POWER DYNAMICS IN SDG IMPLEMENTATION: The case of Barcelona Public Institutions and SDG 11

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"POWER DYNAMICS IN SDG IMPLEMENTATION"

The case of Barcelona Public Institutions and SDG 11

by

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP AND ORIGINALITY

I, *Adrià Lladó Feijóo,* certify that this thesis has not been submitted for the assessment of any other subject, either in part or in its entirety. I also certify that its content is original and that I am its sole author, not including any material previously published or written by others except those cases indicated throughout the text.

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The Hague, 9th June 2023

Abstract

This thesis explores power dynamics in public institutions and their impact on the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona. Through a critical realism approach, a case study and qualitative methodology are used to understand the historical and contemporary influence of institutional power. The data collected, through semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis, highlights how critical junctures over the last three decades have created institutional inertias that affect the implementation of SDG 11 in the city. Resistance to change, prioritisation of economic efficiency over sustainability and the need for inter-institutional collaboration are identified as key factors. The lessons learned from the Barcelona experience could inform implementation strategies for sustainable urban development policies in similar contexts. Despite its limitations, this study contributes to the theoretical and practical understanding of SDG implementation in urban settings and suggests directions for future research.

Keywords

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and context of the study

> *"The road ahead is steep. But it is one we can and must travel – together – for the people we serve."* – UN Secretary-General António Guterres

The term "sustainable development" relates to the idea of satisfying the needs of the current generation without compromising the capability of coming generations to fulfil their own needs. It is seen as the guiding principle for long-term development worldwide, and is composed by three pillars: economic development, social development and environmental protection.

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a set of goals known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to address issues ranging from poverty and inequality to environmental degradation (United Nations, 2015). Bringing together the efforts and collaboration of actors with the required authority to realize or implement the SDGs, such as local governments or public institutions, is a necessity for their realization. Due to their in-depth understanding of their communities' contexts and core needs, these organizations play a pivotal role in bringing the SDGs to life at the regional and local levels.

Although often overlooked due to limited resources and lack of representation in global spaces, local governments have recently emerged as a key actor catalysing social change. This approach, known as municipalism, is currently gaining importance.

Historically, Globalisation focused on the governance of large blocs, East and West, bypassing local governments. However, the main actors of global change are now seeking partnerships with municipalities to combat global inequality. Local governments have emerged as key players in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reflecting a century-old heritage of solidarity, peace and social justice (Hartley 2021). Their role in urban issues, social policy, diversity and global relations was consolidated with the Millennium Declaration in 2000, the precursor to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Goal 11 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to ensure that the world's urban areas are places where everyone feels safe, sheltered, and comfortable. According to the United Nations (2015), its implementation is especially important for urban governance and

sustainable development. Affordable housing, environmentally sound transportation systems, and safeguarding natural resources are just a few of the numerous aims it pursues. Rapid urbanization, overcrowding from tourism, poor infrastructure, insufficient funding, and a lack of coordination among stakeholders are just some of the obstacles cities throughout the world must overcome to achieve SDG 11.

According to Mastrángelo et al. (2018), Hartley (2021) & Fisher & Fukuda-Parr (2019), power dynamics—defined as how power is exercised, negotiated, and challenged in various social and political contexts—must be examined for public goals such as the SDGs or the 2030 Agenda to be successful. Thus, SDG 11 implementation problems and success factors can be better understood by examining the impact of power dynamics within local public institutions (Bowen et al., 2017).

For this thesis, Barcelona has been selected as the subject of study because of its continuous commitment to sustainable urban development and because it offers an intriguing background for examining the implementation of SDG 11 (Bibri & Krogstie, 2020). Although the city has made enormous strides toward attaining many of the SDG 11 objectives, there are still numerous obstacles to overcome, needing a greater comprehension of the variables impacting their implementation and subsequent success.

In this sense, this study aims to explore the effects of power dynamics in depth, using the theoretical lenses of Historical Institutionalism and Discursive Institutionalism, to better understand these dynamics within Barcelona's Public Institutions and the effect they have in the implementation and success of SDG 11 in the city.

1.2 Research question and objectives

As a starting point and focus for our research, the following question is raised: How do existing power dynamics within Barcelona's public institutions influence the implementation of SDG 11, and what lessons can be drawn for other urban contexts?

The relevance of this question is due to its potential to understand the complex effect of power dynamics within public institutions and how this effect can benefit or harm the implementation of transformative policies such as the SDGs (Mastrángelo et al., 2018).

Power dynamics are a critical component of urban governance, as they shape how different actors interact and collaborate in policymaking and implementation processes (Hartley 2021 &

Fisher & Fukuda-Parr 2019). The city of Barcelona represents a particularly relevant case, as it has a broad commitment to sustainable urban development but, at the same time, poses a myriad of challenges inherent to the implementation of SDG 11 in a diverse and complex institutional landscape.

After an exhaustive literature review and deepening in the main research question, the following sub-questions or research questions are formulated in an attempt to break down the leading research question:

- How have historical and political events shaped the configuration and evolution of contemporary power dynamics in Barcelona's public institutions responsible for the implementation of SDG 11?
- How do these power dynamics affect the implementation and success of SDG 11 in Barcelona?
- What lessons could be drawn from the Barcelona experience that could be applicable to other urban contexts?

These sub-questions, whose rationale will be explained in section 2.5 of the literature review, allow for a deeper exploration of the influence of power dynamics, institutional inertia, and path dependency on implementing transnational governance initiatives such as the SDGs.

