

MASTER THESIS

# UNVEILING URBAN PARTICIPATION:

## Exploring the Intersection of Participation Processes and Feminism in the city of Barcelona

2023/2024 Academic Year

**Student:** Stela VAKALOPOULOU

**Master of International Cooperation in Sustainable Emergency  
Architecture**

**Supervisor:** Apen RUIZ MARTINEZ

**Date presented:** 23/05/2024

*This study has been undertaken thanks to the research on the governance of green  
schoolyards in Barcelona, part of the "COOLSCHOOLS" project*

## Table of contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Acknowledgments</b> .....   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Abstract</b> .....  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>List of Figures and Tables</b> .....  | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>1. Introduction</b> .....   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>2. Conceptual Framework</b> .....   | <b>8</b>  |
| 2.1_ Urban Participation and “Ciudadania”.....                                     | 8         |
| 2.1.1 _Types of urban participation.....   | 8         |
| 2.1.2 _Beyond the “Ladder of Participation”.....                                   | 9         |
| 2.2_ Feminist Urbanism And “Ciudadania”.....                                       | 10        |
| 2.2.1 _Feminist approaches to the city.....  | 10        |
| 2.2.2 _From the right to city to the right to “make” the city.....                 | 11        |
| 2.2.3 The youth as part of the feminist urban participation agenda.....            | 12        |
| 2.3_ Feminist Urbanism And Urban Participation.....                                | 13        |
| 2.3.1 _The link between feminist urbanism and urban participation processes....    | 14        |
| 2.3.2 _ General Ideas and specific tools for a feminist participation process..... | 14        |
| 2.3.3 _ Difficulties in incorporating a feminist participatory agenda.....         | 16        |
| <b>3. Case Study: Urban participation and feminism in Barcelona</b> .....          | <b>18</b> |
| 3.1_ Background to the case study.....   | 18        |
| 3.2 _ decidim.barcelona.....   | 19        |
| 3.2 _ “Transformem Els Patis”.....   | 20        |
| <b>4. Methodology</b> .....  | <b>21</b> |
| <b>5. Analysis of results</b> .....  | <b>24</b> |
| 5.1_ Power dynamics, Access, and Language.....                                     | 27        |
| 5.1.1 When diverse experiences influence participation.....                        | 27        |
| 5.1.2_ Challenge of Power relations and Inclusivity.....                           | 29        |
| Challenge of Power relations.....  | 29        |
| Inclusivity.....   | 31        |
| 5.2_ Transparency and political commitment.....                                    | 32        |
| 5.3_ From physical to social transformation.....                                   | 35        |
| <b>6. Conclusions</b> .....  | <b>38</b> |
| <b>7. Bibliography</b> .....   | <b>41</b> |
| <b>8. Appendixes</b> .....   | <b>46</b> |

## **Acknowledgments**

I deeply thank, not because it is customary, my supervisor, Dr. Apen Ruiz, for our insightful discussions throughout the academic year and for her continuous support during the elaboration of this thesis. She was always there for me.

I am also grateful to Filka Sekulova (UOC), a member of the project "COOLSCHOOLS", for generously sharing resources and facilitating connections within my case study. Her assistance has been instrumental in shaping this thesis.

Special thanks to all the people who participated in this research and generously gave their time and experiences, allowing me to slightly contribute in the field of academic research.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to my parents and my brother for their love, trust, and practical support, which allowed me to complete this master's degree.

Lastly, I am deeply thankful to my friends, my partner, the chosen family, both near and far, who accompanied me throughout this journey and provided much-needed care, support and encouragement. Their "presence" has made all the difference.

## **Abstract**

This research explores urban participation processes using the lenses of feminist urbanism. The objective is to understand participation as a method and examine how feminism can be incorporated structurally in the process. After a review of relevant literature centred on the intersection of public participation and feminist urbanism, the analysis focused on the case study of an elementary school of Barcelona, which was part of the city's council wider project. A qualitative approach, based on studying the meeting minutes of the participation process and in-depth interviews with a variety of agents who participated in it, has allowed me to capture several aspects of their experience on the engagement concerning how their personal diverse life experiences, the display of power dynamics and transparency influence participation, as well as the relationship between the physical and social transformation of the space.

Key words: *participation process, feminism, schoolyards, public space, intersectionality, social inclusion, socio spatial inclusion, Barcelona*

## List of Figures and Tables

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Figure_1:</b> Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Engagement..... | 11 |
| <b>Table 1:</b> Interviewed population.....                   | 26 |

## 1. Introduction

In order to improve decision-making processes in the urban environment, in the last decades many cities have implemented urban participation processes. In particular in Barcelona, which is the case study of this research, there are examples of urban participation starting in the transition period from Francoism to democracy, but it was not until the 1990s when it was established as a method of decision-making.

This thesis views urban participation as a human right, although we accept the criticism that “right talk” is a very eurocentric ideology that stems from the capitalist political economic systems (Ignatieff, 2011). The use of the “human rights” language often creates a binary discourse on citizen/costumer, public/private, etc, as if the only way to deserve them is almost exclusively aligned with the person’s political status (Bakker, 2007). So, as justification we also found it important to clarify that the reference of urban participation as an urban right is not aligned with the official declaration on human rights, but as an opportunity for individual or/and collective action to the city.

I would like to clarify the use of some important concepts that are part of my research. I opt to use the term “urban participation” instead of “citizen participation” when describing the act of participating in the city. Similarly, I use the term “ciudadanía” to refer to the inhabitants of a city, avoiding direct associations with their political status as “citizenship” entails and refraining from linking migration with the political systems that usually generate undocumented status (Lambert, 2023).

A second theme that this thesis explores is feminism, which as participation, has entered the realm of urban planning in the last decades, particularly in the city of Barcelona. Feminist urban scholars have illuminated the intricate relationship between gender and the urban context, highlighting the need to also analyse urban participation processes through a lens that embodies this perspective. Building upon this insight, in recent decades, feminist movements have interrogated the neutrality of public policies and the design of spaces, revealing that urban planning is not gender-neutral. Cities and neighbourhoods have been shaped by patriarchal values, thus contributing to the reproduction of these values in the built environment and the relational structure of spaces (Spain, 2014).

Although urban participation processes play a crucial role in shaping the social and physical landscape of cities, its traditional models have often been critiqued for their lack of inclusivity, marginalisation of certain voices, and perpetuation of power imbalances. Expanding on this idea, feminist urbanism offers a framework for understanding the ways in which gender intersects with urban space, governance, and particularly, participation. It challenges the prevailing norms and structures that perpetuate gender inequalities within the

built environment and urban decision-making processes. By centering the experiences and perspectives of women and other marginalised groups, feminist urbanism seeks to create more just and inclusive cities for all.

This research explores the intersection of urban participation processes and feminist urbanism, with a specific focus on understanding how feminism as a method can be integrated structurally into the participation process. The central objective is to critically examine the dynamics of urban participation using a feminist lens to understand how aspects such as power dynamics, transparency and inclusiveness are incorporated in the process. To achieve this objective, the study undertakes a comprehensive review of relevant literature on the intersection of public participation and feminist urbanism. Drawing on insights from this literature, the analysis shifts its focus to a case study of an elementary school in Barcelona, which was part of a broader participatory project initiated by the city council.

The research questions guiding this thesis included one general and two specific ones:

- ★ To which extent feminism has transitioned from a mere intention to a tangible strategy within the framework of participatory processes in Barcelona.
- What strategies and mechanisms facilitate or difficult the incorporation of feminist principles?
- How do these interventions impact power dynamics, transparency and inclusivity within the decision-making framework?

In order to address these questions I use a qualitative approach, utilising a combination of review of meeting minutes from the participation process and conducting in-depth interviews with a diverse range of agents who were involved in the process. Through this methodological lens, the study seeks to capture the multifaceted nature of urban participation experiences, exploring how personal life experiences, power dynamics, and transparency influence participation outcomes.

In conclusion, this thesis aims to contribute to the existing interest to explore urban participation and feminist urbanism by offering a nuanced understanding of how feminist principles can inform and enrich urban participation processes. By unpacking the complexities of urban participation through a feminist lens, this study seeks to advance the goal of creating more inclusive, equitable, and socially just cities for all inhabitants.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

### 2.1\_ Urban Participation and “Ciudadania”

In this section I will discuss how the term urban participation appears in public discourse and governance. In this sense, I align with how Marc Parés and Hug March (2012) understand citizen participation,<sup>1</sup> understood as the political and social practices through which the people who live in the city<sup>2</sup> seek to influence some dimension of what is public. Under this umbrella, we can place a large number of very diverse forms of participation from voting in representative elections to any form of collective protest action. So, the key element that defines citizen participation is the will to influence in the public sphere (March & Parés, 2012).

#### 2.1.1 \_Types of urban participation

Before entering into the discussion about types of urban participation, I think it is necessary to recuperate the idea of “*right to the city*” that was presented by Lefebvre in 1968. As Lefebvre mentioned: “*the right to the city cannot be conceived as a simple right to visit or as a return to traditional cities. It can only be formulated as a right to urban life, transformed, renewed*” (Lefebvre, 2017, p. 139)

As it was previously mentioned, urban participation is manifested in diverse ways, ranging from the most common and regulated way in democracies, such as voting, to more direct and usually unacceptable, such as forms of political action and they all view the city not just as an scenario but also as an object of transformation (Font & Blanco, 2006). In this sense, protesting and occupying the street, participating in a big assembly in the public space, organising an ILP<sup>3</sup> for the removal of a colonial symbol and taking part in the city council’s process for the renovation of a city’s square, are all equally valid types of urban participation. As it was mentioned before, the key element that unites them as urban participation is the desire to exert influence directly or indirectly within the public domain (March & Parés, 2012).

---

<sup>1</sup>In the original text in Catalan appears as *participació ciutadana*. Direct translation leads to citizen participation

<sup>2</sup> aka *ciudadania*

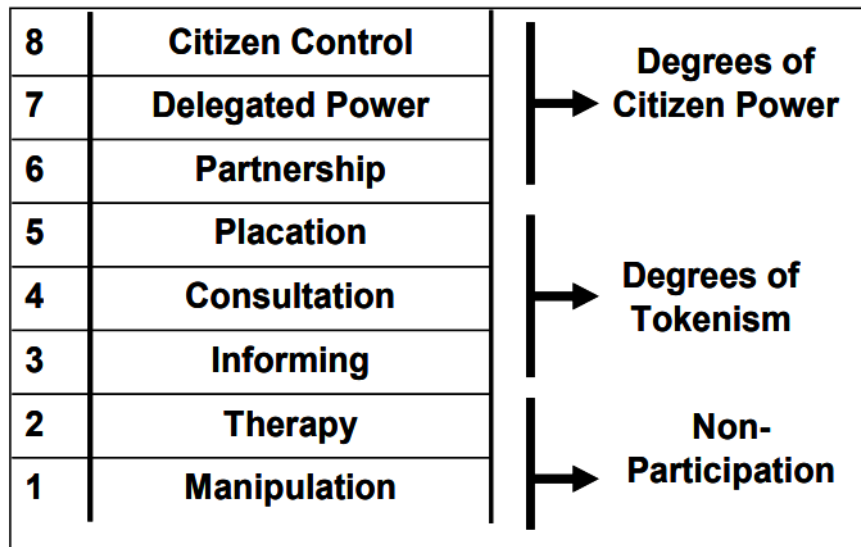
<sup>3</sup> *Iniciativa Legislativa Popular* (tr: *Popular Legislative Initiative*): The Spanish Constitution provides for the participation of citizens in the regulatory production process, through the presentation of 500,000 signatures



This thesis pays attention only to the institutional part of urban participation and does not examine social movements. Institutions in the last decades are using participation processes as a method to democratise and make more transparent the decision making processes. It is a way of redistribution of power from the powerholders to the rest of the citizens to be deliberately included in the future (Arnstein, 1969). On the other hand, social movements leverage urban participation as a cornerstone of their ideological discourse, aiming to autonomously seize power and self-manage the improvement of their living conditions, which institutions, in some instances, neglect to address. As a result it seems more realistic to study participation as a method rather than as a model of political action.

