

SCHOOL OF  
ECONOMICS AND  
MANAGEMENT

# Unlocking Success: Exploring Key Factors in Sustainable Urban Mobility Initiatives in Europe

A case study of the success factors underlying the Superblock project in  
Barcelona from a stakeholder management perspective

by

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# Abstract

This qualitative study delves into enhancing the scalability of sustainable development across European nations by analyzing the key success factors in sustainable urban mobility initiatives. Employing an abductive approach, the research integrates existing theoretical frameworks of stakeholder management, stakeholder salience, and value creation, with the aim to provide practical insights rather than solely filling theoretical gaps. The empirical focus on Barcelona's Superblock project exemplifies a holistic approach integrating transportation, architecture, and ecology, making it a valuable case study. Insights from the study reveal the importance of effective stakeholder management, recognizing both supportive and resistant stakeholders, to leverage support and prevent unforeseen resistance. Stakeholder participation through co-creation fosters shared understanding and value, enhancing responsiveness to community needs. Challenges such as political resistance and public misconceptions necessitate depoliticizing projects, emphasizing societal benefits and employing proactive communication strategies. Incremental and pragmatic approaches to project implementation can mitigate risks and ensure sustainable progress. This study essentially highlights the complex dynamics and strategies of importance for the successful implementation of sustainable urban mobility initiatives, emphasizing stakeholder engagement, supportive policies, and multidisciplinary collaboration. It contributes to broader global sustainability goals by offering practical insights for policymakers and urban planners.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Urban Mobility, Superblock Project, Stakeholder Management Perspective, Key Success Factors, Scale-Up Solutions

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# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 Background and Context.....	10
1.1.1 Sustainable Urban Mobility.....	10
1.1.2 Stakeholder Management.....	10
1.2 Problematization.....	11
1.3 Research Question and Purpose.....	13
1.4 Thesis Outline.....	13
<b>2. Literature Review – The Theoretical Framework in Three Dimensions.....</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1 Stakeholder Management Theory.....	15
2.1.1 Definition of Stakeholders.....	15
2.1.2 Core Concepts of Stakeholder Management.....	15
2.1.3 Managing for Stakeholders and Increased Total Value.....	17
2.1.4 Assessment of Stakeholder Power.....	17
2.2 Stakeholder Salience Theory.....	19
2.3.1 Stakeholder Typology Based on Individual Stakeholder Attributes.....	19
2.3.2 Multilateral Stakeholder Salience Approach.....	20
2.3 Value Creation Theory.....	21
2.2.1 Definition of Value and Value Creation.....	21
2.2.2 Managerial Stakeholder Theory of Value Creation.....	22
2.2.3 Creating Shared Value and Co-Creation of Value.....	22
2.2.4 Value Capture and Value Appropriation.....	22
2.4 Concluding Remark.....	23
<b>3. Methodology.....</b>	<b>25</b>
3.1 Research Approach and Design.....	25
3.1.1 Qualitative Study.....	25
3.1.2 Abductive Approach.....	26
3.1.3 Single Case Study.....	26
3.2 Choice of Case Study: Barcelona's Superblock Initiative.....	27
3.3 Data Collection Methods.....	29
3.4 Data Analysis Techniques.....	32
3.5 Validity and Reliability.....	34
3.6 Ethical Considerations.....	35
<b>4. Analysis of Empirical Findings – Perspectives on The Superblock Project.....</b>	<b>36</b>
4.1 Case description – About the Superblock Project.....	37
4.2 Stakeholder Management.....	39
4.2.1 Identification of Stakeholders.....	39
4.2.2 Stakeholder engagement strategies.....	40
4.2.3 Power dynamics among stakeholders.....	42
4.2.4 Handling stakeholder conflict.....	43

4.3 Stakeholder Salience.....	44
4.3.1 Identification of the various powerful stakeholders.....	44
4.3.2 Stakeholders in favor of the Superblock project.....	45
4.3.3 Stakeholders against the Superblock project.....	46
4.4 Stakeholder Participation.....	48
4.4.1 Pre-implementation.....	48
4.4.2 During the process.....	49
4.4.3 Taking into account stakeholder opinions post-implementation.....	50
4.4.4 Community engagement.....	51
4.5 Challenges.....	52
4.5.1 Political Resistance and Partisanship.....	52
4.5.2 Balancing Political Will and Project Ownership.....	53
4.5.3 Navigating Public Perception.....	53
4.5.4 Balancing Speed and Realism.....	54
4.5.5 Resource constraints and Bureaucratic hurdles.....	55
4.6 Success Factors.....	55
4.6.1 Community Engagement and Common Goals.....	55
4.6.2 Political Will and Courage.....	58
4.6.3 Flexibility and Adaptability.....	59
4.6.4 Participatory Processes.....	60
4.6.5 Technical Integration and Strategic Planning.....	61
<b>5. Discussion.....</b>	<b>64</b>
5.1 Stakeholder Management.....	64
5.2 Stakeholder Salience.....	65
5.3 Stakeholder Participation.....	67
5.4 Challenges Encountered.....	68
5.5 Success Factors from the Superblock Project.....	70
<b>6. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>72</b>
6.1 Theoretical Implications.....	72
6.2 Practical Implications.....	73
6.3 Limitations and Future Research.....	74
<b>7. References.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>8. Appendix.....</b>	<b>80</b>
Appendix A.....	80
Appendix B.....	84
Appendix C.....	85
Appendix D.....	87

## List of Tables

Table 1: Respondents of conducted interviews.....	32
Table 2: Respondents of written questionnaires.....	32

# List of Figures

Figure 1: Stakeholder-Centric Framework for Sustainable Urban Mobility Initiative.....	24
Figure 2: Codes from Stakeholder-Centric Framework for Sustainable Urban Mobility Initiatives.....	37

# List of Pictures

Picture 1: Aerial view of Barcelona Superblocks, Spain.....	38
Picture 2: Closer aerial view of a Superblock neighborhood in Barcelona, Spain.....	38
Picture 3: Pacified street in Barcelona, Spain.....	39



# 1. Introduction

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development gives legitimacy and importance to the climate crisis, which is becoming an increasingly pressing matter (United Nations, 2023). With a global effect, changing our habits and way of living is becoming to a greater degree important (United Nations, 2023). Previous and current human activities have driven greenhouse gas emissions to a record level, with the impacts already affecting human lives (United Nations, 2023). Communities and countries are affected in a variety of aspects, with disruptions to both national and global economies (United Nations, 2023). One of the goals included in the United Nations 2030 Agenda is goal 13, Climate Action, which highlights the need to take action to overcome the increasing impacts of climate change (United Nations, 2023). This includes rethinking aspects of ecology, the use of resources, waste, and most importantly our carbon emissions (United Nations, 2023). Further, while environmental issues are becoming all the more apparent, increasing population and demands for higher living standards are also matters of high regard (United Nations, 2023). This gives global importance to sustainable development, with sustainable urban mobility and transformation and management of urban spaces being given particular attention (United Nations, 2023). Another goal of the United Nations 2030 Agenda is Goal 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, which approaches sustainability not only in terms of natural resources and ecology but also in matters of social sustainability, efficient mobility solutions, and safety, in order to build resilience (United Nations, 2023). United Nations publications on solutions regarding both Goal 13 Climate Action and Goal 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities particularly deal with the aspect of synergies in achieving sustainable development (United Nations, 2023). Key messages that are processed include solving the mutual challenges together, and approaching the sustainable development planning in an integrated manner (United Nations, 2023).

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*“There's no way to back down. They can stop us, they can make things slow down, but people have an understanding of the possibility of living in a better city, especially in Barcelona because it is a very very noisy city. When we got out without the noise during the pandemic, we could listen to the birds and it was amazing. And now people have this idea that it's possible.”* - Sustainable Mobility and Urban Transformation Advisor

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## 1.1 Background and Context

### 1.1.1 Sustainable Urban Mobility

The European Commission describes sustainable urban mobility as the strategic plans that shape the cornerstone for European Urban Mobility, designed to satisfy the mobility needs and surroundings preferences of citizens (European Commission, 2024). Attention is drawn to the impact of transport in urban areas on greenhouse gas emissions. Particularly mentioned is how 70% of citizens in the European Union reside in urban areas responsible for 23% of greenhouse gas emissions generated by transport (European Commission, 2024). The European Commission suggests that all cities embrace sustainable urban mobility plans, to achieve a higher and improved overall quality of life (European Commission, 2024). This suggestion has further been concretized and formulated into an Urban Mobility Framework proposition, encouraging the sustainable development of urban mobility (European Commission, 2024). The Urban Mobility Framework focuses on the aspects of safety, accessibility, inclusivity, and affordability in order to build smarter, more resilient, and emission-free urban areas (European Commission, 2024). Management of mobility flows, more efficient urban logistics, promotion of mobility solutions such as walking and cycling, as well as stronger networks of public transport are all suggested implementations and solutions to achieve the objectives of the proposed framework (European Commission, 2021). Integration and participation are aspects further mentioned to be needing particular consideration. This is in order to enable synergies and partnerships between different areas and involved parties such as residents and stakeholders (European Commission, 2024). Safety and well-being of the affected residents and urban environment are also aspects significantly affected when planning for sustainable urban mobility (European Commission, 2024).

### 1.1.2 Stakeholder Management

The importance of a holistic approach concerning integration and participation when implementing sustainable urban mobility plans (European Commission, 2024) further gives attention to the concepts of stakeholder management (Freeman et al, 2018), value creation (Wasioleski & Weber, 2017), and stakeholder salience (Mitchell et al, 1997). Stakeholder management is an important aspect of consideration to successfully create value for not only the organization but also for its surrounding stakeholders (Freeman et al, 2018). By recognizing that the organization is not an isolated entity, but rather integrated into a network

of interdependent actors, the organization can more efficiently and with care regard those stakeholders that are valuable for the organization. This provides increased importance to building strategic resilience, for survival and to thrive (Freeman et al, 2018). Particularly in sustainable development efforts, there are a variety of interested parties, underlying forces, and various stakeholders all interplaying in a connected network. This makes stakeholder management significant for the successful implementation of the efforts (Freeman et al, 2018). Further, in order to efficiently create value in sustainable urban mobility plans, it is important to navigate the network of stakeholders and ensure that these perceive the value received to be greater than what is invested (Wasioleski & Weber, 2017). For residents, politicians, business owners, and car owners, as an example, this would entail implementing sustainable urban mobility innovation to bring greater benefit than what is sacrificed in the trade-off. Successfully navigating the integrated network of stakeholders also includes the particular aspect of stakeholder salience (Mitchell et al, 1997). In sustainable development of urban mobility plans, this would entail considering which interested parties, for example, the residents, politicians, shop owners, and car owners, are more powerful, legitimate, or urgent in their claim to influence the implementation in a certain way. While all interested parties considered as stakeholders are important to be taken into account, these need to also be prioritized efficiently in order to maximize the value captured and created (Mitchell et al, 1997). Further, the conceptualization of stakeholder management includes both managing the forces for and against sustainable development efforts. This is to successfully navigate potential assets of help to catalyze the plans forward, while also strategically navigating and defending against forces that could be detrimental to the implementations if not managed carefully (Mitchell et al, 1997).

## 1.2 Problematization

Already in 2013, the European Commission launched its Sustainable Urban Mobility Package, which initiated sustainable urban mobility plans across Europe (European Commission, 2023). Some cities have been more successful in the execution of their plans, initiatives, and implementations than others and gained recognition. For example, Paris received a Sustainable Transport Award (STA) in 2023 for its innovative ways of promoting inclusive mobility, through expansion of cycling and pedestrian infrastructure (ITDP, 2024). Another example is Oslo, which as a result of the successful implementation of their Car-free

Livability Programme was awarded the European Green Capital award in 2019 (European Commission, 2021). The implementation of Barcelona's Superblock initiative is also an example of successful urban mobility efforts, with both environmental and social benefits (European Commission, 2019).

Participation and integration are highly regarded in sustainable urban mobility plans, with particular attention to including interests in both vertical and horizontal power dimensions (European Commission, 2023), the theories of stakeholder management (Freeman et al, 2018), stakeholder salience (Freeman et al, 2018) and value creation (Wasieleski & Weber, 2017) are perspectives of relevance. Stakeholder management theory can be of help in understanding how desired elements of participation and integration in sustainable urban mobility plans can be achieved through efficient navigation of the various involved parties (Freeman et al, 2018). Stakeholder salience theory could further be enlightening for the understanding of how the various involved parties and forces vary in nature and importance (Freeman et al, 2018). Such understanding can be of help in enabling synergies and partnerships with and among identified stakeholders (European Commission, 2023). Finally, understanding that value is created in relationships where the benefit received exceeds the invested efforts (Wasieleski & Weber, 2017) can help understand how to both capture more value and how to more efficiently create new value. This understanding is also beneficial when navigating what relationships are more significant for the optimal value-creation process.

According to Banister (2000), the challenge of achieving sustainable urban mobility is of central importance in contemporary urban planning, particularly within the context of European cities. While traditional public transport policies and practices have been extensively studied, the complex interplay of variables influencing their success necessitates a more nuanced analytical framework. As proposed by Banister (2000), the theory of stakeholder management offers a valuable directional framework for understanding these complexities. (Banister, 2000). However, the application of stakeholder management has traditionally been within organizational contexts, focusing on managerial implications (Freeman et al, 2018). Similarly, the theories of stakeholder salience and value creation have been predominantly utilized to address issues within corporate environments, assessing stakeholder importance and the mechanisms of value (Mitchell et al, 1997; Wasieleski & Weber, 2017). Leveraging these theories could provide a deeper understanding of sustainable

urban mobility. Adapting and applying these organizational theories to the broader and more intricate context of urban mobility, where multiple stakeholders interact in dynamic and often unpredictable ways, could reveal critical insights into the mechanisms of successful implementation of sustainable urban mobility projects.

### 1.3 Research Question and Purpose

The purpose of this study is to enhance the understanding of how sustainable development can be effectively scaled across European nations. This will be done by mapping out the underlying key success factors underpinning the effective implementation of a sustainable urban mobility initiative. From this, we hope to provide a nuanced understanding of participation and integration in sustainable urban mobility practices. The study incorporates theories of stakeholder management, stakeholder salience, and value creation, not to fill a theoretical gap, but to leverage these perspectives for greater practical insight. This concerns applying the organizational theories traditionally used in a market economy context for the understanding of how to more efficiently achieve successful implementation of sustainable development plans. The research will provide new insights into how the key success factors can be transformed into scale-up solutions. These can hopefully further be implemented in a larger sustainability context, helping to achieve global sustainability targets not only on a European but also global level. To address the purpose of our study the following research question was formulated:

*What are the underlying key success factors in terms of stakeholder management behind the successful sustainable urban mobility initiatives in Europe?*

## 1. 4 Thesis Outline

Following the introductory chapter, the literature review is meant to reveal the principal success factors of stakeholder management that lead to the development of sustainable urban mobility projects and the possibility for them to further be set forth into motion. A three-dimensional framework of stakeholder management, stakeholder salience, and value creation is here explored. Through the application of these theoretical perspectives, the intention is to establish practical ways and strategic tools for both the engagement and evaluation of urban mobility projects.

In the third chapter, the aim is to elaborate on the underlying methodology that upholds the thesis. The chapter includes the approach and design of the research, along with methodology and techniques for collecting and analyzing the empirical material and data. Included in this chapter is also a reflection concerned with the reliability, validity as well as ethical considerations of the study.

The following chapter concerns the empirical findings and begins with a case description. Continuing, the collected empirical findings are presented analytically. These are complemented and reinforced by empirical literature. The collected empirical findings consist of conducted interviews, while the empirical literature consists of existing cases and studies on the studied matter.

In the fifth chapter, the key findings will be analyzed and discussed. These will further be put into context and perspective regarding existing theoretical and empirical data, contributing to a new understanding of the studied topic.

The final chapter will conclude the study by presenting an explanation of both the practical and theoretical implications that the study entails. Limitations and possibilities for further research will also be addressed in this chapter, concluding the study.