Having set out the main question of the paper, as well as the research questions that develop it, the following objectives are pursued:

- **Objective 1**. To explore the influence of Barcelona's history and traditions on the power dynamics within the public institutions responsible for SDG 11.
- **Objective 2**. To assess how power dynamics affect the implementation and success of SDG 11 in Barcelona, taking into account factors such as the way "sustainability" is interpreted, the contribution of institutions or the role of different actors.
- **Objective 3**. To identify lessons learned through the case of Barcelona and its experience in implementing the SDGs, providing practical recommendations for other urban contexts.

Each objective corresponds to one of the sub-questions in a specific way, ensuring that the research comprehensively covers the study's central question. By fulfilling these objectives, it aims to improve and understand the power dynamics in Barcelona's urban governance and their impact on the implementation of SDG 11 in the city.

1.3 Scope and Limitations

The main goal of this study is to analyze Barcelona's public institutions. Specifically, the study focuses on the Barcelona City Council, Barcelona Provincial Council, Barcelona Metropolitan Area, district councils, and other public agencies involved in implementing SDG 11. Specifically, we will focus on the policy areas and dimensions of SDG 11 related to sustainable housing, urban planning, and transport, as they are critical aspects of the city's sustainable development.

The focus on the city of Barcelona is due to its commitment to sustainable development, innovative approaches to urban governance, and its potential to provide valuable lessons for other cities worldwide (Bibri & Krogstie, 2020). Furthermore, this study covers the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from 2015 to the present, allowing us to analyze the ongoing implementation process and its evolution over time.

However, it is essential to identify the limitations of this research. First, while our qualitative approach will provide an in-depth understanding of power dynamics and the SDG implementation process, it may be subject to researcher bias, so its results may have limited applicability to other contexts. Nevertheless, thanks to a detailed description of the research setting and a sound theoretical framework, our findings may still apply to other cities with similar urban governance structures and similar challenges. To mitigate any bias and increase the applicability of the results, we will carry out rigorous data collection and analysis and use triangulation of data sources.

Secondly, by focusing on Barcelona's public institutions, the perspectives of other relevant actors, such as non-governmental organizations, the private sector, or citizens themselves may be overlooked. We will partially address this limitation by including diverse interview participants. However, it is important to remember that a comprehensive assessment of all stakeholder perspectives will not be possible within the scope of this study.

By recognizing and addressing these limitations, the aim is to make a significant contribution to existing knowledge on power dynamics in public institutions and SDG implementation, especially in the context of a large city such as Barcelona or other similar cities or local contexts with similar challenges in their implementation of sustainable urban development policies.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis aims to provide a coherent and systematic study of the power dynamics that arise in the implementation of SDG 11 within Barcelona's public institutions. In this sense, it aims to provide a complete understanding of the research problem, its theoretical underpinning, the methodology used, and the findings and their respective implications, thus ensuring a practical approach to the research question and the established objectives.

The first section aims to introduce the research and sets out the basis of the thesis. It provides the background, research questions, objectives, scope, and limitations and describes the structure of the thesis.

The second section provides a comprehensive review of the literature. In particular, it critically examines the existing academic literature on the SDGs and, more specifically, SDG 11. It also discusses the politics and power surrounding the implementation of the SDGs and how this implementation is being carried out in Barcelona by its public institutions. This chapter lays the groundwork for identifying gaps in the literature and sets the stage for developing the theoretical framework presented in section three.

The third section extends the literature review by combining the Theory of Historical Institutionalism and the Theory of Discursive Institutionalism. This combined theoretical framework is used to analyze power dynamics in the implementation of SDG 11. It provides the lens through which the research question will be examined, ensuring a robust and informed analysis.

The fourth section describes the research methodology in detail, presenting the qualitative research design, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. This section provides the necessary support for conducting the empirical research and analyzing the findings presented in the fifth section.

The fifth section is organized into three main subsections, each dedicated to addressing a different research question, thus allowing for a systematic examination of the study's objectives. Dividing the chapter into three parts ensures that each aspect of the research questions is fully explored, leading to a comprehensive understanding of the objective or study subject.

The sixth and final section presents the conclusions and recommendations arising from the research findings. This section summarises the main insights gained from the analysis, addresses implications for urban governance and sustainable development, offers

recommendations for policy and practice, and identifies limitations and possible directions for future research.

The chosen structure aims to ensure a logical progression of the research, with each section building on the previous one and helping to address the research question and its objectives. The chosen organization aligns with the study's qualitative approach and its theoretical framework, allowing for a comprehensive and well-structured review.

2. Literature review

2. 1 What are the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals?

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) is a plan of action for people, the planet, and prosperity, which also intends to strengthen universal peace and access to justice.

The 2030 Agenda (2015) was created in response to the world's demand for action to reduce global conflict and improve the quality of life, especially for those who face difficulties accessing well-being. This plan aims to recognize the warning signs our planet is sending us about human impact on the environment and proposes an inclusive and sustainable development model.

2.1.1 History of the 2030 Agenda

Since 1960, the United Nations Assembly has focused on poverty reduction, hunger eradication, universal education, and gender equality. In this regard, programs and funds have been created to combat hunger and help developing countries. Despite these efforts, progress proved insufficient, as much remained to be done (Mensah, 2019).

It was not until 2000 that the United Nations General Assembly approved the Millennium Declaration, culminating in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It represented the first significant global commitment to development, defining clear targets and promoting cooperation based on horizontal partnerships. However, they also faced criticism due to their focus on developing countries, the lack of inclusion of aspects such as equality or sustainability, and their reductionist development vision (Chasek et al., 2016).