### 2.1.2 \_Beyond the “Ladder of Participation”

I will present Arnstein’s core of many perspectives to participation, approach (1969) questioning some of the viewpoints that she develops. Her work, called “The Ladder of Participation” (Figure\_1) shows that each set of steps aligns with shifts in levels of citizen engagement, ranging from non-participation through tokenism to citizen power (Collins & Ison, 2006). One of the problems of this view that Tritter and McCallum’s (2006) brought is the presumption of a hierarchical structure in participation, where citizen control is idealised as the ultimate objective. However, this assumption may not consistently reflect the participants’ genuine motivations for partaking in decision-making processes. Another important part that Bishop and Davis (2002) pinpointed is that it is not considering the complexity of policy, which requires different grades and types of participation. The linear conceptualization of participation fails to adequately highlight the significance of both the process itself and the presence of feedback loops, as well as the complex set of relationships which exist in many ongoing participatory situations, where individuals don’t necessarily define their roles in relation to their sense of power (Tritter & McCallum, 2006).



Figure\_1: Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Engagement (Arnstein, 1969)

## 2.2\_ Feminist Urbanism And "Ciudadania"

An underlying element of this study is to explore how urban participation processes can be understood and somehow enriched from a feminist lens. For this, in this section I will briefly synthesise the intersections between feminism and urbanism, and next I will move to discuss what feminism brings to the understanding of participatory processes. So, I will start summarising the central ideas and definitions that form the lens of the study, as well as the interconnections among them.

### 2.2.1 \_Feminist approaches to the city

A genealogy of feminism goes beyond the scope of this research, however for the purpose of it, I align myself with Kim England's understanding of feminism (1994) as a methodological tool to analyse socio-political phenomena that emerge from the combination of theory and practise with the intention to create revolutionary social change. In other words, feminism cannot be addressed solely through academic theory or as an Intellectual movement. Similarly, in order to be understood through political activism within social movements must be guided and constantly informed by feminist theory. This highlights that *"feminism is not just theory, but is grounded in transformative, emancipatory politics"* (England, 1994: 632)

Feminism has had important impacts in how we understand urban planning and urban transformation. Indeed, in recent decades, feminist movements have questioned both the neutrality of public policies and the design of spaces and feminist scholars have unveiled that urban planning is not gender neutral (Spain, 2014). Cities and neighbourhoods have been shaped following patriarchal values and therefore, the built environment and the relational structure of spaces has contributed to reproducing these values (Col·lectiu Punt6, 2016). Feminist architects and urban planners argue that by incorporating a gender perspective in urban planning we create more inclusive and democratic cities. One of the themes that feminist urbanism has unveiled is the division between “public” and “private” spheres that has historically shaped urban planning models (Visakha, 2023). It also came to highlight for the first time the complexity of people's lives beyond the dominant male perspective, placing their experiences and needs at the forefront of urban decision-making processes, thus demonstrating their equal transformative potential to the city (Col·lectiu Punt6, 2016).

One key aspect that feminism has brought is the acknowledgement of how the complexity and diverse realities of everyday life shape their experience of urban life and how in turn these experiences are strongly tied to power dynamics. In this sense the idea of intersectionality provides an invaluable lens to understand and unveil discriminatory practices in urban environments. According to Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) who was one of the first scholars to systematise the use of intersectionality in the realm of social sciences<sup>4</sup>, individuals face overlapping forms of discrimination based on various aspects of their identity like race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, etc. These intersecting identities shape people's experiences and opportunities in complex ways. In essence, intersectionality comes to acknowledge the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression and emphasise the need for a holistic approach to achieve equality and justice (Guy & Arthur, 2022). When applied to the urban environment, intersectionality opens our possibility to explore how race, class, gender or sexuality shape our experience of the urban (Bonu, 2022; Massey, 1985).

### 2.2.2 \_From the right to city to the right to “make” the city

Though the Lefebvrian concept of right to the city is undoubtedly relevant for the topic of urban participation, I want to bring to the discussion the feminist revisits of Lefebvre's

---

<sup>4</sup> Intersectionality stems from the lesbian black feminist group The Combahee Collective who in the 1960s described how Black women experience intersecting forms of discrimination based on both their race and gender, which are not adequately addressed by either feminist or anti-racist frameworks alone (Bonu, 2022).

ideas. Anna Falú (2017), for example, argued that the exclusion of women and other marginalised groups from urban policy and planning, results in their invisibility, since their specific needs and demands are never taken into account. These demands are not only linked to economic welfare, but also to political engagement, decision-making and equitable access to employment, land, housing, infrastructure, transportation, and safety. So, when she questioned, the existing vision of the *right to the city* is because it didn't include the well-being of the "others"<sup>5</sup> and their equal access to safely utilise and enjoy urban spaces and public resources while navigating the city (Falú, 2009 & 2017).

However, except for treating them as equal users, the *right to the city* also represents equal participation in the design, planning, and construction of urban environments, as well as the development of infrastructure and services within cities (Falú, 2017). The way of experiencing the cities is influenced by a complex interaction between the physical urban landscape like tangible elements like buildings, streets, plazas, and green spaces and the emotional dimension, which involves a spectrum of feelings of belonging, safety, exclusion, fear and marginalisation (Hudson & Rönnblom, 2008 as cited by Hudson & Rönnblom, 2020). So, *"If women do not feel safe and 'at home' it is difficult for them to participate in changing the existing city"* (Ortiz Escalante & Gutiérrez Valdivia, 2015, p. 2).

Therefore, it is necessary not only to include those who are repeatedly kept out, but also give them the resources to confront the existing dynamics and to gain respect for their desires for the future city. By challenging the taken-for-granted power relations of the city, we aim to contribute to the envisioning processes in urban planning, fostering the creation of alternative visions for the future city (Hudson & Rönnblom, 2020).

To make this happen it is necessary to apply methodologies of participation process with an intersectional feminist perspective that will put this concept in the centre. This idea will be explained further in the previous chapters.

### 2.2.3 \_The youth as part of the feminist urban participation agenda

As women, children and teenagers, have been a historically silenced group in urban planning and in decision making processes for various reasons. One of these is that the concept of citizen and as a result urban rights are usually understood as the rights and obligations of an adult. Indeed, numerous rights are contingent upon age, such as voting rights (Smith et al., 2005). However, we shouldn't consider voting rights and political participation as the same thing. Not all people who can vote actually make use of their right

---

<sup>5</sup> Historically excluded groups such as: women, migrants, lgbtqai+ people, disabled, youngsters etc.

and similarly the ones that can't vote doesn't mean that they are not politically influencing the city (Smith et al., 2005; Eden & Roker 2002).

Talking about *the right to the city* Manouchehri and Burns (2021) point out that even though the youth, as inhabitants of cities, use urban public spaces, in many ways, their *right to the city* is limited due to lack of access to urban public spaces and services. So, it is obvious that they are also part of the marginalised groups that have been historically excluded from participating in city making and for this reason it is essential to incorporate their voice in tangible outcomes and also establish them institutionally in planning discussion (Manouchehri & Burns, 2021).

This is specially useful for my thesis since schoolyards could be considered urban public spaces when talking about the younger sectors of society. They are places where children and teenagers spend a great part of their time and consequently works as an agent of their socialisation and construction of gender identities and relationships (Ciocoletto & Col·lectiu Punt6, 2022). Undoubtedly the school as a place where stereotypes and power relationships due to gender, class, race, origin, etc take place, thus is a scenario where inclusive and exclusive practices take place (Ciocoletto et al., 2019).

To conclude, children and teenagers should also have equal access to the production of school space and urban space at large, since they have daily encounters and experiences within them. To accomplish this by feminist lens as this research vision, it is necessary to establish a participatory methodology which has as a goal to involve all these different qualities. In the next chapter we will talk more thoroughly on these specific methodologies.

### 2.3\_ Feminist Urbanism And Urban Participation

As it was mentioned in the previous sections, the significant impact of feminist urbanism is its focus on participatory processes, because it is the only way to effectively meet the experiences of vulnerable population and more particularly women, girls, the elderly, people with disabilities, migrant workers, sexual and gender minorities, and other marginalised groups (Visakha, 2023). A concept that will differ from the present planning structure of the city and would reflect their needs and desires without limiting them as passive receivers of already setted plans and policies (Hudson & Rönnblom, 2020). Also, the

incorporation of diverse voices experiencing the cities will challenge the present power relations that result from the until-now sexist planning (Hayden, 1980).

In the next pages we will zoom to more concrete ideas on the incorporation of a feminist urbanism approach in the urban participation practices and the challenges related to their implementation.

### 2.3.1 \_The link between feminist urbanism and urban participation processes

According to “Col·lectiu *Punt6*,” some of the indicators to evaluate the urban space from an intersectional feminist perspective are divided in five urban qualities: proximity, diversity, autonomy, vitality and representativeness. These are some of the qualities that space should meet to include the everyday experiences of its inhabitants (Ciocoletto & Col·lectiu *Punt6*, 2022). Although all the aspects are important and valid, for this thesis I have focused on the role of representativeness as the main component of this research.

Col·lectiu *Punt6* acknowledges representation as the quality perceived when there is people's participation in urban decisions. Besides participation, they also bring in the element of memory and visibility. They suggest that when certain groups, are invisible both historically and in present-day public spaces within neighbourhoods, it holds back the progress towards a fairer and more inclusive society (Ciocoletto & Col·lectiu *Punt6*, 2022). So they perceive participation not only as a method of decision making but also as a tool of collective memory.

### 2.3.2 \_ General Ideas and specific tools for a feminist participation process

One of the main challenges of urban participation is the lack of community representation in the processes proposed by the public institutions. For marginalised groups with more complex daily experiences and after being historically excluded from the public sphere, it is not a priority to participate in this kind of process. That is the reason why it is necessary to change the actual processes and promote more transformative ones that with a feminist lens will empower marginalised groups and challenge the existing power dynamics (Col·lectiu *Punt6*, SCCL & CAF, 2023). As Escalante and Gutiérrez Valdivia (2015) argue empowerment involves not simply providing power upon someone, but recognizing the inherent power that individuals and marginalised groups possess within themselves. It entails establishing mechanisms that facilitate the exercise of their rightful power. That is why for Beall (1996) empowerment is considered as an actual tool for participation.

A feminist perspective in participation processes should confront deep-seated, systemic sexist, racist, classist beliefs and prejudices (Visakha, 2023). To succeed this is important to previously recognise the impact of gender roles on the participation dynamics and not allow sexist attitudes that will cancel the input of women and other historically excluded groups. To do this, it is necessary to introduce the idea of inclusive language in the preparation and realisation of the process, which is linked with several meanings.

The first is related directly to the linguistic part. Sometimes in the urban participation processes there are people who are not sharing the same language as first. It is important to handle this limitation from the beginning without causing discomfort or confusion to the people who don't speak well. For this, it is recommended to use the languages of the communities where the activity takes place, instead of referring exclusively to the widely spoken language of the place (Col·lectiu Punt6, SCCL & CAF, 2023).

Inclusive language is also related to the technical aspect and the activities used during the process. In participation processes usually the profiles of the people are very diverse. That is why it is recommended to use accessible and specific dynamics to facilitate the participation of different groups of age, level of training, socioeconomic condition or origin and avoid very formal or demanding activities with complicated tools (ex. architectural plans) may end up being exclusive. Methodologies must encourage the participation of all people and be flexible and creative, without losing depth for comprehensive analysis (Font & Blanco, 2006).