## 2. Literature Review – The Theoretical Framework in Three Dimensions

### 2.1 Stakeholder Management Theory

#### 2.1.1 Definition of Stakeholders

Understanding the meaning of stakeholders is fundamental in the context of sustainable urban mobility initiatives. Stakeholders are far from passive observers, they are the life force driving these projects forward (Freeman et al, 2007a; Freeman et al, 2018). However, Stakeholders can be divided into primary and secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders directly contribute to the value-creating processes, while the secondary stakeholders or additional stakeholders do not directly contribute to the value-creation of the organization (Freeman et al, 2007a; Freeman et al, 2018). One significant step to managing their different interests is to start by identifying the key stakeholders within the project (Freeman et al, 2018). Then, grouping and categorizing will help gain an understanding of the mutual functions of the groups of stakeholders in the value-creation process (McVea and Freeman, 2005; Freeman et al, 2018)

#### 2.1.2 Core Concepts of Stakeholder Management

Moreover, what lies at the center of good stakeholder management are seven principles. These ideas are the cornerstone of identifying stakeholder relationships, which are key challenges in the field of sustainable urban mobility policies (Freeman et al, 2018). First and foremost is the concept of managerial focus, which emphasizes the importance of directing attention and resources toward understanding and addressing stakeholder needs and concerns (Freeman et al, 2018). By prioritizing stakeholder engagement, organizations can foster mutually beneficial relationships that drive project success (Freeman et al, 2018). Undoubtedly, a solid moral basis is the very core of stakeholder management, and it lays a foundation for ethical choice-making and responsible management of stakeholders' interests (Freeman et al, 2018). Companies that exhibit ethical practices not only improve their images but also create trust and reliability in stakeholders which in turn form lasting partnerships (Freeman et al, 2018).

A strong consolidating force that brings together the interests of all stakeholders with the overall organizational objectives is the main aim (Freeman et al, 2018). Through the formulation of the vision and the mission statement, organizations will motivate the

stakeholders to participate in achieving common goals (Freeman et al, 2018). Further, paramount in stakeholder management is the generation of both economic and non-economic value (Freeman et al, 2018). Non-economic value is not as easily quantified as economic value is, as it is measured not in monetary terms but in factors like social impact, environmental sustainability, and community development (Freeman et al, 2018). Recognizing and valuing both forms of value creation can enable organizations to foster a broader and more lasting impact (Freeman et al, 2018).

Moreover, the idea of reciprocity focuses on the mutualistic relationship between organizations and the stakeholders they serve. Simplified, this concerns how well the stakeholders are treated by the organization (Freeman et al, 2018). Hence, through stakeholder satisfaction investments, companies not only benefit their organizations but also increase their competitiveness (Freeman et al, 2018). Therefore, reciprocity promotes confidence and positivity and contributes to strengthening stakeholders' relationships. Further, the term reputation can be understood to emphasize the significance of how the stakeholders feel about and rate organizational behaviors (Freeman et al, 2018). On one hand, a good reputation not only states a high trust and high credibility but also becomes a magnet to attract investment, talent, and collaboration. On the other hand, reputation damage can harm stakeholder trust and ruin the chance of project success (Freeman et al, 2018).

Furthermore, to ensure the continued alignment of stakeholders' interests over time, it is imperative to recognize the evolving nature of these relationships (Freeman et al, 2018). The concept of stakeholder interests converging over time is related to the trade-offs of attending to stakeholders, with particular attention to a long-term strategic perspective (Freeman et al, 2018). While allocating resources to manage short-term issues can be beneficial, a strategic perspective highlights the importance of fostering consensus and alignment among stakeholders for long-term objectives (Freeman et al., 2018). By prioritizing key stakeholders and cultivating profound partnerships, institutions can navigate complexities and facilitate sustainable value creation (Freeman et al., 2018). Essentially, these core concepts serve as a basis for stakeholder management. They make organizations capable of fostering meaningful connections, unprecedented value, and shared objectives, all of which are essential for the advancement of sustainable urban mobility (Freeman et al, 2018).



### 2.1.3 Managing for Stakeholders and Increased Total Value

Advancing forward, the concept of Managing for Stakeholders can be defined as a specific approach within stakeholder management characterized by six key attributes (Freeman et al, 2018). These are trust and integrity, concern for stakeholder well-being, value creation for stakeholders and subsequent action, active interaction, engagement, and communication with stakeholders, recognition and rewards for stakeholder contributions to value creation, and the alignment and integration of stakeholder interests rather than simply balancing competing interests (Freeman et al, 2018). This concept puts the welfare and interests of the stakeholders first. It therefore emphasizes their importance in creating value and ensuring the continuity of a successful project (Freeman et al, 2018).

The attribute concerning aligning stakeholder interests instead of trading off is of particular notion, as the conjoined interests of stakeholders is mentioned as an important factor for long term success, and could possibly lead to failure if neglected (Freeman et al, 2018). Managing for stakeholders is further related to the increased total value by the concept of reciprocity (Freeman et al, 2018). Investment in the stakeholder relationships creates greater value for the organization as the stakeholders are more inclined to collaborate and contribute to the value-creation processes if treated well and attended to than if neglected (Freeman et al, 2018). The investment in such mutually beneficial relationships with the stakeholders has reputational implications, which can further enhance the total value, through new additional value-adding stakeholder relationships, that contribute to greater strategic flexibility (Freeman et al, 2018).

### 2.1.4 Assessment of Stakeholder Power

The next significant pillar in stakeholder management for most organizations is identifying and determining the influence matrix of the parties that have an impact on them. Stakeholder power is defined as the capacity of the stakeholder to influence the outcomes of the strategies and decisions of the organization (Freeman et al, 2018). Awareness of stakeholder power can be useful in determining the need of attention and consideration of particular stakeholders, to ensure successful management for stakeholders for increased total value, referring to the strategy to be pursued for each stakeholder (Freeman et al, 2018). The factors of power of particular importance that are mentioned are economic power of stakeholders, political power of stakeholders, social influence of stakeholders and legitimate, contractual or institutionally based sources of power (Freeman et al, 2018). The more power a stakeholder has along the

mentioned aspects, the more important it is for the organization to pay particular attention to these stakeholders and manage these in the value-creating processes (Freeman et al, 2018). Of particular importance is to see these powerful stakeholders as a potential for added value and alliance rather than an enemy (Freeman et al, 2018). In the framework presenting stakeholder intelligence and stakeholder management, the interrelating relationships and processes to be taken into regard for efficient management are visualized (Freeman et al, 2018). The identification of stakeholders contains multiple aspects of stakeholders' power, interests, behaviors, current and potential contributions and current stakeholder strategies that, when analyzed, are translated into stakeholder intelligence (Freeman et al, 2018). This in turn is of valuable use for the creation and development of the organization's mission, strategies, culture, values and performance measures and control systems aligned with the identified stakeholder intelligence (Freeman et al, 2018). The performance of these processes are further to be evaluated, revised and readjusted with changing dynamics of the stakeholder intelligence, in order to efficiently manage the stakeholder relationships for value creation (Freeman et al, 2018).

However, as emphasized by Verbeke and Tung (2013), the efficacy of stakeholder management hinges not only on its contemporary application but also on its adaptability to temporal dimensions. Their model elucidates the need for firms to respond to evolving stakeholder concerns and navigate shifts in stakeholder pressures (Verbeke & Tung, 2013). This aligns with the understanding of stakeholder management as a dynamic process that must account for changes in stakeholder dynamics over time (Verbeke & Tung, 2013). In a sustainable urban mobility context, evaluation of the temporal pattern of stakeholder management has a pivotal role in ensuring the sustainability of collaboration and realization of long-term goals. Through the acknowledgment of the influential stakeholders that may suddenly shift their agendas (Verbeke & Tung, 2013), urban mobility projects can develop strategies that can adjust to the changing needs of the community without losing the competitive edge in the market. Therefore, the behavioral stakeholder management model of Verbeke and Tung (2013) could be important for analyzing stakeholder landscape and then use that information in implementing sustainable urban mobility plans.

## 2.2 Stakeholder Salience Theory

### 2.3.1 Stakeholder Typology Based on Individual Stakeholder Attributes

After exploring stakeholder power as the capacity of the stakeholder to influence the outcomes of the strategies and decisions of the organization (Freeman et al, 2018), it is further explained how power is one out of three main attributes in the Stakeholder Salience Theory. This theory provides a structured framework for identifying and prioritizing stakeholders based on the key attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency (Mitchell et al, 1997). Understanding these attributes is understood to be crucial for effective stakeholder management. Power can be defined and perceived differently from various perspectives. One definition of power mentioned by Weber (1947) is "the probability that one actor within a social relationship would be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance". Another mentioned by Pfeffer (1981) is "a relationship among social actors in which one social actor, A, can get another social actor, B, to do something that B would not otherwise have done". Essentially, both definitions recognize the ability of individual actors in possession of power to achieve desired outcomes (Mitchell et al, 1997).

Legitimacy can loosely be defined as socially accepted and expected structures or behaviors and can be applied to the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate use of power by the notion of "in the long run, those who do not use power in a manner which society considers responsible will tend to lose it" (Mitchell et al, 1997). However, when relationships in society are evaluated, legitimacy and power are oftentimes implicitly coupled together (Mitchell et al, 1997). This is exemplified by the assumptions that are often made concerning how powerful stakeholders are implicitly legitimate and how legitimate stakeholders are necessarily powerful (Mitchell et al, 1997). Legitimacy and power are proposed as two distinct attributes that exist independently, but when combined create authority, which is further defined as "the legitimate use of power" (Weber, 1947; Mitchell et al, 1997). Further, to be perceived as salient for an organization, a stakeholder needs to, in addition to its claim of legitimacy on an organization, have both power and urgency present (Mitchell et al, 1997). It is therefore argued that legitimacy should be attended to with particular attention in the stakeholder management relationship, in a comprehensive manner approach to stakeholder salience theory (Mitchell et al, 1997). Urgency is a stakeholder attribute that brings attention to the dynamics of the stakeholder management relationship, with particular regard to the

interactions between stakeholders and the organization, giving the stakeholder salience model a dynamic rather than static nature (Mitchell et al, 1997).

From the three stakeholder attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency various types of stakeholders can further be identified and categorized into certain qualitative classes of stakeholders (Mitchell et al, 1997). The analysis that emerges from the principle of “Who or What Really Counts” is helpful in identifying the relevant sets of stakeholders, from which salient stakeholders for the organization can further be established (Mitchell et al, 1997). Accordingly, the model argues that stakeholders not in possession of any power, legitimacy, or urgency in relation to the organization are not perceived as salient stakeholders in relation to the organization (Mitchell et al, 1997). Understanding these distinctions helps prioritize stakeholder management efforts and allocate resources effectively (Mitchell et al., 1997). For example, a stakeholder included in the dominant coalition, defined by both power and urgency, that also possesses the attribute of urgency is characterized as the definite stakeholder (Mitchell et al, 1997). This definite type of stakeholder is defined as a salient stakeholder, possessing all three attributes, and therefore has the mandate to be given priority and be attended to immediately (Mitchell et al, 1997). Recognizing stakeholder salience enables organizations to allocate their resources more efficiently by prioritizing those stakeholders who have the most significant impact on achieving their objectives (Mitchell et al, 1997).

### 2.3.2 Multilateral Stakeholder Salience Approach

An extension to the Stakeholder Salience Framework is the Multilateral Stakeholder Salience model. The MSS approach takes into account not only the attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency of the individual stakeholder but also those critical attributes of other stakeholders (Hajdini et al, 2021; Mitchell et al, 1997). This adds a multilateral perspective of interdependence between the salience of not only the individual stakeholders with the organization but rather how the varying salience of the various stakeholders affect and interdepend (Hajdini et al, 2021; Mitchell et al, 1997). The aspect of stakeholder salience interdependence that extends the understanding of the stakeholder salience framework further contributes to the understanding of a collective effort of joint value creation for the organization (Hajdini et al, 2021; Mitchell et al, 1997). By taking into account also the

dimension of interdependent relationships between the stakeholders, organizations can more efficiently navigate and respond to coinciding stakeholder interests (Mitchell et al, 1997). Leveraging these interdependencies and coinciding interests of stakeholders can enable the identification and creation of synergies between the stakeholder resources and capabilities (Hajdini et al, 2021; Mitchell et al, 1997). This could further enhance the joint value created (Hajdini et al, 2021; Mitchell et al, 1997), ultimately contributing to the success and sustainability of initiatives such as sustainable urban mobility projects.

## 2.3 Value Creation Theory

### 2.2.1 Definition of Value and Value Creation

Furthermore, the concept of value creation plays a central role in stakeholder management. Value Creation is defined as an increase in net benefit and automatically occurs in an exchange between two or more parties that is of a purely voluntary nature (Wasioleski & Weber, 2017). In the context of organizational wealth, value creation theory delineates two crucial dimensions concerning shareholder wealth and stakeholder wealth (Porter, 1996; Wasioleski & Weber, 2017). This theory reveals how these projects can create and distribute an added value between the stakeholders. This model is built on the idea of regarding organizational wealth as including both shareholder and stakeholder wealth, which shows the need to consider the variety of interests of various stakeholders involved (Wasioleski & Weber, 2017). Secondly, the concept of shareholder wealth refers to the topic discussed earlier on stakeholder management theory (Wasioleski & Weber, 2017). Similar to the theory of stakeholder management that lies among the identification and management of various stakeholder interests, creating value requires entrepreneurial innovation and strategic management which are the major driving forces in the wealth increase of the shareholders (Wasioleski & Weber, 2017). Hence, the incorporation of value creation theory with stakeholder management objectives will lead to an all-encompassing approach to assessing and revealing both the interests of stakeholders and underlying innovative business practices. This will, at the same time, foster the realization of strategic management practices (Porter, 1996; Wasioleski & Weber, 2017).

### 2.2.2 Managerial Stakeholder Theory of Value Creation

The Value-Balance-Accountability model is a promising approach that combines different but mutually beneficial stakeholder theories with managerial stakeholder theory (Wasioleski & Weber, 2017). The VBA conception draws attention to the importance of balancing the varying or conflicting interests and moral standards of the various stakeholders in order to create value for the stakeholders (Schwartz & Carroll, 2008; Wasieleski & Weber, 2017). Additionally, an aspect of consideration that the VBA model brings forward is how the firm is subject to accountability for conduct and disclosure (Schwartz & Carroll, 2008; Wasieleski & Weber, 2017). Managerial Stakeholder Theory from the Value-Balance-Accountability perspective is thereby fundamentally anchored on the belief that value creation is the underlying element of both business and society and is efficiently achieved when the needs of stakeholders are met without causing negative externalities (Schwartz & Carroll, 2008; Wasieleski & Weber, 2017). In line with this, with a more general societal level of perspective, is the Producer Surplus Theory (Wasieleski & Weber, 2017). This claims there is a normative obligation for organizations to increase the general welfare of society and create net social value, with a particular notion toward the increase of long-term value not only for the organization but also for society (Schwartz & Carroll, 2008; Wasieleski & Weber, 2017).

### 2.2.3 Creating Shared Value and Co-Creation of Value

Moreover, Shared Value Creation occurs when organizations address social issues while simultaneously generating economic and social value (Porter and Kramer, 2011; Wasieleski & Weber, 2017). Creating Shared Value (CSV) takes into account a more holistic market perspective that includes a broader set of influences that can impact the long-term success of the organization (Porter and Kramer, 2011; Wasieleski & Weber, 2017). Co-Creation is further the concept concerned with creating joint value by both the organization and the customer (Wasieleski & Weber, 2017). The strategy of Co-creation involves an interactive relationship between the organization and its customers, in order to create a more rich value proposition for both the organization and the customer, through joint involvement (Wasieleski & Weber, 2017).