2.1.2 Towards a New Agenda

In 2012, at the Rio+20 conference, the idea to design a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that would continue the momentum generated by the MDGs emerged. Unlike the MDGs, the development of the SDGs was a participatory process that included diverse stakeholders from around the world (Mensah, 2019).

In 2015, during the 70th General Assembly in New York, all UN member countries adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the 17 sustainable development goals. The SDGs seek to improve and expand on the successes of the MDGs and achieve the targets that were not achieved in the past. Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs are universal and address all countries, not just developing ones. Furthermore, they propose eradicating poverty

by addressing its structural causes while protecting the environment and combating climate change (Mensah, 2019).

2.1.3 2030 Agenda: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

On the 25th of September 2015, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly signed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (hereafter referred to as the Agenda or 2030 Agenda), a historic international commitment to protect the planet and its people. The Agenda consists of 17 goals with 169 targets and 300 monitoring indicators intended to eradicate poverty and hunger, combat inequalities, build peaceful and inclusive societies, and protect human rights and the planet's natural resources (UN, 2015).

Although the SDGs are not legally binding, signatory countries have a political responsibility to take the necessary measures to achieve them within their respective territories. In this regard, according to the Agenda 2030 (2015) governments must establish a regionally adaptable monitoring system that collects reliable and timely data to measure progress (UN, 2015).

The 2030 Agenda engages governments, partnerships, the private sector, academia, and civil society. All parties are expected to collaborate and contribute to the accomplishment of national initiatives. It should be noted that, in addition, there are pre-Agenda 2030 partnerships that are complementary to the 2030 Agenda and are in the process of being aligned with it, such as the Urban Agenda (UN, 2015).

To monitor and review progress toward the SDGs, each SDG has associated targets and indicators reviewed annually. Thus, at the global level, there is a framework for global indicators, while at the national level, governments set their own indicators.

The new Agenda benefits from financial resources for its implementation. The SDG Fund was established in 2014 as the first international development cooperation mechanism to achieve the SDGs. With initial contributions from 23 countries, the Fund has helped improve the lives of more than 5.4 million people through joint sustainable development programs (UN, 2015).

2.1.4 The SDGs

The 2030 Agenda is a global action plan. To achieve this ambition, the 2030 Agenda sets out 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that provide detailed guidance for implementation. The guiding philosophy of this plan is to "leave no one behind."

The 17 SDGs are comprehensive, multidimensional, participatory, and universal. As stated by Niestroy et al., (2019), achieving these goals requires the involvement of all actors in society

and the combination of national public policies, external action, and development cooperation, always with sustainability as a cross-cutting theme.

The implementation of the SDGs is based on its six principles:

- **Transversality**: Everyone should be involved and benefit from the efforts and rewards.

- **Interrelatedness**: The goals are integrated and should be addressed simultaneously and harmonised, promoting collaboration among actors and across disciplines and sectors.

- **Shared responsibility**: All countries and actors, according to their resources and capacities, should contribute equitably.

- **Subsidiarity**: A proportional approach is required in resources, but not in isolation, through partnerships for shared management.

- **Localisation and ownership**: Applies globally, but it is also considered at local and national levels.

- **Evaluation and accountability**: Progress and results must be measured and learned from.

The 17 SDGs, which are interconnected and must be addressed in an integrated manner, can be divided into three blocks: **people** (SDGs 1 to 6), **advancing collective efforts** (7 to 11, 16, and 17), and **environment** (12 to 15). However, they are also recognized in five areas known as the 5 Ps: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership. Each goal directly influences the others, so they must be treated as a complex whole requiring a coherent and non-compartmentalized approach (Frans de Man, 2022).

In short, the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs represent a comprehensive and ambitious framework to address the most pressing challenges of our time, focusing on inclusion and sustainability (Biermann et al. 2017). Its implementation aims to achieve a future where everyone can live on a healthy and prosperous planet.

2.1.5 SDG 11

The UN SDGs provide a global framework for addressing the most pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges.

This paper will focus on SDG 11, exploring its goals, challenges, and specific implementation in Barcelona.

SDG 11, also known as Urban Sustainable Development Goal 11 (USDG11), has several objectives or 'targets' that guide its implementation. These range from inclusive and sustainable urbanization (Target 11.3), striving to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage (Target 11.4), reducing the environmental impact of cities (Target 11.6), and providing universal access to safe green and public spaces (Target 11.7) (UN, 2015). These goals recognize the complexity and diversity of urban challenges and require an integrated approach to achieve them.

Zinkernagel et al. (2018) and Pradhan et al. (2017) highlight the interconnectedness between SDG 11 and the other SDGs, suggesting that cities are vital actors in sustainability. However, despite synergies, the implementation of SDG 11 also presents challenges. Aust and du Plessis (2018) argue that not all SDG 11 sub-targets can be achieved simultaneously without negatively affecting other SDGs due to potential conflicts between concepts such as 'security' and 'inclusion'.

For example, Barcelona, as a city rich in cultural and natural heritage, and also with a diverse and constantly changing population, faces these challenges uniquely. In this sense, to meet Target 11.4, the city must balance the protection of its heritage with the need for development and modernization.

The same applies to Target 11.6, which aims to reduce the environmental impact of cities. In this case, Barcelona must consider the particularities of its urban geography and its strong dependence on tourism.

Following the previous line, in terms of inclusion, Target 11.3 requires participatory and integrated management of urbanization. Barcelona, as a city with remarkable diversity, faces the challenge of ensuring the inclusion of all its citizens in decision-making, especially those in vulnerable situations.