It is also important to use non-androcentric language that recognizes equally the contributions of diverse groups of people to society and avoid campaigns that victimise women or other marginalised groups (Ciocoletto & Col·lectiu Punt6, 2022). Together with this, inclusive language should be also related with the diversity of bodies and gender expressions. This practically means to establish an environment where people can freely express their pronouns<sup>6</sup> and also use verbal, textual and graphic language that does not perpetuate gender roles (non-binary - man/woman) or discriminate based on origin or body (Col·lectiu Punt6, SCCL & CAF, 2023).

To ensure that all the above challenges are being effectively addressed the chosen facilitation team and other experts hired to carry out the process should be aware and relevantly trained with the concept of feminism and social inclusion.

Also, as in other urban qualities, the concept of care should be the central one to plan and analyse participatory processes. Indeed, the involvement in care work, that not always but many times is done by women, appears as a one of the basic aspects that exclude them

---

<sup>6</sup> A gender pronoun is a pronoun that a person chooses to use for themselves (she/her, he/him, they/them).

from being protagonists of participatory processes. This would practically mean that it is essential to take into account the diverse realities that may affect participation such as proximity<sup>7</sup> (Ciocoletto & Col·lectiu Punt6, 2022). Lastly, apart from the preparation and carrying out the process it is also very important to evaluate the relationship between the physical transformation of urban space and the social transformation of the community that has engaged.

To conclude, the above views are the wide concepts of feminist urbanism that a corresponding participatory process must also fulfil. So, in order to impact the power dynamics, integrate all aspects of inclusive language and inclusivity, put in the center care and the personal experiences of marginalised groups and finally evaluate the relationship between the physical transformation of urban space, there are many specific tools and methods depending on the state of the process. There are some more adequate for the urban diagnosis part, such as assessments, exploratory walks, interviews, questionnaires and others that are used more in the urban transformation of space part, such as workshops, community mapping, and neighbourhood photovoice, as well as everyday log itineraries or exploratory walks (Escalante & Valdivia, 2015).

### 2.3.3 \_ Difficulties in incorporating a feminist participatory agenda

Although there are many methodologies and tools to implement a feminist perspective in participatory processes, it is not the only challenge in establishing it. There are difficulties that have to do mainly with the institutions themselves and their political agendas, but also with more structural issues that we will briefly analyse.

In order to meaningfully discuss about democratic tools for involving different voices we need to previously understand the power relationships that are established in the city from the institutions themselves. As Beall argues a feminist perspective will not reform urban policy and planning processes automatically. *“There is a need to transform City Hall from within, while continually holding it to account from outside”* (Beall, 1996, p. 10). Following this view, Escalante and Gutiérrez Valdivia (2015) also highlight that city authorities and potentially national governments might express high interest and willingness to endorse women’s and other oppressed group’s involvement in the participation processes, citing goals of empowerment and accountability. However, when it comes to implementing actual change, it becomes challenging to directly intervene or sway decision-makers in a manner that leads to tangible results.

---

<sup>7</sup> location, schedule, accessibility, compatibility with other tasks



This challenge occurs because local governments embody the concrete expression of the socially and economically unjust neoliberal model of our cities. Part of this model's values include androcentrism, individualism, ableism, ageism, classism, profit maximisation, productivity, etc (Valdivia, 2018). Rethinking the city from a feminist perspective is to stop generating spaces from a productivist, socially and politically restrictive logic and start thinking about environments that prioritise the people who are going to use them. Thus, to address social and economic inequalities, a structural paradigm shift is essential (Valdivia, 2018) and in our case, one of the main obstacles.

### 3. Case Study: Urban participation and feminism in Barcelona

#### 3.1\_ Background to the case study

To contextualise my case study, I will briefly outline the connections between urban participation processes in Barcelona and the institutional integration of feminism. This includes its role as a broad component of the city's strategy, as well as its more specific application within the urban spectrum.

The incorporation of participation into urban planning processes in the Spanish state and particularly Barcelona has its origins in the neighbourhood movement during the transition period from Francoism to democracy (1970-1979). This first stage is characterised by the non-institutionalized nature of participation and its link to the practices of protest (Bonet-Martí, 2012). In the 1970's, the capacity of the neighbourhood associations to fight against the municipal urban plans because of their speculative interests, came to play a vital role in directing urban participation in urban transformation policies (Parés et al., 2012). The institutionalisation of urban participation in Barcelona began in 1986 with the second legislature of the democratic city councils (1983-1987), with the approval of Citizen Participation Regulations that regulated the creation of sectoral councils and participation mechanisms at the municipal and infrastructure municipal level (Bonet-Martí, 2012). Even though feminism or gender issues were not openly verbalised in this period, it is well known that women were at the centre and leading most of the demands of the neighbourhood associations (Valconcelos, 2018).<sup>8</sup>

During the 1990's citizen participation gained a lot of public interest. The first community plans<sup>9</sup> started in Barcelona and they also began to implement the environmental dimension into citizen participation. For the sake of this study, I consider as a key moment that connects feminism with urban strategies the implementation of the "Llei de barris"<sup>10</sup> (2004), marking the official recognition of gender equality and transversality for the first time.

Some of the basic points of this law were a) Gender equality in the use of urban space and facilities, b) Development of programs that lead to social, urban and economic improvement of the neighbourhood c) Accessibility and the removal of architectural barriers (Martinez & Ciocoletto, 2011). According to the observatory of Health and Impact of Policies aimed to reverse inequalities between the neighbourhoods of the city of Barcelona and mainly affected the regeneration of neighbourhoods with the most deficiencies (*Evaluación*

---

<sup>8</sup> Family planning, buses, schools—all activities that affected women (Vasconcelos, 2018)

<sup>9</sup> the *Pla Integral del Casc Antic de Barcelona* and the *Pla Comunitari de Trinitat Nova*

<sup>10</sup> Tr : Neighbourhood Law

de la «Llei de Barris» (intervenciones regeneración urbana) | Observatori de Salut i Impacte de Polítiques, n.d.).

This law formalises the concept of transversality, which, as mentioned previously, is an essential tool for action. It proposes, among other things, a redirection of current systems of thought and action that are based on an abstract neutrality corresponding to exclusively masculine experiences (Martinez & Ciocoletto, 2011). Likewise, feminism has been one of the main political movements in Catalunya since the very early moments of the democracy (Bofill, 2014; Duch, 2023). Even though it has always maintained a non-institutional spirit and agenda, the election of Ada Colau in 2015 has opened opportunities to see unprecedented examples of the institutionalisation of feminism in urban strategies. During her service she commits to incorporating the feminist perspective and gender equality in all areas and policies of the City Council.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.2 \_ Decidim.barcelona

An important element for Barcelona's participation strategy was the establishment of the *decidim.barcelona*<sup>12</sup>, an online platform launched in 2016, with the intention to facilitate citizen engagement in decision-making processes related to municipal governance (*Decidim Barcelona | Barcelona Digital City | Barcelona City Council*, n.d.).

The timing of the launch of the platform is not irrelevant with the political situation of Spain at the same moment. Following the 15M Spanish Indignados Movement<sup>13</sup> Spain has experienced a significant shift in its democratic landscape, transitioning from a crisis of representation to embracing new ventures in participatory democracy. This transformation, deeply rooted in the technopolitical movements of the 15M, underscores the pivotal role of ICTs<sup>14</sup> in reshaping political structures (Peña-López, 2019). This movement influenced a lot the following local elections in 2015 and for the first time was elected a party in Barcelona that had emerged from one of these civic movements. What this new city council wanted to do was to “transpose the philosophy and ethos of the civic movement into the municipal

---

<sup>11</sup>El Àrea de Mujeres y Feminismos incorpora la mirada feminista de manera transversal en todos los ámbitos del Ayuntamiento, de la política y de la sociedad | Tr: The Women and Feminisms Area incorporates the feminist perspective in a transversal way in all areas of the City Council, politics and society

<sup>12</sup> "Decidim" means "we decide" in Catalan

<sup>13</sup> The 15M Movement started officially 15/05/2011, a social event that began with a series of demonstrations throughout Spanish territory where citizens showed their discontent with the economic crisis of 2008 and cuts in social and public aid.

[https://as.com/diarioas/2021/05/14/actualidad/1620989259\\_994666.html](https://as.com/diarioas/2021/05/14/actualidad/1620989259_994666.html)

<sup>14</sup> Aka: Information and communication technology

*institution*” (Peña-López, 2019, p. 41). Similar initiatives happened also in other municipalities led by rightwing parties after a strong demand of the public for transparency, openness and accountability.

So, to conclude decidim.barcelona came to fill this need of the citizenry for direct interaction with city officials allowing them to participate by proposing ideas, discuss issues, prioritise projects, and participate in decision-making through various digital tools and channels. In the case of this research decidim.barcelona is very important since every urban participation process initiated from the city council is uploaded and also discussed there. The basic objective was to standardise citizen participation, ensure its quality, honesty and transparency (Ortega, 2022). In the upcoming chapter, you'll notice that a portion of the research material originated from the decidim.barcelona platform. Therefore, it appeared crucial to provide additional clarification on this aspect.

### 3.2 \_“*Transformem Els Patis*”<sup>15</sup>

For the case study of this research I chose an elementary school that is located in the district Horta-Guinardó in Barcelona whose name will not be mentioned to protect the anonymity of the participants. The school participated in the project “*Transformem els Patis*” initiated by the Barcelona City Council, that aims to enhance play areas by fostering the naturalisation of space and promoting inclusive relationships through diversified gaming experiences. Moreover, it seeks to encourage community engagement by repurposing these spaces as neighbourhood facilities. The protagonists of this program are the educational centre and the wider educational community and the city council’s shared goal aims to foster a critical perspective, creating the tools for both physical and social transformation that will enhance coexistence (*Transformem els patis - decidim.barcelona*, n.d.)..

Is also a driving project planned in the “*Plan del juego en el espacio público*”<sup>16</sup>, part of the 2030 agenda that is planning to take the necessary actions to move towards a model to expand, improve and diversify play opportunities in public spaces. The Plan has as a priority to fulfil the various needs and interests in the uses of public space and for this reason, they promote a participation process that will make it possible to collect proposals and reconcile the diversity of needs to convert “patios”<sup>17</sup> into community facilities accessible to people in the neighbourhoods (*Plan del juego en el espacio público - decidim.barcelona*, n.d.)

---

<sup>15</sup> Tr: Let’s transform the yards

<sup>16</sup> Tr: Plan for Play in Public Spaces

<sup>17</sup> Tr: yards

While one of the project's objectives was to foster inclusive relationships through diversified play and enhance community engagement, it differs from other projects done by feminist urbanism collectives such as Col·lectiu Punt 6. The program "*Transformem els Patis*" was not initially designed as a feminist project, rather it falls under the purview of the Department of Education and is part of the city's agenda regarding climate refugees. My examination of this project through a feminist lens is my personal contribution, aiming to assess the necessity of its integration. My contribution involves examining this project through a feminist lens and assessing the necessity of its integration. This is in line with the broader strategy of the Barcelona City Council, which aims to incorporate feminism and gender perspectives as methodological tools across departments.

## 4. Methodology

As argued earlier, in order to promote a feminist urbanism strategy, feminism should not only be incorporated as a conceptual understanding of the city, but also within urban participation processes. Cities have been historically made by men and for men and have continuously left aside all the other existing embodiments (Hayden, 1980). In this sense, my zoom on this specific school within "*Transformem els Patis*" aims to analyse the participation process itself. Although I am also intrigued by the physical and social transformation of the space, my focus remains on understanding these changes within the context of collective decisions made during the process. With this purpose, I planned a research design that involved the use of various methodological strategies.