### 2.2.4 Value Capture and Value Appropriation

A difference can be identified between the creation of value in an organization or industry and the capture or appropriation of that value by the various stakeholders (Germany &

Muralidharan, 2001; Wasieleski & Weber, 2017). Value Capture and Value Appropriation can also be distinguished, where Value Capture is concerned with each stakeholder retaining a certain proportion of the created value through the transitions, while Value Appropriation is concerned with who gains or benefits from the bargaining process of the multiple stakeholders (Germany & Muralidharan, 2001; Wasieleski & Weber, 2017). Therefore, an organization may be able to, using Value Capture and Appropriation tools, overcome potential conflicts and establish trust with the different stakeholders, and thus, achieve the success of the sustainable urban mobility plan (Wasieleski & Weber, 2017).

## 2.4 Concluding Remark

In conclusion, the three theoretical dimensions of stakeholder management, stakeholder salience, and value creation provide a robust framework for addressing the complexities of sustainable urban mobility. When organizations integrate these theories into their planning and decision-making processes, they can effectively balance the diverse needs of stakeholders with their sustainability objectives. For instance, Freeman's Stakeholder Management Principles offer insights into stakeholder dynamics, enabling organizations to forge positive relationships by understanding and addressing their needs, thus ensuring sustainability remains a central focus in all their actions. Moreover, the Value-Balance-Accountability (VBA) model underscores the importance of transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct in stakeholder relationships. By aligning organizational objectives with stakeholder interests, value creation extends beyond shareholders to benefit society at large. Proactive engagement fosters trust, enhances reputation, and fosters enduring success in urban mobility initiatives. Additionally, the Multilateral Stakeholder Salience model provides valuable insights into the evolving nature of stakeholder dynamics, including changes in power, legitimacy, and urgency over time. By adopting a multilateral perspective, businesses can identify collaboration opportunities, anticipate conflicts, and leverage combined resources for sustainable growth initiatives. This holistic approach enables businesses to navigate complex stakeholder relationships more effectively, facilitating consensus-building, collaboration, and innovation.

In essence, stakeholder management theories enable organizations to embed sustainability into their strategies and operations. This may involve collaboration with communities,

governments, and industry partners to promote social responsibility and drive innovation in urban mobility projects. Stakeholder management serves as a roadmap for achieving sustainable development objectives. Looking ahead, organizations must continue to apply these theories in practical contexts, adapting them to changing circumstances and emerging challenges. By leveraging stakeholder management frameworks, organizations can make positive contributions, enhance resilience, and create lasting benefits for present and future generations. Thus, stakeholder management evolves from a theoretical concept into a practical tool for advancing sustainable development in urban mobility.

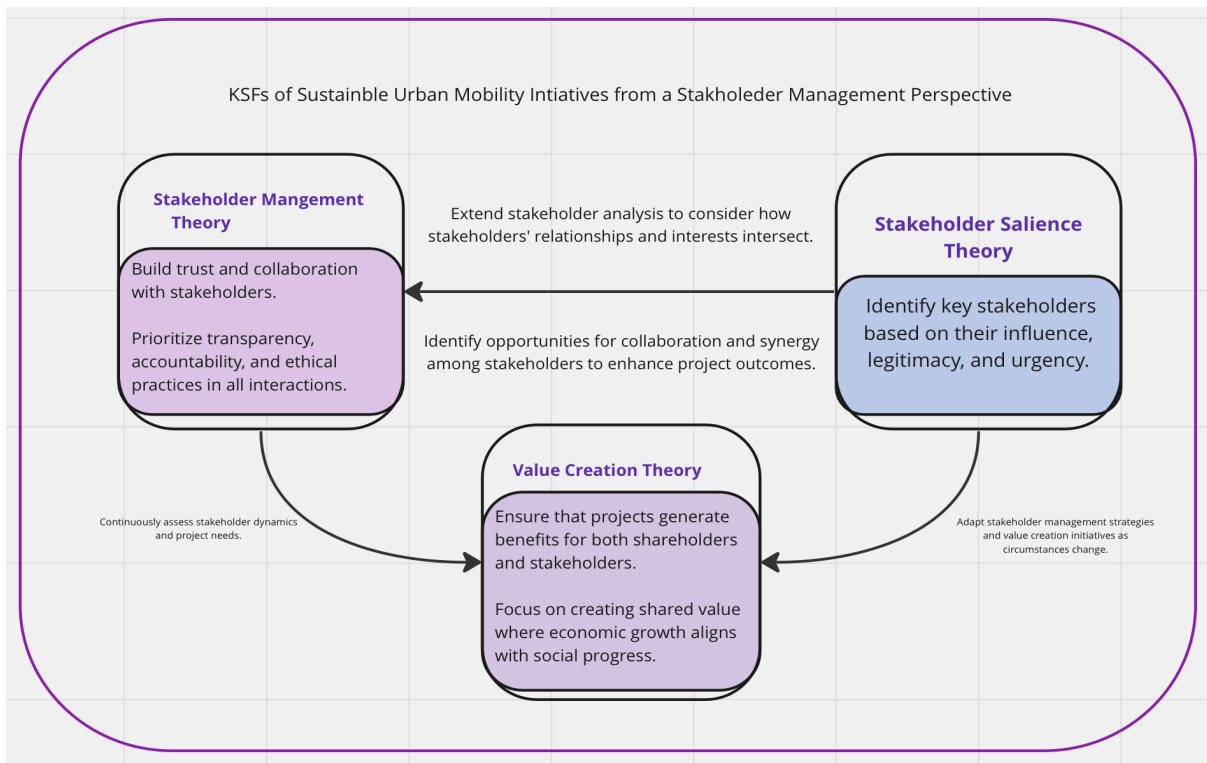


Figure 1: Stakeholder-Centric Framework for Sustainable Urban Mobility Initiative



## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Approach and Design

#### 3.1.1 Qualitative Study

To effectively address the research question of the study, a qualitative research design has been deliberately selected. The overarching intention is to explore and enrich our comprehension of the intricate dynamics and interrelated processes that underlie the successful implementation of sustainable urban mobility. This qualitative approach is deemed particularly suitable for our purposes (Robson, 2002). While quantitative research designs are typically employed to investigate variables or factors influencing specific outcomes (Creswell, 2014), they presuppose a predetermined understanding of these variables, which is not congruent with the objectives of our study. While it may be argued that such a design is viable given our ambition to comprehend the underlying variables of successful sustainable development, it ultimately does not conform to our approach. Our objective is to unearth these variables rather than operate from predetermined assumptions. Consequently, the chosen methodology diverges from the criteria of a quantitative research method (Creswell, 2014).

The study further takes on an integrative approach to understanding the key factors of successful sustainable urban mobility practices from the theoretical perspectives of stakeholder management, stakeholder power, and value creation (Freeman et al, 2018; Mitchell et al, 1997; Wasieleski & Weber, 2017). Separate theoretical areas are therefore integrated to discover new dimensions of interrelated processes and relations (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). However, as these studied factors and dimensions will not be quantitatively tested, this brings forward an aspect of limitation to the study and potential for further research. While the study will contribute knowledge of the underlying dynamics of the particular studied situation, it leaves room for further research to apply a quantitatively tested and more general approach. It is further exploratory, in need of both flexibility and adjustment to unforeseen variables and findings during the progression of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The support necessary for such conditions can be found in the qualitative study method (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

### 3.1.2 Abductive Approach

The deductive approach, as outlined by Bryman and Bell (2011), involves testing hypotheses derived from established theory. However, this method is not suitable as the study is not focused on testing specific hypotheses but rather on merging existing theories to gain a deeper understanding of a particular situation. Additionally, the deductive approach is criticized for its inflexibility in accommodating new factors, which is problematic for the investigation aiming to explore underlying factors that may not be accounted for in existing literature. Conversely, the inductive approach, also discussed by Bryman and Bell (2011) aims to develop theories based on observed data. Yet, the goal is not to create new theories but rather to enhance the understanding by integrating existing theoretical perspectives. Although the study is grounded in empirical data, it also draws on theoretical frameworks to offer fresh insights rather than proposing new theories. With neither the deductive or inductive methods aligning with the objectives of the study, the abductive approach emerges as a promising alternative. Defined by Alvesson and Sköldböck (2008) as a process of refining understanding by combining existing theories, it allows for a flexible interplay between theory and empirical findings, as emphasized by Bryman and Bell (2017). Given the emphasis of the study being on synthesizing existing knowledge with empirical data, adopting an abductive approach is fitting.

### 3.1.3 Single Case Study

In refining the methodological approach, there was careful deliberation between employing multiple case studies or a single case study. A case study delves deeply into particular situations, unraveling their complexities (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Opting for multiple case studies offers the advantage of accumulating a broader spectrum of empirical evidence (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), further bolstering the credibility of the conclusions through cross-case comparison (Eisenhardt, 1989). Conversely, a single case study adopts a more focused lens, dissecting a singular scenario to unveil its intricate components and overarching purpose (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This approach is further acknowledged for its ability to synthesize qualitative insights with established research paradigms (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007).

Using a single-case approach enables theories to be precisely calibrated to the many unique aspects of a specific situation. This can result in the creation of more intricate theories

compared to using a multiple-case approach. In contrast, a multiple-case study primarily focuses on correlations that are consistent across the majority of examples (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). As a result, it becomes challenging to establish new distinctions or retain them without the distinct context provided by a single case. Keeping this in consideration, a single case study approach has been implemented for the research.

According to Yin (2009) and Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007), a single case study is also useful when the scenario under examination is exceptionally exemplary, particularly revelatory, or provides an opportunity for unconventional research access. The Superblock project in Barcelona embodies a multifaceted context, characterized by intricate interactions among numerous dynamic variables. By undertaking an explorative single case study of this context, the aim is to attain a nuanced comprehension of key underlying factors contributing to successful sustainable urban development. Notably, Barcelona's status as a popular tourist destination, coupled with high levels of traffic and mobility, profoundly impacts a wide demographic when introducing new sustainable urban mobility initiatives like the Superblock project. Moreover, the project's implementation within the city center neighborhoods adds complexity, intertwining with Barcelona's rich cultural and political heritage. These additional dimensions enrich the already intricate web of factors and stakeholders shaping the project's dynamics.

### 3.2 Choice of Case Study: Barcelona's Superblock Initiative

This case study was selected amongst others because Barcelona serves as a prominent example of sustainable urban development in Europe. Barcelona's cultural and historical legacy has not only accepted sustainability but further shaped it, as evidenced by its 10th rank among Europe's top sustainable cities scoring 61.9% in the 2022 Clean Cities rating (Clean Cities, 2022). Furthermore, its C40 membership shows that the city is conscious of the climate change issue and contributes to the development of resilient neighborhoods (C40 Cities, 2023). As a part of these changes, Barcelona has launched some unique projects such as the Superblock, which is a wide-scale action to change mobility patterns through a multidimensional approach that integrates not only the transportation aspect but architecture and ecology as well (Cities Forum, 2021). The Superblock project therefore stands out for the fact that it managed to find a fair balance between the interests of all the stakeholders and to

resolve the problems concerned with urban development and sustainability. Having a location in the city center, the project has received both support and protest. Understanding the way Barcelona managed these stakeholder dynamics is therefore of high interest for the identification of crucial factors behind this project's success story.

Furthermore, Barcelona's historical background presents a distinctive context for researching sustainable urban mobility changes. The post-2008 recession recovery of the city highlights the changes in the patterns of migration and spatial reconfigurations that shape daily travel habits and bring about environmental challenges (Gil-Alonso et al, 2022). The comprehension of how Barcelona handled the demographic changes with the goals of sustainable mobility is the source of additional information about the ways that the economy, urban development, and environmental sustainability interact. Additionally, sustainable urban mobility policy in Barcelona is pushed both by European directives and local initiatives aimed at diminishing emissions, improving public life, and creating livable cities (Gil-Alonso et al, 2022). The city's implementation of measures such as Low Emission Zones and its response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates its commitment to green transport systems (Gil-Alonso et al, 2022). Through the study of how Barcelona has tackled some of these determinants, we can learn successful strategies for meeting sustainability objectives in urban transport.

Barcelona's status as a pioneer in smart mobility solutions further renders it an exemplary subject for a case study. The city has adopted different strategies including a bike-sharing program, electric car incentives, intelligent parking systems, and advanced traffic control devices (Wolniak, 2023). These steps showcase Barcelona's integrated strategy towards reducing traffic jams, improving air quality, and improving the environment. It is a particularly noteworthy advance in Barcelona's sustainable urban mobility scene. Moreover, the Superblock Project tackles the challenge of rerouting urban traffic in tight areas by introducing low GHG emissions, green spaces, and better public health (Lopez et al, 2020). Its particularity of showing how an existing urban setting can be restructured without having to consider excessive infrastructure investments is an aspect of interest that is used for studying the dynamics of stakeholders and socio-political factors that affect urban mobility transitions. Furthermore, the political landscape and the social dynamics involved in this Superblock Project show that sustainability-based mobility projects in the city of Barcelona are bound to scope and scale, depending on different and unpredictable factors. The

stakeholder involvement, participative implementation, and change of narrative, as mentioned, are all elements that signify the collaborative nature of the urban transformation project (Lopez et al, 2020).

Finally, the Superblock project of Barcelona also provides the necessary scope for other European cities as well as globally, to cope with urban mobility. This study is designed to reveal transferable strategic considerations and challenges to enhance sustainability initiatives in mobility across geo-cultures and regions. Other Mediterranean cities sharing similar attributes face challenges in attaining the level of sustainability performance achieved by Barcelona, thereby elevating this city as a symbol of urban innovation for planners and policymakers globally. Through this study, we hope to provide a deep insight into the factors that lead to the successful establishment of a sustainable urban environment. In turn, this can serve as an example for future initiatives in other European cities.

### 3.3 Data Collection Methods

The empirical material for this study comprises both collected empirical data as well as existing empirical literature. Data was collected through a series of Zoom interviews, as well as through questionnaires with individuals possessing key insights into or involvement with the sustainable urban mobility project. Five interviews were conducted, one of which was with representatives from the companies Fojab and Bouvier. These were pivotal for the study to efficiently ascertain and grasp the broader relevance of its findings. The firsthand insights gathered from interviewees well-versed in the nuances of the Superblock project were juxtaposed with the overarching knowledge of sustainable urban mobility held by Fojab and Bouvier — two urban planning firms specializing in architecture and mobility, respectively. This comparison allowed for a contextualized understanding of the primary empirical data concerning the Superblock project within the broader framework of sustainable urban mobility planning.

Further, these qualitative, semi-structured interviews provided flexibility while adhering to the relevant theoretical framework outlined in the literature review (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The selection of interviewees was based on recommendations and references from faculty members involved in the sustainable urban mobility initiative. Furthermore, in recognition of time constraints and to accommodate flexibility, two questionnaires were sent. One was

administered to a professor and researcher whose expertise lies in urban transformations, sustainable mobility, and related areas. The other questionnaire was directed to the management of the chief architect of Barcelona City Hall. Additionally, a recent paper discussing Superblocks was suggested and shared during one of the interviews. This was enriching for the study with insights into experimentation and learning within urban development. Furthermore, case studies and existing empirical material concerning sustainable urban mobility were used in the study. This material was found to be a particularly relevant complement to the newly gathered empirical data. It helped unveil where existing understanding of the studied subject lacked in understanding and what gaps were in need to be filled.

The Zoom interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour each, with both researchers present. Each interview was recorded using both the Zoom program and the researchers' mobile phones, with prior consent from the interviewees. The recordings were utilized for transcription, allowing for undivided attention during the interviews without the need for detailed note-taking. Nonetheless, general notes were taken to monitor the completeness of answers and identify areas requiring further elaboration. Furthermore, recording the interviews facilitated more accurate transcription of the gathered empirical data and enabled closer examination and re-evaluation of the material, thereby enhancing the depth and nuance of the analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2017). The recording of interviews ensured the preservation of valuable empirical data, preventing loss or oversight and promoting accurate data utilization for analysis. Before each interview, an interview guide was developed, delineating key subject areas deemed relevant for the study. Within each subject area, questions were formulated to guide the direction of the interview and provide a foundation for subsequent analysis. The interview guide underwent revision and customization for each interview, tailored to the specific objectives and expertise of the interviewee. Each interview commenced with a general introduction of the interviewee, followed by inquiries about their role and/ or involvement in the project to establish context. Subsequently, the discussion delved into stakeholder management, aligning with the theoretical framework outlined in the literature review. These discussions were contextualized within the unique setting of the Superblock project in Barcelona. Concluding the interview, participants were invited to share insights on lessons learned, offer recommendations, and provide concluding remarks. This open-ended approach encouraged

interviewees to contribute additional insights beyond the structured questions. The interview structure allowed for flexibility, enabling the exploration of emerging themes and insights.