In addition, providing universal access to safe green and public spaces (Target 11.7) is fundamental to the well-being and health of the city's residents. In this case, Barcelona faces the challenge of maintaining and improving these spaces, ensuring their safety and inclusiveness, and adapting to the changing needs of its population.

To sum up, SDG 11 proposes an ambitious and comprehensive vision for sustainable urban development. Moreover, while its implementation is challenging, it also offers significant opportunities to improve life in cities and contribute to sustainable development at the global level.

2.2 Power and politics in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Power dynamics can impact the prioritization and focus of different perspectives and goals. In the context of Barcelona and SDG 11, it is crucial to analyze how these dynamics influence the adoption of relevant policies and projects.

This section explores the close relationship between achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the dynamics in play by power and politics. To this end, a rigorous review of the existing literature examining the interrelationship between politics, power, and the SDGs has been undertaken, identifying several academics who have approached the topic from various perspectives.

Hartley (2021) examines influential cities' role and influence on the SDGs. In his work, he makes an intriguing starting point by suggesting that influential cities can perpetuate misleading narratives or preserve alternative perspectives, indicating how using alternative narratives, such as the SDGs, is highly political (Hartley, 2021). Another relevant contribution is the one brought up by Fisher and Fukuda-Parr (2019), who investigate how the SDGs effect power dynamics, resource distribution, and priorities at national and local levels. Their approach is instrumental in examining how Barcelona's institutions can be affected by the implementation of SDG 11. They suggest that the influence of the private sector and economic forces on the SDGs has a considerable impact that requires further research.

Following Fisher and Fukuda-Parr (2019), Sachs, Schmidt-Traub, and Lafortune (2020), they assess the feasibility and affordability of the SDGs, arguing that the lack of progress in some cases can be attributed to the absence of political will and support from affluent nations. They highlight the need to explore the power and political dynamics in the implementation of the SDGs to understand how these may affect the ability of cities to achieve the proposed goals.

Kapto (2019) has also studied power relations in the SDGs, providing valuable insight by examining how power dynamics and political contestations influence the development of indicators. Kapto (2019) argues that the choice of indicators is based on technical factors and political considerations, providing an in-depth insight into how power and politics can impact the implementation of the SDGs in general and SDG 11 in particular.

During the literature review, studies analyzed power dynamics from a gender perspective were also identified, such as the feminist view of Esquivel (2016) and the contributions of Razavi (2016). Both authors focus on how gender inequalities and power dynamics can affect the

implementation and monitoring of the SDGs, ensuring that policies and projects are inclusive and address gender inequalities in the urban context.

Other notable studies found during the literature review are the contributions of McBride et al. (2019) and Bexell & Jönsson (2021), who analyze the role of institutions and governance in the SDGs. Both studies provide a more concrete approach by examining the role of institutions and governance in implementing the SDGs. These scholars argue that participatory governance and including a wide range of actors is critical to the success of the SDGs.

In addressing the present analysis, the researcher will take into account the relevance of these contributions as these and other authors (Fisher & Fukuda-Parr, 2019; Sachs et al., 2020) indicate that it is crucial to take into account how power and political dynamics might hinder the successful implementation of the SDGs. In doing so, it will seek to deepen the understanding of how power and political processes shape and sometimes limit SDGs adoption and effective implementation in Barcelona's urban environment.

2.3 Implementing the SDGs

The study of the SDGs brings with it an extensive academic wealth that reflects the depth and diversity of this field of study. The UN General Assembly (2015) established the SDG framework, promoting a global vision that incorporates economic, social and environmental aspects for a sustainable future. This framework has served as the basis for numerous studies and analyses that seek to understand and improve the implementation of these goals.

Krellenberg et al. (2019) and Krantz & Gustafsson (2023) provided a comparative analysis of the SDGs in different contexts, showing the diversity of approaches adopted in different regions and the importance of adapting the SDGs to local circumstances. The notion of adaptation to local circumstances is reinforced by Mejía-Dugand, Croese and Reddy (2020), who, through case studies in Latin America and Africa, argue for a more tailored and contextualised approach to SDG implementation.

Fox & McLeod (2023) together with Leavesly, Trundle & Oke (2022) converge on the importance of multi-level governance in implementing these goals, pointing out the crucial role of effective coordination between various stakeholders along with different levels of government. This perspective is complemented and extended by Hartley (2021) and Meuleman (2021), who argue for greater cooperation between different actors and underline the need for cross-sectoral engagement, as Breuer and Leininger (2021) also emphasize. Sachs et al. (2020), for their part, highlight the relevance of tailoring the SDGs to the particular economic, social

and cultural conditions of each country and region. In this collaborative and multi-level approach proposed by these scholars, Caballero (2019) supports the importance of including local communities, thus helping to ensure effective and successful implementation of the SDGs.

Finally, Saner, Yiu & Nguyen (2020), and Lepenies et al., (2023) reflected on the importance of clear and quantitative indicators for SDG monitoring and evaluation. These authors argued for a monitoring system based on quantifiable indicators, specific and measurable targets.

Throughout this literature review, a variety of approaches to SDG implementation have been identified, ranging from cross-sectoral cooperation and adaptation to local contexts to multi-level governance and the importance of clear, quantitative indicators. However, a more detailed review of the literature also reveals a number of important research gaps that still need to be addressed.

The first gap identified is in the understanding of power dynamics in SDG implementation. While cross-sectoral cooperation, multi-level governance and adaptation to local contexts are important, the roles and power relations between the different actors involved has not been sufficiently explored. For example, Redclift (2005) suggests that power relations can influence the interpretation and implementation of the SDGs, an aspect that deserves further attention.

