

# International Superblock Meeting

Documentation

Hosted by the City of Barcelona. 22nd-25th March



S U P  
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Ajuntament de  
Barcelona

# A Europe-wide exchange for public space transformations

On 22, 23, 24 and 25th March 2023, the first International Superblock Meeting took place in Barcelona. The conference brought together political and technical representatives from different European cities, leaders in public space and sustainable mobility policies, to discuss and share practical experiences, lessons learned and challenges encountered.

The participating cities were: Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, Ghent, Lodz, London, Ljubljana, Milan, Paris, Rotterdam, Valencia, Vienna, and Vitoria-Gasteiz.

The meeting included three days of political and technical exchange during working sessions, presentations as well as on-site visits. The signing of an agreement “For a new model of public space” set a forward-looking agenda in which the signatory cities committed to continue working together to achieve a qualitative, green and peaceful public space that places citizenship at the center of their priorities, and to continue sharing learning and experiences in order to achieve healthier and decarbonized cities.

The initiative to organize the conference arose from the cities working group formed by the European project Tune Our Block. This project, financed by the European Union, takes the Superblocks concept developed in Barcelona as an example of a political and planning strategy for boosting the urban transition towards the sustainability and decarbonization of cities. Barcelona and the cities of London, Rotterdam, Vienna, Berlin, Ljubljana, Lodz and Ghent are part of the TuneOurBlock peer group where they share lessons learned.

In the face of current scenarios, cities have to adapt, new and more efficient ways of functioning have to be implemented, transformative approaches have to be found, capable of dealing with multiple issues simultaneously. For this reason, cities are moving into action and they need to work together, sharing knowledge, problems and learning, they need to support each other, sharing victories, but also defeats, because it is in a collective way that we can innovate and evolve.

With this spirit in mind, the 60 participants embarked on three days of collaborative learning and inspiration during the first International Superblock Meeting.



# The Agenda - what happened?

	WEDNESDAY 22 MARCH	THURSDAY 23 MARCH	FRIDAY 24 MARCH	SATURDAY 25 MARCH
<b>City Councillors Agenda</b>				
MORNING		Arrival of international participants	9:00 – 10:15 City presentations: Projects for Public Space Transformation Moderated by Dani Alsina Casa Golferichs	
			10:15 – 12:00h Presentation and signature of Agreement + photo	
MIDDAY		12:00 Welcome Ca l'Alíer  12:30 – 14:00 High level plenary: Round table Moderated by Núria Moliner Ca l'Alíer	12:15 – 13:30 Site visit: Superblock Sant Antoni	10:00 – 20:00 Public party Viu la Superilla  Locations: Green Axis Rocafort (Aragó / Diputació) and Green Axis Consell de Cent (Enric Granados / Rbla. Catalunya)
LUNCH		14:00 – 16:00 Lunch	13:30 – 15:00 Lunch	
AFTERNOON		16:00 – 17:30 Site visit: Poblenou Superblock	15:30 – 17:30 Superblocks bike route	
	18:00 – 19:00 Urban Transformation lecture: Janette Sadik-Khan Moderated by Oriol Nel·lo Fundació Tàpies	18:30 – 19:30 "Superblock Barcelona" book presentation with Janette Sadik-Khan and Camilla van Deurs Moderated by Josep Bohigas Editorial Gustavo Gili		
EVENING		20:00 Dinner Casa Jaime Consell de Cent, 222	20:00 Dinner at La Violeta Night visit to Gràcia	

Colour code: ● Public activity ● Semi-public activity ● Reserved activity for City Councillors ● Closed door workshop



Janette Sadik-Khan lecture in Fundació Tàpies



High level plenary in Ca l'Atelier

# Debates at the Opening Plenary

The 24th was opened with a round table, where the political representatives of the cities invited presented their experiences. The session was moderated by Núria Moliner, architect and communicator. During the session they talked about the climate emergency, and that cities, although they represent only 2% of the planet's surface, are responsible for 70% of CO2 emissions. Therefore, they represent a major challenge in terms of transformations that can reduce this emissions and lead a transition to a more sustainable future. Moving from distopia to protopia: a viable present based on already consolidated experiences that allow us to visualize a more sustainable future.

The political representatives of the 11 cities presented their urban transformation projects, each one with its own peculiarities, but all of them, examples of transformation of public space, changing the priority from a space dedicated to vehicular mobility to an active mobility, more space for pedestrians and bicycles, and greenery.

The different leaders focused on the need to address structural changes, and that it takes courage to implement them, but also a lot of work with the community, a solid technical work and a good communication strategy.

The participants in the session were:

Rezina Chowdhury	Councillor for Sustainable Lambeth and Clean Air of London Borough of Lambeth
Camilla van Deurs	Chief Architect of Copenhagen
Filip Watteeuw	Deputy Mayor for Mobility, Public Space & Urban Planning of Ghent
Rok Žnidaršič	Deputy Mayor responsible for urban and traffic planning, urban design and environment of Ljubljana
Adam Pustelnik	Deputy Mayor of Lodz
Bart Dhondt	Alderman of Mobility and Public Works for the City of Brussels
David Belliard	Deputy Mayor of Paris, in charge of the transformation of public space, transport, mobility, the street code and roads
Raimundo Ruiz de Escudero	City Councillor of the Department of Mobility and Public Space Vitoria-Gasteiz
Giuseppe Grezzi	City Councillor Sustainable for Mobility & Public Space of Valencia
Pierfrancesco Maran	Deputy Mayor in charge of Public Space and Neighbourhoods of Milano
Janet Sanz	Deputy Mayor for Ecology, Urban Planning, Infrastructures and Mobility

# Site visit: Poblenou Superblock





# Presenting the Superilla book

The conference was the occasion for the presentation of the book *Superblock Barcelona: Barcelona 2015-2023*, by Barcelona Regional and the Urban Ecology Area of the Barcelona City Council. The book makes an exhaustive review of the Superblock model and its evolution and implementation in Barcelona.