In addition to interviews, questionnaires were utilized to gather insights from individuals preferring written responses or facing time constraints. Prior to distribution, a meticulously curated list of questions tailored to each recipient's expertise and perspectives was prepared. This ensured the relevance and specificity of the questions, optimizing the likelihood of comprehensive responses. Once finalized, the questionnaires were distributed to the selected individuals. Clear instructions were provided, emphasizing the importance of their insights to the study. Upon receipt, respondents were given sufficient time to craft thoughtful responses, and accessibility for any clarifications or additional information was ensured throughout the process.

<b>Role of the Interviewee</b>	<b>Involvement in the Superblocks Project</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>	<b>Interview Duration</b>
Sustainable Mobility and Urban Transformation Advisor/ Activist	Involved	05/04/2024	1 hour
Mobility Consultant	Possesses valuable knowledge about the project despite not being directly involved	05/04/2024	45 min
Director of Urban Strategy in the Urban Ecology Area/Architect	Involved	16/04/2024	1 hour
Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council	Involved	22/04/2024	45 min
Architect and partner at FOJAB	Not involved	08/05/2024	45 min
Senior Advisor within Mobility Planning at	Not involved		

Bouvier Advisory AB			
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Table 1: Respondents of conducted interviews

<b>Respondent Role</b>	<b>Involvement in the Superblocks Project</b>	<b>Date of Sending The Questionnaire</b>	<b>Date of Receiving the Responses</b>
Research Professor in Urban Planning	Possesses valuable knowledge about the project despite not being directly involved	15/04/2024	25/04/2024
Coordinator of International Relations Projects, Management of the Chief Architect	Involved	11/04/2024	12/04/2024

Table 2: Respondents of written questionnaires

### 3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis is important for the sensemaking of the collected data, thereby of great importance for the results and discussion (Creswell, 2014). However, it is important to differentiate between the important, useful data and the irrelevant data in order for the results and discussion to be meaningful (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In a qualitative study, there is no one suitable or preferable solution to the data analysis process, unlike in the quantitative approach (Bryman and Bell, 2011). There are therefore several possible approaches to the data analysis process available to choose from (Saunders et al, 2011).

For the study, an approach of mixed techniques was chosen, defined as the template approach (King, 2004). The approach entails the creation of a template with so-called “codes” prior to the start of the data analysis process. These “codes” are predefined themes into which valuable information from the collected data can be organized and categorized (King, 2004).



The predetermined themes were continuously revised and modified during the data analysis process (King, 2004). This is in order to coordinate meaningful data with relevant themes and thereby more efficiently represent the nature of the studied case and contribute with valuable understanding. The chosen template approach is suitable for supporting the analysis process as it creates an initial basis for analysis that is coherent with the chosen theories in the literature review (Saunders et al, 2011). The main factors of the final empirical framework are stakeholder management, stakeholder salience, stakeholder participation, challenges, and success factors, which together build the foundation of the understanding of the studied case. Each of the main themes further has 3 to 5 sub-categories that bring forward the possibility of a more detailed and nuanced understanding of each studied theme. Additional factors of stakeholders for and against the project have been added as sub-categories of stakeholder power during the data analysis process. The theme concerning success factors was modified during the process and “challenges” was added as a separate theme as a result. To create a refined representation, excessively detailed factors of little significance were disregarded. The included factors have been mentioned persistently throughout the interviews or had a significant presence in the process of gathering empirical data. Additionally, as the data collection process includes interviews and questionnaires with several different interviewees, the template approach could be of help also in producing meaningful comparisons between the different perspectives of the various interviewees (King, 2004).

A potential weakness of the template approach is the need to balance between broad definitions and complexity to ensure the findings are valuable and meaningful (King, 2004). An alternative method suitable for the data analysis process is the Grounded Theory approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Unlike the template approach, Grounded Theory does not rely on predefined frameworks or codes but instead derives codes from the data during the analysis process (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Considering the theoretical perspectives of the study was deemed important to contextualize the analyzed data effectively. The template approach was therefore chosen over Grounded Theory.

### 3.5 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the principles outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2017) and Bryman & Bell (2017) were followed. Internal validity, which assesses the impact of the studied variables rather than external factors, was emphasized through a transparent data collection and interpretation process. Detailed records of data collection and analytical methods were maintained, allowing others to easily verify or challenge the findings. Moreover, the research critical examination of potential sources of bias or confounding variables that could disrupt the final results (Creswell & Creswell 2017). The external validity of the findings was determined through a detailed process of communication covering the analysis process. This included intentions of involving community opinion leaders in dialogue, including policymakers, community members, and academics to receive diverse views and neutrality on the possible conflicts of interest. The purpose of this was to admit and deal with the differences in perceptions and biases, and to widen the generalisability of the findings to wider contexts (Bryman & Bell, 2017).

Reliability in this qualitative single-case study, which utilizes a literature review and interviews, should be a central focus of the researcher. That goal is achieved through methodological transparency, data collection consistency, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking. Methodological transparency is disclosing in full detail the research method such as literature chosen selection criteria, and interview protocol. Repeated application of data collecting methods, putting the flexibility of qualitative research at the forefront, is a way to preserve reliability. Triangulation, through the exhibition of convergence between data from multiple sources, increases credibility. Interpersonal debriefing provides an additional source of appraisal of the research procedures and concepts contributing to empirical research validity. Moreover, member checking involves letting people verify the interpretations by sharing the results which will in turn strengthen the reliability (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Bryman & Bell, 2017).

These techniques collectively lay a solid foundation of trust in the whole research venture and make it possible to bring authentic results. Taking a holistic approach to data collection and analysis, was in order to get a comprehensive picture of all the elements and factors involved in influencing the success of initiatives like the Superblock Project.

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

While executing the study, the ethical code that is highlighted by Bryman & Bell (2017) has been attended to. Confidentiality, integrity, non-harm, objectivity and respect are the main research principles. An open and transparent communication with participants about the study and their role entailed disclosure of all that was happening, thereby minimizing the deception and contributing towards consensual data exchange and use of information. By sharing the question and the materials beforehand, the participants could feel ready and respected, hence, avoiding the feelings of being ambushed. Moreover, priority was given to respecting the participant's desire to stay anonymous and maintaining data confidentiality in case this was demanded. Data and information was used only after mutual consent and in accordance with the purposes that were agreed upon. After written correspondence with the participants concerning consent of using included information about the participants, confidentiality and integrity could be ensured (Bryman & Bell, 2017). These criterias were further the basis for the research behavior and ensured that the research process was carried out with integrity.

## 4. Analysis of Empirical Findings – Perspectives on The Superblock Project

The analysis navigates through a set of themes derived from the established theoretical framework. Drawing from theories of stakeholder management, stakeholder resilience, and value creation, it explores how these themes or codes illuminate the underlying key success factors in sustainable urban mobility initiatives. Starting with the theme of stakeholder management that is influenced by the theory of stakeholder management and encompasses sub-themes such as identification of stakeholders and stakeholder engagement strategies. Through this lens, the intention is to understand how the complexities of stakeholder relationships can be navigated to drive successful project outcomes. Additionally, the theme of stakeholder power, derived from stakeholder salience theory, sheds light on influential stakeholders and their stance on projects. The theme of stakeholder participation underscores the importance of participatory decision-making processes, aligning it with the principles of value creation theory. Furthermore, the analysis also includes two themes derived from a practical point of view rather than a theoretical one. These themes emerged from the interviews where the individuals involved shared their experiences, highlighting challenges encountered and success factors that could help any future project to embark on a similar endeavor. The theme concerning challenges acknowledges the obstacles faced during project implementation, and its subcategories such as political resistance, communication shortcomings, and resource constraints. Conversely, the theme of success factors highlights strategies and approaches that drive project success, such as community engagement, strong leadership, and flexible implementation. These practical themes, informed by the theoretical framework, follow the initial three theoretical themes and serve as the results of the study. By analyzing the data through these lenses, the aim is to unravel the complexities of stakeholder dynamics and uncover the drivers of successful urban mobility initiatives.

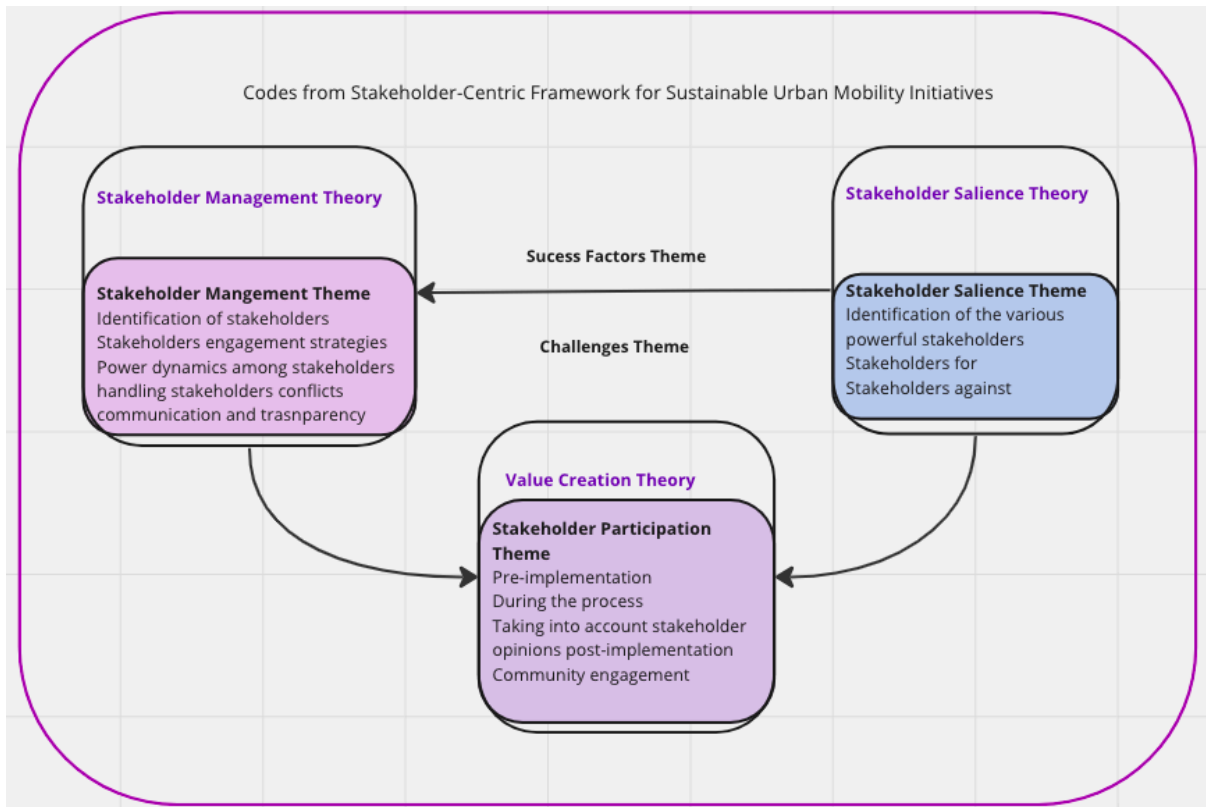


Figure 2: Codes from Stakeholder-Centric Framework for Sustainable Urban Mobility Initiatives

While this chapter is important in addressing the research question, it is focused on presenting and conveying the empirical findings, whereas the discussion chapter that follows will put this data into the perspective of the chosen theoretical frameworks and literature.

#### 4.1 Case description – About the Superblock Project

The concept of Superblocks in Barcelona entails reimagining urban spaces to prioritize pedestrians, cyclists, and public transportation while reducing the dominance of private motorized traffic. (Rueda, 2019) In the Eixample neighborhood, Superblocks cover approximately 400 m × 400 m areas, with variations in other parts of the city. These Superblocks feature pacified interior roads accessible primarily to active transport and residential traffic, with a maximum speed of 20 km/h. Surrounding the Superblocks is a basic road network designed for thorough traffic, with a maximum speed of 50 km/h, accommodating cars, and motorcycles, segregated cycling and pedestrian infrastructures, and segregated bus lanes. (Rueda, 2019) Bus stops are strategically placed every 400 m at main intersections, promoting frequent and accessible public transport. The implementation of Superblocks aims to significantly reduce private motorized traffic, leading to less congested

traffic flow on the basic road network. (Rueda, 2019; Barcelona City Council, 2014) Additionally, the Superblock model includes plans for liberating and reallocating public space, fostering the development of plazas, parks, green corridors, and general greening both within and outside the Superblocks (Rueda, 2019; Barcelona City Council, 2014).



Picture 1: Aerial view of Barcelona Superblocks, Spain.

(Photo Credit: Westend61 / Amazing Aerial)



Picture 2: Closer aerial view of a Superblock neighborhood in Barcelona, Spain.

(Photo Credit: Ajuntament de Barcelona)



Picture 3: Pacified street in Barcelona, Spain.

(Photo Credit: Filipe Frazao)

## 4.2 Stakeholder Management

### 4.2.1 Identification of Stakeholders

Derived from the conducted interviews the main stakeholders identified to be affected are the residents of the neighborhoods where the changes are implemented as well as the surrounding neighborhoods. Particularly mentioned are various groups of residents such as parents, the elderly, and the disabled. These are further mentioned to be represented by various associations. One such association mentioned in particular is AMPA. Additionally, other stakeholders also mentioned are shop owners and people involved and affected by the change of commerce on the streets where the project is implemented. Car owners are also important and described as a rather powerful group of stakeholders. They are even represented by the association: The Royal Automobile Club de Catalunya (RAC). This association is by the primary empirical material identified to have a high degree of power and can affect decisions. These stakeholders can be defined as holding importance from perspectives of social and economic nature. To illustrate those perspectives, the following quotes are presented.

*“One stakeholder group would be the people living in the streets that you're going to change and another type of stakeholder are the people that live in the surrounding streets” - Mobility Consultant*

*“It's all the different local shops that are in those streets. Let's say you have a commerce on that street and you're used to having your clients coming by car, they would park, buy things, and go back home. Now they cannot access it the same way” - Mobility Consultant*

*“For example, old people, people with various disabilities, people that are from the neighborhood associations, other shop owners associations that are very important, and the fathers and mothers of the schools, they are usually also in associations, we call it the AMPAs.” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

*“I think that the main problem is not the citizens themselves, but the economic powers that are pushing. We've got an association called RAC, The Royal Automobile Club de Catalunya, and they were complaining” - Sustainable Mobility and Urban Transformation Advisor*

Lastly, political involvement is also described to be highly present in the studied case, making politicians and the government another relevant stakeholder. Noting that politicians are kept separate from the other stakeholders, the reasons for this distinction will be analyzed and explained in a subsequent section.

#### 4.2.2 Stakeholder Engagement Strategies

The second observation concerns how to effectively engage the stakeholders identified to be involved. In the Superblock case, it becomes apparent that neighbors have organized themselves to support and protect the project, creating a community in the neighborhood with a focus on defending the Superblock. When participatory budgets were obtained the community of neighbors further started organizing toward building a case to present to the city council, asking for more projects. This could further be described as an organization for all stakeholders as a kind of lobbying. Further, a commission was in place, managing the communication and participation with the community of neighbors and citizens and with the municipality, thereby supervising and managing the stakeholder engagement process and their communication with the city council and government. Another aspect of the importance of notice is good organization working together cohesively and moving in the same direction. This organization of stakeholders is exemplified by the following quote.