Secondly, there is a gap in the understanding of the most effective ways to implement the SDGs at the local level. McKenzie & Abdulkadri (2018) advocate for a customized approach, but argue there is insufficient depth on the specific practices that would enable local communities to implement the SDGs effectively. Saiu & Blečić (2022) touch upon this issue, but more research is needed in this area.

Another gap lies at the intersection of multilevel governance theory and practice. Fowler & Biekart (2017) and Boorman, Jackson & Burkett (2023) argue that SDG implementation requires a multilevel governance approach that integrates diverse actors and levels of government. Nevertheless, these authors claim more research is needed to understand how this can be achieved in practice.

Despite these gaps, it is important to recognize that the study of the SDGs has made significant contributions to our understanding of how these goals can be achieved. The academic contributions of the aforementioned authors have greatly enriched this field of study and have established a solid foundation on which future research can be conducted.

In summary, SDG implementation is a rich and diverse field of study, and while significant progress has been made in understanding this topic, there are still gaps that need to be addressed. Power dynamics in SDG implementation, how to implement the SDGs most effectively at the local level, and the intersection between the theory and practice of multilevel governance are undoubtedly areas that deserve further attention. As we continue to move towards a sustainable future, it will be crucial to address these gaps to ensure that the SDGs are implemented as effectively as possible.

2.4 Barcelona's local context and institutions

The city of Barcelona is a paradigm of how a city can implement smart solutions to address the challenges inherent in sustainable development. In this sense, Phelps & Miao (2020) suggest that understanding the local context and socio-economic conditions is paramount when planning and implementing such solutions. Along these lines, the City of Barcelona and its institutions have exhibited a strong commitment localising the SDGs, adopting plans and strategies in line with the 2030 Agenda (Gabinet Tècnic de Programació, 2019). In Bibri and Krogstie (2020) words, Barcelona stands out in relation to its European competition in terms of sustainability.

This commitment is reflected in various initiatives such as the Barcelona Nature Plan 2021-2030, the Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Plan and the Tree Master Plan, as well as the Green Axes project and the "superblocks". Nevertheless, according to López Villanueva and Vallbona (2021) the city faces persistent challenges such as gentrification and touristification. The authors underline the resistance strategies employed in different neighbourhoods, highlighting the relevance of the city's associative and cooperative networks, political actions at the local level and the contribution of neighbourhood associations to achieve a more sustainable city.

Issues such as urban policy and transformational adaptation in Barcelona are also of particular interest. Zografos et al. (2020) examine the famous "superblocks" project as a case study in order to argue that urban transformation is not exclusively motivated by environmental and quality of life benefits, but also by competitive urbanism and short-term political gains. In this sense, the authors conclude that transformational adaptation entails political struggles over who has the right to shape the future of the city.

On the other hand, Cibrario & Ciambra (2019) highlight the critical role of local and regional governments in the implementation of SDG 11. The authors conclude that decentralising power, empowering subnational governments and ensuring inter-agency policy coherence are essential to effectively address the urban and territorial challenges associated with the goals.

To address contemporary urban and socio-economic challenges, Barcelona has adopted a comprehensive urban greening strategy. This strategy encompasses a range of projects from green infrastructure and biodiversity to sustainable mobility and energy transition. Despite significant progress in implementing sustainable solutions, gaps in the current literature include the need for a greater focus on social equity and inclusion in the planning and execution of sustainable development initiatives, as well as the relevance of analysing the interaction between sustainability policies and power dynamics at the local level.

For example, the Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Plan seeks to develop green infrastructure and nature-based solutions to mitigate the effects of climate change (Climate Adapt, 2022). The Tree Master Plan, on its behalf, highlights the importance of urban vegetation and involves diverse social groups and vulnerable populations in the greening of the city. Additionally, the Barcelona Nature Plan 2021-2030 focuses on urban biodiversity, the protection of green spaces and the promotion of nature-based solutions (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2020).

The city has also implemented the Energy, Climate Change and Air Quality Plan 2018-2030, which provides a strategic framework for reducing emissions and promoting sustainable mobility solutions (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2018). Similarly, the Green Axes project proposes equitable access to green areas through the integration of green infrastructure and active transport (Magrinyà, Mercadé-Aloy and Ruiz-Apilánez, 2023).

Despite these advances, the literature review indicates how crucial it is to emphasise that social equity and inclusion must be fundamental factors in the planning and implementation of sustainable development initiatives. This implies consideration of the needs of all stakeholders, including the most vulnerable and marginalised populations, and the active participation of all key actors.

To conclude, Barcelona has made significant efforts to address sustainable development challenges by implementing smart and sustainable solutions, localising the SDGs, and adopting transformational adaptation strategies. However, there is room for improvement in terms of

social equity, inclusiveness, and analysis of local power dynamics. This reflects the complex and multifaceted nature of urban sustainability and underscores the need for continued research and practice to move towards more sustainable and equitable cities.

2.5 Identifying gaps in the literature, formulating questions and hypotheses

Case studies such as Phelps & Miao (2020), Croese and Reddy (2020), and Magrinyà, Mercadé-Aloy, and Ruiz-Apilánez (2023) have provided practical examples of how different cities, including Barcelona, have addressed the challenges of SDG 11 through intelligent solutions. However, they have also highlighted the need for further research to explore how power dynamics and institutions can influence the implementation of these solutions. While the report by the "Gabinet Tècnic de Programació" (OMD) and the "Direcció de Serveis de Justícia Global i Cooperació Internacional" (2019) provides valuable information on the implementation of the SDGs in Barcelona, it also reveals gaps in the existing literature. In this sense, it does not provide a detailed analysis of how different power dynamics and political structures can influence SDG implementation at the local level.