The presentation of the book was led by Josep Bohigas, director of Barcelona Regional, with the participation of Janette Sadik-Khan, Janet Sanz and Camilla Van Deurs, Chief Architect of Copenhagen and author of the article 'Superblocks to the rescue', which opens the third chapter of the book. During the session, emphasis was placed on the project's achievements and also on the controversies, criticisms received and the effort to generate a process that has ended up generating a model.

According to Josep Bohigas, the book wants to explain this story, to tell how this process has been, without giving anything away, because the idea of superblocks is growing and evolving.

The book is divided into four chapters: *The origin of Superblocks*, which reviews the history of the model; *Superblock explosion*, which explains the first experiences in Poblenou and Sant Antoni; *The city we want*, which refers to the deployment of superblocks throughout the city and the creation of the network of green streets as a new green infrastructure; and finally *Public space and everyday life*, dedicated to the caring city, where all the areas involved in this transformation are described. The publication includes studies and data on the projects already carried out in Barcelona, as well as explanations of parallel strategic projects such as 'The Playable City' or the 'Let's protect the schools' program. Emphasis is also placed on the research and experimentation of the model, and on its repercussion and international recognition.

Each chapter opens with an introductory article by experts who have been involved in similar transformations in different cities: *Save our streets: 50 years of Making Space for People* (Samuel I. Schwartz and David Kaner, New York); *A happy proximity in cities for living* (Carlos Moreno, Paris); *Superblocks to the rescue* (Camilla Van Deurs, Copenhagen); *The caring city. Bogotá and the retaking of public property with citizens* (María Mercedes Jaramillo Garcés, Bogotá).

Download the superilla book

Catalan version: [Superblock Barcelona: Barcelona 2015-2023](#)



**International Superblock Meeting**  
Hosted by the City of Barcelona  
22nd - 25th of March



# International Superblock Meeting

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"Superblock Barcelona" book presentation

# City presentations

At the City Presentations session were presented projects for the transformation of public space in each of the cities invited. Dani Alsina, coordinator of the Superblock Technical Office, presented and conducted the session, and invited each technical representative to explain a project implemented in their city over the past 5 years.

The presentations, which lasted 5 minutes, provided key themes on the transformation of public space, and offered a space to talk about the challenges, successes and difficulties encountered throughout the process. It served to present topics that could be discussed and worked on during the afternoon workshop session.

The cities were divided into two blocks (6 and 6) and between each block there was a question and answer session for the technicians, where they talked about gender perspective in urban planning, citizen participation and other aspects related to mobility. Each block was closed with a short presentation, the first by C40 and the second by JPI Urban Europe.



## Barcelona

Xavier Matilla, Chief Architect from the city of Barcelona, presented the project of superblocks, talking about its benefits and how to expand the model to the whole city.



NEW ENVIRONMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE   PROXIMITY Daily Life   INNOVATION New materials   LANDSCAPE HERITAGE   ACCESSIBILITY

## Berlin

Merlin Pitz, from the Department of mobility of the City of Berlin, presented the project Bergman Street, based on the superblocks model.



## Rotterdam

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José Besselink, sr. Urban planner from City of Rotterdam, presented the project 'Superblock Hoogkwartier'.



## Ljubljana

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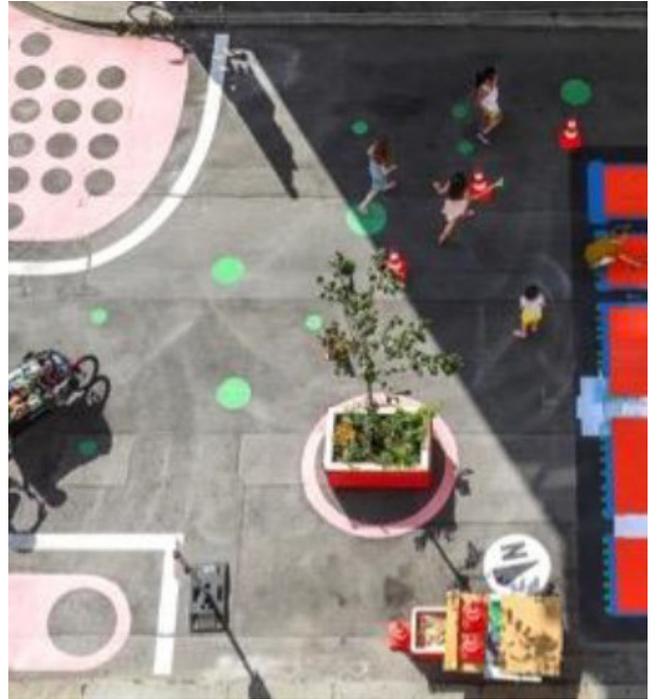
Professor Janez Koželj, from the City Council of Ljubljana, presented the project Eco-Zone, a car-free area in the center of Ljubljana.



## Vienna

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Lukas Franta, from the Urban development and planning department of the city of Vienna, presented 'Supergrätzl Favoriten', a superblock pilot project in Vienna.



## London

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Luuk Van Kessel, principal transport planner from London Borough of Lambeth, presented the project 'Lambeth's Climate Action Plan'.



## Milan

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Demetrio Scopelliti, director for Planning and public space from the city of Milan, presented the project 'Piazze Aperte'



## Valencia

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Ruth Lopez Montesinos, head of Sustainable Mobility Department for the city of Valencia, presented the project of the Ciutat Vella district, a urban transformation at superblock scale.



## Lodz

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Anna Sokolowska, head of strategy of Plan Zero, presented the project for the neighborhood of Stare Polesie in Lodz.



## Brussels

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Stefan Vandenhende, policy advisor from the Cabinet of the Minister Elke Van den Brandt, presented the project 'Good Move' for the city of Brussels.