*“We are organized in the mobility organizations, for pedestrians, for cyclists, for public transit, for safety, and handicapped people. We are organizing a kind of lobby. And now there is a new mobility plan going on in the city and the metropolitan area.” - Sustainable Mobility and Urban Transformation Advisor*

The organizing could be described as working with the neighbors to inform and create understanding. By doing so, there could be a mutual understanding and refined idea that increased the likelihood of the municipality having to accept the proposals. However, important to note is how the participation processes varied in the different neighborhoods of the project. Moreover, to satisfy the neighbors and all stakeholders involved, the various neighborhoods were also adapted differently to adhere to traffic and car usage. By doing so, a compromise could more efficiently be achieved. This meant ultimately moving away from the original 9-block plan. It further meant enabling the same or similar usage patterns for car owners and not disrupting bus lines, while improving the social and ecological environment, thereby keeping in line with the objective. These adaptations are described by the following quotes.

*“...in the pilot in Poblenou, it was important for the bus line to continue to flow on Roc Boronat, and this was what led to the modification of this Superblock from the archetype.” - Research Professor in Urban Planning*

*“In Sant Antoni, they no longer used the 9 block archetype and directed traffic in a way that no longer changed directions. Instead, it simply forced them to turn. Whereas in the Poblenou pilot, they changed directions.” - Research Professor in Urban Planning*

Lastly, another important aspect mentioned is the international recognition and its effects on stakeholder participation. Extensive research and larger masses interested in the project, with media attention, brought importance to the project. The affected stakeholders and neighbors had to take it more seriously, with the higher stakes and large attention, and participate in the discussion. This is explained by the following quote.

*“International attention and research has played an important role in elevating the debate, valuing the innovative work here, and encouraging local decision makers to continue to move forward. The stream of students and visitors to the Superblocks has amplified its presence on social media, in debates and forced residents to take the idea seriously as a new way of*

*organizing street space, and giving considerable legitimacy to what a few years ago was seen as a fringe or radical idea.” - Research Professor in Urban Planning*

#### 4.2.3 Power Dynamics Among Stakeholders

Moreover, to engage various stakeholders effectively, it is essential to be aware of the different power dynamics between them. Hence, The first power dynamic identified was that of the city council and the government, with both needing to agree for the project to continue. This includes the aspects of political parties and their interests. Another aspect included in this dynamic is the agreement between politicians and technicians concerning city planning and aspects of mobility, and architecture, as well as social and ecological aspects. While the citizens and their associations can be both for and against, these can be managed in the participatory processes. However, to be able to implement the project, the city council and government need to agree as well. The political perspective of power dynamics is illustrated by the following quotes.

*“One party of the City Council, not in the government but in the opposition, asked the government to begin with that project. Then the actual government, at that moment, agreed to do that.” - Director of Urban Strategy*

*“Projects in Barcelona are always projects agreed between politicians, technicians, and citizens.” - Barcelona City Hall*

Further, it is described how various powerful associations were present. These associations were of varying nature and could be coalitions of citizens, shop owners, and car owners. The most established and powerful played a role in affecting the politicians and their decisions, as this would represent a large part of the voting citizens. It is therefore a very interdependent and dynamic network of stakeholders all affecting each other. The dynamics between the stakeholders are not just on an individual stakeholder-to-stakeholder level, but rather integrated on various levels of groupings and associations that have the power to affect and push forward changes. The dynamics of the power of associations and their interdependent nature are further illustrated by the two quotes below.

*“For example, old people, people with various disabilities, shop owners associations and also the fathers and mothers of the school kids. We call it the AMPAs.” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

*“ They said they had a lot of ideas that were wrong about the project, so we explained a lot of the problems. After that, when they approve our initial project, we adapt to the changes that they bring,”*

#### 4.2.4 Handling Stakeholder Conflict

Understanding the power dynamics is usually the first step toward overcoming potential conflicts. Nevertheless, there is one conflict that you can not avoid when it comes to implementing new projects especially when it comes to urban mobility, that is resistance. The resistance to change is of a general nature from the public, ingrained in the culture and history. People need time to understand and accept the changes. The importance of managing various interests of stakeholders is therefore very important. Communication and having a dialogue with those against to understand their concerns and then explain how those issues can be resolved or are not issues is further an aspect that has been regarded with importance. Also taking into account the concerns to adapt the project and compromise with the interests of stakeholders. The need to adapt the projects is further described as important for the coherence with the various interests and concerns of the stakeholders without negatively affecting the process of achieving the objectives of the project. Such communication and dialogue includes discussion with the neighbors. Mentioned was the mobility pact and mobility agreement, where the municipality meets with stakeholders, and the neighbors are also represented in these meetings. This is illustrated below.

*“In Barcelona, we've got the mobility pact, the mobility agreement since 1998. And that's like a space where the municipality meets with the social stakeholders in the city, and also the neighbors are represented there.” - Sustainable Mobility and Urban Transformation Advisor*

Lastly, there is an evident need for time and empathy when successfully implementing such projects and handling conflicting stakeholder interests. As exemplified by the quote below, there is a need for well-organized meeting sessions where everyone can be heard and satisfied, to find a middle ground. Such meetings are further described to bring all opinions

together into a coherent and acceptable course of action. In line with such meetings, the importance of gathering a strong foundation of arguments is mentioned to be important, to meet various opinions and arguments efficiently, and to find a middle ground as stated in the following quote.

*“It's really about identifying all of them, creating a very strong and robust process in terms of how you engage with those stakeholders and being very well prepared with a lot of different arguments because they are environmental arguments, they're social arguments, they're economical arguments. There's just so many different arguments and you will have a different pitch for different stakeholders and different stakeholders have different needs.” - Mobility Consultant*

## 4.3 Stakeholder Salience

### 4.3.1 Identification of The Various Powerful Stakeholders

As mentioned, after analyzing the power dynamics, the primary powerful stakeholders identified from the interviews are the politicians on various levels. This includes the city council, the mayor, and its government party. The biggest concern is the interest of individual politicians and how they associate with projects such as the Superblock. Various parties are either for or against the project, taking sides in the matter, thereby making the project a political matter, affecting how efficiently it can be implemented as well as whether it can be continued. Further, various politicians are described as creating alliances with voting power to create a stronger movement, however, it seems to be hard to navigate and find common ground on the matter to ensure that the powers are directed in a direction that supports the project. This is further summarized by there being a positive outcome where there is consensus. The following quotes describe these power dynamics from their different perspectives, all agreeing on the same point.

*“It's a project that is from all the parties, but in the last period only one party got it. The next political party that was in the government after all this big success doesn't want to know anything about this[...]Their main agenda is other personal or political party things. ” - Sustainable Mobility and Urban Transformation Advisor*

*“It's dependent on the political power in the end. They are the ones that have the power.” - Mobility Consultant*

*“They tried to make alliances[...]But at the moment, it's going very badly, like they don't find common ground.”*

*“When there is political consensus, the outcomes are different.” - Research Professor in Urban Planning*

Furthermore, all stakeholders affected on the streets and in the neighborhoods could further also be identified as powerful stakeholders, particularly through their participation in various committees and associations. Such stakeholders include citizens of the neighborhoods, shop owners, and stakeholders involved with the commerce in affected areas as well as car owners. Powerful associations, both for and against that have been mentioned are for example AMPA and RAC. AMPA is an association representing citizens of various kinds, particularly relevant for concerned parents as well as the elderly and disabled. RAC is a well-established association representing car owners and motor mobility, pushing against the project as illustrated in the following quote.

*“...the stakeholders are really important. It's all the different local shops that are in those streets[...]So you have the commerce and then obviously you have the people living in those streets.” - Mobility Consultant*

#### 4.3.2 Stakeholders In Favor of The Superblock Project

Stakeholders, with their varying degrees of influence and positions for or against a project, play a critical role in determining its outcome. The interviews contributed to the insight into how the political party under Ada Colau was supporting the project, driving it forward, and pushing for it. Further, it is described how during the period of Ada Colau in a governmental position there was political commitment and demand to implement the Superblocks project further. This is explained in the following quote.

*“...the Superblock was an initiative from a political party that was in power for the last years, under Ada Colau, who was the mayor. They were obviously pushing for it a lot.” - Mobility Consultant*

Another powerful stakeholder that was pushing for the project was the association AMPA. The work and contribution to the Superblock project were mainly driven by parents

concerned with the safety of their children related to mobility in the city. The following quote explains their perspectives clearly.

*“Mothers of children around the associations of AMPAs, they also had an opinion that they want the superblocs because they want safe cities and safe streets for the children.” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

Further, powerful stakeholders working along with and for the project also include some shop owners. These helped along with the project, preparing their shops to fit the new streets, rearranging parking spaces, and coming up with new solutions. With their cooperating and collaborative solutions they not only helped the Superblock project to proceed efficiently but also ensured that their commerce did not get significantly negatively affected as it is mentioned in the following quote.

*“There are also a lot of shop owners with big shops that help us a lot to do the project. Even some of them work in his shops to prepare the shop for the new street and they pay themselves.” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

#### 4.3.3 Stakeholders Against The Superblock Project

Powerful stakeholders working against the project could be identified as primarily the new mayor and its political party. The change in government meant a change in focus, with the new government not being for the project. The political aspect of the stakeholders includes not only the dynamics between individual politicians but also between the different political levels, including the town council, the mayor, and the governing party. The politicization of the project further brought forward attention from the media which also included large amounts of criticism towards the project as it is presented in the following quotes.

*“ Now we've got a new mayor that is obviously going backwards, or at least he's not trying to push that forward. The political power in place is the most important one.” - Mobility Consultant*

*“It was very, very political. There was a lot of discussion, also between the politicians of the city, also at a higher level, in the town council, in the meetings of the mayor. It was a project*

*that got a lot of criticism in the media.” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

Further, there were significant amounts of people going against the project, even going to court. Additionally, important powerful stakeholders that were mentioned earlier, were the car lobbyists, mainly through the association RAC, for motor mobility and car owners. RAC is mentioned to also have a strong media presence and a well-established position in society. Many people in the country and the city of Barcelona therefore listen to and rely on the opinion of RAC, thereby creating a strong movement against the project when not in the interests of the association. This perspective is illustrated in the following quote.

*“We have an association that is very important about the motor mobility in Barcelona, it's called RAC. It's one of the most important and what they say usually people usually say okay to them, but has a view that it's to defend the cars...” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

In essence, the social powers were a strong stakeholder against the project and the following quotes are a clear demonstration of that.

*“...there are the lobbies against it[...]the people against it, they went to the court.” - Sustainable Mobility and Urban Transformation Advisor*

*“There was a lot of power, people or communities that were pushing hard to not do the Superblocks.” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

Economic powers against the project are also described by the interviewees to have been present. Particularly exemplified by the Spanish car manufacturer SEAT. With its economic contribution to the country's economy, they are described to have had a strong influence on governmental decisions, thereby further strongly affecting the political decisions regarding the Superblock project. The following quote explains that.

*“Apart from society, we still have the economic powers. For instance, in Barcelona, we've got the Casa SEAT.” - Sustainable Mobility and Urban Transformation Advisor*

Lastly, while it is described how some shop owners collaborated and helped the project move along, there were however large associations of shop owners on famous streets such as Diagonal and Paseo de Gracia that were strongly against the project and worked rather aggressively to stop it as it is highlighted in this quote.

*“The big associations of shop owners from the big cities of Barcelona, Diagonal, Paseo de Gracia. They were very against the project[...]Usually the shop owners are very aggressive and they have a stronger opinion, usually against the project.” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

## 4.4 Stakeholder Participation

### 4.4.1 Pre-Implementation

It is further described in the interviews how an issue was a lot of questions and concerns in need of answer and processing. The participation processes that were implemented were described to have the objective of answering all the questions and concerns and creating an understanding of the project for all stakeholders. These processes are further described to have started as a gathering of small groups from various associations. These groups included neighbors who had knowledge about the public spaces. With their insight obtained, an assessment of positive and negative factors concerning what was working and not working could be made. Those groups representing stakeholders were further introduced to the Superblock project, where they were explained and informed about the benefits of a Superblock implementation. This was in order to work through the various negative preconceived opinions and views of the project and create a mutual and well-informed understanding. An action plan is also described to have been present in the pre-implementation phase of the Superblock project. This action plan was collaboratively created with the neighbors for the neighbors, further ensuring mutual understanding and agreement. This type of action plan included research, studies, and information on the areas and streets of the Superblock project, describing the differences between before and after implementation of the Superblock solutions. The purpose of the pre-implementation participation process is further illustrated in the following quotes.



*“There were a lot of questions that they needed to have an answer to, and the participation process tried to give it.” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

*“We have two or three people from each of these associations together, and we do a first diagnosis about what's working well in the neighborhood, and what's not working well with the objectives of Superblocks, and we introduce them to the subject[...]We explain well what it means to do a Superblock, because a lot of times it's that they really don't know. They think if we do a Superblock we cannot enter with a car, and that's not true.”*

*“We do an action plan for the neighborhood. Working on the document of the action plan with the neighbors. At the end we have the action plan where we have an agreement with the neighbors.”*

#### 4.4.2 During The Process

During the implementation process, the participation process is described to have continued through meetings with commissions of neighbors and the municipality every two to three months. Other stakeholders, represented by both general and more particular associations, also had such meetings. These associations could include sectors such as children, women, the elderly, people with special needs, or retailers.

The meetings were implemented with the intention of showing what was to be done, what were the intended benefits of the Superblock project and how that could positively affect the neighbors. This included showing the ideas and strategies underlying the projects through arranged meeting spaces, to have discussions concerning these projects. These meetings are further described to have been different in nature, where some were more similar to discussions while others were more one-way claims of positive and negative aspects of what worked well and what did not work so well.

This process was collaborative and prepared together with the various stakeholders, including the neighbors, various representative groups or entities as well as associations. The stakeholders involved in the participatory processes had insight into what was working and where there was a demand for change and were therefore holders of valuable information on improvements and where the change should be focused. In essence, the process of participation was concerned with creating feedback loops during the process to ensure

continuous improvements in a collaborative and unified manner. This perspective is explained in the following quote.

*“They know what is working, what is not working, what they want to change, and they can give us information to do a better change to make the streets without cars, pacified. The idea of participation is going with the project, showing them and getting some change, and sometimes it's also before we do the project and get information about the area to do a better project and do it together with the streets.” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

#### 4.4.3 Taking Into Account Stakeholder Opinions Post-Implementation

The participatory process is further described to have had a central and inside position in the process of implementation of the Superblock. Further, it is described how the participatory process was divided into various steps that were attended to one at a time. Unless a mutual understanding and agreement could be achieved at a particular participatory step, the process would not proceed forward to the next step. As illustrated in the following quote.

*“...so to make the process of the Superblock work, we did the different participation steps, and until we had an agreement with the neighbors, we didn't do the next step of the process.” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

Further described is how going to court is a last resort option implying that these people have not been heard enough and their opinion has not been taken into account enough. In line with this, the importance of approaching the implementation process in a collaborative manner is further stated. Such co-creation is mentioned to require a great extent of time and investments. While a fast-paced implementation does have its benefits, it can have implications on the collaborative nature of the process, further affecting the extent to which the stakeholders are for or against the project. This perspective is further explained in the following quote.

*“And that's where you need to do enough co-creation and enough workshops and talking, and that's work, that's work, that's money, that's investments. When you want to go fast, you*

*don't find enough time to give enough moment to those people that are against it.” - Mobility Consultant*

#### 4.4.4 Community Engagement

While all the more budget is allocated to engagement and participatory processes, it is also the first to be cut during limited budgets. With limited budgets and budget cuts, community engagement would suffer the most, with underspending on citizen engagement. This could well be the reason for the resistance and court hearings that were present in the case of the Superblock project. The community is however described to have been thoroughly engaged in the participatory processes that were implemented. This was done through the step-by-step sequence of participation, which included pre-implementation meetings explaining the necessity of the project, approval prior to implementation, as well as post-implementation meetings where opinions and reflections could be voiced. All this was with the intention of creating a mutual understanding of the process. Having the necessary resources is needed to ensure community engagement is illustrated in the following quote.