### 4.1\_Research design

The first step of the methodology consisted in the review of relevant literature to construct a theoretical framework centred on the intersection of public participation and feminist urbanism. The second step was to study the meeting minutes of the participatory sessions' case study. These were available on the city council's web page, *decidim.barcelona*. This process gave me the opportunity to understand from the beginning of this study the methods and activities that were used in the participatory process, the specific dates and duration of the meetings, the people and entities who participated as well as the transformation plans, that I am not sharing to protect the privacy of the school workers, parents and other professionals members of the process.

The third step was to arrange semi-structured interviews with 1) the people involved in the participatory process of the chosen school and 2) professionals of the urban participation field.

### 4.2\_Semi-structured interviews

I organised the interviews to reach two groups of people. The first group, aimed to capture the perspectives from participants in the "*Transformem els Patis*" project at the school. Among the 11 people I interviewed there were mothers, fathers, facilitators of the process, architects, as well as teachers and the director. The interviews occurred during April and lasted from 40-60' minutes and they had a format of open conversation following an

interview guide that was adapted according to the person and their role in the process. During the open interviews I took notes that were used for the analysis.

The second group of people I interviewed were urban participation professionals. As the research focuses on the institutionalised methods of urban participation processes, I considered that it would be enriching to talk with people with a solid experience in urban participatory processes even though they had not been involved in this particular project. I talked with six technicians of different departments of the city council of Barcelona such as Gerència de Drets Socials, Salut, Cooperació i Comunitat<sup>18</sup>, Departament de Projectes Estratègics i Participació<sup>19</sup>, Implicació Territorial i Social<sup>20</sup>, Departament de Participació d'Urbanisme, Transició Ecològica, Serveis Urbans i Habitatge<sup>21</sup>. With four of them I had conversations and with two of them I followed an interview guide. The duration of all was around half an hour and occurred between 7 and 26 of March. During the analysis respecting their anonymity I will use the given names "technician 1", etc to refer directly to them (table 1).

Apart from the professionals related to public affairs I also interviewed a team of architects specialised on gender issues, who consider architecture and urban design from a feminist point of view and use participation as a method to their projects. For them, during the analysis I will use the given name "studio X".

#### 4.3\_Ethical considerations

It seems necessary to add an important fact concerning the interviews, which was to attempt to implement the feminist approach during the whole process and not keep only as the theme of the research. Practically that meant that I was very flexible on times and location of the interview, giving all the liberty to the participants to decide, being totally respectful on their complicated time slates as people who perform both productive and reproductive work. In the case of the school interviews the meeting with the two mothers and one father, occurred in different moments but in all cases after school because it was easier for them to do it watching their child play around. For the director and teachers team it was best to meet at the school and for the professionals (architects and facilitators), online. For the technician as they offered me their experience for my research during their working hours I tried to adjust my questions to their time offered and adapt it to an online or physical meeting, according to their preference. Apart from the schedules I tried to be as more

---

<sup>18</sup> Tr: Management of Social Rights, Health, Cooperation and Community

<sup>19</sup> Tr: Department of Strategic Projects and Participation

<sup>20</sup> Tr: Departament de Projectes Estratègics i Participació, Implicació Territorial i Social

<sup>21</sup> Tr: Department of Urban Planning Participation, Ecological Transition, Urban Services and Housing

transparent as possible, creating a quite descriptive consent form that I insisted to be well read and discussed, if needed, previously.



## 5. Analysis of results

The goal of this thesis has been to study a specific process of urban participation in a public school in Barcelona in order to examine how the participatory method was implemented. The idea was not to validate it, but to examine if by using a feminist approach, we could gain insights about the method of participation itself.

In order to briefly describe the process implemented in this school, I analysed the meeting minutes available at the platform [decidim.barcelona](https://decidim.barcelona). According to the documentation there were four official meetings, one introductory and three more specific, and all took place at the school area from 16:00-17:30. The usual participants were: direction, teachers, AFA<sup>22</sup> representatives, student representatives, coordinator architects - education consortium<sup>23</sup>, team of architects, directorate of education. Apart from the established meetings some groups of the process did more meetings to coordinate effectively.

The minutes provide information about the logistics of the process, but the interviews have allowed me to better understand the complexities, challenges and difficulties of this particular participatory process. After studying both information and results I would like to give a first general image of the process before analysing the specific themes.

The participatory process was not a smooth one, in the sense that there was conflict, especially in one of the meetings, when the team of architects imposed their opinion on the rest, without listening very carefully what was the desire of the people inhabiting the school. The direction and teacher's team also had strong opinions, targeting as priority to remove the cement, which was the biggest part of the schoolyard and also the goals, trying to implement a general concept of a "free-of-ball" yard. This concept was already part of the school's strategy, but the physical transformation seemed like an opportunity for the addition of new components that can diversify play and bring new possibilities in the schoolyard and also shaded areas and more natural elements. So for them the social and physical transformation were very well linked from the beginning.

Therefore, I have organised the information obtained from interviews and the material on [decidim.barcelona](https://decidim.barcelona), in three main themes that feminist scholars have underlined as necessary to be in processes of urban participation.

---

<sup>22</sup> Asociación de Familia y Alumnos, Tr: Family and students association

<sup>23</sup> Consorci d'Educació <https://www.edubcn.cat/ca>

- 1) Power dynamics, access, and language
  - When diverse experiences influence participation
  - Challenge of Power relations and Inclusivity
- 2) Transparency and political commitment
- 3) From physical to social transformation

Before moving to the analysis of data let me briefly describe the population sample of people interviewed. In order to have a broad and diverse understanding of how the participatory process took place, I interviewed people who hold different positions in relation to the project (table 1) and also others who work in the sector of participation both in the public and private sector, who commented more generally about the processes with a feminist lens.

| <b>PID</b> | <b>Description of role</b>               | <b>Assumed age</b> | <b>Assumed gender</b> | <b>Given name</b> |
|------------|--|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| P01        | Mother participating in the process      | 40-50              | W                     |                   |
| P02        | Mother, president of AFA                 | 30-40              | W                     |                   |
| P03        | Father participating in the process      | 30-40              | M                     |                   |
| P04        | Architect participating in the process   | 55-65              | M                     |                   |
| P05        | Facilitator participating in the process | 25-35              | W                     |                   |
| P06        | Facilitator                              | 30-40              | M                     |                   |
| P07        | Director participating in the process    | 50-60              | W                     |                   |

|     |  |       |   |              |
|-----|--|-------|---|--------------|
| P08 | Sport's teacher participating in the process   | 25-35 | W |              |
| P09 | Teacher participating in the process   | 25-35 | W |              |
| P10 | teacher  | 25-35 | W |              |
| P11 | teacher  | 35-45 | W |              |
| P12 | Technician of the city council's Department of Strategic Projects and Participation  | 40-50 | W | technician 1 |
| P13 | Technician of the city council's Department of Urban Planning Participation, Ecological Transition, Urban Services and Housing | 35-45 | M | technician 2 |
| P14 | Cofounder of a company specialised on feminist urbanism  | 30-40 | W | studio X     |

***Table 1: Interviewed population***

### 5.1\_Power dynamics, Access, and Language

This section aims to describe the experiences of people participating in the process focusing on three key topics that resulted from the interviews as well as from the literature review. These topics emerge from the diversity of experiences that directly influence people's schedule, flexibility and possibility of participating. In addition I wanted to examine also how power relations that possibly are being reproduced and affect the process and finally with the "language" used, which can encourage or exclude people of further involvement.

### 5.1.1 When diverse experiences influence participation

As it was mentioned previously a feminist approach in urban planning prioritises the centrality of users' everyday experiences, particularly those of women and individuals engaged in care work. Care work, being fundamental for the sustainment of society often serves as a barrier to participation for those involved, making it imperative to focus our analysis on this aspect (Ciocoleto & Col·lectiu Punt6, 2022). Technician 1 (P12) clearly explained how the centrality of care influences feminist planning processes, emphasising proximity as the foremost consideration for enabling people's participation. By proximity she means the location of the encounters, the schedule of the meetings and the accessibility of the place. She argued that when planning a participatory process with gendered perspective, they always try to organise it so the location, the access and schedule are compatible with care activities.

Although it is quite obvious this is one of the key aspects to reach larger and more diverse groups of people. In our case study all participants confirm that the schedule and number of encounters were established previously from the city council without any flexibility. However, a working mother as well as some other participants, seem to justify this inflexibility because of the project's fixed deadline, which limited a lot in the sense of times: *“La estructura era fija desde el principio porque tenían que desarrollar y terminar la construcción en verano.. O sea iban apretados.”*<sup>24</sup>

To contrarrest the lack of flexibility, the parents found ways to organise themselves, making additional surveys with the parents who couldn't attend. On the one hand this shows a form of solidarity among people who deal with similar complexities, but on the other hand it reveals the low interest of many of the families: *“Ahí fueron más o menos cinco personas de padres pero hacían encuestas para informar al resto. No contestaban mucho.. Unos veinte, treinta, puede ser, pero si cuentas los que somos aquí verás lo poco que es.”*<sup>25</sup>

This doesn't necessarily mean that people showed low interest because they didn't care. It just signals the complexity of everyday life for people who perform both productive and reproductive work, that many times it doesn't allow the implication to community and political activities. The facilitator team who worked in many schools of the project mentioned that: *“El mayor problema del proyecto al final es la falta de tiempo para liberar y pensar en propuestas.. Es muy corto y con tiempos ajustados y definidos del programa del*

---

<sup>24</sup> Tr: (P01): *The structure was fixed from the beginning because they had to develop and finish the construction in the summer... In other words, they were tight.*

<sup>25</sup> Tr: (P02): *There were more or less five parents, but they did surveys to inform the rest. They didn't answer much... About twenty, maybe thirty, but if you count how many of us are here you will see how few there are...*

*ayuntamiento*.<sup>26</sup> The concept of "neutral" management, which allocates equal time, budget, and activities to every school in the project, supposedly under a feminist approach, fails to embody true equality. Each school presents unique realities that demand individual consideration, thus highlighting the inadequacy of a one-size-fits-all approach.

### 5.1.2\_Challenge of Power relations and Inclusivity

#### Challenge of Power relations

As we previously discussed, the current urban landscape is a site of power imbalances that embodies the perpetuation of several social and economic injustices (Valvidia, 2018). Deliberative theorists often operate under the assumption that setting aside political and economic power dynamics is adequate for ensuring equal participation among people (Young, 1997). However, this overlooks the fact that social power, which can hinder equal participation, stems not only from economic or political factors but also from individuals' characteristics such as gender, social class, race, sexual identity, physical ability and age shape the privileges and oppressions individuals encounter in their daily experiences within urban spaces (Valvidia, 2018).