## Ghent

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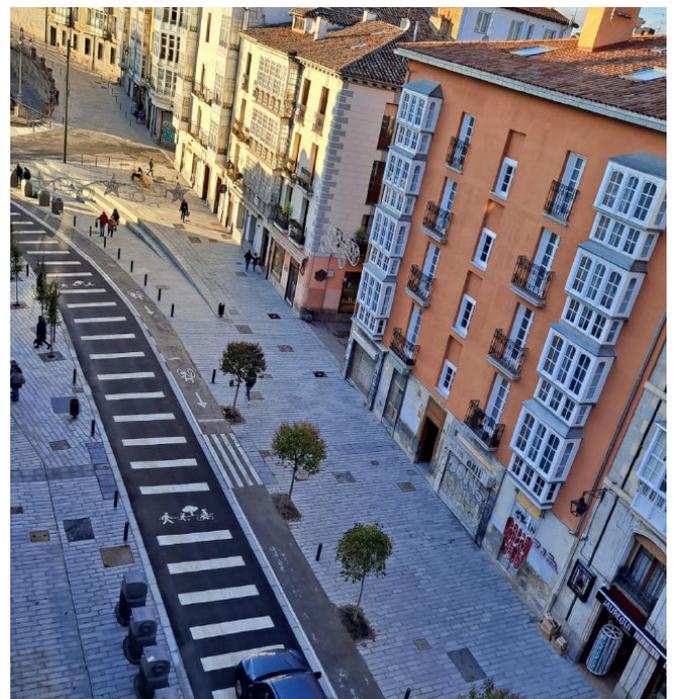
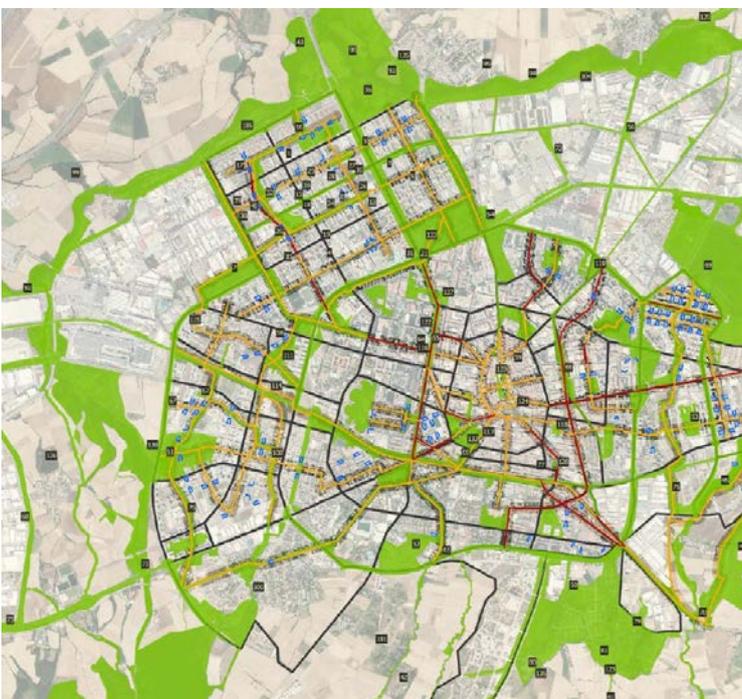
Wim Schuddink, from the mobility company of Ghent City Council, presented the district mobility plans for the city.



## Vitoria-Gasteiz

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Eduardo Rojo, chief architect of Public space and Natural environment department for the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz, presented the superblocks strategy for the city.



## C40

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Hélène Chartier, director of Urban Planning Design of C40, presented the program Green and Thriving neighbourhoods and the actions taken in cities around the world.



## JPI - Urban Europe

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Christoph Gollner, from the Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) Urban Europe, presented the 'Impact Oriented Research' project and the Driving Urban Transitions (DUT) Partnership.



**Positive Energy Districts and Neighbourhoods**  
transforming the urban energy system



**Circular Urban Economies**  
an integrated approach for urban greening and circularity transitions



**15-minute Cities**  
rethinking the urban mobility system and space

# Agreement between Cities

On 24th of March the representatives of the cities attending the meeting signed an agreement endorsing urban transformation policies to achieve greener and more sustainable cities. The final agreement of the first International Superblock Meeting concludes that cities must move forward with these transformation models to address the climate emergency, reduce emissions and achieve healthier urban areas. The text endorses policies that place pedestrians, public transport, sustainable mobility and green and living spaces as priority areas in the design of cities. The agreement is signed by Paris, London, Amsterdam, Berlin, Milan, Rotterdam, Brussels, Ljubljana, Ghent, Łódź, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Valencia, and Barcelona.

The cities gathered in the framework of the conference claim to be creative and proactive cities that want to continue working collectively and be leaders in the promotion of solutions and answers for the future.



## For a new model of public space

Humanity faces an unprecedented challenge: the simultaneous mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. Surging global temperatures, droughts, rising sea levels, an increase in natural hazards, and a decline of biodiversity put further stress on cities. The impact on the health and well-being of the most vulnerable populations is of particular concern.

Cities continue to be the main source of pollution. They are responsible for 70% of greenhouse gas emissions, yet occupy a mere 2% of the planet's surface area. At the same time, they are home to the majority of the world's population and are expected to become even more densely populated. Cities play a decisive role in the process of changing lifestyles, production and consumption models, and spatial distribution patterns.

To reduce emissions and make cities healthier, cities need transformative approaches capable of addressing multiple issues at the same time. Our cities must evolve to redirect flows, encourage new uses, introduce nature in a bolder way, foster proximity, and move us toward more sustainable types of transport and mobility. This requires new models for the use and design of public space. These actions are inspired by the mandates of the UN and the European Commission, as well as the evidence the scientific community has made available to us.

With varying degrees of similarity, all the cities gathered here face the same challenges and are committed to proactively addressing them. These cities are embracing experimentation, creativity, long-term thinking, and the responsibility of being leaders in the search for solutions, as is the case with the Barcelona Superblock project.

Cities do not exist in isolation but in networks of flows and exchange. It is therefore essential that cities work together and share knowledge and experiences.

In this spirit of cooperation, the cities gathered here acknowledge their commitment to transforming their public spaces according to the following principles:

- People are the main protagonists and must occupy a central place in urban design.
- Public transport and active mobility must be prioritised to increase efficiency and decrease emissions.
- There should be plenty of comfortable, attractive, non-privatised places for all residents to carry out a wide range of social and recreational functions.
- Vegetation and green and blue infrastructure play a critical role in improving the urban environment and the physical and psychological health of residents, as well in climate adaptation.
- Protected school zones and play areas should be widely implemented to ensure that children can safely and comfortably use streets and other public spaces throughout the city.