*“Municipalities put more and more budgets and money on the engagement, but those are also the first budget that you would cut if you have limited budgets. So I think there's always an underspending on citizen engagement, community engagements, that's always the part of the budget that will suffer the most.” - Mobility Consultant*

*“It's like a process to make them understand about the process. And we also started to speak about the strategy, what is Superblocks, and we finally spoke about the project, how it's going to be in each suite[...]We go through the tiny little things, the little parts of each area.” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

Engagement was further ensured with the subjects being put out on the meeting agenda with freedom of discussion not only between the community municipality and town council but also among the citizens. Opinions and perspectives could thereby be shared and reflected upon, where various stakeholders could learn and develop their mutual understanding through dialogue. The discussion and communication further helped create a unified understanding of how the project could be suitable for all. It was through such understanding easier for everyone to find a middle ground to move forward with the project. In essence, participation

was of great importance for the project to efficiently move forward. This perspective is explained in the following quote.

*“When you put the subject in the middle and you get the opinions and they can see each other with the different opinions, it's also easier to find a way to, a middle way to do it, to move forward the project.” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

## 4.5 Challenges

After processing the three fundamental themes derived from the theoretical framework, it was then possible to look into the challenges faced in this project from a practical perspective. Interviews revealed several recurring themes regarding the challenges faced in the Superblock project. These themes highlight the complexities encountered and provide insights into the difficulties of implementing sustainable urban mobility initiatives. The following sections present the subcategories of these challenges.

### 4.5.1 Political Resistance and Partisanship

First and most importantly, political resistance and partisan associations posed challenges to project continuity. Resistance from politicians and political parties hindered the project's progress. Moreover, changes in political leadership or priorities can jeopardize ongoing projects. This challenge is illustrated in the following quotes coming from different perspectives, all agreeing on the same point.

*“You will eventually lose power in the next elections and construction takes a lot of time[...]it's not two years. It's not three years. It's much more than that. So if you don't build it, imagine if they would have taken more time and then they don't win the election and the new mayor comes into place. He would have killed it. He would have said stop right away.” - Mobility Consultant*

*“This issue simply became one on which to attack Mayor Ada Colau and her team. To some extent, some of the issues also around Catalan independence were mixed in” - Research Professor in urban planning*

#### 4.5.2 Balancing Political Will and Project Ownership

In the same context, it was mentioned how challenging it can be to maintain project neutrality amid political transitions. In a way, to push a project forward you need a strong political will since as we already established it's the most influential stakeholder but at the same time there has to be an acknowledgement of the difficulty in striking a balance between political will and project ownership. If not, the problem of partisanship resurfaces.

Therefore, while political support is essential for project initiation, maintaining a city-centric approach and fostering community ownership is equally crucial for long-term success as highlighted in the following quote.

*“If you are appropriating that project to you, if you say it's my project, you are not helping. But it's so difficult, because you also need the political will, so it's difficult to have that balance, to make the push, but after that, it's not my project, it's for the city, this is not easy for the politicians.” - Director of Urban Strategy*

#### 4.5.3 Navigating Public Perception

Navigating public perception can be very challenging. Misconceptions and public resistance can arise at any stage. In the initial phases, fear and skepticism about the project are explained by a lack of comprehensive information and understanding of its objectives and benefits. A more comprehensive understanding of this challenge is explained in the following quote.

*“This is called a status quo bias and there's extensive research in this. So if you have something different going on, something really big coming up. We are afraid, that's natural. We don't want that, we want the same every day. But if we do it in smaller steps where people don't feel it's a big change, we can accept it. This is human psychology, we can accept almost everything.” - Senior Advisor within Mobility Planning*

Then, during the implementation, due to associating the Superblock project with specific political figures or parties, political alliances, and media narratives influence public perception and hinder the project implementation. This perspective is illustrated in the following quote.

*“I think right now the resistance had to do more with the association of the project to one specific party. And I think that's really sad for the city. Probably that was about the strategy from the previous government. The Superblocks project is not from one government.” - Sustainable Mobility and Urban Transformation Advisor*

Finally, even in the final stage of the project, you can still encounter some kind of resistance or opposition if there are communication shortcomings or technical issues that upset stakeholders, such as the absence of clear guidelines and communication tools that hinder the effective utilization of space within the Superblock. The example of a lack of communication about the priority pyramid is further explained in the following quote.

*“ This sort of pyramid of who is the priority and how can I use this space, in my opinion, is not very well communicated and in some cases not very well respected.” - Mobility Consultant*

#### 4.5.4 Balancing Speed and Realism

The next challenge, according to the interviews, is how it can be quite difficult to balance speed and realism. The project must embody both ambition and feasibility. However, it was further emphasized that rapid transformations may face resistance due to a lot of reasons that we already established or they may result in unintended consequences. That is why projects necessitate a pragmatic approach to adapting to changes in the implementation phase. This challenge is illustrated in the following quote.

*“Incrementally, it's important. Also because of acceptance, public acceptance, political acceptance, there are really rare cases in Europe, where you can implement things seemingly overnight or a few months. But even those projects where it seems like, oh, they did all this. They started planning this and they implemented it in six months. There's usually a timeline going back many, many years. People who have had these ideas, try to grow them, try to formalize them and it also comes down to a bit of luck.” - Senior Advisor within Mobility Planning*

However, it can also be beneficial if the project is implemented at a fast pace. Of recurring mention in the interviews was how rapid construction and visible changes played a significant role in garnering public support and ensuring project permanence. According to

the experiences of the interviewees, once implemented, the changes became irreversible, reinforcing public acceptance and project continuity.

#### 4.5.5 Resource Constraints and Bureaucratic Hurdles

Moreover, projects like the Superblocks or any other urban pacification initiatives require the need for careful planning. Despite the long-term vision for transforming urban mobility, immediate results are not always feasible. Therefore, it can be challenging when they face resource limitations and timeline constraints. Additionally, with the short tenure of local governments and lengthy bureaucratic procedures, it becomes almost an impossible mission. This challenge is further explained in the following quote.

*“I think the bad thing is that the eight years for a government in Spain, for a local government, are not enough to implement policies that really transform the city. You need this participatory process and you need the project time itself and also the public procedures to contract and they are really, really long and then it's very difficult and then the time to execute in four years is not enough. You need at least six or eight years to show that there can be some changes.” - Sustainable Mobility and Urban Transformation Advisor*

## 4.6 Success Factors

Given what has been gathered about the Superblocks project from the interviews and after going through the challenges encountered, several recurring themes among the key success factors (KSFs) became clear, providing valuable insights into the success of sustainable urban mobility initiatives such as the Superblock project in Barcelona.

### 4.6.1 Community Engagement and Common Goals

The creation of a shared goal within the community stands out as the first theme that has a significant impact on the project outcome. This was according to both individuals who were directly involved in the Superblock project and individuals who had other experiences with Sustainable urban mobility. The project's success hinges on the community's organized effort to defend and protect the Superblock model or any new concept in general. Every new concept will be faced with resistance but this cohesion enables them to withstand opposition and ensure project continuity. This perspective is illustrated in several quotes as follows

highlighting how important this factor is for the project's outcome.

*“In the end, I think that the most important thing is to create a community that has a common goal. And then people just organize themselves to defend it or to fight for it. What was special about the Superblock in Poblenou, was that the common goal was to defend the Superblock. In general, people go together against something, but not to protect something or to defend something[...]. I was told many times that if we wouldn't have been organized as neighbors to defend the Superblock, probably the Superblocks project could have disappeared.” - Sustainable Mobility and Urban Transformation Advisor*

*“If we're talking about key success factors, I think it's about coming back to finding common ground and common ambition. It's about striving towards the same goal and making sure that everyone that is involved is on the same path or wants the same, sees the same ambition. And that is why the architect is often the generalist in a group of people when we're doing things.” - Architect and partner at FOJAB*

*“For the Superblock-like project to be a success in another city, there must be strong leadership and vision. If the urban form is conducive to a superblock, that helps considerably. Obviously neighborhood buy-in is a success factor” - Research Professor in Urban Planning*

To get everyone on the same boat, it's essential to address the fear and resistance among citizens towards significant urban changes, especially when it comes to removing cars from certain areas. Overcoming this resistance requires demonstrating the benefits of the project through tangible examples and gradually pacifying streets to alleviate concerns as the following quotes explain.

*“If you want to bring a change to something, it's often about removing parking, reducing parking spaces. The local traders, they are key. If you ask them what they think, the percentage of their revenue, their turnover, which comes from customers coming in by car[...]. Collecting that data, showing them that car customers are important, but they're not their only customers. Assessing that, giving them numbers, is really important as well. Because you always have their fear of losing out there. That's what you have to confront.” - Senior Advisor within Mobility Planning*

*“So it's not about giving information. It's about people being afraid. And you need to explain*



*it better. And say don't worry. Don't be afraid. This change is going to be okay. It's different.”*  
*- Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

Therefore, it became evident how important it is to engage local communities in the decision-making process. Highlighting the significance of informing residents about changes and actively involving them in the project, stressing the need for effective participation processes as this quote illustrates.

*“I think that the success stories are when we manage to work very tightly together and take that holistic view and solve things as an interdisciplinary team. And the failures are often when we work in silence and each one solves their bit. And we just get this sort of sub-optimized system that works really well if you look at individual bits, but the whole is not that great[...]It's very much about finding those ways of working together and really using the knowledge that different individuals and different teams have and expertises.”* - *Architect and partner at FOJAB*

Moreover, engaging communities and having common goals is consistent with Banister (2000) that suggests that sustainable mobility is a complex goal to meet and that just focusing on the technologies alone will not solve this issue. In fact, this perspective emphasizes the importance of stakeholder engagement, spatial considerations, and public support in achieving sustainable mobility goals (Banister, 2000). A holistic approach which includes stakeholder engagement, spatial considerations, travel reduction options, and public support is therefore suggested to be more beneficial (Banister, 2000). Through the involvement of different stakeholders such as government agencies and private sector entities for advocacy groups and communities, the initiatives for sustainable mobility can expand from obtaining more viewpoints to incorporating collaborative efforts. The core concept of reducing the reliance of economic growth on transport intensity is highlighted, necessitating measures such as ecological tax reform and tradable mobility credits to promote greener transport options (Banister, 2000). Crafted policies and interventions will ensure that the specific issues and possibilities of the countryside areas, peripheral regions, and urban areas are captured. Securing stakeholder support is critical for the successful implementation of sustainable transport initiatives, underscoring the importance of fostering collaborative relationships and public acceptance (Banister, 2000).

#### 4.6.2 Political Will and Courage

Furthermore, It was echoed that success depends heavily on political leadership that must be willing to challenge the status quo. Especially if the project includes reallocating space from cars. As politicians are the decision makers, which puts the fate of any SUM initiatives literally between their hands. The critical role of these powerful stakeholders is further explained in the following quotes.

*“I think the hardest part for the politicians is that they have to be really brave. Especially in terms of taking a space from cars, because it's always the same problem everywhere.” - Sustainable Mobility and Urban Transformation Advisor*

*“I think that the first one is to have political will, supported by society or not. If you have a belief in that change, it's needed[...]Political will is the first one. After that, involve all the stakeholders, the ones supporting, but also the ones against it.” - Director of Urban Strategy*

*“It's a fight of arguments. Now it's a political fight. It's not anymore urbanism. Now it's all about policy because those things can only be implemented by politicians.” - Mobility Consultant*

However, as mentioned before it can be challenging to position projects as city initiatives rather than party-specific endeavors. Nevertheless, projects must transcend political affiliations and be viewed as beneficial for the entire community, thereby fostering greater ownership and support among residents. The optimal way is to have a strong leadership figure and clear vision that will foster a sense of commitment to driving transformative urban planning initiatives in the whole community. In fact, politicians should work to gain support from both proponents and opponents of the project, and doing that requires demonstrating flexibility and adaptability in addressing the different concerns of the stakeholders. This need for an inclusive approach is illustrated in the following quotes.

*“Eventually, people need to find that common ambition again. I think all stakeholders are probably important. I wouldn't say one or the other. I say it's a team.” - Architect and partner at FOJAB*

*“The political preconditions are different in every country. Sometimes in Sweden you only depend on the municipality leaders and in other cities you have to go ahead from the region or another level. So if these levels are aligned and the scope of your idea is also aligned to*

*their ideas, to their scopes, then it can go really quick.” - Senior Advisor within Mobility Planning*

Worth mentioning is also the contribution of Gallo and Marinelli (2020) which could further enhance this perspective concerning the role of political will in driving sustainable urban mobility initiatives (Gallo & Marinelli, 2020). Emphasized here is the need for governments to integrate sustainable mobility into their global agendas, highlighting the importance of regulations, incentives, and investments in facilities to promote environmentally friendly transport options such as public transit, cycling, and walking (Gallo & Marinelli, 2020). Additionally, the promotion of shared mobility services, including ride-sharing and car-sharing, is advocated to reduce emissions and enhance mobility equity (Gallo & Marinelli, 2020). This point will be further analyzed in a subsequent success factor concerning the technical aspect of supporting sustainable urban mobility initiatives.

#### 4.6.3 Flexibility and Adaptability

Another key factor is flexibility. In the case of the Superblocks, the project was able to adapt to local needs and combine tactical and structural interventions allowing for efficient resource utilization and implementation. It was also highlighted, from the interviews, the importance of allowing sufficient time for stakeholders to adapt to new urban designs and usage patterns, and to collect their feedback in case they had any sort of concern. The following quote illustrates how the project was flexible and adapted all the time to the changes proposed by different stakeholders such as residents, and shop owners.

*“They said they had a lot of ideas that were wrong about the project, so we explained a lot of the problems. And after that, when they approve our initial project, we adapt to the changes that they bring.” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

Further, to guarantee being flexible, one must acknowledge that mistakes are made and it is bound to happen at any stage. What’s more important is to use these mistakes as learning opportunities allowing for continuous improvement and refinement. This perspective is explained in the following quote.

*“At the beginning, I think that we made some mistakes with the communication. It was not well done. Also on a technical aspect we have made mistakes. But we were also learning. And*

*it was an opportunity for us, also for our technicians to test some things. Some were wrong , but some were right. We have spent a lot of time discussing how to do it. And Poblano was a place where we could do it.” - Director of Urban Strategy*

Equally important, are the iterative implementation and experimentation in refining the Superblock concepts. The pilot projects serve as the best example of how efficiently they can adapt designs based on feedback and data received after experimentation. Starting with small-scale experiments allowed thorough research and positive outcomes, which provided a strong foundation for subsequent larger-scale implementations. The following quote illustrates how important this is.

*“I think that's also a key success factor, that you prototype something and you test it out and you implement in small steps and you test things and then you let them grow because then you learn and you can change. But if you take on doing it all in one big step, you can't change or learn or build upon the successes.” - Architect and partner at FOJAB*

#### 4.6.4 Participatory Processes

It was further identified that the success of the Superblocks project is enhanced by early participatory processes that allowed community involvement in the decision-making. The purpose of this process is further explained in the following quotes.

*“There were a lot of questions that they needed to have an answer, and the participation process tries to give it.” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

*“We tried to do the project with the participation[...]To make the process of the Superblock work, we did the different participation steps, and until we had an agreement with the neighbors, we didn't do the next step of the process. ”*

However, it was also mentioned that there is always room for suggestions for improvements, such as streamlining participatory procedures, expediting decision-making, and including architects in the participatory phase. According to the interviews, architects may have an added value when it comes to explaining their ideas to the stakeholders that will be impacted by this project. This perspective is illustrated in the following quote.

*“I think it is key to involve architects because as architects you are much more pedagogic*

*than I as a traffic planner. You are much better at visualizing things. That's something you need to describe. So people can see what we add, what they gain from something. If that picture is compelling, that's something we really should do. It's a way we should work more but we don't."* - Senior Advisor within Mobility Planning

Moreover, the interviews shed light on the importance of collecting comprehensive data and coordinating efforts across different stakeholders. Conducting thorough studies before and after the implementation of the project. These studies evaluate various metrics, including sales in commercial areas, parking availability, and traffic flow, to inform decision-making and dispel misconceptions about the project's impact. By doing so, the participatory process will generate more fruitful results, it will offer an opportunity for the stakeholders that were against the project to understand the objective of it and the added value behind it. This perspective is further explained in the following quotes.