In the existing literature, some gaps have been identified that need to be addressed to better understand the implications of institutional inertia and power dynamics in implementing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 in Barcelona.

Research questions based on these gaps are formulated below, along with their corresponding hypotheses.

Question 1: *How have historical and political events shaped the configuration and evolution of contemporary power dynamics in Barcelona's public institutions responsible for implementing SDG 11?*

Hypothesis 1: The history and customs embedded in Barcelona's public institutions, characterized by norms and practices maintained over time, have played an essential role in shaping and maintaining current power dynamics in the institutions tasked with implementing SDG 11.

Question 2: *How do these power dynamics affect the implementation and success of SDG 11 in Barcelona?*

Hypothesis 2: Power relations within public institutions influence the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona. This is because progress can be enabled depending on the distribution of power and the existence of a committed political will.

Question 3: *What lessons could be drawn from the Barcelona experience that could apply to other urban contexts?*

Hypothesis 3: Lessons drawn from Barcelona's experience in implementing the SDGs could offer valuable insights for other urban contexts, highlighting the importance of managing power dynamics appropriately for the success of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, the transferability of these lessons may be conditioned by city-specific contextual factors.

The hypotheses raised will be tested through a detailed analysis of the data collected and a critical review of the existing literature. As the research questions are answered, it will be possible to fill the gaps identified and contribute to understanding the relationship between institutional inertia, power dynamics, and SDG implementation in urban settings.

In this case study, implications of institutional inertia and power dynamics on the implementation and outcomes of SDG 11 will be explored. The interview analysis will provide direct insight into the challenges and successes experienced in practice, providing a solid basis for assessing the hypotheses raised.

3. Theoretical framework

This research is closely linked to two fundamental theories: historical institutionalism and discursive institutionalism. Together, they form a comprehensive framework structured in two dimensions: the structural dimension, based on agency, and the discursive dimension, both essential for a holistic understanding of the complex power dynamics within Barcelona's public institutions.

3.1 Historical Institutionalism

Historical institutionalism, a prominent stream within neo-institutionalism, posits that the state is not a homogenous and monolithic entity. It is instead interpreted as a layered network composed by stakeholders and organisations, which hold different degrees of power and influence (Pierson and Skocpol, 2005; Steinmo, 2001). This approach focuses on the examination of long-term political structures and processes, viewing institutions and their underpinning constructs as arenas in which various players confront their interests.

The conceptual framework proposed by historical institutionalism (hereafter, HI) stands as a relevant instrument to explore the interaction of structures, processes, and events in the design of the political terrain. This approach is distinguished by the integration of concepts such as inertia and path dependence in institutions, along with other concepts such as critical junctures, understood as the transformative capacity of critical event. This framework provides a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of political dynamics. In the present study, we draw on HI, building on the contributions of prominent scholars such as Pierson (2000), David Collier (2021) and others, in order to unpack the complexities inherent in political continuity and change.

Partially grounded in economic theories, Pierson (2000) examines the self-reinforcing nature of institutional processes, arguing that decisions and outcomes at one point in time can influence future developments. Pierson (2000) defines path dependence as a "Positive Feedback loop" in which each advance engenders further advances, making it challenging to modify institutions once established.

By applying path dependence theory to political institutions, Pierson illustrates how the institutional matrix shapes the behavior of individuals and organizations, which adapt to pre-

existing institutions. If institutions create incentives for certain behaviors, people will invest in maintaining them, even if they are not economically productive.

In his analysis, Pierson identifies five mechanisms that make the political sphere particularly prone to self-reinforcing, or path-dependent, behavior:

- Salience of collective action
- Status quo Bias
- High density of institutions
- Power asymmetries
- Short time horizons

Each characteristic contributes to the prevalence of positive feedback processes in politics, leading to the persistence of existing institutional arrangements.

For example, collective action dilemmas like urban sustainability, generate feedback loops, as political actors cannot act in isolation and must constantly evaluate the winning strategy, thus favoring existing organizations and reinforcing their presence. The dense network of institutions around the central government, with its risk aversion and high cost of reform, as Pearson (2000) states, also fosters path dependency. In addition, opportunities to use political authority to increase power asymmetries and the complexity and opacity of politics further enhance self-reinforcing behavior and institutional inertia too.

Paul Pierson's (2000) path dependence refers to how historical decisions or events can establish a certain direction that institutions and policies tend to follow over time. Once a trajectory has been established, the costs of changing it can be very high, leading to resistance to change in institutions and policies. Pierson (2000) highlights how initial decisions, even minor ones, can have long-lasting and far-reaching effects because of this path dependence. The analysis in the present thesis will also focus on understanding the mechanisms at work in the resistance to change that Pierson discusses. In this way, it will seek to understand the tendency of institutions to resist change due to the norms established by the Path Dependence.

Thus, although both concepts come from historical institutionalism, the study of Path dependence will focus more on how historical decisions and events can establish a trajectory that institutions and policies tend to follow, while the analysis of institutional change resistance mechanisms will seek to understand how these internal dynamics or processes of increasing

returns operate. Thus, legitimising the established Path dependence and by extension maintaining the status quo.

Despite the strong case for path dependency analysis and its reinforcing dynamics and mechanisms, historical institutionalism also recognises the potential for significant change through the concept of critical junctures. Critical junctures theory argues that large, rapid and discontinuous changes can alter the course of institutional evolution. These turning points interrupt path-dependent processes, allowing for a change in the social order and initiating new path-dependent processes. David Collier (2022) defines critical juncture as a period of significant change that often manifests itself in different ways in different countries (or other units of analysis) and is postulated to produce different legacies.