Through the transformation of public space, we can help our cities better adapt to climate change and become more resilient.

We are also committed to communicating our desires, plans, and projects, to transmitting our knowledge and experiences, to supporting each other in the changes we wish to implement, and to sharing the necessary methodologies and tools. Each of our cities brings its unique characteristics to the table, but we share a common vision of becoming healthier, more resilient, more welcoming, more equitable, and more sustainable.



Agreement between cities



# Workshop “Superblocks for Urban Transformation”

Held on:

FRIDAY, 24 March, 15h30 - 19h00 / Location: Edifici del rellotge/vagó. Escola Industrial

With a concluding session on:

SATURDAY, 25 March, 9h30 - 11h00 / Location: Casa Golferichs

## Workshop Documentation

### Workshop Synopsis

### Workshop Structure

#### SESSION A - The conditions for urban transformation

##### REPORT – Session A

Conditions and triggers for change.

Challenges, responses and good practices

Beyond Mobility Narrative and Broader Picture

Open and transparent communication

Community management

Intrinsically motivated technical staff "going the extra mile".

#### SESSION B – Superblocks as a transformative tool

##### REPORT – Session B

1) Rationale for the implementation of public space transformation measures

2) Indicators of progress of urban transformation

3) Superblocks concept definition and “contested” statements

#### Session C – How to transform street space

##### REPORT – Session C

First workshop round: Considerations for implementing superblocks and large-scale public space transformations

Second workshop round: A three-dimensional approach integrating nature-based solutions with Superblocks

### Attendance

Participating experts

Workshop Facilitation

## Workshop Synopsis

The workshop “Superblocks for Urban Transformation” was conducted within the First International Superblock Meeting held in Barcelona from March 22-24 2023. It provided opportunities for an interactive technical and academic exchange of participants. The workshop gathered about 40 city representatives (technical staff) as well as academic experts from Barcelona and cities across Europe.

The workshop was prepared and facilitated by the interdisciplinary team of the TuneOurBlock project together with the Office of the Chief Architect of the City of Barcelona. The workshop’s aim was to enable participants to develop a deeper understanding of the commonalities and differences of various "Superblock" approaches and expand their applied knowledge on how to successfully implement complex urban transformation projects. The workshop built on experiences with Superblock projects in Barcelona and other European cities as well as interim results of the TuneOurBlock project.

The workshop consisted of three parallel thematic sessions (A, B and C) which are documented on the following pages. The result from the workshop provide lessons learnt as well as starting points for future cooperative projects and professional exchange.

## Workshop Structure

	Session A <i>The conditions of urban transformation</i>	Session B <i>Superblocks as a transformative tool</i>	Session C <i>How to transform street space</i>
15h30 16h00	Welcome & Introduction to Workshops (big room, plenary)		
Round 1 16h00 17h00	Introduction to session theme & questions for first round	Introduction to session theme & questions for first round	Introduction to session theme & questions for first round
Break 17h00 17h30	Change of rooms, coffee break & informal exchange	Change of rooms, coffee break & informal exchange	Change of rooms, coffee break & informal exchange
Round 2 17h30 18h30	Summary of round 1 & questions for second round	Summary of round 1 & questions for second round	Summary of round 1 & questions for second round
18h30 19h00	Wrap-up & send-off to evening program (big room, plenary)		

# Session A

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## 'The conditions for urban transformation'

Facilitated by: Nicolina Kirby (RIFS), Thomas Stein (difu), Alexandra Meyer (ChangingCities) - from the TuneOurBlock consortium.

Local experts: Cynthia Echave (UPC) and Josep Bohigas (BR).

Session A investigated how cities integrate superblock-like concepts into strategic planning objectives and which conditions should be met for doing so. Participants discussed which triggers got the concept implementation started, which stakeholders were involved at which stage and how common challenges could be overcome.

## Report - Session A

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The workshop consisted of two 60-minute rounds with around 12 participants in each round - a mix of political and technical representatives of invited European cities (Berlin, Ghent, Lambeth/London, Lodz, Milano, Paris, Rotterdam, Valencia, Vienna, Zürich) and local experts from Barcelona. A facilitation technique similar to dynamic facilitation was used which allowed participants to speak freely on all key questions while the facilitator writes their input onto the according flipcharts.

In the first round the following key questions were discussed:

- What were the triggers to get the process started?
- Which groups of stakeholders were involved - and at what point in the process? (Flipchart with a timeline: initiation - implementation)
- What were successful involvement strategies you facilitated?
- Which concrete challenges did you face during the process? How did you respond?

The findings from the first round were briefly reflected upon with the second group and supplemented along the following guiding questions:

- State of the art: Looking at stakeholders and triggers: How are Superblock concepts currently initiated? What are common challenges?
- Good practice: Which strategies work well? In terms of implementation and also involvement
- What do we need to work on in the future?
- In the following we present the key findings focusing on conditions and triggers, challenges for implementation, and good practices for overcoming them.

## Conditions and triggers for change

Superblock-like concepts play an important role in the transformation of public space in the participating cities. Public space is or was used in a strongly car-centered way in all cities. Changes in planning and concretely on the street have local-specific but also general triggers. Overarching global conditions such as dealing with the Corona pandemic and responding to climate change play a central role in many cities. As a result, various EU regulations have successively increased the pressure to act, particularly in Barcelona. These included, for example, new caps on noise and exhaust emissions. Other traffic and urban development problems (e.g., high accident rates, child safety, few green and open spaces) are also overarching conditions that increase the pressure to act. At the same time, the urgency of the individual problems varies between cities. Local administrative logics and political culture also influence the transferability of approaches and speed of implementation. In addition to these structural deficits as triggers, participants described various social and political conditions that set off transformation processes. Political visions and political will for people-centred urban and transport policies have been important foundations for successful implementation in all cities. Civil society pressure was also an important driver for change in Rotterdam and especially in Berlin. In addition to these general causes and conditions, which tend to be transferable, singular events such as a traffic collision are also always triggers.

