan even though they are working on their individual project at the end of the submission always has a project at ground floor level of all the people that are involved together. This is the methodology in a week that is transversal of scales. So there are 2 professors per group of urbanism and there is 2 professors of architecture scale. That already makes a couple of people and then I was asked to coordinate this course. So, together we always do a brainstorming of our overall work for the next year. And so, we also thought that it was interesting to work here with the KU Leuven university with the master of urban design. And so we asked them if they wanted to work on this project too. So actually the first time we talked about the superblock was on this course of Architecture. It is the 4th year (1st and 2nd semester of 4th year of Architecture). When this came up then two professors were

involved in this course which were Iñaki Baquero and Jaime Batllé whom you met. And so then we always have the Vertical workshop in this school. It's the first week of class that all the students of the whole university are put into groups from the 1st to the 5th year mixed. And they have to work on something and build something physically, and that week is like a boost of energy for the first week. And so usually we rotate and different professors come up with an idea, like the year before were worked at the super block the parking day was the idea. So each group had a space of parking and on the parking day, the built everything there on the street. We try to engage in things like that. So with Jaime and Iñaki Baquero, we do the superblock as a project of what can happen there with the groups. And this became bigger because the schools of Architecture through some professors of each university decided to join. That's why it was such a big thing and it keeps up with size and everything. So it was an opportunity to experiment. So we thought it was interesting to rethink from the university, we always like to do that in projects that are in the city because if anything we can be neutral and we can have an opinion because we are not in any political area. So that was why but it came up from this group of professors, yeah. The 4th year of architecture here.

Miroslav:
How did you get a permission from the municipality to go and do this workshop right there?

Carmen:
They looked through it. They had to call Jaime and Iñaki were very proactive and through Salvador Rueda because we invited him to explain the superblock. We though him we were going to work on that. So he was involved both in the 4th year of Architecture that year before and then the Vertical workshop. He thought that was a great idea that this was going to be done in all the schools of architecture. So he really helped us but they went through a lot of meetings with the municipality to convince them with the idea and they finally gave full support. So they were engaged in getting the permissions and they did a lot of work. It wasn't that easy. They had to talk with everybody, tons of meetings and finally, they got the approval because Salvador was okay, the municipality thought it was an interesting idea that there were all the schools of architecture involved, it was temporary and so. Some of them have stayed like the one that's painted on the floor with the panola? 4:10 and I don't know about the other ones. But it was an experiment that was very inactive for expression also because since there was on the open space the projects are just ideas on the open space. And each of them had a topic, I remember one of them was democracy and the other one I forget – activism. I don't know. There were like 4 definitions for each, like, space. And so I think that was an opportunity for expression and also for the neighbours to see that something was happening there because sometimes ideas are easy to understand from the academics, from a lot of technical people but the people on the ground – you really have to explain to them and they see it, they understand the dimension, you know. So I think this is what happened. This was a catalyst to see what was really going to happen in that space. And so yeah. That's how it all started.
Miroslav:
That's also my idea, like - to translate this idea from above – from planners, from technical background people, whatever this is – engineers, architects or academics. And the people from below – how to translate this idea to them, to become accessible to them so they can actually involve in it.

Miroslav:
So how was the process there – were they (the people) very supportive or were they negative?

Carmen:
The people?

Miroslav:
The people, yeah.

Carmen:
I think the people were supportive when the students were working so everyone asking "what are you doing?". And I work a lot in participation because my master is in cooperation. And so whatever thing we always learn is that you have to transmit what you are doing to people or else they don't know. So it is explaining and explaining, and explaining. And the success stories of transformation are at urban scale, that we should learn from for example in Meriden in Colombia, the transformation of Meriden in Colombia. Have you seen those projects?

Miroslav:
No, I haven't actually.

Carmen:
Well, you should look them up because what they did was that they extrapolated, they decentralized from the municipality into these municipal agencies that were in the neighborhoods they were upgrading. And part of their job was to sit with the community leaders and explain what they were going to do before they did it. So when they were talking about "okay we are going to do this to an open space" that's really abstract, you know. We understand what open space is but the people don't. So it was showing them what it means. There is a lot of pedagogy that should be done in any public space.

And so here, I think, the plan, obviously it is not an urban plan, I think it is a mobility plan. Now I think its going to be transformed into an urban plan because urbanism is more than just mobility. So now they are in that phase of becoming an urban planning in which you have to talk about activities, you have to talk about land management because it is not the same to have your plot in front of the open space and now in front of the hub of the cars, right. So there is going to be changed in the value of land.

Miroslav:
For sure.

Carmen:
It has to be a lot of things and this is what makes an urban plan. This is just the mobility idea.

Miroslav:
So it all started as mobility idea and involved in something more?