In our case the different characteristics of people were related more with gender, age and level of expertise that greatly shaped the distribution of power during the participatory process. Aside from the parents and the children, the rest of the participants (teams of architects, directors and teachers) had quite strong opinions related to their professional interests on the project: *"ellos (se refiere al equipo docente y directivo) en general tenían en mente que querían hacer y a los niños por eso no les hicieron tanto caso, no por peques pero porque estaban cogidos de la mano."*<sup>27</sup> As the facilitator argues "Fue muy diferente que en otros (colegios). *El arquitecto tuvo un protagonismo destacado.*"<sup>28</sup> This remarkable protagonism of the architect was related to his general idea on participation and the concept of expertise, which as we mentioned is one of the elements that shape power relations in participatory processes. As he argues *"(..)Supuestamente contratas a alguien para escucharle.. si no, yo por ejemplo por qué voy al dentista (?).. Me dio la sensación que el*

---

<sup>26</sup> Tr: (P06): *The biggest problem of the project in the end is the lack of time to release and think about proposals. It is very short and with tight and defined times of the town hall program.*

<sup>27</sup> Tr: (P02): *They (she refers to the teaching and directing team) generally had in mind what they wanted to do and that's why they didn't pay as much attention to the children, not because they were little but because they were directed by them.*

<sup>28</sup> Tr: (P05): *...it was very different than in other (schools). The architect had an outstanding role*

*equipo directivo tenía líneas muy marcadas y no querían escuchar ni a los padres, ni a los niños ni a nosotros.*<sup>29</sup>

The results of the interviews show that the direction and teaching team used the *"Transformem els Patis"* project to make changes in the schoolyard in order to create a gender inclusive schoolyard. For example, they had presented quite strong opinions on removing the existing cement from the schoolyard *"Diguem que nosaltres teníem una idea clara per reduir la pista al màxim"*<sup>30</sup>, because they had already been trying this for a long time. Removing the cement had the intention to diversify the play activities and regulate the use of the ball that was usually dominated by boys and which had the tendency to leave girls and many other children outside from the play area. So, from the side of the school, the project was a good opportunity to change power relations among kids in the schoolyard. For example, one of the interviewees clearly mentioned *"es que salía la pelota y ala..."* *"la ley de la selva"* *(..) los chicos cambiaban directamente (..) y lo que pasaba durante el fútbol afectaba las dinámicas el resto del día.."*<sup>31</sup>

The parents and facilitators also confirm that the teachers and director had this very specific objective that sometimes monopolised the process, but in a way they all agreed that it was a priority that emerged from an educational and social vision for a more inclusive schoolyard. However, the architects weren't willing to politically accept some of the proposals that had a gender perspective: *"yo no hago espacios para niños o niñas, hago espacios cognitivos.. el problema con el fútbol es educacional.. ¿Por qué no fomentar a las niñas a jugar al fútbol? Tu no juegas porque no te dejamos."*<sup>32</sup> This strong opinion from the architect generated a conflict that unveiled clearly his role as expert and especially his position of power in the process.

The facilitator's role was to manage conflict and power dynamics during the process and described that they intervened late because they really didn't expect such a behaviour from the architect, as in other schools they didn't face similar attitudes: *"Hizo mucho mal en la primera (segunda sesión oficial) que no sabíamos de donde nos venía(...)Era Muy paternalista con nosotras y con los niños (..) pero en las siguientes se mejoró porque le hablamos y se dio cuenta.."*<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Tr: (P04): *Supposedly you hire someone to listen to you... if not, why do I, for example, go to the dentist (?).. I got the feeling that the management team had very marked lines and did not want to listen to the parents, children or us.*

<sup>30</sup> Tr: (P07): *Let's say that we had a clear idea to reduce the (football) field as much as possible.*

<sup>31</sup> Tr: (P11): *The thing is that the ball was coming out and then..."the law of the jungle" (..) the boys were changing directly (..) and what was happening during soccer was affecting the dynamics the rest of the day..*

<sup>32</sup> Tr: (P04): *I don't make spaces for boys or girls, I make cognitive spaces... the problem with soccer is educational... Why not encourage girls to play soccer? "You don't play because we don't let you"*

<sup>33</sup> Tr: (P05): *He did a lot of harm in the first (second official session) that we didn't know where it was coming from (...) He was very paternalistic with us and with the children (..) but in the following ones he improved because we talked to him and he realised it...*

It is interesting that all the participants of the research who were present in one of the most conflictive meetings wanted to share with me some of the sentences that the architect used to indirectly influence the children, both girls and boys: “¿A vosotros os gusta jugar al fútbol, o qué?”<sup>34</sup> In other words, even though the school had their own plan for the schoolyard that was aligned with their educational philosophy of inclusive schools, the attitude from the architect seems like stepping on them and using his power as an expert to influence the kids.

In conclusion, power dynamics in this project appear at different levels. As we have seen, the school was interested in transforming gender power dynamics among kids by removing the cement area that was used to play football. On the other hand, we see that the architect was acting using his power as an expert and not facilitating a real dialogue among participants. It is true that the school's objective on the transformation was presented strongly by the director and teachers, but I think that they should be permitted to have a clearer view of the needs as they are the daily users of the school. That is why the parents and the rest of the participants weren't complaining about them imposing their view and they specifically pointed at the behaviour of the architect. It seems that he used his power as an expert to “mislead” the process and fulfil his professional interests. In reality, I would refer to them more as personal or political than professional because he appeared negative in fulfilling the school's agenda, which clearly had a gender perspective that he wasn't sharing. Additionally, thinking that the rest of the participants, except for the kids, were all women, we can assume evidence of gender-biased behaviour, as the facilitator shares: “viendo como se comunicó el arquitecto, también pienso en cosas de género.. pero éramos solo mujeres entonces tampoco puedo comparar.. No sé cómo habla a los hombres(..)pero muy paternalista con nosotras y con los niños”<sup>35</sup>

## Inclusivity

The use of language can also play a critical role in assessing power dynamics and the question of inclusivity. As we previously examined, language in a participatory process is not only related to its linguistic aspect. As Font and Blanco (2006) argue inclusive language includes a series of means, methods and activities that can be used in order to effectively approach different groups, individuals in the process. Not all of us have the same capacities

---

<sup>34</sup> Tr: (P04): *Do you like to play football, or what?*

<sup>35</sup> Tr: (P05): *Seeing how the architect communicated, I also think about gender things... but we were only women so I can't compare either... I don't know how he talks to men (...) but very paternalistic with us and with the children*

to understand or to produce discourse. Methodological plurality and flexibility is the key to inclusion (Font & Blanco, 2006).

According to a member of studio X when they plan a participatory process is very important to: *“preparar la mirada”*<sup>36</sup>, that is, they design the process taking into account the public they are addressing. It is crucial that the methodologies, activities and even language be customised to suit the specific audience targeted by the project. For them, providing all the information, making a prior diagnosis and reflection, preparing this community to offer the adequate design tools is also to give agency to the people involved in the project. In our case the facilitators who were supposed to design the process weren't even hired in the first meeting when all the agents met for the first time. This fact complicates the process because in the meeting, where conflict occurred, the facilitators weren't ready to handle the dynamics and neither knew the members participating in order to prepare the adequate activities/language for engagement. So, as it appears from the comments of the participants there wasn't time to design the activities adequate for this particular group: *“sería muy guay poder jugar más y no tanto plano que para vosotras es fácil pero a mi me cuesta y no me gusta.. Me gustaría algo más interactivo y para todos los públicos..”*<sup>37</sup>

Besides the lack of interactive activities that some mentioned, the use of technical language is also an issue that if it is not handled properly can trigger the power dynamics between experts and non-expert participants. The people who appear as experts in the project shouldn't use their expertise to manipulate or ridicule the rest: *“Yo soy un tío muy llano y si voy a un forum no arquitectónico intento ser muy llano y no referir en aspectos técnicos. Uso mímica, muevo mucho las manos, bajo la voz (...) Para todos los que no son técnicos intento ser muy de calle...(.) El mundo de ideas y realidad es difícil y es complejo porque el chaval no tiene lenguaje técnico. Entonces ‘dime que te agrada y yo intentaré hacer algo’.”*<sup>38</sup> At the same time that he was trying to be simple the rest of the participants commented that: *“Hi havia un mansplaining del noi aquell...o sigui, jo crec que sí que intentaban per que ho entendessim pero a vegades el noi aquell arquitecto que ens feia unos dias sortir molt empanades perque ens feia un mansplaining com si fóssim...”*<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Tr: (P14): *Prepare the “look/lenses/gaze”*

<sup>37</sup> Tr: (P02): *It would be very cool to be able to play more and not so much on plan, which is easy for you but it is difficult for me and I don't like it. I would like something more interactive and for all audiences.*

<sup>38</sup> Tr: (P04): *I am a very plain guy and if I go to a non-architectural forum I try to be very plain and not refer to technical aspects. I use mime, I move my hands a lot, I lower my voice (...) For all those who are not technical, I try to be very street...(.) The world of ideas and reality is difficult. (...)It is complex because the kid does not have technical language (...) “Tell me what you like and I will try to do something.”*

<sup>39</sup> Tr: (P08): *There was mansplaining from that guy... I think they were trying to make us understand, but sometimes that architect guy made us end up so puzzled some days because he was mansplaining us as if we were...*



## 5.2\_Transparency and political commitment

As mentioned earlier, a primary goal of urban participation is to democratise decision-making processes (March & Parés, 2012). Catalina Ruíz Rico (2023) argues that misinformation or inaccessibility to urban processes, data, documentation, etc, of women and other marginalised groups in the current public system intervenes as a cause for the breach of their rights and can contribute to vulnerability. In this perspective, the information must provide elements to carry out intersectional analysis of the categories suspected of discrimination as gender, age and expertise among many characteristics that may be a condition of people's marginalisation. That is why transparency, to be an effective tool that allows making decisions, measuring progress or being accountable, has to have gender (Rico, 2023).

When we refer to transparency we are not only referring to money management and accountability. We also associate it with the clarity on the objectives to which the process responds and the topics that are discussed, who participates, what responsibilities, limitations and decision-making capacity have been attributed to the process and what are the possible results of the process. It is also associated with the common decisions during the process and their compatibility with the final result. Said that, it seems also important to clarify that the concept of transparency is not addressed only to the people participating, but also to the ones who aren't, but they equally deserve to have all the information about the possible transformation (Font & Blanco, 2006).

According to the interviews conducted, lack of transparency was an issue that came up multiple times. Parents, teachers and the director (8 from the 11 people who participated in the process) pointed at lack of economic transparency as the major problem of the project and as the first thing that they would handle differently if they could return to a similar process: *"puedo decir una cosa? A mi no me pareció un proceso limpio a nivel económico , no se si vosotras<sup>40</sup> tenéis la misma sensación, no nos dieron en ningún momento presupuestos en detalle.. (..)"<sup>41</sup>*. Similarly a father commented: *"(..) y sobre la transparencia pedimos catálogo de costes, nos dijeron que sí pero nunca llegó..(..) al menos en la mesa de las familias."*<sup>42</sup> They did have the general budget of the intervention, but they wanted a more detailed one, in order to be able to prioritise decisions according to the available money. Many of them believe that the lack of economic transparency was used also as an

---

<sup>40</sup> mirando al resto de profes y directora, tr: looking at the rest of the teacher and director

<sup>41</sup> Tr: (P08) *Can I say something? To me it did not seem like a clean process on an economic level, I don't know if you (looking at the rest of the teachers and director) have the same feeling, they did not give us detailed budgets at any time.. (..)*

<sup>42</sup> Tr: (P03): *and regarding transparency we asked for a catalogue of costs, they told us yes but it never arrived...(..) at least on the families' table.*

excuse to avoid doing things that they demanded and the architects weren't in favour: "*Quan no estábamos d'accord sortia el tema del presupuesto.. Llavors deia que no puc demanar certes estructures de joc perquè el presupuesto se ha anat a trancar el paviment de ciment*"<sup>43</sup>. Said that, we could say that the people handling the budget used it to hold power.