## Challenges, responses and good practices

The challenges of initiating and implementing Superblocks and street transformation projects were discussed primarily in terms of communication, participation and discourse with urban society. Transformation in public space often leads to scepticism and open resistance from those affected on the ground. In the political arena, too, the projects are usually highly controversial. The conflicts become visible with regard to the specific neighborhood as well as being discussed in the context of the city as a whole. In the workshop, for example, the focus was on conflicts between poor vs. rich and center vs. periphery. Superblocks and streetscape upgrades, for example, are often associated with social change. Local measures are also rarely seen in the larger, strategic context. Commuting relationships between downtown and outlying neighborhoods are also virulent in the debates. In addition to citywide discussions, specific stakeholders have consistently been identified as more sceptical/opposed. Residents with private cars, local businesses, craftsmen or garbage collectors are often less than enthusiastic about street closures and removal of parking for motor vehicles. Getting hold of local stakeholders who are not directly affected by the changes and generating positive tailwinds for transformation is also challenging. In this context, the "participation paradox" (it is always the same people who participate – those in favour of the process – and once the participation process is finished and implementation has begun those opposing the idea get loud) was also discussed as challenging. To address these challenges, participants discussed the following solution strategies and good practices.

## Beyond Mobility Narrative and Broader Picture

The added value of the measures and strategies should be brought to the fore. It should be made clear that public transformation projects are about more than just new traffic rules or better bike lanes. Rather, the focus should be on attractive public spaces for a wide variety of uses, and the importance of the measure to a wide variety of strategic areas. In Barcelona, for example, Superblocks are part of the health, mobility, urban development, and water management strategies, among others. Synergies can also be established with School route safety concepts.

## Open and transparent communication

Open and transparent communication is a key component in the implementation of public space transformation concepts. The above mentioned stakeholders should be addressed in time through different methods and formats. Experts for participation or communication should be working within the responsible administration. Possible formats are, for example:

### *Surveys and online participation platforms*

Representative surveys can help to get a more differentiated and realistic picture of opinion. Between the loud supporters and opponents, there is usually a "silent majority" that is basically open to change, but is slightly sceptical. Another means can be online participation platforms where interested people register and are regularly asked about urban development issues. The city of Rotterdam has had good experience with this and has been able to contribute positive opinions in this way.

### *Tactical pilot projects*

Play streets and other (temporary) interventions in the street space address various challenges in public space transformation projects. Through experiential transformation, many more people can be exposed to the underlying project, thus also creating a broader awareness and opinion. Furthermore, test rooms allow to try out certain scenarios and design types for the final implementation phase.

### *Further involvement methods*

Other communication and information methods mentioned in the workshop were: Information evening; neighborhood walks; citizen assembly; open format-focus groups and street labs. These dialogue-oriented formats complement especially tactical interventions and should always be planned and applied in combination with each other.

## Community management

In Berlin and Vienna, there are public community managers who are in permanent exchange with the local neighborhood. Through these multipliers, communication and participation can be disseminated and controlled. Such institutions can support the development of alliances. These managers are often tied to the administration but are well connected with the citizens, ideally having an office as a direct point of contact within the neighborhood.

## Intrinsically motivated technical staff "going the extra mile"

Transformation projects often lead to strong opposition and emotional debates.. There are many conflicts to be fought out over space, daily routines and priorities. A strong, interdisciplinary team within the administration is very helpful for success. In addition to traffic-related issues, it is above all the people who have to be convinced. This often requires completely new paths, measures and tools. A task for which you sometimes have to go the extra mile and intrinsic motivation is worth its weight in gold. The team of the Superblock Technical Office of Barcelona's City Council is a good practice example of this.



# Session B

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## ' Superblocks as a transformative tool'

Facilitated by: Johannes Müller (AIT), Elena Mali (STC), Ulrich Leth (TUW), Jernej Tiran (ZRC SAZU) – from the TuneOurBlock consortium.

Local experts: Carolyn Daher (ISGlobal) and Javier Ortigosa (AMB).

Session B investigated how the concept of superblocks is understood, adapted and applied in cities across Europe. Participants shared views on key elements of superblocks and experiences about planning goals, planning concepts, indicators, and modelling approaches that support superblocks as a tool for urban transformation.

## Report - Session B

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The workshop consisted of two 60-minute rounds with around 15 participants in each round – a mix of political and technical representatives of invited European cities (Berlin, Ghent, Lambeth/London, Lodz, Milano, Paris, Rotterdam, Valencia, Vienna, Zürich) and local experts from Barcelona. Each round was divided into three main parts.

### 1/ Rationale for the implementation of public space transformation measures

In the first part of the workshop, the participants were asked for the main reasons behind the implementation of superblocks or superblock-like approaches in their respective city. They were each given a larger post-it (for the main reason) and two smaller post-its (for two secondary reasons), which they were asked to place on the scheme with eight categories of motivations. In the next step, they were asked to justify their choice.

Improving or gaining public space was by far the most important reason in respective cities to implement superblock-like approaches – 10 of 11 city representatives named it as one of three main reasons, in nine cases the primary one (see Table 1). When justifying their choice, most participants saw it as a means to improve urban well-being and liveability and having public space as a counterbalance to a high residential density.

On the other hand, many participants exposed that the motivations for implementing superblock-like approaches were manifold. They emphasized that increasing quality of public space was inseparably linked to other goals, such as reaching modal shift to sustainable transport modes, improving overall health (as an overarching objective), improving (traffic) safety, reducing noise and air pollution and implementing climate adaptation measures. However, these goals were somehow secondary to public space improvement. Other, less frequently exposed motivations included climate mitigation,

community building, preserving built heritage districts in the city, and reducing city-shrinking. Furthermore, participants mentioned that the Superblocks concept can be used in political discussions as a way to exert “peer pressure” on political stakeholders to convince and inspire other cities to adopt such an approach to urban transformation.