Carmen:

Yeah, it will now I think. Because the logic of the city that's different. So you can have a plan that is just mobility but you also have to talk about compensations. And you have to talk about mixed use because what' gonna happen with the place where there is roads and where there is not. There is a lot of things to be studied but I think it is a good idea, a concept, you know. So I am going back to your question. Because I think the people were not involved in this or thought "what do you think?" till afterward, you know.

Miroslav:
Right. So basically it was a very top-down decision? Let us first try it and see how it works.

Carmen:
That's very top-down, yeah. I think it is very from a municipal level. The idea is not to be very top-down, I think, they wanted to be very like, communicate with the people so they did this pilot project for example and it wasn't the whole city that was transformed, right. So, I think, this gave an opportunity for the people to talk. But they weren't told that in the beginning. There was no assessment of the community, there was no participatory design. It wasn't like that.

Miroslav:
I think they learned the lesson in the bad (hard) way. They got the resistance right after.

Carmen:
Yeah but actually arises is an academic idea. Femoral totally. So it was like, okay, let's see what can be done in these 2000 square meters and let's see what these students can come up with within a week. And then group, and build it and then take-up over the space. That was the main idea.
The municipality has to do this whole process, I think. Because for it was just an academic exercise and dimension, and it showed how big these spaces were. And made people wanna use them as open spaces because till then people were still walking on the sidewalks, even though there were no cars (on the road). Because the concept of the road is always a road, you know. So when we painted those spaces all of sudden the became, like: "oh, look this a place I can walk on". It was an interesting experience, changing from private to public space, you know. What is open is not necessarily public space, right. As taboo use.

Miroslav:
What about the road? Are they private or public?

Carmen:
It is public land, but I mean the idea of the car and the pedestrian.

Miroslav:
Okay, in that way.

Carmen:
These concepts. No, no. Here everything that is systems, the roads, and everything is public land. The zone which is the private land, which is housings and buildings, but everything that is not that is considered in the urban plans public.

Miroslav:
So it all started as mobility. What happened with the plan of Salvador (Rueda)? Did it happen afterward or at the same time? Because he speaks a lot about ecology and it is a mobility plan. So how those two (categories) intersect together?

Carmen:
Yeah, it actually comes from mobility thing form this broad way plan. The mobility plan not done from the urbanism department. I think this is the big change. It's done from the urban ecology agency (BCN ecologia). Before the past mobility plan of Barcelona, which is done after the Olympics in 1992, it was done by the planning departments of the municipality.

Miroslav:
This has changed.

Carmen:
Now it is a singular of this plan, it is very ecological because he is like "oh, look at the plan". It is a huge amount of maps and stuff. He's probably showed you. There is a lot of assessment of CO2 consumption and greening, everything. It comes from this, this is what I think it is singular about it. It's a change of the thinking of the car as the only way of mobility to thinking of different options mobility. I think that's also more advanced. But it is a plan that comes from this agency which is also very singular for Barcelona. It's usually been done by the planning department.

Miroslav:
Exactly, so that's a bit unusual.

Carmen:
Yeah. I think it is very good but it also needs to convert itself into an urban plan because right now is just a concept of mobility and ecology and there is a lot of other factors in the city.

Miroslav:
So how did this project gain so much popularity around the world? Or let's take first the small scale – here in the city, out of the city, in Spain, in general? And in the world?

Carmen:
I am not sure it's that popular. Is it that popular?

Miroslav:
It is. If you actually google it, there is plenty of articles and plenty of videos about it.

Carmen:
I think it is because of the moment we are living in. And not everywhere. I think in certain cities in the US but now what is happening in the US against climate changes is terrible. So it is popular I think in European cities that have a very compact way of living. I think this is

possible in a compact city where you can have different public transport. In the US the public transportation doesn't exist except in the big cities like New York or Washington or Boston. But the rest of the country everything is car-based. So I think here in Europe is a moment where everybody is very conscious of ecological issues so it comes in a perfect time I think. This is why. I think it is interesting because many cities can imagine themselves implementing something like that. We've got to a point where there is very ecologically conscious people in Europe in general in compact cities. In Latin America too because a lot of Latin American cities are going towards the same idea of less cars and more public transport but it is taking quite a while. So now it is very user based cars. So I think in European cities it is easy to understand. It is certain cities. Other ones, where there is no such tradition (do not). I think the big cities in Europe are already going towards less car user.

Miroslav:
In different ways, yeah.