*"We show a lot of studies that explain and demonstrate that when you pacify a street you will sell more stuff than when the street is for the cars. The more people walk on the street in a slower way, the more that you will sell."* - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council

*"If you're going to push something, you have to do it in steps. You have to bring out the data. Showing them we can do this, we can really do this. That's something which I could then criticize, maybe, if you are not that much data-driven within your projects, you should really be. Build scenarios and say these are the people using this in the future. How can you get reference examples? How can we prove that this will work? Build these cases."* - Senior Advisor within Mobility Planning

Therefore, the participatory process serves as a guarantee that all the stakeholders involved directly or not are considered and their interests are balanced which leads us back to emphasizing the importance of community engagement and information dissemination throughout the project's lifecycle. Knowing that conducting participatory processes, providing accurate information, and addressing citizens' concerns are essential for fostering public support.

#### 4.6.5 Technical Integration and Strategic Planning

It was further emphasized that there are other key factors in the technical aspect that increase the project's chance of success. One of which, the SUM initiatives must be integrated

seamlessly with existing public transport and shared mobility systems. The integration ensures accessibility and convenience, encouraging alternative modes of transportation. The following quote explains how one of the reasons for the success of Superblocks is their public transport and shared mobility systems.

*“I think we have a very good public transport and shared mobility systems in Barcelona. It obviously helps because when you create less space for cars, you need to make sure that you have other ways of moving.” - Mobility Consultant*

Therefore, a solid transportation infrastructure is a must. For initiatives similar to the Superblocks project, according to the interviews, the transportation system, including cycling networks, is identified as a critical success factor. The Superblocks for example required alternative modes of transportation to compensate for reduced car access, emphasizing the importance of investing in sustainable mobility options.

Another important point mentioned is the importance of strategically selecting areas for Superblock implementation based on traffic patterns, existing infrastructure, and community needs. Usually, choosing areas with high car traffic but lower pedestrian density facilitates the initial stages of the project and allows for gradual expansion into other neighborhoods. This is illustrated in the following quote.

*“There are keys to the Superblocks and to choose the area. If we look at Barcelona, the mobility of Barcelona from left and right, it's a lot of mobility but from up to down it's not so much because we have the sea and we have the mountains so it's more difficult to move...There are some streets that are big streets and there it's more difficult to do the Superblocks. But others are small streets from 5 or 7 meters and it's easier to do the Superblocks.” - Participation Process Manager in the Barcelona Town Council*

Finally, according to these interviewees, all these success factors and lessons learned from the Superblocks project in Barcelona have served as inspiration for other cities, and it demonstrates the potential for adaptation and replication. Its scale, success, and even mistakes provide a blueprint for similar initiatives which therefore accelerate the adoption of sustainable urban mobility practices internationally as the following quote highlights.

*“What they are looking for is to transform the city's urban model into one where citizens and sustainability are priorities. The Superblocks are Barcelona's answer to the questions of a nearby city. This is what they call a 15-minute city in Paris.” - Barcelona City Hall*

However, while projects like the Superblocks serve as inspiration, each city must adapt them to suit its local contexts and priorities. Simply replicating projects may not be effective without considering local conditions and challenges. Factors such as street layout, density, and existing infrastructure play a crucial role in determining the feasibility and effectiveness of Superblocks. This perspective is illustrated in the following quotes.

*“Barcelona has been serving as an inspiration for others. Each city must find their own way, and use the tools and policies that fit them.” - Research Professor in Urban Planning*

*“You should get as many arguments and inspirations and learnings you can get from it, but then you need to build your own projects and do your own battle in your city. So that would be a big mistake to just take the same approach.” - Mobility Consultant*

*“ I think having projects like Barcelona and other ones, you can accelerate a bit more. You don't have to reinvent the whole wheel. You can use a lot of those arguments and that's a battle of arguments in the end.”*

It is also worth mentioning that advocacy at the policy level and collaboration between cities facilitates knowledge exchange and supports the implementation of similar projects elsewhere. Therefore, organizations and networks play a crucial role in providing resources and expertise to support cities in their endeavors as it is explained in the following quote.

*“That's why at European level, you have a lot of networks that help cities to find the right arguments, do the right research, to be able to do that. I think there's a common agreement between all those organizations, cities in Europe, that's where we need to go.” - Mobility Consultant*

## 5. Discussion

In this chapter, insights from the empirical findings were drawn. By contextualizing sustainable urban mobility within the broader framework of Stakeholder Management, Stakeholder Resilience, and Value Creation, the aim is to uncover the complex relationships and factors influencing the success of such initiatives. Moreover, as previously mentioned, the Superblock project in Barcelona exemplifies a holistic approach that integrates transportation with architecture and ecology. It brings together urban traffic management, green spaces, and public welfare considerations, which makes it a valuable case study for the research.

### 5.1 Stakeholder Management

The first key insight that can be drawn from the findings is the importance of identifying the various stakeholders in projects such as the Superblock. This is well in line with the perspective of stakeholder management theory defining the stakeholders as a driving force of projects rather than passive observers (Freeman et al, 2007a; Freeman et al, 2018). With stakeholders identified as taking an active role rather than passive, managing their activity and intentions efficiently will be of significance for the direction and outcome of the project. Not acknowledging important stakeholders could equivalently have negative implications, with unforeseen resistance.

Furthermore, it is also understood to be of importance to regard both the stakeholders for and against the project. This aligns with the philosophy of managing for stakeholders that stresses the need to attend to stakeholders needs and concerns (Freeman et al, 2018). Another key point of the management for stakeholders perspective that is of relevance is the prioritization of stakeholder engagement to achieve mutual benefit (Freeman et al, 2018). Attending to stakeholders against the project and actively working with them can result in compromise, mutual understanding, and even a cohesive action plan going forward. Additionally, identifying these stakeholders, taking them into consideration, and trying to understand them can be beneficial for the project. This could for example give new insights into how the project can improve in various areas, including both the actual implementation as well as the communication. Not ignoring the stakeholders that are for the project or taking them for granted can further be very beneficial for the project. These stakeholders supporting the project can be leveraged against the resistance and also be of great help in communication



when resolving conflicting ideas and finding common ground. If these stakeholders are efficiently identified, attended to, and given a central role in the process, they could help in enlightening the beneficial aspects of the project.

Understanding stakeholders as an active driving force in need of attention and engagement further ties in with the perspective of reciprocity within stakeholder management theory, which also takes into account the factor of mutual benefit (Freeman et al, 2018). The reciprocity aspect however reflects also the importance of the stakeholders being treated well for the strengthening of stakeholder relationships (Freeman et al, 2018). This is to further strengthen the competitiveness in achieving desired outcomes (Freeman et al, 2018). With this perspective in mind, attending to all stakeholders, both for and against, thereby implies a contribution to mutual benefit (Freeman et al, 2018).

Lastly, a holistic approach in considering stakeholders that is of strong emphasis in the primary empirical data can once again be related to the theoretical perspective concerning managing stakeholders, with emphasis on the long-term strategic implications (Freeman et al, 2018). Mutual understanding and a cohesive course of action can more efficiently be achieved through the alignment of stakeholder interests rather than considering a trade-off (Freeman et al, 2018). This would further improve the possibility of creating long-term success and minimizing the failure that neglecting stakeholders could lead to (Freeman et al, 2018).

## 5.2 Stakeholder Salience

The second insight drawn from the findings is how the stakeholders of most power and legitimacy, which in the case of Barcelona's Superblock are the politicians, are a deciding factor in whether or not the project will succeed or fail. This aligns with the discussion of stakeholder power assessment of the stakeholder management theory (Freeman et al, 2018). According to this, the stakeholder with the most power along the factors of economic, political, social, and institutionally based power is the most important to take into consideration (Freeman et al, 2018). In this case, identified individual stakeholders and various associations may have a stronger social power base. Various key actors in the commerce sector as well as manufacturers may have stronger economic power. However, the politicians have the strongest political and institutional power, along with both social and

economic power present as well. They are chosen into government democratically by the people and are the ones to allocate the project budget. Important to note is how the assessment of stakeholder power perspective emphasizes how these particularly powerful stakeholders should be managed in a value-adding manner rather than be seen as an enemy (Freeman et al, 2018). This is particularly interesting in the Superblock case, as the matter was highly politicized in a political ecosystem that underwent significant changes during the process of the project implementation. It therefore becomes an aspect of consideration whether the management of the politicians in the Superblock project adhered to a value-adding approach or was a contributing factor to the described political resistance at the end of the project.

Aligned with this perspective is also the definition of power according to the stakeholder salience theory to be an actor in a position to carry out its will despite resistance (Weber, 1947; Mitchell et al, 1997). Even though it is described how there is a substantial movement of stakeholders for the project, the politicians are in a position of power that allows them to make the final decision regardless of the claims of other stakeholders. Stakeholders such as the various groups of citizens represented in committees have an urgent claim on the project. The various well-established associations such as RAC and AMPA have a legitimate claim on the project. However, the politicians with both power and legitimacy, were identified to have the deciding claim on whether the project should proceed or not. This is further well in line with the reasoning of the stakeholder salience theory claiming the power and legitimacy functions to be implicitly coupled (Mitchell et al, 1997). Power and legitimacy being two distinct attributes that together create authority is also of high relevance in the studied case of the Superblock. The term “legitimate use of power” used in stakeholder salience theory to define the combination of power and legitimacy is useful in describing a situation where, while all stakeholders are important, the politicians have that legitimate use of power that the others do not have, therefore influencing the outcome the most (Weber, 1947; Mitchell et al, 1997).

Furthermore, the reasoning of the stakeholder salience theory concerning how the urgency attribute brings forward a dynamic relationship with and among the stakeholders (Mitchell et al, 1997) is highly related to the findings. Interestingly, the stakeholders are, from the empirical material observed, not autonomous but rather integrated, interdependent, and in relationships of a network structure, affecting each other both directly and indirectly. This

implies that the stakeholders of less power but with urgent or legitimate claims can indirectly be a deciding factor for the success of the project, through their influence on the most powerful stakeholder and vice versa. The interdependent nature of direct and indirect influences that have been identified can be further understood by the MSS approach (Hajdini et al, 2021; Mitchell et al, 1997). This not only takes into account the three main attributes of a particular stakeholder, but also how these change depending on the attributes of the other stakeholders (Hajdini et al, 2021; Mitchell et al, 1997). In the collected empirical findings this is exemplified by the relations of how, while the politicians have the last say, they are influenced by the associations such as RAC and economic powers in the country such as car manufacturers. These indirect stakeholders affect the inclinations of the politicians toward a certain decision concerning the project. While the manufacturers and associations themselves do not have the power of decision, they can indirectly change the course of action through their strong establishment in society and consolidated effort to make a statement or change. Being mindful of these dynamics and understanding how they are all integrated into a network structure rather than a simple linear cause-and-effect relationship can help navigate how to strategically manage the various stakeholders. This can further give insight into how to conduct the participatory processes underlying the project to enable successful implementation. The stakeholder salience theory further supports this, mentioning how an understanding of the interdependent nature can also be leveraged into synergies, creating greater value and accommodating a more successful outcome of the implemented project (Hajdini et al, 2021; Mitchell et al, 1997).

### 5.3 Stakeholder Participation

Furthermore, another key insight from the findings is the critical role of stakeholder participation, especially during the pre-implementation phase. Through interviews and questionnaires, it became evident that efforts were made to engage various stakeholder groups, including neighbors, associations, and representatives from different sectors. This participatory approach aimed to address concerns, dispel misconceptions, and foster mutual understanding of the project objectives and benefits. This engagement of stakeholder participation can be understood as the act of creating joint value, relating to the concept of co-creation (Wasieleski & Weber, 2017). As the strategy of co-creation is focused on creating an interactive relationship through joint involvement to create greater value (Wasieleski &

Weber, 2017), this can be understood to have been a strategy applied in the Superblock case. The stakeholders were involved and engaged in the process through participatory mechanisms, in order to ensure mutual understanding, mutual benefits, and a cohesive course of action.

They were provided with opportunities to voice their opinions, raise questions, and contribute to shaping the project's direction. During the implementation process, regular meetings with commissions of neighbors and municipal representatives were held to update them on project progress and gather feedback. This can be further understood from the Value-Balance-Accountability conception that relates the importance of balancing the various and conflicting stakeholder opinions to the creation of greater stakeholder value (Schwartz & Carroll, 2008; Wasieleski & Weber, 2017). By investing in the participatory processes and ensuring that the various stakeholder opinions are attended to in a manner that can develop into a mutual understanding, the project could more successfully progress, with greater benefit for all involved stakeholders.

These meetings are further described as fostering a collaborative environment where stakeholders can discuss project ideas, strategies, and potential concerns. The collaborative nature of these meetings facilitated continuous improvements and adjustments based on stakeholder input and ensured that the project remained responsive to the needs and preferences of the community. This can further be related to the perspectives of value capture and value appropriation, which concern the stakeholders retaining the value created as well as who are the primary beneficiaries (Germany & Muralidharan, 2001; Wasieleski & Weber, 2017). The collaborative approach to the participatory processes could be understood as a tool of value capture and value appropriation (Germany & Muralidharan, 2001; Wasieleski & Weber, 2017), ensuring trust and balance of conflicting stakeholder opinions. This could be a contributing factor to a unified movement forward in the Superblock project.

## 5.4 Challenges Encountered

However, the study also identified key insights into potential challenges that could arise during the implementation process. For the first significant challenge, we find political resistance, and as a consequence public misconceptions. In politics and public discourse, projects often become entangled in partisan battles, which leads to challenges in guaranteeing

their continuity. When a project is associated with a specific political party or figure, it risks being viewed through a narrow partisan lens. This leads to hindering its broader acceptance and continuity beyond a particular administration's tenure such as in the case of Barcelona's Superblocks Project.

Moreover, political opposition and media scrutiny, due to their significant influence, pose significant obstacles to garnering public acceptance and support for sustainable mobility initiatives. To overcome this challenge, future projects must strive to depoliticize urban initiatives and emphasize their broader societal benefits. Rather than aligning projects with specific parties or individuals, projects should be framed as solutions to common challenges that benefit the entire community. Therefore, effective communication strategies should be employed to highlight the project's objectives and outcomes in a nonpartisan manner, to foster support across political divides. Additionally, building coalitions of support beyond traditional party lines can help insulate projects from political volatility and ensure their continuity across administrations. Ultimately, emphasizing the project's positive impact on public safety and welfare can transcend partisan politics and garner broader support for its continuity and long-term success.

Furthermore, public perception is a critical factor in the success of urban projects in general. That is why, misconceptions can quickly lead to resistance and hinder its progress. In the case of the Superblocks project, addressing public concerns and enhancing awareness were paramount. It was proved that effective communication strategies were essential to dispel misconceptions and build support among the public. Therefore, future projects must prioritize proactive communication efforts. Engaging with the community early and transparently can help alleviate concerns and garner support. It showed, again, a strong emphasis on providing clear and accurate information about project objectives, benefits, and potential impacts to help bridge the gap between perception and reality. Additionally, involving stakeholders in the decision-making process can foster a sense of ownership and cooperation which can help create greater acceptance and smoother implementation.

Finally, setting ambitious goals is essential for driving meaningful and sustainable change in urban mobility. However, these goals must be tempered with a realistic understanding of the challenges and constraints involved. Therefore, future projects should adopt a pragmatic approach that acknowledges the complexities of implementation while remaining committed to the long-term objectives. This requires careful planning and phased implementation that

allows for iterative adjustments based on feedback and data gathered. By breaking down large goals into smaller, achievable milestones, projects can maintain momentum while minimizing the risk of failure. Moreover, engaging with stakeholders throughout the whole process can help manage expectations and build support for incremental progress. Ultimately, by balancing speed with realism, projects can achieve a lasting impact on sustainable urban mobility. Finally, fostering collaboration and partnerships with relevant stakeholders can help leverage additional resources and expertise that can mitigate the impact of limited budgets and timelines.