On the other hand, as we previously mentioned, transparency doesn't have to do only with the economic aspect, but also with the fact of knowing well the possibilities and limitations of the ongoing process. According to studio X, in Barcelona urban transformations are very protocolized and there is little room to propose other things. However, these limitations have resulted from the need for more transparency in the public processes. The problem with this appears when participants don't have this information and have expectations that can't be fulfilled, as it happened in the case study examined in this research, where the children didn't feel listened: "*yo creo que es una pena un poco para los peques porque no les escucharon.. Es que pedían cosas normales como niños, cosas con altura que no cumplían o solamente no estaban en su catálogo. Deberían haberles dicho desde el principio las limitaciones para no tener estas expectativas.*"<sup>44</sup>

Another aspect of transparency that emerges from the interviews is the discrepancy between collective decisions and final results. Several participants commented that they agreed on specific things that later changed without them knowing: "*dijeron que sí a muchos cambios y luego no los hacían, por ejemplo de estas gradas de madera que las queríamos de hormigón, lo comentamos y nos dijeron que sí y luego se hizo de madera (..) que no queríamos por cuestiones de mantenimiento*"<sup>45</sup> and also: "*al final hizo*"<sup>46</sup> lo que quería con las plantas, trajo árboles de italia y holanda cuando supuestamente el proyecto tiene que ver con el cambio climático... y eso lo sabemos porque preguntamos al jardinero, no nos informó nadie, ni a la dirección.." <sup>47</sup>

I want to add the experiences of *col·lectiu punt 6* who shared that on many occasions, technical and political personnel were seeing participation as a legal imposition and who didn't value the daily experience of the inhabitants. Sometimes they even understood it as a tool that hinders processes and political decisions. It has been feminist

---

<sup>43</sup> Tr: (P07): *When we didn't agree, the issue of the budget came up. Then he said that I can't ask for certain play structures because the budget has blocked the concrete pavement*

<sup>44</sup> Tr: (P02): *I think it's a bit of a shame for the little ones because they didn't listen to them... They asked for normal things like children, things with a height that they didn't meet or just weren't in their catalogue. They should have told them from the beginning the limitations so they wouldn't have these expectations.*

<sup>45</sup> Tr: (P02): *They said yes to many changes and then they didn't do it, for example with these wooden stands that we wanted to be made of concrete, we talked about it and they said yes and then they were made of wood (..) which we did not want for maintenance reasons.*

<sup>46</sup> She refers to the architect

<sup>47</sup> Tr: (P01): *In the end he did what he wanted with the plants, he brought trees from Italy and Holland when the project supposedly has to do with climate change... and we know that because we asked the gardener, no one informed us, neither the direction...*

urban planners, architects and geographers who highlighted the need for inclusive urban planning, advocating for collaborative methods that respect and incorporate all community voices together with their knowledge and experience (*col·lectiu punt 6, 2019*).

It is evident that different issues related to lack of transparency emerged in this project. That doesn't necessarily mean that in this case public institutions acted on purpose, but it signals the gaps between the political commitment and the design of the project which have made many of the participants doubt about the process: *"era un poco rollo.. parecía que tenían que hacerlas (las sesiones de participación) y ya está.."*<sup>48</sup> As I previously argued, the city council of Barcelona has created several tools and regulations to ensure transparency and its visibility on the processes such as *decidim.barcelona* platform. However, studying the meeting minutes of the case's study process, which are published in the platform, doesn't provide sufficient information about the progress of decision making. Specifically, the plans of the preliminary and final project, along with the participants of each meeting, the time, and the proposals of each group—with photos of the voting results in some cases—are available online for broader access. What remains entirely unseen are the varying opinions or conflicts that arose throughout the process. I think that it is also important to show the part of disagreement because it is a very critical part in a participation process. As studio X argued: *"Siempre surge conflicto, pero no es malo. Hay desacuerdos y trasfondo que no se había hablado hasta el momento y se da la oportunidad para que se hable. No todo el mundo va a estar de acuerdo, no buscamos esto pero unos puntos en común.."*<sup>49</sup>

### 5.3\_From physical to social transformation

Scholars argue that empowerment is considered an actual tool apart from an outcome of participation (Beall, 1886) because apart from providing power upon someone and recognising the inherent power relationships, it allows individuals to exercise their rightful authority (Escalante & Valdivia, 2015). Similarly, as Iris Young argues: *"the final aspect of empowerment, then, is organisation: the establishment or joining of democratic collectives that foster bonds of solidarity and bring the actions of many individuals together toward some end of social transformation"* (1997, p.92).

According to the interview with studio X, the success of feminist participatory processes cannot only be measured by looking at the physical transformation of urban

---

<sup>48</sup> Tr: (P03): *era un poco rollo.. parecía que tenían que hacerlas (las sesiones de participación) y ya está..*

<sup>49</sup> Tr: (P14): *Conflict always arises, but it is not bad. There are disagreements and backgrounds that had not been discussed until this moment and the opportunity is given for them to be debated. Not everyone will agree, we are not looking for this, but some common points.*

spaces, but also the social transformation of communities who participate. So, it is important to always evaluate its transformative function on the specific project according to their previous and new objectives that came up during the engagement meetings. Moreover, the evaluation and self-reflection should be part of the process and should consist of a meeting, gathering, march or/and inauguration after the physical transformation in order for the participants to reflect in a group about the results. In the case of *"Transformem els Patis"* the evaluation wasn't part of the agenda.

One aspect I noticed is that the interviews I did for this research provided the opportunity for the participants to reflect, because they didn't have the chance to comment about it at the moment. Indeed, a process of reflection during or after the participatory process was never planned. For example, the school director shared *"Fa molt anys que nosaltres buscàvem canvis el pati.. Hi havia molt poques possibilitats de joc i ho que feiam era una dinamica de dividir el patio (..) Antes de la pandemia salió un AFA con unas madres con muchas ganas de participar, usar el patio, pintar, juntar las familias... había mucha sinergia(..) Després vam fer un formació para la comissió de les escoles per la igualtat i la diversitat(..) y así surgió presentarse en la convocatoria(..) que ja teníem molt clara la motivació."*<sup>50</sup> This statement shows that the director, teachers and part of the families wanted the transformation for a long time. Also, it pinpoints that they had clear objectives related to social aspects along with the physical. These were the diversification of the schoolyard in order to challenge the existing dynamics, like football excluding any other presence and the inclusion of the transformed space to the school's educational curriculum: *"O sigui, per a nosaltres no era una cerca de diners per a arreglar i pintar, sinó més aviat una transformació del espai per noves possibilitats"*<sup>51</sup>.

The parents I interviewed agreed that the participatory process was a good opportunity for them to learn from the conflict and thus grow as a social group. One of the mothers, for example said: *"Hubo bastante revuelo cuando volvieron y vieron que ya no había pista de fútbol tanto de unos niños como de algunos padres. Personalmente, a mí no me afectó porque estaba de acuerdo con la decisión, pero entiendo que muchos otros no estaban de acuerdo. Sentí que esta decisión venía más de la directora y el profesorado que*

---

<sup>50</sup> Tr: (P07): *It has been many years since we were looking for changes to the schoolyard.. There were very few possibilities for play and what we did was a dynamic of dividing the patio (..) Before the pandemic, an AFA came out with mothers very willing to participate, use the patio, paint and bring the families together... there was much synergy (..) Then we did a training for the schools' commission for equality and diversity (..) and that's how it resulted to apply to the program (..) when we already had very clear motivation.*

<sup>51</sup> Tr: (P07): *In other words, for us it was not a search for money to fix and paint, but rather a transformation of the space for new possibilities*

de las que participamos en el proceso.”<sup>52</sup> The truth is that the directing team and teachers didn’t hide that removing “ball” and the football field from the schoolyard, in order to implement new types of play, was the main objective and what they proposed clearly, as representatives since the beginning. As the daily users of the school yard, who better know its dynamics and as educational experts interested in leveraging it as an educational tool, they should be listened to just as attentive as, if not more so than, traditional experts: *“Al final es el nostre pati, saps..? És com fer obres a casa i tu veus la paret ‘no se como’ i t’intenten convencer que te la posaran de gotelé... ‘és la meva casa’, no?”*<sup>53</sup>

Following this view and talking with the families, professors and directing team feels like the new patio fulfils its objectives because it has changed a lot in its use. There are children who were playing only football before, occupying the bigger part of the yard and now they have rediscovered the space. The physical transformation worked as a learning experience that led to a social reform. Some argued that even for the kids protesting it was a very interesting learning experience to “stand for what they believe” and claim it in a collective way. As a teacher commented: *“el cambio del patio es evidente y eso no se puede negar y está claro que durante el proceso hemos luchado para esto..(..) I ara sense volem traemos los trapos sucios i ens quedem amb els 5 que están enfadats en comptes de dels 200 que están contents... no.. per mi el cambio es brutal y crec que estamos muy contentas tanto nosotras como ellos..”*<sup>54</sup>

So, without talking about the project’s results in general, but specifically about the ones related to the link between physical and social transformation it is obvious that it has, at least partly, succeeded: *A ver.. Es un proyecto chulo pero con sus particularidades (..) Sí cumple (sus objetivos) si pensamos las prioridades que era la sombra (...) pero lo de renaturalización... pobrecitos estos árboles, no van a crecer nunca (...) y también el equipo directivo quería un patio libre de pelota y aprovecharon el proyecto para hacerlo y funciona mejor el patio, hay dinámicas mejores..”*<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Tr: (P02): *There was quite a stir when they returned and saw that there was no longer a soccer field, both from some children and some parents. Personally, it didn’t affect me because I agreed with the decision, but I understand that many others didn’t. I felt that this decision came more from the director and the teachers than from those of us who participated in the process.”*

<sup>53</sup> Tr: (P09): *In the end it’s our schoolyard, you know..? It’s like doing construction at home and you see the wall “I don’t know how” and they try to convince you to put it “de gotele” .. “it’s my house, isn’t it?”*

<sup>54</sup> Tr: (P08): *The change in the yard is evident and that cannot be denied and it is clear that during the process we have fought for this...(..) And now if we want we can “bring the dirty rags” and stay only with the 5 who are angry instead of the 200 who are happy... no... for me the change is brutal and I think we are both parts very happy*

<sup>55</sup> Tr: (P02): *Let’s see... It’s a cool project but with its particularities (...) It does meet (its objectives) if we think about the priorities that the shade was (...) but the renaturalization thing... poor things, these trees, they will never grow ( ...) and also the management team wanted a playground free of ball and they took advantage of the project to do it and the playground works better, there are better dynamics..*

## 6. Conclusions

This thesis contributes to existing research about urban participation and feminist urbanism by providing a nuanced exploration of how feminist principles can enhance and inform urban participation processes. To achieve this objective, the study undertakes a comprehensive review of relevant literature on the intersection of public participation and feminist urbanism. Drawing on insights from this literature, the analysis has been used as a case study of an elementary school in Barcelona, which was part of the broader participatory project "*Transformem els Patis*" initiated by the city council. The qualitative research methodologies employed in this case study have facilitated the exploration of how feminist urbanism is perceived within Barcelona's urban strategies. Furthermore, they have provided insight into concrete ideas and methods for effectively incorporating this perspective into urban participation processes.

I managed to tackle the research questions outlined in the introduction:

- ★ To which extent feminism has transitioned from a mere intention to a tangible strategy within the framework of participatory processes in Barcelona.
  - What strategies and mechanisms facilitate or difficult the incorporation of feminist principles?
  - How do these interventions impact power dynamics, transparency and inclusivity within the decision-making framework?

The broader question of the research was achieved by studying the literature on Barcelona's urban strategies and listening to the technicians and other professionals of the different departments of the city council. For the two sub-questions apart from them, it seemed crucial to combine this information with one gained by interviewing the people participating in the case's study participation process. Hearing their personal experiences and combining it with the larger scale's strategy of the city gave me potential answers to respond to my initial questions.