Carmen:
I think it is the moment, that's been important here. Here in Barcelona, everything that's related to urban issues in Barcelona is strong ever since the Olympics. The city really believes in their public offices for the transformation of the city, very good architects work in the municipality. This is something that was changed in the 80's after the dictatorship. What happens was that the people had no faith in the public institutions because they had never done anything for them. It was pure speculation under dictatorship here. Since (19)78 when the Land act is done, the urban land act, they decided finally start talking about the compensation and the rights of the people to the city. When the fist democratic governments came into power in (19)79 the first thing they did in the municipality of Barcelona, the new mayor is hired an architect, Oriol Bohigas. You probably heard of him. And he is the one that transforms, he says: "okay, we have to do small projects that people will gain again faith in the public administration". So they started doing what it was called the urban acupuncture, probably heard of if from (19)80 to (19)82. They had all this public land the municipality had required. So they said: "okay, we don't have but money but we have all that different spots over the city. Let's make public spaces, public facilities, and social housing. That was their agenda and that's all they did, you know, during 2 years. From 80 to 82 they paved, pedestrianized and all that. Little be, he hired the best architects in the city. They were called the golden pencils because they had just graduated from the University to come work with them. They designed everything – from lamps to public furniture, lots of plazas. So people started seeing that their taxes gave them back something. And this is a tradition that has continued and then the big bid for them they already had a plan for transforming the city and in (19)86 when they gave the nomination to Barcelona, they had the money. So it wasn't like: "what do we do for the Olympics?". It was like we have this whole plan, the new centralities, the waterfront. And so little by little the city has always been very interesting, the people liked to know a lot about what's happening in urbanism here in Barcelona. I think that's why here is very big because it was a big change and everybody is very aware of it. In Spain, I have no knowledge that it was well-known. It probably is, you know. But I think it is the moment. In Madrid too, there is mayor that she's very socially oriented and she is also pro-ecologic, (has) ecological ideas and pro-biking. And so I think it is like the moment towards. Certain cities are already thinking ahead of CO_2 consumption and stuff like that. I don't if it's they did very much publicity. I know that Salvador has gone to give a lot of talks

all over the place. So that will have some influences. He likes to explain his project a lot. I mean this man has been working on this for years. I mean, this has been his thing. In Barcelona, no one was talking about ecology but he was already talking about ecology. So I think it's just taking time for the rest of the society to catch up with his ideas.

Miroslav:
How would you evaluate the results of the project?

Carmen:
I think it is too soon because it hasn't been any. I think one macro block will not be the issue. I think when there is more than one we will be able to see if the model works or not. And I think there is a lot of things to be solved as I was telling you. They need to think about the other layers of the city – not just ecology/mobility but also the built form, you know, what happens with the houses, what happens with the value land management is really important in this case; the use, the activities, you know, where you gonna concentrate activities – is it, all the same, the superblock or there are hierarchies. Are there certain axis that will not change, you know? Has to be now a hierarchy of the city read by its use and its activities in order to see where the macro block is real as it is or maybe it is a hybrid, you know. I think what will happen, it will underpin sort of a hybrid, not so rational that everything works like that. So I think it is too soon because it hasn't been really implemented in more than one block. What has worked well is the busses, the Diagonal buses. That has really helped the mobility of the city. Everybody sees that, even the users. This is really good. Those are the first steps of his plan. And I think this worked really well because there is rationalizing of the busses, there is doing routes that are more rational for the people and the people really value that. They wait less time; it's been more synchronized. So I think that part is implemented totally and that is a really good thing. But the macro block, still, is an experiment in a way.

Miroslav:
I talked with Maria Sisternas the day before and she said that the idea is good, she really said the same thing. She said we have to think of ecology, we have to think of clean air, we have to think of faster way to move because the city needs that for sure. Everybody can see that. There is demand for mobility as well but she said that she didn't agree it was the right location to be done.

Carmen:
Poblenou?

Miroslav:
Yeah. She said there are certain areas in the city where they have need of public space, need of pedestrian space but that wasn't the case there.

Carmen:
Yeah. I think it was easy to do it there. That's why I think it was clever of them to start there because the city is not totally made. That's a place of renewal. The Poblenou is still redefining many of its uses, transforming industrial area. It's in transformation. So when you were doing that there, I think it was the only place you could do it right now without collapsing the city because the rest of the city is very dense, full of activities, you know. So I think to

put in place a mobility plan like this, it should in a place where its also in transformation. So I think it was done there on purpose because else it would have been really complicated. Barcelona is a grid, so the grid works efficiently but if you start blocking certain parts of the grid you have to think about it really well because it can really collapse the city, you know. So while the Poblenou is a place in renewal, that is changing, it is transforming, it is not as dense in this area as it is the rest of the l'Eixample. So I think it was because of that. It is a pilot project right now, really implementing. I think they are doing good and taking their time with implementation because they have seen the limitations of the plan and I totally agree there is places where you need more open spaces, maybe not the Poblenou, because it is not so dense. But I think they kind of did it in another place to start, you know. So yeah, that's why I think they picked that place. And that's what Salvador (Rueda) said also.