The application of HI to our analysis lies in its recognition of both continuity and change in political institutions. Using Pierson's (2000) insights and the concept of path dependency, and the transformative potential of critical junctures outlined by the David Collier (2022), we can undertake a detailed and nuanced analysis of the political landscape, shedding light on the mechanisms of institutional inertia and change, elucidating the complex dynamics that shape political processes and outcomes.

In order to analyze research question 1, "How have historical and political events shaped the configuration and evolution of contemporary power dynamics in Barcelona's public institutions responsible for the implementation of SDG 11?" HI framework we just mentioned will be used. In doing so, it will explore the influence of path dependency and existing institutional norms on current power dynamics in Barcelona. With the help of the concepts proposed by Pierson (2000) the Collier brothers (2022) and other scholars, will help us to understand how historical policies and institutions have set the path for recent policy decisions.

A combination of archive research, document analysis, and semi-structured in-depth interviews will be employed to illuminate the historical evolution of SDG-related institutional practices in Barcelona. These methods will enhance the understanding of how historical patterns of governance have influenced the implementation of SDG 11 in the city, potentially limiting its capacity for innovation and strategy adjustment. In summary, this approach combines the theoretical power of HI with a robust and flexible research methodology to provide a nuanced understanding of the interplay of structures, processes, and events in shaping the political landscape.

3.2 Discursive Institutionalism

The conceptual framework proposed by Discursive Institutionalism (hereafter, DI) is also a fundamental theoretical framework for exploring power dynamics within public institutions in Barcelona and their influence on the implementation and success of SDG 11. This framework is relevant because of its focus on the critical role of ideas and discourse in politics and policy-making, as postulated by Vivien Schmidt (2008), Norman Fairclough (1992) and Ruth Wodak (2001).

DI is handy for this study as it provides analytical tools to examine how ideas and discourses on SDG 11 are formulated, negotiated, and communicated within Barcelona's institutions and how these interactions can result in institutional changes. This theoretical approach is equally relevant to understanding how power dynamics can affect the formation of discourses and subjective perceptions of the policy environment, which in turn can influence the implementation of SDG 11.

This thesis aims to provide a deeper understanding of the complexities of these dynamics by adopting three key concepts from the DI: discursive skills, policy framing, and communicative and coordinative discourses.

Schmidt (2011) distinguishes between foreground discursive skills and background discursive skills. The former refers to the deliberate and persuasive arguments that actors make to change or maintain existing policies and institutions. On the other hand, the latter is internal to actors and is often subconscious, allowing them to speak and act without the need to follow rational or external rules consciously. In this study, we will examine how institutional actors in Barcelona use their discursive skills to negotiate and communicate ideas about the implementation of SDG 11.

Another essential DI tool is the use of policy frameworks. These are coherent systems of normative and cognitive elements that define the mechanisms of identity formation, principles of action, and methodological prescriptions for actors who subscribe to the same framework (Carstensen, 2011). In this study, the policy frameworks at play in the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona will be identified and analyzed, examining how norms and preferences that influence behavior can persist and change over time.

Finally, Schmidt's (2011) distinction between communicative and coordinative discourses will be applied, depending on the institutional context in which they occur. Coordinative discourses develop in the political sphere when political actors are engaged in policy creation, deliberation, and agreement. Communicative discourses, on the other hand, are those that attempt to influence public opinion and gain public support or disapproval for policy ideas.

In order to answer these questions accurately, this study will examine how different actors exercise power through these different forms of discourse. Following Foucault (1972), the study will recognize that power is not simply a phenomenon that some actors possess, and others do not but is a relational phenomenon that infiltrates all forms of human interaction. According to Foucault, power is present in all social relations and is exercised globally, permeating all levels of society. Hopefully, this approach will reveal the subtle but influential ways in which power is exercised in the discussions on the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona.

Furthermore, it is crucial to consider the specific characteristics of SDG 11 in exploring these dynamics. This development goal aims to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, which is particularly relevant in a city like Barcelona, known for its urban challenges and opportunities. The DI will be handy in identifying how discussions on what inclusion, safety, resilience, and sustainability mean can influence the interpretation and implementation of this goal in the city.

In summary, this theoretical framework provides a powerful and sophisticated lens for understanding the role of ideas, discourse, and power in policy formulation and institutional change. By applying the DI to the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona, this study hopes to reveal the underlying forces that can facilitate or hinder the realization of the city's sustainable development aspirations. Furthermore, by adopting this approach, the study also hopes to provide relevant insights for other cities seeking to implement the SDGs effectively.

The discursive, institutional approach is notable for its attention to the subtleties of discourse and its ability to capture dimensions of power, which are often overlooked in other theoretical frameworks. With this framework, it is hoped that the study will contribute significantly to the existing literature on SDG implementation in urban contexts and, more generally, sustainable development policy. In doing so, this research is committed to shedding light on the intricate and multifaceted nature of discourse and power in urban development policy and advancing

our understanding of how public institutions can effectively promote more sustainable and inclusive development.

3.3 Integrating the theories

Integrating these two theories provides a multidimensional approach to understanding the institutional dynamics involved in SDG 11 implementation. Historical Institutionalism serves as a backdrop, outlining the constraints and opportunities arising from past structures. On the other hand, Discursive Institutionalism adds another level of complexity by highlighting how ideas and discourse shape institutions and influence actors' behavior. This integration recognizes the complexity of institutional processes and allows for a complete answer to the research questions.