A motivation for the introduction of Superblock was for some participants that it changes the narrative and the labelling of a concept for promoting traffic calming measures after political shifts. Some also mentioned that the motivation depends on which stakeholder you ask – planners or politicians might have different visions. There was also a discussion on marketing Superblocks: in Barcelona, for example, the concept became very popular especially among other cities and the investors, but focusing too much on city branding towards other cities and international audience may not be beneficial for the original idea. One of the participants emphasized that the communication strategies should be tailor-made to a local context and creating similarities to Barcelona case might not be a viable solution (“one size doesn’t fit all”).

*Table 1: The importance of reasons to implement a superblock-like concept in cities according to the workshop participants.*

MOTIVATION	'SCORE'
Public Space	o o o o o o o o o o x x x
Modal Shift	o o x x x
Health	o o x x
Traffic Safety	x x x x x x x
Noise & Air Pollution	x x x x x
Climate Adaptation	x x x x x
City Shrinkage	o x
Climate Mitigation	o
Community Building	x
Peer Pressure	x
Local Businesses	

Legend:

o = main reason

x = secondary or tertiary reason

## 2/ Intrinsically motivated technical staff "going the extra mile"

In the second part of the workshop, the participants were asked which indicators were used in their respective cities during the implementation of public space transformation and for what purpose. Altogether, the participants reported 67 indicators across different categories (see Table 2). Most of them were meant to monitor and evaluate the progress of urban transformation attempts; some are more general and some already very precise and “ready to use”. The majority is related to social dimension of public space, focusing on social interaction, and modal shift, followed by climate adaptation

and mitigation. Some of them were reported by multiple participants.

At the beginning of the discussion, it was emphasized by the experts from Barcelona that collaboration between city authorities and researchers is essential to measure and understand the benefits of Superblocks, for example in the field of health. “Ante-post” measurements in various fields can be especially useful to show the progress and the success of implementation. Contrary to climate change and sustainability narratives, which are at times too abstract for the entire population, health intervention narrative, combined with improving well-being and quality of life proved much more efficient to get public approval and provided useful talking points to communicate with the city administration. In addition, a need for measures and indicators on the metropolitan level was also highlighted as cities are functionally linked to suburban and rural areas in their vicinity. The cohesive consideration of urban and rural areas was considered important to also address the concerns of the population living outside the superblock (and the city).

During the discussion, it became clear that some indicators cannot be applied in every city due to legal restrictions (e.g. using cameras for counting of pedestrians). Some places have more developed data gathering procedure (e.g. accurate and up-to-date data on each building). Most participants agreed that along the “objective” indicators, “subjective” indicators are also essential and should be included in the monitoring procedure. Some of them even stated that such subjective indicators are best suited to show how the public space transformation project performs.

*Table 2: Indicators used in the implementation of superblock-like concepts according to workshop participants*

Traffic Safety	Noise & Air Pollution	Modal Shift	Climate Adaptation & Mitigation	Public Space	Local Businesses	Health	Others
no. of accidents (deaths, severely injured)	noise level/ no. of people living over the noise pollution threshold (3x)	modal split (2x)	local greening: tree canopy cover (m2), green planting (m2)	no. of "slow movers" (children, elderly, people with strollers)	local businesses	no. of heat strokes	before-after pictures (2x)
perceived safety	NO2 and PM10 immissions	no. of through traffic	% of new permeable space	vulnerable people in public space	local businesses (sales) types	temperature (heat islands)	no. of active initiatives
no. of crashes	PM2,5 level	mobility diary (change of habits)	no. of planted trees	no. of added street furniture	shops vitality	extension of life expectancy	liveability monitor
road safety prediction model		pedestrian flows	amount / m2 of unsealed surface	pedestrian frequency			waste
traffic speed		cycling countering	green monitor	duration of stay			(emotional) appreciation

		walking monitor	no. of trees	width of the sidewalks			housing prices
		traffic counts	crown volume of trees	"seatability" (places where to sit)			no. of residents left or want to live in the area
		average trip length (km per day)	% of new opened soil	mixed use of public space			building permits
		car possession (vehicles per 1000 inhabitants)	green areas	public life observation/survey			
		modal change		gender & age mix			
		no. of reallocated parking spaces		regained space (m2)			
		no. of parking permits		intensity of social life on public spaces			
		kerbside reallocations		no. of interactions			
		no. of people who gave up on cars		no. of activities			
		increase/decrease of cars in streets		no. of persons staying in the street in a day			
				no. of persons walking along the street in a day			
				different urban uses			
				public places usage			