Miroslav:
So who decides which place should be taken? Is it the municipality or the local government who decides really where we put the block on a map?

Carmen:
It has to be the municipality. It's the local government that rules over Barcelona. I think they still have to rethink the whole plan and once it's rethought they can probably see where and how. I don't think it is going to be that rigid. The city has to be active and in transformation and I think they should finish up their idea of what it should be an urban plan, and then they can come up with maybe other hybrid ways of doing the macro block. I guess not everything is a macro block, like at the plan you see of his. But they have to start reading, as I was saying, the content of the city, the hierarchies. This is an area where we can't touch the grid because it has already it is own life, you know. But maybe certain areas can have the macro block. I think it is gonna end up in something like that. But it has to be done by the municipality because they are the ones that regulate everything. So you have to mix all the different department to make this possible. And I don't know how much they are willing to take their time for a kind of public participation. The thing with the participation is that it makes the process longer. There is a lot of participation in Barcelona and it has to be implemented but it is not that much. It is more consultative than decision making. So I think this will also be seen, how they use it but it is a municipal competence.

Miroslav:
And when we talk about collapse can we speak of that there is sort of collapse at the moment right there at this block (Poblenou) in terms of land value as you said. We have perhaps loss of value of the properties who are the periphery of the block, we have loss of businesses perhaps to some level, and it generates in a way spatial inequality compared to let's say the block itself – it surrounded by blocks and there is one in the middle. So the one in the middle benefits more in a way than the one at the periphery. On the other hand, we can speak of the block itself and the surrounding blocks which are not there yet. So can we say this is a collapse in a way and then the people are the ones who take the consequences of this try?

Carmen:
Yeah. I think before they implemented it they had to sort out all these things, you know. The people won't complain if they have certain kind of compensation. Like when cities are built for the first time and a certain road passes through your plot, they have to compensate for the road and there is a lot of negation when we talk about land management. Another thing

is the acceptance. When you are talking about the public acceptance of this change but at the same time there is all these urban management things that have to be solved. I wouldn't use the word collapse. I don't think that's the word. I think there is still a lot of negotiation and dialoguing to be done. And actually, to construct the plan, you know. I think it's not just two layers of the city, you have to see all of them. Like you were saying activities etc. I think they are on that. Right now they are doing this for what I understand. They are still revisiting and reviewing again. I think during the pilot macro block was a good idea to see how the people reacted and stuff and I think it is gonna give them a lot of feedback. I think that's positive. It was a good idea to start place that is not so complicated, a place that is easy to implement and to test it. I think it was a good idea to test it and see how the people react to this. Some will always be against things by nature. We work a lot with participation around the world and this happens a lot but then when you see the betterment for the most people then people accept the changes. The change is always difficult. But anyway. I think it is interesting that it has been such a big thing because that's a good sign. It means that many cities are thinking of reducing CO2 consumption and thinking of more public transportation as the only means of mobility, and cycling and walkability. All these concepts are at buzz of today so that's good. That's why it's probably got so much echo because it is the right moment for many cities.

Miroslav:
Do you know anything about... I don't think it is called the superblock but it's a block right behind the Camp Nou stadium?

Carmen:
Les Corts?

Miroslav:
Les Corts, yeah. I have been there. Can you somewhat relate to both those cases? Are they similar in a way, are they different? And how are they different?

Carmen:
I think the city is very different. You have to see it in its context. Everything in the urban context has to be contextualized. I think they are two different kinds of neighborhoods. Poblenou right now is creating its own identity, right. It's like in a process of renewal, it's changing, it was an industrial area of Barcelona. Now it is service area. Les Corts is a very old housing area and it very close to Diagonal which is a very active street and hub. I don't think it affected that much because you are on the outside of Barcelona. Here is the extension grid and here is Sarrià, Les Corts. These were all the villages in the 1800s that were out of the walls. So the second wall of Barcelona was constructed and at that time the distance of a cannon was who decided where these populations were. So there is this huge plain 1889 there was an extension plan contest and that's where Cerdà decided all that space was occupied by the extension plan because there were all those villages like Sarria, Sant Gervasi, Les Corts they were always on the outskirts of the city. So the density and the mobility isn't as big. I don't know if you have been there. Now it is very pedestrianized which was easy. It was the urban core which was pedestrianized. So I think the urban conditions were very different. It is not a place that is central, you know. l'Eixample when you see the plan it's like the whole grid you know so this where it is complicated while Les Corts has its own logic and I think the activity comes from Diagonal. So below Diagonal, there is more

houses and small shops. It is not similar in the context. That's why Les Corts hasn't been a big issue because it was the urban core that was pedestrianized but there have been different activities like nursing, small children's home. It works well there because it is not like a traffic hub there and it never was. I have seen the transformation. It's never been, nobody's noticed this much because it is not like you are touching a big important street. So the mobility continues working exactly the same. I think if you don't interrupt the way the traffic is going like there. It's a macro block but it's not felt like it is done any change, no. It is not a drastic change. Each context is different.