An interesting aspect that emerged during the research process is that although feminism is well into public discourse and general strategies, it is not methodologically incorporated into urban participation processes, if the project doesn't have this specific focus since the beginning. This view is confirmed from the technicians and professionals working in the sector of urban participation. Specifically, *technician 2* mentioned that they don't prioritise

a feminist and gender perspective when dealing with urban participation processes. For them the concept of social inclusion in these procedures is only addressed by incorporating many different community entities, but apart from that they don't make a special effort to include this perspective methodologically. Similarly, *technician 1* who is working in projects that focus on the social inclusion aspect agrees with the above view. According to her, if the project is initiated with a gender perspective, they will truly follow the methods that agree to this view, but if not, they won't make a specific effort to be more attentive to this matter. Studio X that specialises in gender issues also confirms that when they are working with the city council it is always for a relative project and they don't usually get hired to introduce this perspective to an irrelevant urban participatory project.

In addition, it needs to be said that "*Transformem els Patis*" doesn't include a feminist urbanism's agenda, although one of its general objectives is related to gender. Examining the interviews, it appears that the school team's principal objective, which is primarily related with gender, is also the main source of contention with the architect. However, this tension mainly seems to stem from their different political ideologies regarding feminism, rather than from other design or planning concerns. So, if the people who have been hired do not have training and are not politically committed with feminism, it is a management or/and a political problem by the city council which will also possibly lead to the failure of the process. Hiring adequate people to these positions is fundamental to introducing perspectives related to social inclusion, as feminism does.

Likewise, as resulted from the interviews, apart from having the "right people in place" there is a need for addressing the issue of transparency. Barcelona has strongly standardised urban planning procedures in order to be more transparent with *decidim.barcelona* being the example of them. However, there is still plenty of room for improvement and integration of methodologies that collectively address budget and communication issues in order for the people to be well informed and not doubt the objectives of the process, as happened in the case study.

To conclude this research, it is evident the existence of methodologies that can be easily introduced if the public institutions prioritise them. Putting care work and the diverse realities of women and other traditionally marginalised groups in the centre of the planning and progress of the participation process, can truly challenge existing power dynamics. Also apart from ensuring transparency in all aspects of the process, feminist methodologies succeed in accomplishing both physical and social transformation at the time.

It is important to acknowledge an important fact of this research. The studied elementary school was a place where the incorporation of feminism and gender was quite present in the discourse and that is why the transformation ended up having this perspective, as the process itself didn't. This highlights the necessity of incorporating and standardising

feminism as a method into the participatory processes that may give the opportunity to open this discourse in places where it's not present yet. By standardising I don't refer to making it part of the to-do-list, as one more bullet point that needs to be checked, but as a process of rethinking urban participation and delving into the perspective of social inclusion as feminism does. In this sense, as this research shows the intricate relationship between the physical and social transformation of urban space, shows how participation processes can contribute to reshaping the built environment and fostering more inclusive and equitable communities.



## 7. Bibliography

- Arnstein, S. R. (1969). *A Ladder Of Citizen Participation*. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216–224.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225>
- Bakker, K. (2007). *The “Commons” Versus the “Commodity”*: *Alter-globalization, Anti-privatization and the Human Right to Water in the Global South*. *Antipode*, 39(3), 430–455. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2007.00534.x>
- Beall, J. (1996). *Participation in the city: Where do women fit in?* *Gender & Development*, 4(1), 9–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/741921946>
- Bifulco, L. (2013). *Citizen participation, agency and voice*. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 16(2), 174–187. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431012459695>
- Bishop, P., & Davis, G. (2002). *Mapping Public Participation in Policy Choices*. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 61.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.00255>
- Bofill, M. (2014). *Décadas de feminismo: historia de mi práctica de la relación*. *DUODA: estudis de la diferència sexual*, 16-46.
- Bonet-Martí, J. B. i. (2012). *El territorio como espacio de radicalización democrática. Una aproximación crítica a los procesos de participación ciudadana en las políticas urbanas de Madrid y Barcelona*. *Athenea Digital. Revista de pensamiento e investigación social*, 15–28.  
<https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/athenead/v12n1.914>
- Bonu, G. (2022). *Intersectionality and Participatory Action Research: A methodological proposal applied to the study of feminist spaces in urban contexts*. *Culture e Studi Del Sociale*, 7(2), Article 2.
- Ciocoletto, A., Col·lectiu Punt6. (2022). *Espacios para la vida cotidiana*. Disponible en:  
[https://www.punt6.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/libro\\_Espacios-para-lavida-cotidiana\\_ES.pdf](https://www.punt6.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/libro_Espacios-para-lavida-cotidiana_ES.pdf)
- Ciocoletto, A., González Castellví, A., Valdivia Gutiérrez, B., Rivas Moreno, A. (2019) *Patios Coeducatius. Guia Per A La Transformació Feminista Dels Espais Educatius*. Disponible en: <https://www.punt6.org/es/books/patios-coeducativo>
- Col·lectiu Punt 6 (2022). *Patios coeducativos*. Retrieved Mayo 13, 2024 from <https://www.punt6.org/es/books/patios-coeducativos/>
- Col·lectiu Punt6. (2016). *¿Qué es el urbanismo feminista? Por Col·lectiu Punt 6*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dl4TOCPMMBA>

- Col·lectiu Punt6. (2022). *Espacios para la vida cotidiana*.  
<https://www.punt6.org/es/books/espacios-para-la-vida-cotidiana/>
- Col·lectiu Punt 6 (2019). *Urbanismo feminista por una transformación radical de los espacios de vida*. Retrieved Mayo 18, 2024 from  
[https://www.punt6.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/libro\\_Urbanismo-feminista\\_ES.pdf](https://www.punt6.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/libro_Urbanismo-feminista_ES.pdf)
- Col·lectiu Punt6, SCCL & CAF. (2023). *Guía para el diseño de las infraestructuras educativas desde una perspectiva de género interseccional y sostenibilidad ambiental*. Luciana Fainstain-Gerencia de Género, Inclusión y Diversidad CAF.  
<https://www.punt6.org/es/books/infraestructuras-educativas-con-perspectiva-de-genero/>
- Collins, K., & Ison, R. (2006). *Dare we jump off Arnstein's ladder? Social learning as a new policy paradigm*. Proceedings of PATH (Participatory Approaches in Science & Technology) Conference, Edinburgh.  
<http://www.macaulay.ac.uk/PATHconference/index.html#output>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color*. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>
- *Decidim Barcelona | Barcelona Digital City | Barcelona City Council*. (n.d.). Retrieved April 23, 2024, from  
<https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/digital/en/technology-accessible-everyone/accessible-and-participatory/accessible-and-participatory-5>
- Duch, M. (2023). *El movimiento feminista en Catalunya: sobre desmemoria y disputa*. *Crítica urbana: revista de estudios urbanos y territoriales*, 6(28), 5.
- Eden, K., & Roker, D. (2002). *Doing Something: Young People as Social Actors*. The National Youth Agency
- England, K. (1994). *From "Social Justice and the City" to Women-Friendly Cities? Feminist Theory and Politics*. *Urban Geography*, 15(7), 628–643.  
<https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.15.7.628>
- *Evaluación de la «Llei de Barris» (intervenciones regeneración urbana) | Observatori de Salut i Impacte de Polítiques*. (n.d.). Castellano. Retrieved April 16, 2024, from <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/observatorisalut/es/avaluacions>
- Falú, A. (2017). *Women's Right to the City: Reflections on Inclusive Urban Planning*. Urbanet. <https://www.urbanet.info/womens-right-to-the-city/>
- Font, J., & Blanco, ismael. (2006). *Polis, la ciudad participativa; Participar en los municipios: ¿quién?; ¿cómo?; por qué? .*). Retrieved May 13, 2024, from

[https://llibreria.diba.cat/es/libro/experiencias-de-participacion-ciudadana-polis-la-ciudad-participativa-participar-en-los-municipios-quien-como-y-por-que\\_36525](https://llibreria.diba.cat/es/libro/experiencias-de-participacion-ciudadana-polis-la-ciudad-participativa-participar-en-los-municipios-quien-como-y-por-que_36525)

- Guy, B., & Arthur, B. (2022) *Feminisms, Intersectionality, and Participatory Research | Participatory Methods*. (n.d.). Retrieved April 18, 2024, from <https://www.participatorymethods.org/resource/feminisms-intersectionality-and-participatory-research>
- Hayden, D. (1980). *What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work*. *Signs*, 5(3), S170–S187.
- Hudson, C., & Rönnblom, M. (2020). *Is an ‘other’ city possible? Using feminist utopias in creating a more inclusive vision of the future city*. *Futures*, 121, 102583. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2020.102583>
- Ignatieff, M. (2011). *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*. In *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400842841>
- Lambert, L., *Undocumented International: Introduction*. (2023, December 12). THE FUNAMBULIST MAGAZINE. <https://thefunambulist.net/magazine/undocumented-international/undocumented-international-introduction>
- Lefebvre, H. (2017). *The right to the city*. Verso Books. Retrieved May 20, 2024, from <https://www.versobooks.com/products/732-the-right-to-the-city>
- Manouchehri, B., & Burns, E. A. (2021). Participation as a right to the city: Iranian children’s perspectives about their inclusion in urban decision-making. *Children & Society*, 35(3), 363–379. <https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12446>
- March, H. and Parés, M. (2012) *Guia per avaluar processos participatius*. Govern obert. Retrieved March 28, 2024, from [http://governobert.gencat.cat/ca/detalls/article/3.-guia\\_per-avaluar\\_processos](http://governobert.gencat.cat/ca/detalls/article/3.-guia_per-avaluar_processos)
- Martinez, Z., & Ciocoletto, A. (2011). *La Ley de Barrios en Cataluña: La perspectiva de género como herramienta de planificación*. *Feminismo/s*. <https://doi.org/10.14198/fem.2011.17.07>
- Massey, D. (1985). *New Directions in Space*. *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, 25, pp. 9-19.
- McFarlane, A. G. (2000). *When Inclusion Leads to Exclusion: The Uncharted Terrain of Community Participation in Economic Development*. *Brooklyn Law Review*, 66, 861.
- *Mirada feminista y transversalidad | Mujeres y feminismos | Ayuntamiento de Barcelona*. (2018, July 17). Mujeres y feminismos. <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dones/es/quienes-somos/estrategia>

- Ortega, E. (2022) *Balance de las políticas de participación ciudadana en Barcelona*. (2022, June 29). *Crítica Urbana*.  
<https://criticaurbana.com/balance-de-las-politicas-de-participacion-ciudadana-en-barcelona>
- Parés, M., Bonet-Martí, J., & Martí-Costa, M. (2012). *Does Participation Really Matter in Urban Regeneration Policies? Exploring Governance Networks in Catalonia (Spain)*. *Urban Affairs Review*, 48, 238–271.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087411423352>
- Peña-López, I. (2019). *Shifting participation into sovereignty: the case of decidim.barcelona*. Barcelona: Huygens Editorial. Retrieved April 4, 2024, from <https://ictlogy.net/bibliography/reports/projects.php?idp=3771>
- *Plan del juego en el espacio público—Decidim.barcelona*. (n.d.). Retrieved April 4, 2024, from <https://www.decidim.barcelona/processes/pladeljoc?locale=es>
- Rico, C. R. (2023). El derecho a transparencia desde una perspectiva de género. *Revista Española de la Transparencia*, 16, Article 16.  
<https://doi.org/10.51915/ret.293>
- Smith, N., Lister, R., & Middleton, S. (2005). Young People as ‘Active Citizens’: Towards an Inclusionary View of Citizenship and Constructive Social Participation. In C. Pole, J. Pilcher, & J. Williams (Eds.), *Young People in Transition: Becoming Citizens?* (pp. 159–177). Palgrave Macmillan UK.  
[https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230597778\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230597778_9)
- Spain, D. (2014). *Gender and Urban Space*. *The Annual Review of Sociology*, 40 (2014), 581-590
- *Transformem els patis—Decidim.barcelona*. (n.d.). Retrieved April 4, 2024, from <https://www.decidim.barcelona/processes/transformemelspatis?locale=es>
- Titter, J., & McCallum, A. (2006). The Snakes and Ladders of User Involvement: Moving beyond Arnstein. *Health Policy (Amsterdam, Netherlands)*, 76, 156–168. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthpol.2005.05.008>
- Valdivia, B. (2018). Del urbanismo androcéntrico a la ciudad cuidadora. *Hábitat y Sociedad*, 65–84. <https://doi.org/10.12795/HabitatySociedad.2018.i11.05>
- Valdivia, B. (2021). *La ciudad cuidadora: Calidad de vida urbana desde una perspectiva feminista* [Ph.D. Thesis, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya]. In TDX (Tesis Doctorals en Xarxa). <https://www.tdx.cat/handle/10803/671506>
- Vasconcelos, P., (2018). *Female Consciousness and Social Activism: A gender analysis of the Plataforma de los Afectados por la Hipoteca de Barcelona*. Thesis Master Master of International Cooperation in Sustainable Emergency