### 3/ Superblocks concept definition and "contested" statements

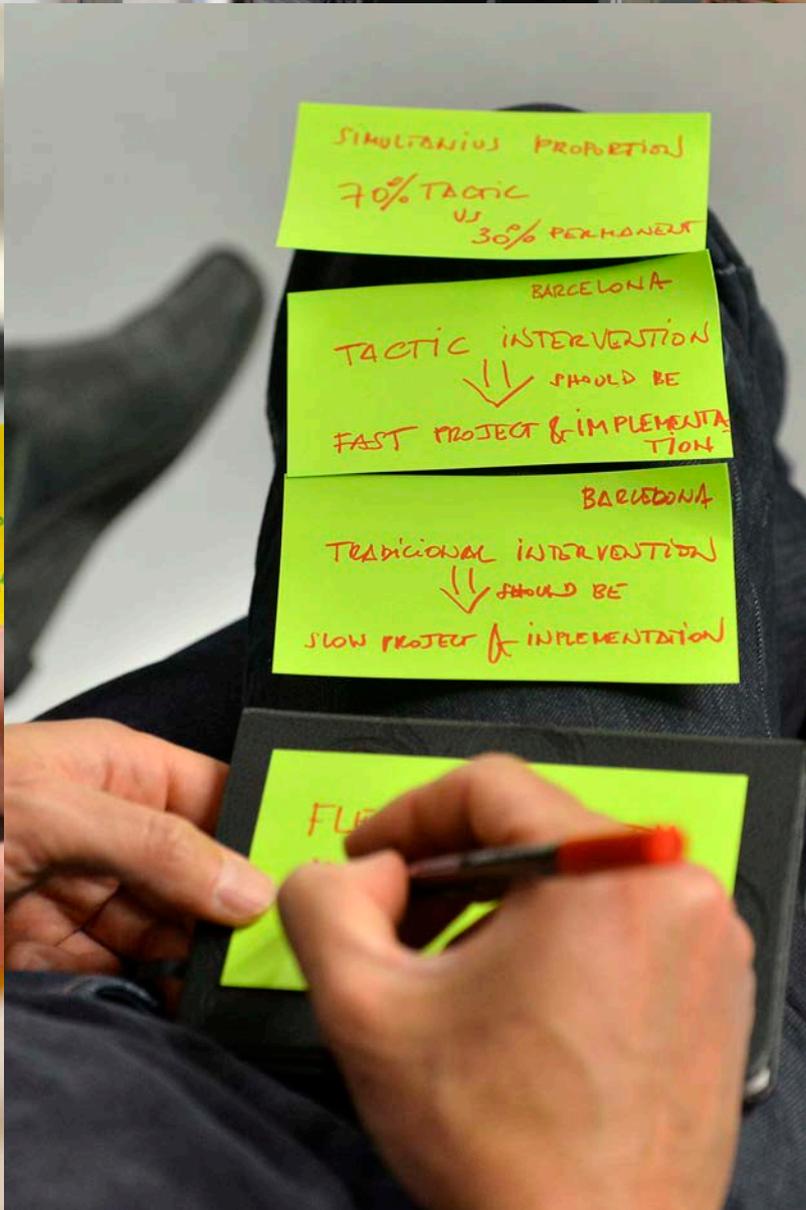
One of the tasks for the participants was also to discuss some of the "contested" statements from the e-Delphi process conducted within the TuneOurBlock project. During the first round of the e-Delphi survey, there were higher levels of disagreement about some Superblock elements, especially regarding the urban morphology.

Following the presentation of the Superblocks concept definition developed within TuneOurBlock, there was a discussion about the appropriate size of a superblock. A

concern was raised that if a superblock is too big, the inner traffic can concentrate and become through traffic. A big superblock also means risk of losing proximity and social cohesion and leads to the question, how far are people willing to travel by non-motorized transport modes. In Barcelona, urban planners realized that there is no need to be fixed around the "3x3 size", what is more important is the neighbourhood and community belonging. From a social services perspective, a superblock can take care of 40.000 people, combining mobility and social perspective. On other hand, the question of size very much depends on the density. It also relates to the question of allowing public transport and important services (e.g. ambulances) to go inside the superblock.

The second round of the discussion evolved around the question if a superblock needs to have the central public space. Participants mostly agreed that it is very important and also commonly develops naturally after implementation of a Superblock that it has some areas that are more vibrant than others. . It is beneficial if it is in the centre but this should not be a requirement; the location also depends on the current urban fabric and the historical development. It also does not need to be a plaza or square. Also an individual street can fulfill the function of a central public space. What is more important is that people have a possibility to gather and that walking distances within the superblock are not too big. It was also pointed out that in the areas of single-family houses, it is difficult to create a lively public space as there is no identifiable common space; somewhere it can only be at the edges.





# Session C

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## ' How to transform street space '

Facilitated by: Dirk von Schneidmesser (RIFS), Christian Unger (Changing Cities), Valentin Gebhardt (City of Vienna), Francesco Remonato (Smarter than Car), Georg Wieser (studio LAUT) - from the TuneOurBlock Consortium.

Local experts: Carlota de Gispert (Cierto Estudio) and Marina Cervera (UPC).

Session C dealt with strategies and methods to successfully implement complex urban transformation projects in the context of complex actors, including decision-makers and other local stakeholders. Participants discussed how Superblocks – and similar projects – can be implemented effectively at a large scale. The focus was set on good practice and promising methods for approaching street space transformations based on the experiences of those present.

## Report - Session C

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The workshop consisted of two 60-minute sessions with around 15 participants in each round. – The guest impulse-speakers were LEKU Studio from Barcelona. In the first round, mostly technical representatives from European cities (Berlin, Ghent, Lambeth/London, Lodz, Milano, Paris, Rotterdam, Valencia, Vienna, Zürich), but also a small number of political representatives attended. In the second session, the majority of participants were technical staff from Barcelona working on water preservation and use. Due to this unforeseen participant constellation, the second 60-minute session deviated from the planned workshop progression to profit from and host an adequate exchange on this topic.

### First workshop round: Considerations for implementing superblocks and large-scale public space transformations

Why have superblocks (and related measures) been implemented as they were?

This was the guiding question of the first session, and served as the point of departure for the initial impulse-interview provided by Jokin Santiago from LEKU Studio.

The impulse illustrated the experience of Barcelona, especially for the transformation of street space in the St. Antoni Superblock, which was improved on through learnings from the Poblenou Superblock. Working together with the Barcelona City Council, a design guideline was developed for a modular set of measures that could be implemented quickly and in multiple areas - enabling a transformation of St. Antoni, but also creating a blueprint for other areas. The structural phase of a longer-term transformation was conceived at the same time as the chronologically nearer tactical phase, so that the former could emerge effectively from the latter without unnecessary complications and

delays. The design guideline for the modular set was oriented toward providing flexibility for a broad spectrum of uses, while the goal was to use only as many elements as necessary.

In a next step, the guiding question (*Why did you implement superblocks (or related measures) as you did?*) was put to the entire group of participants. They were asked to use a brief period of silence to reflect individually and note reasons, motivations, and solutions for their street space transformation decisions. Further prompts were given by the facilitation team to help elicit productive ideas to share.