Miroslav:
So that's why they didn't receive that much echo from the media or…?

Carmen:
And it wasn't very much announced as a macro block. I think what's the finger of this is that it comes with the whole plan. So when you see the whole plan and you are like wow. This will change totally the logic of the city so I think that's why people go wow. This is something that is not transforming that area drastically. I think that's the difference. While if you are, on the other hand, transforming an area that is a grid at itself it is very difficult. You are changing the logic of this part.

Miroslav:
So can we then compare Les Corts with Gracià for example because that's an old village, it has the same concept. It has the same several floor high buildings with cores for pedestrians, a lot of plazas and that sort of thing. Can we somewhat compare them?

Carmen:
But it was a different strategy. Gracià is part of the transformation plan of the 80's so it was part of the idea of gaining public space. So what was guiding the agenda of the transformation of Gracià was the public space, not the mobility.

Miroslav:
And now this has changed?

Carmen:
Yeah. It was a totally different concept and origin. But this is a plan that changes the way the people move through the city and Gracià was obviously pedestrianizing Gracià and incorporating these plazas that were already there because of the urban fabric. But it was more like gaining open space than transforming a mobility plan. It wasn't like now let's transform the mobility, the concept or that idea that transformed that was totally different. And you have to read the Gracià in the context of the 80's when there was no public space. What they did was working on those small interventions but at the same time, they had this plans. It was nice that they publish a book so everyone can see. This was part of the pedagogy too. This was done by the municipality back then. The name is the "The plazas of Gracià".

In the 80's cars were in all the studies in Europe. All the plazas were parking spaces. So in that period, this was like, okay let's gain the spaces for the people, let's pedestrianize but it was more open space. That's why it's called the open spaces of Gracià. So they were

thinking about a mobility plan. I don't think it is comparative temporarily and also the concept behind but at the end, the result is that is pedestrianized, right. Now Gracia is all walkable even so it has cars that pass through it. When you are there, there are certain streets like Major de Gracià. They are very important, very structural. So they decided that there had to be cars. So I think that's gonna happen with the macro block. There are certain areas that will have to maintain the mobility they have because they have activities, the city has to be diverse. It can't be homogenous.

…

Miroslav:
Let's turn back to the mobility. We have the super block right now in Poblenou and it will certainly have an impact on cars at the periphery. I talked with the municipality and they said: "no, it won't because right now the streets are on their limit". And I have been there two times – once during the weekend and once during the week and actually, that's not true. You can see there' plenty of space for (more) cars. There are only a few cars passing by. There's plenty of space. So will that affect somewhat the residents themselves? There was an issue Maria Sisternas mentioned that when there is increase in traffic at these peripheral streets, it makes it more difficult for the public transport to go, like, there are delays and certain problems.

Carmen:
So what is the question? If there's going to be more problems?

Miroslav:
Yeah. Related to the increase in traffic in those peripheral areas.

Carmen:
Yeah, definitely it will be. But the idea is that there will be less individual cars. I think it is more towards public transport. I think the idea of Salvador is that little by little there won't be private cars as much as. Just public transport, or walking and cycling. And he, I don't know if he told you this but he really wants is the electrical motorcycle as the means of transportation. This is something that he envisions. There's going to be stops and everything and it won't be with gas consumption. And so I think his idea is that the streets won't be that crowded because everyone will be using the public transportation because it's more efficient. So I think this model goes with public transportation and not with private cars. Or else it will be very much more collapsed, yeah. I mean there will be more cars in those areas than in the other ones.

Miroslav:
So, do you think it is a good idea to implement some complimentary measures like extra taxes or extra fees for parking and that sort of thing to limit this growth, so it happens to be very small or none so that it maintains the level that is right now? So it will be later on easier later on to implement public transport, because imagine if we have an increase right now and it is going to be a lot more difficult to limit it in five years from now.

Carmen:

Yeah. I think definitely it goes with the policy for public transportation. Like lowering, making a unique only card. This has been in Curitiba in Brazil. They did this on one line and it's very efficient because they did a lot of, like, giving support to public transportation card. So everybody would use them and if you lower the prices the people will use that.

Miroslav:
Exactly.