Architecture Retrieved May 14, 2024, from

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RbKya-7dvlo1HGprWX9BvD-ryqxo3U4B/view>

- Visakha, S. (2023, March 8). *Feminist Urbanism: Smashing Patriarchy in Design*. Urbanet.  
<https://www.urbanet.info/feminist-urbanism-smashing-patriarchy-in-urban-design/>
- Young, I. M. (1997). Feminism and the Public Sphere. *Constellations*, 3(3), 340–363.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8675.1997.tb00064.x>

## 8. Appendixes

### Appendix 1: Guía de entrevistas para familias:<sup>56</sup>

#### I. Preguntas generales basadas a: “*URBAN PARTICIPATION AND CIUDADANIA*”(=*CITY?*)”

1. ¿Ha sido tu primera **vez** en un proceso participativo?
  - a. ¿Por qué decidiste participar?
2. ¿En **cuántas** de las reuniones en total has estado?
3. ¿Consideras que la gente participando (tanto de niños como de adultos) representa bien los **diferentes perfiles** del el cole?
  - a. Género, nacionalidades, particularidades
  - b. Ir solo una persona de AFA fue una decisión vuestra?
4. ¿Qué tal te ha parecido el **proceso**?
  - a. Cómo empezasteis,
  - b. de donde surgió la demanda de transformar el patio y no otras cosas
  - c. Por qué con este grupo de arquitectos y no otros
5. ¿Cómo ha ido el proceso?
  - a. ¿Qué problemas has detectado durante el proceso?

#### II. Preguntas más orientadas a: “*FEMINISM URBANISM AND URBAN PARTICIPATION*”

6. En qué manera crees que se han navegado unas dinámicas posibles (por si estaban) de superioridad?
  - a. De parte de quien?
7. ¿De qué manera gestionó el **equipo de dinamización** el equilibrio de las voces durante el proceso?
8. ¿Cómo se trató el tema de la **inclusión de opiniones** de la gente, durante las fases del proyecto?

---

<sup>56</sup> Tr: Interview guide for families

- a. La **facilidad** de expresar opiniones, dudas..
  - b. La **comodidad** en el espacio
  - c. Qué tal te pareció el **lenguaje (claro/ inclusivo)**
9. ¿Cómo habéis hecho para decidir los encuentros?
- a. el horario de las reuniones,
  - b. la duración y
  - c. las veces de reuniros
10. ¿Qué **flexibilidad** había?
11. Sobre las **criaturas**:
- a. De qué manera crees que incluyeron sus ideas?
  - b. ¿Cómo reaccionaron los chicos despues de quitar tanto espacio de **fútbol**?
12. Y como proceso crees que cumple sus objetivos?
13. La gente que empezó a participar en el proceso siguió o crees que hay algune que decidió **dejar de ir**?
- a. Si es así por cuál razón crees que sucedió eso?
14. Cómo fue el proceso de decidir el proyecto final? (**votar/ consenso**?)
15. ¿De que manera crees que el **resultado final** refleja las decisiones del proceso?
16. ¿**Volverías** a participar en un proceso parecido?
- a. ¿Gestionarías algo de otra manera?

Appendix 2: \_ Hoja de consentimiento:<sup>57</sup>

**Código del estudio:**

**Versión del protocolo:**

**Fecha de la versión:** \_\_/04/2024

**Fecha de presentación:** \_\_/\_\_/2024

**Título del Proyecto:** Estudio sobre los procesos participativos

**Supervisora del Proyecto:** Apen Ruiz

**Investigadora:** Stela Vakalopoulou

**Departamento:** Universitat Internacional de Catalunya

Esta hoja de consentimiento informado, puede contener palabras que usted no comprenda. Por favor, pregunte a la persona encargada del estudio para que le explique cualquier palabra o información que usted no entienda con claridad.

## **I-INTRODUCCIÓN**

Usted ha sido invitado a participar en un estudio de investigación. Antes de que decida participar, por favor lea este consentimiento detenidamente y haga todas las preguntas que usted tenga, para asegurarse de que entiende los procedimientos del estudio, incluyendo riesgos y beneficios.

## **II-PROPÓSITO DEL ESTUDIO**

Como parte del máster “*Cooperación Internacional en Arquitectura Sostenible de Emergencia* de investigación” que se desarrolla en la *Universitat Internacional de Catalunya*, se está llevando a cabo un estudio sobre los procesos participativos. Para recopilar la información necesaria, se realizará una entrevista personal. Le invitamos a colaborar en esta investigación y aportar sus opiniones.

## **III-PARTICIPANTES DEL ESTUDIO**

Usted ha sido invitada/o/e para participar en la entrevista

## **IV-PROCEDIMIENTOS**

El estudio consiste en investigar si la perspectiva feminista está incorporada en los procesos participativos. En las entrevistas semi-estructuradas el objetivo es 1) escuchar las experiencias de la gente que formó parte del proceso participativo de un colegio del distrito Horta-Guinardó que formó parte del proyecto del Ayuntamiento de Barcelona *Transformem els patis*, 2) hablar con gente que trabaja en el sector de la participación ciudadana.

## **V-RIESGOS O INCOMODIDADES**

---

<sup>57</sup> Tr: consent form



El estudio consiste en pedir su opinión sobre su propia experiencia de las sesiones de participación del proyecto *Transformem els patis* o en el sector de la participación ciudadana.

#### **VI-BENEFICIOS**

Aunque usted no reciba ningún beneficio directo de su participación, los resultados del estudio, podrían beneficiar experiencias parecidas en el futuro. La información que se recopile, podrá facilitarse a las instituciones o/y a los programas que trabajan directa o indirectamente en estos temas, usando los resultados o implementando un estudio parecido en el futuro sobre este u otro tema.

#### **VII-COSTES**

No hay ningún costo para su participación en el estudio. Cualquier cosa necesaria para la realización de las actividades se le proporcionará.

#### **VIII-INCENTIVO PARA EL PARTICIPANTE**

A usted no se le pagará nada por el hecho de participar en el estudio. Este es un estudio universitario y los resultados no serán usados más allá de ese contexto.

#### **IX-PRIVACIDAD Y CONFIDENCIALIDAD**

Protección de Datos Personales y garantía de los derechos digitales, la información que proporciones al estudio permanecerá totalmente anónima y confidencial. Los documentos utilizados en la entrevista o cualquier actividad se almacenarán en un espacio seguro, al que sólo tendrá acceso la investigadora involucrada en el estudio. Se asignará un código a cada entrevista (el código está en la parte superior de la primera página) y sus datos personales no serán divulgados en ningún momento. La información recopilada se utilizará únicamente para los fines mencionados en este formulario.

Este consentimiento será válido hasta el final del estudio, a menos que usted lo retire antes. Puede retirar su consentimiento en cualquier momento llamando al número de contacto de la investigadora en la siguiente dirección: [stelavak@gmail.com](mailto:stelavak@gmail.com)

#### **X-PARTICIPACIÓN EN EL ESTUDIO**

Su participación en este estudio, es totalmente voluntaria. Usted puede decidir no participar o retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento. Su decisión, no conlleva penalidad ni pérdida de beneficios a los que usted tenga derecho.

#### **XI-PREGUNTAS**

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre este estudio o sobre su participación en el mismo, o si piensa que ha sufrido alguna lesión asociada al estudio, puede contactar con la supervisora del estudio: [cruizm@uic.es](mailto:cruizm@uic.es)

No firme este consentimiento, a menos que usted haya tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas y recibir respuestas satisfactorias para todas sus preguntas.

Si usted firma aceptando participar en este estudio, recibirá una copia.

#### **XII-CONSENTIMIENTO**

He leído la información de esta hoja de consentimiento, o me la han leído de forma adecuada. Todas mis preguntas sobre el estudio y mi participación, han sido contestadas.

Al firmar esta hoja de consentimiento, no se ha renunciado a ninguno de los derechos legales.

---

Nombre del participante:

---

Firma del participante

Fecha:

---

Nombre y firma de la investigadora:

## Appendix 3:\_ Interview Data Collection Sample

| Date                        | Duration | Description of the person | Format     | Place             | Assumed gender | Assumed age | Conversation highlights  | Quotes                       |
|-----------------------------|----------|---------------------------|------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------|--|------------------------------|
| 1 03/04/2024_ 17: 60' aprox |          | mother                    | presencial | Outside se school | W              | 40-50       | 1)Primera vez en un proceso 2)La estructura era fija desde e   | "es muy caro de quitar", "al |
| 2                           |          | mother, president of the  | presencial |                   | W              | 30-40       | 1) Trabajo en procesos participativos y ha participado 2) may  | "dijeron que si a muchos ca  |
| 3 05/04/2024_ 17: 60' aprox |          | father                    | presencial | Schoolyard        | M              | 30-40       | 1) ha participado en otros procesos de otro rollo 2) estaba en "el arquitecto y la construct   |                              |
| 4 14/04/2024_ 15: 40' aprox |          | architect                 | online     | google meets      | M              | 55-65       | 1)Ya llevamos tiempo. Hicimos 3 y después otros 3 b)Es un a 3)"Voy a ser franco.. Supue<br>16)No se tomó de ellos. Iban dirigidos entonces lo que sabían<br>No se produjo mucho partic<br>8)"No se gestionaron.. Por<br>Para todos los que no son<br>14)"Al principio venían a es<br>No lo entiendo porque no p<br>La primera derivada era: n<br>22) La tensión depende m  |                              |
| 5                           |          | Facilitator               |            |                   | W              | 25-35       | 1)no 2) en general trabajan con coles en este proyecto en pa 4)Fue muy diferente que la<br>4) En general es un proyecto agradable y fácil y les ha gusta Hizo mucho mal en la primi<br>Niños: se iban al patio dibujaban insitu Y ponían encima posti 11) Era bastante parecido €<br>10) EN GENERAL- Idioma, material en castellano. Más dinám El se pasaba de explicar co<br>16) el equipo docente tenía claro desde el principio que no q Y no explicaba las cosas di<br>Después de la transformación a la hora de aplicar, se prohibi Se enrollaba con eso<br>18)Marta cree que si.. Después de esas sesiones esperaba r No podía equilibrar. (Marta<br>El presu era claro que se justificaba el arquitecto en acuerdo 16) No hablaron específica<br>19)Green que no. Había incomodidad entre docentes y arquil Las docentes no querían p<br>20)Realmente no parece que sea prioridad porque hay horar 21)Cambiaría la primera ge |                              |
| 6 18/04/2024_ 16: 50' aprox |          | Facilitator               | online     | google meets      | M              | 30-40       | 2) cree que sucedió por licitación 3) añade que tampoco pasa<br>17) PRIORIZACIÓN cada grupo 5 gometis, priorizaron y llega<br>En comparación con otros salió bien porque en otros había p<br>20) En realidad no parece prioridad<br>4)al final dependes mucho  |                              |