## 5.5 Success Factors from the Superblock Project

Finally, the findings highlight critical success factors. The primary reason the Superblock project is now regarded as an inspiration is its success in fostering a shared goal within the community. The effort among residents to defend and protect the Superblock model highlights the importance of community engagement in driving the project's success. Therefore, engaging local communities in decision-making processes and actively involving them in the project is crucial for fostering ownership and support. As a first step, acknowledging and addressing the initial fear and resistance among citizens towards significant urban changes, such as restricting car access in certain areas is a must. Demonstrating the tangible benefits of the project through clear communication and gradual implementation it can help alleviate concerns and build public support over time. Moreover, the role of political leadership cannot be overstated in driving sustainable urban mobility initiatives. From the collected data, there was a stress on how a strong political will and commitment are necessary to challenge the status quo and overcome the resistance to change. Furthermore, projects must transcend partisan politics and be framed as solutions to the common challenges, with an emphasis on their broader societal benefits. Additionally, involving all the stakeholders in the decision-making process is crucial. This includes not only identifying and engaging stakeholders but also prioritizing their needs and concerns. Building coalitions of support and fostering mutual understanding among stakeholders can facilitate project acceptance and continuity. The findings also highlighted the role of flexibility in project implementation and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. In fact, both are described as keys to success. Moreover, iterative implementation and experimentation are also of significant importance as they allow for continuous learning and

improvement. Preferably with data-driven decision-making to ensure informed choices based on evidence and feedback.

Finally, from a technical perspective, findings showed that successful sustainable urban mobility projects must be seamlessly integrated with existing public transport and shared mobility systems. This integration enhances accessibility and convenience, thereby encouraging the adoption of alternative modes of transportation. Equally important, findings show that strategically selecting areas for project implementation based on traffic patterns, existing infrastructure, and community needs is critical. For projects similar to the Superblocks, choosing locations with high car traffic and lower pedestrian density facilitates the implementation process and allows for gradual expansion into other neighborhoods. However, according to the empirical findings, while this project serves as inspiration, each city must adapt it to suit its local contexts and priorities. Replicating projects without considering local conditions may not be effective. This further highlights the importance of adaptation and customization. Moreover, advocacy at the policy level and collaboration between cities facilitate knowledge exchange and support the implementation of similar projects elsewhere.

## 6. Conclusion

To conclude, the study explores sustainable urban mobility through the lens of Stakeholder Management, Stakeholder Resilience, and Value Creation theories and focuses on Barcelona's Superblock project as a primary case study. Its purpose is to enhance the understanding of how sustainable development can be effectively scaled across European nations. Although the study did not contribute to developing new theories, each of the theoretical frameworks illuminated the examined case and its processes. These were also further supported by the findings of this study.

The main findings of this thesis can furthermore be summarized as follows. First and foremost, effective stakeholder management is crucial for the success of the project. It implies identifying and engaging both supportive and resistant stakeholders in order to prevent unforeseen resistance and leverage their support. Therefore, a holistic approach that prioritizes mutual benefits and long-term strategic implications is vital for the continuity of these projects. Moreover, the influence of stakeholders, particularly those with significant power and legitimacy, such as politicians, is a decisive factor in project outcomes. According to the findings of the study, managing powerful stakeholders in a value-adding manner is the key to navigating political dynamics and resistance. Furthermore, stakeholder participation through co-creation fosters mutual understanding and shared value. Continuous involvement during project implementation ensures responsiveness to community needs and enhances overall success. However, political resistance and public misconception were identified as consistent challenges in the process. Therefore, depoliticizing projects and emphasizing their societal benefits, along with proactive communication strategies, can bridge the gap between perception and reality. Additionally, incremental and pragmatic approaches to project implementation can mitigate risks and ensure sustainable progress.

### 6.1 Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings reinforce the perspective that all stakeholders are active participants, whose involvement can either drive or impede the project's success. Moreover, as mentioned, the Superblocks example highlights the necessity of identifying and engaging stakeholders both for and against the initiative. The application of stakeholder management theory, with its emphasis on mutual benefit and reciprocity, suggests that an



inclusive approach can foster long-term success. The findings further reinforced this perspective. It was proved that managing stakeholders through active participation and addressing their concerns promotes a collaborative environment, aligning their interests for mutual benefit. Finally, the integration of stakeholder power and stakeholder salience theory illustrates the dynamic interplay of power, legitimacy, and urgency among stakeholders. The Superblocks case demonstrates that while powerful stakeholders like politicians hold decisive influence, their decisions are interdependent on the social and economic power of other stakeholders. This networked stakeholder relationship necessitates strategic management to balance competing interests and leverage synergies.

## 6.2 Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, the Superblocks project provides several actionable insights for future urban mobility projects. The findings stress the importance of stakeholder participation. It is paramount for the project's success. Engaging stakeholders early in the project through participatory mechanisms ensures their voices are heard and fosters a sense of ownership and cooperation between them. The findings also underscore the need for effective communication strategies to address public misconceptions and gain their support. Moreover, transparent, proactive engagement with the community can mitigate resistance and align public perception with project objectives. The political resistance, which was identified as a major challenge, highlights the necessity of depoliticizing urban initiatives to ensure continuity beyond individual administrations. Furthermore, this project further proves the necessity of iterative implementation and flexibility. By breaking down ambitious goals into achievable milestones and continuously adapting these based on stakeholder feedback and data, projects can maintain momentum and achieve sustainable impact. Integration with existing public transport and strategic area selection based on traffic patterns and community needs is crucial for success. However, while the Superblock serves as an inspiration, each city must tailor similar projects to its unique context and priorities. This highlights the importance of local adaptation. Knowing that advocacy and collaboration at the policy level can facilitate knowledge exchange and support the replication of successful initiatives.

## 6.3 Limitations and Future Research

The focus of this study centers on the unique context of the Superblock project within Barcelona. While this narrow lens may seemingly constrain the generalizability of findings regarding sustainable urban mobility across Europe, it offers an unparalleled opportunity for an in-depth exploration of the intricate mechanisms and interplays underpinning the project's success. Emphasizing depth over breadth, the study intends to yield sustainable mobility insights transferrable to other European cities.

While acknowledging these inherent limitations, they serve as catalysts for future enhancements and research endeavors. An avenue for advancement lies in robust comparative analyses, juxtaposing the insights obtained from Barcelona with the challenges and triumphs witnessed in diverse European contexts. Along these lines, the inclusion of Swedish firms Fojab and Bouvier in the study enables a preliminary comparison, hinting at broader applicability. Yet, there exists an imperative to extend this comparative scope, capturing the nuanced realities faced by sustainable urban mobility initiatives across European countries.

Another compelling trajectory for future research pertains to assessing the implementation landscape of Superblock-inspired projects across Europe. Delving into the various interpretations of the Superblock concept and assessing their efficacy could offer a rich spectrum of insights for further understanding the critical success factors and challenges. Such research could be valuable not only for the enriched comprehension of the Superblock blueprint but also to provide insights for more general knowledge concerning the management and implementation of sustainable urban mobility initiatives in Europe.

In light of these findings, an important research question emerges: How can public organizations and private companies collaborate effectively to promote sustainable urban mobility? This question will guide future research aimed at understanding the dynamics of public-private partnerships and their impact on sustainable urban development. By exploring this question, future studies can provide deeper insights into the mechanisms that enable successful collaborations and the integration of sustainability into strategic management processes across sectors.

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## 8. Appendix

### Appendix A

Interview Guide for Participants Involved or with Knowledge About the Superblocks in Barcelona
<b>Introduction Questions</b>
Can you describe yourself, What do you work with and what is your role?
How did you get involved in the sustainable urban mobility initiative?
For how long have you been involved and active?
How did you manage to effectively integrate architecture and mobility in a sustainable way?
Can you provide an overview of the Superblock project and its objectives in promoting sustainable urban mobility within Barcelona?
<b>Sustainable Urban Mobility</b>
Can you elaborate on your role and involvement in the initial stages of the Superblock project in Barcelona's Poblenou neighborhood?
How did the collaboration between architecture students, faculty members, and research institutions contribute to the success of the Superblock project?
What was the main focus in the sustainability efforts? Any area in particular?
What were the main objectives and goals of the Superblock project, particularly in terms of social engagement and community development?
How do you perceive that they managed to effectively integrate architecture and mobility in a sustainable way?
Can you describe if there was collaboration in these sustainability efforts?
Can you provide an overview of the Superblock project and its objectives in promoting sustainable urban mobility within Barcelona?
Can you provide examples of how the Superblock project facilitated community engagement and social interaction within the neighborhood?



What measures were taken to assess the social impact and effectiveness of the Superblock project beyond traditional mobility metrics?
What were the key stakeholders involved in the planning and implementation of the Superblock project, and what roles did they play?
Could you discuss any challenges or obstacles encountered during the implementation of the project, especially regarding stakeholder engagement and power dynamics?
In your opinion, what were the key factors that contributed to the acceptance and support of the Superblock project by the local community and other stakeholders?
How was the project communicated to stakeholders?
<b>Stakeholder Management</b>
What were the key stakeholders involved in the planning and implementation of the Superblock project, and what roles did they play?
How were stakeholders engaged throughout the various stages of the project, from planning to implementation and ongoing management?
How did the political landscape influence this project development and execution?
Were there specific policies or regulations that facilitated or hindered the project's progress?
What were some of the main challenges or obstacles faced in garnering stakeholder support for the Superblock project, and how were they addressed?
Can you describe any instances of collaboration between the different stakeholders?
Were there any particularly powerful stakeholders? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How was the relationship with them?</li> <li>● Any particularly legitimate stakeholders?</li> </ul>
Can you discuss any strategies or tactics employed to manage stakeholder expectations and address any concerns or resistance to the project?
Any particularly pressing/urgent stakeholders?
How have these stakeholders been prioritized?
Were there certain attributes that were particularly important when choosing which stakeholders to prioritize?
Did you put any effort in identifying similarities and differences between the stakeholder interests?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you manage these?</li> </ul>
Were the similarities or differences between the stakeholder interests taken into account in terms of leveraging resources and capabilities for the project?
What were some of the positive outcomes or successes achieved through effective stakeholder management in the Superblock project?
Can you describe and elaborate on the participatory processes of the project?
How did the collaboration and participation of those involved contribute to the success of the Superblock project?
<b>Superblock in Barcelona</b>
<p>So particularly in Barcelona, there were certain setbacks and skepticism to the sustainable urban mobility initiatives, and particularly Superblock, which were the main actors that were against, and why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How were these managed?</li> </ul>
<p>Did they affect the outcome in any way from the original plan?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could they be managed differently?</li> </ul>
<p>Did their resistance affect the value for other important stakeholders?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which?</li> </ul>
How did the Superblock project contribute to Barcelona's overall sustainability goals and objectives, particularly in terms of sustainable urban mobility?
Was the project changed or revised in any way during the process of implementation?
How has the project been followed up?
<b>Lessons Learned and Recommendations</b>
Can you provide any recommendations or best practices for other cities looking to embark on similar sustainable urban mobility initiatives, based on your experiences with the Superblock project?
What are the KSFs in stakeholder engagement efforts that we can retain from this project?
Were there any lessons learned or insights gained from the stakeholder management process in the Superblock project that could be applicable to other sustainable urban mobility initiatives?
<p>How did the Superblock project influence urban planning and mobility policies in Barcelona?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think are the lessons that can be learned from its implementation?</li> </ul>
<p>What setbacks did you encounter?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you manage these?</li> </ul>

What could have been done differently to achieve a better outcome?

**Closing Questions**

How do you envision the future of sustainable urban mobility in Barcelona, and what role do stakeholders play in shaping this future?

Anything to add about your involvement in this project?

Any other insights that you think will be helpful to implement the same concept in other cities?

Can you provide an overview of the Superblock project and its objectives in promoting sustainable urban mobility within Barcelona?

Looking ahead, How do you envision the future of sustainable urban mobility and community-centered initiatives like the Superblock project or do you think there are other stakeholders that you find his role/s significant in shaping this future?

Based on your experiences with the Superblock project, Can you provide any recommendations or best practices for other cities looking to embark on similar sustainable urban mobility initiatives?

## Appendix B

Interview Guide for FOJAB and Bouvier
How do you integrate sustainability principles into your architectural projects, (particularly concerning urban mobility and transportation aspects)?
How do you approach stakeholder engagement and management (in sustainable urban mobility projects or) in any projects in General?
Are there specific strategies or methods employed to ensure effective collaboration with all relevant parties?
How do you address the challenge of balancing the need for efficient transportation infrastructure with environmental sustainability and community well-being in urban development projects?
In your experience, what role does architecture play in shaping sustainable urban mobility initiatives, and how do you contribute to this aspect?
From your perspective, what are the key success factors for implementing sustainable urban mobility initiatives at a larger scale, particularly within the context of urban planning and architecture?
How do you work with participation processes when implementing new projects?
What stakeholders are generally regarded the most powerful when implementing new solutions?
Any examples of particular cases that stand out?
From your perspective, what role do you see policymakers, city planners, and community stakeholders playing in driving the adoption of sustainable urban mobility initiatives, and how can architects effectively collaborate with these stakeholders to achieve shared goals?

## Appendix C

Questionnaire for Jordi Honey Rosés
The Superblock is a highly politicized matter, do you think the turnout could have been different and the project could have continued if it was not as politically involved with one particular party?
Is there any way you think the project could have been managed differently, adhering to different political forces and perspectives, that could have benefitted the outcome?
How did the level of community engagement and participation influence the decision-making process in implementing Superblocks?
How did the level of community engagement and participation influence the decision-making process in implementing Superblocks?
Were there any unexpected challenges or barriers encountered during the participatory phase of the Superblock initiative, and how were they addressed?
What were some of the main political struggles associated with the implementation of the Superblock pilot projects?
Can you elaborate on any specific strategies or mechanisms employed to ensure diverse stakeholder involvement and inclusivity in the Superblock planning and implementation process?
How did existing urban policies and regulations either facilitate or hinder the implementation of Superblocks in Barcelona?
Were there any instances where policy adjustments or adaptations were necessary to align with the objectives of the Superblock initiative?
Beyond the quantitative indicators mentioned in the paper, can you discuss any qualitative or anecdotal evidence of transformational changes observed within Superblock areas?
How have residents' perceptions and behaviors regarding urban mobility and public space shifted as a result of the Superblock intervention?
How have residents' perceptions and behaviors regarding urban mobility and public space shifted as a result of the Superblock intervention?
How have residents' perceptions and behaviors regarding urban mobility and public space shifted as a result of the Superblock intervention?
In what ways has the Superblock model contributed to broader urban sustainability goals, such as reduced carbon emissions, improved air quality, or enhanced social cohesion?

In what ways has the Superblock model contributed to broader urban sustainability goals, such as reduced carbon emissions, improved air quality, or enhanced social cohesion?

Can you discuss any unintended negative impacts of the Superblock projects, such as gentrification, and how they have been addressed?

Based on your research and observations, what are the critical success factors for successfully scaling the Superblock model to other cities, especially those with different urban contexts?

Are there specific lessons learned from Barcelona's experience with Superblocks that could inform the replication or adaptation of similar initiatives in diverse geographical and cultural settings?

How do you envision the role of international collaboration and knowledge exchange in supporting the global adoption of sustainable urban mobility solutions like Superblocks?

## Appendix D

Questionnaire for Barcelona City Hall
What sustainable urban mobility work are you currently doing at Barcelona City Council and what is the objective of this work?
What are the main projects at the moment?
What is the main focus of Barcelona City Council's sustainability projects? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any particular area?</li></ul>
How are you actively working with the integration of architecture and mobility?
How are you working with multiple stakeholders?
Can you explain and describe the process of collaboration in sustainability efforts?
What were some of the main challenges or obstacles encountered in gaining stakeholder support for the Superblock project, and how were they addressed?
What were some of the main challenges or obstacles encountered in gaining stakeholder support for the Superblock project, and how were they addressed?
Why is the Superblock project not currently prioritized?
Were there specific policies or regulations that facilitated or hindered the progress of the Superblock project?
How has the political landscape affected the continuation of the Superblock project?
What is/would be needed for the project to be prioritized and continued again?