Carmen:
So it has to be coming with the policy for favouring public transpiration or other means of transportation that are not private cars. I think this has to be in parallel. I think they are thinking about that. They are thinking about a card that is one only card. Like, the card there is now for metro, bus, train and everything but using certain fees that are cheaper, subdividing that use because the people will use it if it's cheaper and efficient, you know. So I think they are working towards really giving a lot of importance to public transportation and that, as you say, in the end, will make private cars not being used. I think there is a lot less use of private cars now in Barcelona. A lot of people I know would rather go by public transport. And young people, they don't really want to get their license. They can use their card for everything. So I think it has to be with policies that really really reinforce the use of public transport.
There are certain cities like London that is really expensive to come on to the city with your car and as I also studied. There are different ways of limiting private use.

Miroslav:
I think it's the same in Copenhagen. They have very strict limits for cars. So that's why many people who live in the outskirts of Copenhagen, in the suburbs, they will use the public transport even though it might be somewhat slower. They just want to use the public transport because it comes a lot cheaper.

Carmen:
It is cheaper, it efficient and it is comfortable. So I think I will work more with policies toward bettering the service and frequency. I think this something they are also taking into consideration. I mean, the plan is taking in consideration a lot of things. He (Salvador) studied this for years. What hasn't be studied very much is the consequences of the other layers, as I was saying of the city. And I think that's what they are working on now. That's why it hasn't been implemented, they have been bettering all these other layers like activities and regulations.

Miroslav:
Thank you very much. I have no more questions I think.

Carmen:
Okay, thanks. I am glad I could help you. It will be nice to see how you do.

Interview.5

ATM - Autoritat del Transport Metropolità

Participants:

Jordi Martín Oriol
Jordi.Martin@uab.cat

Date and time:

21-03-2017

Location

c. Muntaner, 339 3er (third floor), 2a (second door)

Pages: 3

This is a brief of an interview with Jordi Martín Oriol from the Metropolitan Transport Authority. The key topic discussed in the interview is the superblock and particularly – the one in Poblenou. Issues related to mobility, planning, spatial inequality, public participation and resistance were also central in the discussion.

On the question: 'Do you think the outcome of the superblock is positive or negative?'

He says it is difficult to say whether the impact is a good or bad. Since he does not live there himself it is difficult to make any conclusion on this regard but seeing it from the distance of

another neighborhood it seems a good idea. Yet, he believes that the people who live there should be the one to be asked about the impact. He referred to a story of his friend who is a resident of the superblock (in Pobelnou) who's a young man with a child. He says, before the superblock the kid asked his dad to go out and play few blocks away from where there's a public space that allows play and recreation. However, now when there are no cars at the superblock it is far easier and more convenient to go right outside and enjoy good public space devoid of cars. He thinks himself it is a really good outcome and change in practices for good; change in the function of the space – where cars used to drive, there is now people walking and children playing.

He also says that restaurants are particularly happy with the change and some can benefit a lot from the calmer and carless space.

On the question: 'What are the issues related to the superblock?'

What he says is that there is a lot of resistance from local business owners. It's an industrial area, he says, and their complaints are often related to their supplies and deliveries since the superblock has specific measures on car mobility. These measures have also a significant impact on people who are car owners and live in the superblock. They have to park their vehicles in the subterranean parking which are common in Barcelona and with the implementation of the limiting car measures at the superblock this becomes a major issue. Another complaint he refers to is the problem at the periphery and especially at the crossroads at the corners of the superblock – where a larger amount of cars spends more time in traffic which is a major cause of the higher pollution and noise rates at these particular spots. This has indeed effect over the neighboring (the superblock) buildings which take particularly the negative effect of the intervention. He totally agrees with the argument that the superblock generates inequalities and this is something to be looked upon.

Do you think the area (Poblenou) was the right choice for the implementation of the superblock?

He says that the area is a right choice because of it is low density, homogeneity, and simplicity in terms of business activity and mobility. Since it is an area in transition (from an industrial area) it's measures are flexible to changes. This is known as 22@ (http://www.22barcelona.com/component/option,com_frontpage/Itemid,83/lang,en/)

He also confirms that the area has poor access to public transport but this is a short-term issue which will be solved (easier than if it already access to it) with the new mobility plan. He further argues that in case the superblock location was different, the process of the implementation would have been a lot more complicated, complex, time-consuming, requiring a lot more negotiations and eventually – increasing the public resistance.

In terms of politics, he says, the project is a test for the mayor. He predicts that if the project succeeds well the current mayor will be reflected and if not – she will be perhaps losing the elections.

What is your opinion on the resistance to the project? is another question that's been asked at the meeting.

There are issues which concern both the business and the residents, he says. There are banners around the areas of the superblock saying "No superilla" but this is not a precise indicator of public disagreement. There are people in Barcelona who are for the independence of Catalonia without having the Catalan flag hanging on their windows or balconies. This might mean that there are people who are against the superblock without having the banners on their balconies. Likewise, this it totally the same for the people who support it.