For example: *Was the goal to implement many superblocks or just one? Was the goal to transform a small area of street space very thoroughly, or much more street space very quickly? How did goals align with contextual factors, such as budgets and timelines?*

The participants then shared their answers, and were asked deepening questions to elicit more useful information about experiences for the other participants to learn about. The deepening questions included:

- 1) *What affected your project the most? (e.g.: political context, administrative setting, public opinion, legal standards);*
- 2) *How did the coordination of all involved stakeholders happen?;*
- 3) *What worked well? And what didn't?;*
- 4) *What were the most difficult obstacles to overcome and how did you manage to navigate these challenges?;*
- 5) *What did you do to build support for the implementation stage?*

The shared experiences were gathered, and the facilitation team identified a number of spectra of tension from the experiences the participants shared. These included:

Tactical Urbanism implementation vs. Structural street space transformation: Participants agreed that some amount of hybridity is helpful between temporary and permanent transformation of street space. While temporary/tactical measures enable speed and fast feedback loops, structural measures more represent a goal which many stakeholders are expecting. Accompanying tactical measures with a general plan that goes beyond temporary/tactical measures is important. Furthermore, the limits of tactical measures are clear when thinking of measures for e.g. permeability. Participants suggested that altering the status-quo by using temporary/tactical measures can also create windows of opportunity, because it brings dynamics into an otherwise static situation.

Prioritization: "Start where the energy is" vs. "identify areas that most require transformation": This tension arises from the clear attractiveness (especially for political decision-makers) to begin transformations in places where the stakeholders approve as opposed to developing objective criteria to select areas for beginning transformation based on need. With political backing, the latter strategy is likely to be more just, while the process of creating proof of concept in places where approval of transformation measures is high can enable a process of successive transformation. Some participants emphasized that using windows of opportunity, seizing or catching opportunities as being very valuable to their transformation processes.

Top Down vs. Bottom-up: This spectrum of tension is closely linked to the two considerations mentioned above, but is more a part of the decision process, involving legitimation and effectively managing communication and participation resources. Ideas here included using online surveys for collecting all inputs, orienting communication and participation strategies to manage the most critical voices, cooperating with local actors by asking which problems and needs exist (as opposed to what kind of street design they want).

Experimental vs. Planned Transformations: Participants agreed that any experimental transformation needs to be embedded in an overarching general plan. Thus, any experimental transformations can only fill out smaller areas of uncertainty within overarching plans.

Fast/Cheap/Tactical vs. Slower/Expensive/Longer-Term street-space transformations: These fields of tension were highly dependent on contexts, including budgets, political election cycles, political goals, and the scale of planned street space transformations.

## Second workshop round: A three-dimensional approach integrating nature-based solutions with Superblocks

In the second 60-minute session, the focus was much more on green-space and water-use. Numerous technical experts made a convincing plea for looking beyond the conflicting goals of street space allocation, which had been the focus in the discussion on transforming street space in the first 60-minutes. They argued that Superblock-measures must be thought of not only in terms of what we do with the horizontal surface of the city, they argued, but also what we vertically do with urban space: from the roofs and tree-tops to the tree-roots, pipes, and aquifers far below the surface.

The cooling effect of tree-tops in the city is contingent on the ability of tree-roots to expand deep below the surface. The health of the tree-roots is in turn dependent on the availability of water, an increasingly precious and scarce resource. Thus, cities cannot afford to squander run-off from rooftops and paved streets, but must retain it to keep urban green alive. Barcelona runs two parallel water piping systems, one for fresh drinking water, and another one for water that can be used for watering urban green. Networks of underground aquifers gather and channel water in semi-permeable basins that allow water collected during strong, short rains to seep into the ground over the course of days and weeks, rather than being mixed with sewage and/or directly carried away.

This three-dimensional approach to Superblock-measures points to the gargantuan challenge of coordinating urban sustainability transformations. Achieving traffic safety, ensuring mobility, expanding urban green, maintaining public spaces, sustaining water resources, involving citizens and other stakeholders in balancing the (sometimes conflicting) goals are all intertwined objectives in this immensely complex process of transforming urban spaces to become more resilient and sustainable.

This goes far beyond the already complex challenge of coordinating public utilities. When digging up a street to renew pipes or create an even-level pedestrian zone, cities must consider the potential window of opportunity to implement a broad spectrum of changes. But coordinating the departments of a city responsible for diverse tasks such as installing new underground water basins, re-designing the streetscape, planting additional trees, renewing underground electric lines, gas- and water pipes, to mention a few, is a daunting task. In this context, other cities stand to profit from the experiences made by the City of Barcelona. For example, Barcelona has a cross-cutting administrative body called the “Superblock Technical Office” to coordinate all the plans and actors (public and private) involved in these complex city transformation projects and processes. Such coordination efforts are affected by current political and budgetary contexts, and must be understood as embedded in their respective contexts.

Some tensions identified in the second 60-minute session were:

Biodiversity vs. Monoculture: This tension requires also informed expectations about what flora will be appropriate for the changing climate in the city in the future.

Drinking water vs. Water for other uses: Many cities are not equipped to deal with dual water logistics. This is an enormous up-front investment, but - depending on context - might pay for itself quickly.





# Attendance

## Participating experts

Cynthia Echave  
Urban Planner / Urban Ecology - Systems Thinking R&D /  
Strategic Project Management

Josep Bohigas  
Director of the Barcelona Regional -  
Strategic Planning Agency

Carolyn Daher  
Coordinator, Urban Planning, Environment and Health  
Initiative at Barcelona Institute of Global Health (ISGlobal)

Javier Ortigosa  
Mobility-Urban Planner, Transport Researcher

Jokin Santiago  
Architecture, Urban Design&Strategic Planning  
Co-Founder LEKU STUDIO

Marina Cervera  
Director of Master's Program in Landscape Architecture

Carlota de Gispert  
Architect, Co-Founder Cierto Estudio

## Workshop Facilitation

Session Facilitators: Nicolina Kirby (RIFS), Thomas Stein (difu), Alexandra Meyer (ChangingCities), Johannes Müller (AIT), Elena Mali (STC), Ulrich Leth (TUW), Jernej Tiran (ZRC SAZU), Dirk von Schneidemesser (RIFS), Christian Unger (Changing Cities), Valentin Gebhardt (City of Vienna), Francesco Remonato (Smarter than Car), Georg Wieser (studio LAUT)

Moderation: Florian Lorenz (studio LAUT)

A city in transformation







Viu la Superilla!  
20 de Març  
10h  
Ajuntament de Sabadell

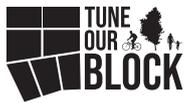
SUPERILLA

MUS FERRETERIA

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