

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



CITY CASE STUDY

COUNTRY CITY SPAIN BARCELONA

POPULATION

1,664,182

MITIGATION GOAL

-45% BY 2030 (2005 BASELINE)

EMISSIONS IN 2017

<u>3.41 MTCO₂e</u>

Barcelona • Sant Antoni, the green street inspiring the city

Since 2016, the city of Barcelona has been supporting the establishment of "superblocks" (*superillas*) – micro-neighbourhoods consisting of blocks of 3x3 buildings. In these urban spaces, priority is given to pedestrians, slow traffic, and a greater presence of vegetation. This strategy is one of the 103 measures in the climate emergency plan decreed in March 2020 by Ada Colau, the mayor of Barcelona, to reduce GHG emissions by 2 million tonnes by 2030. The Cerdà Grid model, using which the city has been organised intro quadrangular blocks since the 19th century, is particularly conducive to the creation of these superblocks.

The Sant Antoni superblock

In 2017, the Barcelona municipality launched a public consultation to create a "areen axis" connected to a square - a new, second-generation conception of "superblocks" - in the central Sant Antoni neighbourhood. Work was completed in 2019. Traffic within the superblock is now limited to 10 km/h for all vehicles. The Barcelona City Council spent €7 million on the project, notably on the street fixtures. The street is divided in two parts, one with more classic permanent street fixtures, the other with provisional fixtures that are innovative and inclusive, and can be easily dismantled and reused to create new ones. Floor markings bring colour and outline games for children, with the aim of bringing out new ways of "living" the street.

A success by and for the residents

For this "green axis" project, Barcelona relied on strong citizen involvement. During the public consultation, a group of 40 representatives of associations and shopkeepers of the street reassessed the outlines of the project together with the city council, before presenting it to the residents. This process was particularly influential in decisions such as not changing the direction of street traffic because "people would not understand these traffic changes", said Ariadna Miquel, Director of Urban Strategy at the Office of the Chief Architect of the City Council of Barcelona. "We lowered the ambition of our project, but it became feasible." The city thus intends to learn from the discontent encountered

in the Poblenou district when a *Superilla* was created there. The neighbourhood residents, who were interviewed about a year after the end of the street works, spoke of the benefits experienced: more street life at different times, fewer cars hence more visibility, etc. In addition, the pedestrian area has expanded by almost 135% to reach a total of 43,209 m², i.e., 100%, of the neighbourhood's public space. As a direct result, the presence of pedestrians has increased by up to +44% in certain areas.

Changes to expect

On Sant Antoni Street, the combination of the different modes of mobility regularly causes conflicts between cars and pedestrians "owing to the disregard of traffic rules by some vehicles but also because of a lack of signage and information", according to Julia Goula Mejón, associate architect in the firm Equal Saree. Greater efforts in terms of signage are therefore planned for the future green streets of Barcelona. To slow down the pace of traffic on the street, it was necessary to work on traffic planning at the level of the street, but also of the entire district and city. However, being located in the touristic heart of Barcelona, the green street of Sant Antoni is often accused of gentrifying the neighbourhood. Thus arises the need for a social housing policy in support of the project: any establishment of new businesses has been prohibited in the street usage plan, to prevent it from concentrating the centres of attraction to the detriment of neighbouring districts.

What next for the superblocks?

Superblocks are a flexible tool that can be adapted to various urban fabrics and so they can be easily exported, according to Ariadna Miquel. For her, it is essential to study the locality, build a consensus with the residents and stakeholders, and be able to count on committed citizens to bring the project to life. At the end of 2020, the Barcelona City Council announced 21 new squares and 21 new green streets to come in the Eixample district, in the same vein as Sant Antoni (FIG.). Work on these superblocks began in the summer of 2022.

FIGURE

THE 21 GREEN STREETS UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN THE EIXAMPLE DISTRICT Source: Construction21, 2022