Do you think that the superblock is a universal formula for the city?

He claims that the superblock is good for some areas and that the effect will be different (positive or negative) depending on the area. Some areas, he says, are more likely to adopt the superblock easily where in others it will be a lot more complex and long process due to different factors. The superblock should be considered differently in the different contexts.

Results sheet

1. What is your relationship to the superblock? (one possible answer)

Living in the superblock	1
Working in the superblock	2
Working and living in the superblock	1
Having business in the superblock	0
Having business and living in the superblock	0
Living near but spending time in the superblock (work, recreation)	0
Living near the superblock and have to cross it sometimes	1
Living near but have no relation to the superblock	0
Living far from but spending time in the superblock (work, recreation)	0
Living far from the superblock and have to cross it on a daily basis	1

Living far from the superblock and have no relation to it	0

2. Where do you live in relation to the superblock?

In the centre of the superblock	0
At the periphery of the superblock	1
Neighbouring the superblock	1
Elsewhere in the city	4

3. Where do you work in relation to the superblock?

In the centre of the superblock	2
At the periphery of the superblock	1
Neighbouring the superblock	0
Elsewhere in the city	3

4. How has your life changed since the implementation of the superblock? (more than one option)

Changed my mobility pattern	2
My mobility pattern remains the same	2
Change in mobility mode (from car to public transport, from car to bike etc.)	1
I use the same mode of transport	3
I use more money on mobility	0
I use less money on mobility	0
I use the same amount of money on mobility	0
I use more time in traffic	2
I use less time in traffic	0
I use the same amount of time in traffic	0
The area near my apartment became noisier and more polluted	1
The area near my apartment became less noisy and less polluted	1
I do struggle because my business (or work if employed) go down because of the superblock	1

I do get more work because of the super block	0
I have worries about my job or business (if owner)	0
I am optimistic about my work or business	2
I have worries about the value of my property	0
I believe the value of my property will raise	0
I feel unsafe at the super block (because of the lack of people during night hours for example)	0
I feel more safe at the super block (because of the less traffic for example)	
I consider moving out of the super block	
I consider moving my business out of the super block	

5. Please, write your free opinion here (required at least one sentence)

I think the superblock is a good iniciative but it should be explained better and it should have a more attractive final use for the people that live neighboring the spaces inside the superblock.
A good initiative launched prematurely.
I consider the superblock project is a brilliant idea and that over time will consolidate as an alternative to minimized the traffic. It will bring new uses to the public space, more activity and a new paradigm in the way of understanding l'Eixample. From the idea of universal mobility proposed by Cerdà, the coexistence between pedestrian and vehicle will no longer be a relationship between vehicle and citizen but a relationship among citizens.
I hope soon there will be more activity in the area.
The superblock is a great idea, but very poorly done!! No parking for bikes.
Overall, I'm happy with the implementation of the Superblock.

6. Age and children

Young (15-29) with children	1
Young (15-29) with no children	0
Younger adult (30-44) with children	2

Younger adult (30-44) with no children	2
Older adult (45-64) with children	1
Older adult (45-64) with no children	0
Old (65 +)	0

7. Your gender

Male	4
Female	2

8. Your initials (example Salvador Martinez –> S.M.)
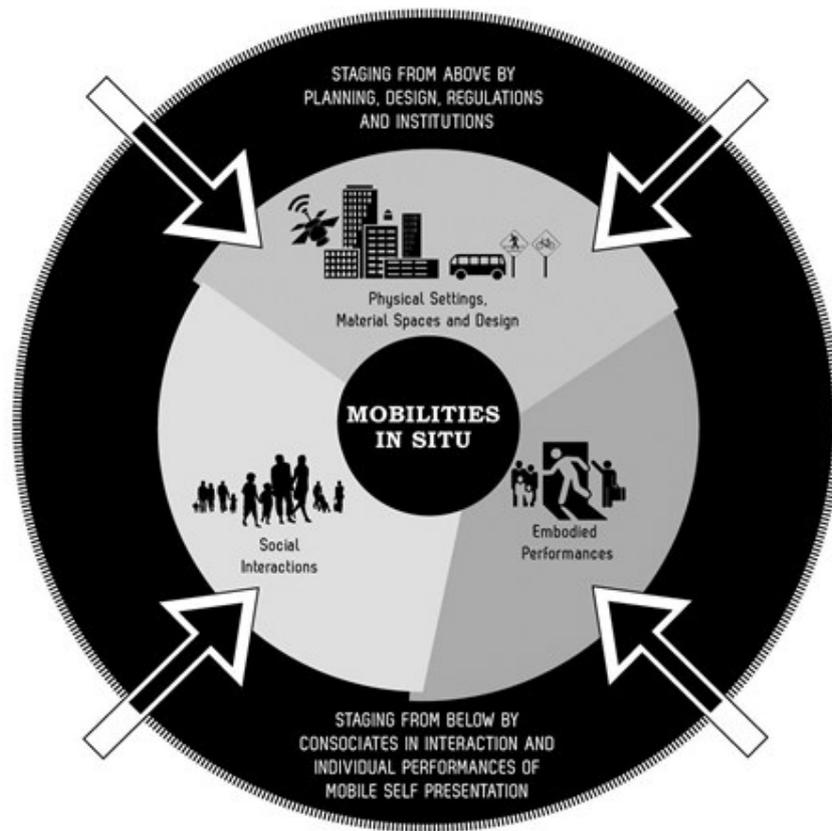
S.M.V

A.B

J.M.

A.M.

E.F.

A.A

Interview Guide

Investigation theme:

From Above perspective – planning, design, regulations and institutions

Related topics:

auto(mobility), urban space(s), spatial inequality, public involvement, policy making

STAGING FROM ABOVE BY PLANNING, DESIGN, REGULATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

Physical Settings, Material Spaces and Design

MOBILITIES IN SITU

Social Interactions

Embodied Performances

STAGING FROM BELOW BY CONSOCIATES IN INTERACTION AND INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCES OF MOBILE SELF PRESENTATION

http://www.altinget.dk/images/article/137577/18223.jpg

AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

General about the Superblocks

What is your involvement in the project?

How were the four pilot areas chosen? What was the main driving force or the criteria for the choice?

• La Maternitat i Sant Ramón, in Les Corts; Sants-Hostrafrancs, in Sants-Montjuïc; Diagonal- Poblenou, in Sant Martí, and Esquerra de l'Eixample, in Eixample.

Do they share common qualities i.e. size, location, number of inhabitants, lack of green space, equal traffic measures etc.?

Are there unique policies, designs, and strategies applied in each section or they follow the exact same development pattern? If yes – why, if not – why?

What will be the future super block destinations? Based on what criteria they will be chosen/are chosen?

Which superblocks are already implemented? Which are currently implementing?

Goals and achievements

How do you define good life qualities and which of these qualities are achieved (in superblock) and which are not? How can this be changed in the future phases?

What is the criteria for success of a superblock?

• Can you please give an example of one of the pilot project that is successful and why; and one that isn't and why. What happens with the unsuccessful one – improvement or cancellation? Who decides and based on what criteria?

How is the success measured or how the success can be actually proved?

Is mobility considered part of the people's quality of life, including automobility?

Planning

How would you define the adopted planning approach – top-down or bottom-up?

Which do stakeholders take part in policy making? Which are the stakeholders who take part in the implementation?

How are they involved in each individual stage?

'No superilla' or the negative voice of the public appears through banners and in the

media. Why there is such big resistance to the project? And which users are mostly negative towards the project (businesses, residents etc.)?

What is the criteria for success and when a superblock can be taken on continuation, improvement or cancellation?

• Can you please give an example of one of the pilot project that is successful and why; and one that isn't and why. What happens with the unsuccessful one – improvement or cancellation? Who decides and based on what criteria?

What are the challenges which the authorities face trying to implement the Superblock?

• I.e. spatial inequality, safety issues, business interests etc. How are they identified? Can they be solved?

How is spatial inequality tackled – on the one hand, the super block inequality compared to non-superblock areas; a periphery of the super block and the center of the Superblock?
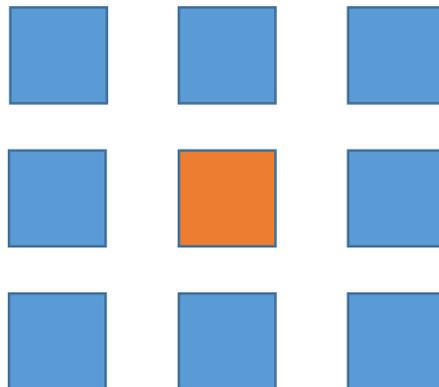
Social interactions

How would you evaluate the social life in the super blocks (before and after)?

What are the good achievements (sports, social events for instance)?

What are the bad points (loss of jobs, business wrecks, safety issues during night time)?

Is it documented and how? (can you please refer to a report, article, table)

Material setting

Is the budget solution a key to the success of the project – plants, painted streets etc.?

• A cheap solution is not a sustainable one in a political sense. With political dedication, it can easily be removed or transformed where a more expensive one is more likely to stay.

• A cheaper solution like painted streets and removable plants do not provide the same use as some more expensive ones (possibly more practical like playgrounds, plazas with benches, other meeting points)