3.3.1 Operationalization of theoretical concepts

The theoretical concepts of the two theoretical streams used in the thesis are operationalized as follows:

- **Institutional change resistance mechanisms, path dependence, and critical junctures**: Institutional change resistance mechanisms will be measured by examining resistance to change, difficulty in implementing new policies, bureaucratic or organizational obstacles, and dependence on existing policies or practices over time. Path dependence (Pierson, 2000) will be measured by examining past decisions, the consequences of these past decisions on the current situation, discarded alternatives, and possible changes in the past that could happen in the future. The degree of change or continuity in Barcelona's institutions related to SDG 11 will be used as an indicator for these two concepts. Finally, Critical Junctures (Collier, 2022) will be measured by examining the different significant changes that have occurred in Barcelona, critical decisions that have been made, different crises that have occurred, and changes in governments and administrations.

- **Discursive interactions**: Building on Schmidt's (2008), Fairclough's (1992) and Wodak's (2001) framework, discursive interactions will be tracked by analyzing the interviews, policy documents, meeting minutes, and other related texts for emerging narratives, discursive coalitions, and the framing of SDG 11. According to interviewes, these will be measured by examining how different actors understand urban

sustainability, the role of institutions, different perceptions of change and institutional inertia or path dependency, and the perception of the role of different key actors involved.

		CONCEPTS			
		DISCURSIVE INSTITUTIONALISM (DI)	HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM		
			CRITICAL JUNCTURES (CJ)	PATH DEPENDENCE (PD)	Institutional change resistance mechanisms (ICRM)
CODES	1	Urban sustainability (how it is conceptualised, and how it is represented in terms of problems and solutions)	Significant change (references to significant changes in policy, strategy or implementation of SDG 11)	Past decisions (past decisions that have influenced the implementation of SDG 11)	Resistance to change
	2	The role of institutions (how institutions are described, and how they are perceived in terms of their role and effectiveness in the implementation of SDG 11)	Critical decisions (mention of decisions that would have a considerable impact on the course of SDG 11 implementation)	Consequences of past decisions in the current situation	Difficulty implementing new policies
	3	The perceptions of change and inertia (how these processes are described, and which discourses stand out, continuity or change?)	Crisis (references to critical events that have influenced the implementation trajectory of SDG 11)	Alternatives that were discarded due to past decisions	Bureaucratic or organizational obstacles
	4	Actors and roles (who is perceived as responsible for the implementation of SDG 11, how the roles are conceptualised, and the relationships between the different actors)	New administration / new politics (changes in the administration or in the policies that resulted in significant changes)	Trajectory changes that could happen in the future	Dependence on existing policies or practices

Table 1. Operationalization of the concepts proposed by HI and DI, together with the themes identified.

3.4 Synthesis

The selection of this theoretical duo is particularly appropriate for this study, as it provides a multidimensional analysis that can address the complexity of Barcelona's institutional configuration and power dynamics. The framework allows us to explore how institutional structures, actor behaviors, and discursive practices intertwine and shape the implementation of SDG 11, thus comprehensively answering the research questions. This research acknowledges that each theoretical approach has its limitations. However, their combined use allows us to overcome these limitations by offering a multifaceted perspective, making this theoretical framework appropriate and powerful for understanding and analyzing the institutional dynamics of SDG 11 implementation in Barcelona. This holistic understanding can provide valuable insights for other urban contexts facing similar SDG implementation challenges.

4. Methodological framework

The previous chapters outlined the theoretical underpinnings of this research, the specific questions it seeks to answer, and the theoretical frameworks used in the process. To successfully conduct this research and ensure that the research questions are answered correctly, key methodological decisions must be made. This chapter complements the theoretical foundations previously outlined by providing methodological choices that facilitate understanding the influence of power and politics on the implementation of SDG 11.

4.1 Research approach: critical realism

The research philosophy adopted in this project is critical realism (hereafter CR).

CR focuses on the reasons (causality) for the occurrence of a given phenomenon in a specific context, considering that a causal justification is inferred by clearly identifying interactions between structural entities and contextual conditions (Wynn and Williams, 2012; Scott, 2014). Reality is perceived as an independent and self-contained world, accessible through the perceptual and theoretical lenses of the researcher (Scott, 2014).

The CR approach is used to examine the causal relationship between organisational power, historical politics and the implementation of SDG 11 in the Barcelona context. The research focuses on identifying demi-regularities, semi-predictable patterns that explain the effect of power dynamics on the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona politics (Fletcher, 2017).

4.2 Research design: Case study

The design of this research follows a Case Study, identified by Stake (2005) as a qualitative approach. In essence, this approach involves a meticulous, thorough and systematic investigation of a specific case. The case study not only exposes facts and situations, but also provides an in-depth understanding of the events and contexts in which they occur.

This design was selected for its ability to penetrate the essence of the phenomenon under study, addressing the complexity of a specific case, as suggested by Stake (2005). This ability is reflected in the possibility of extracting details from the interaction of the case with its context. Bresler & Stake (1992) also emphasise that the case study allows for a thorough exploration of elements that characterise a phenomenon.

This methodology has allowed us to illuminate key aspects of the researched reality, especially in relation to the power dynamics and challenges in the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona. In this sense, the case study has proved invaluable in providing meaningful information about a particular institutional situation, which in this case is the focus of our thesis.

4.3 Research sample

Ventura (2017) defines population as the set of entities from which knowledge is sought in a research study. The sample, on the other hand, is a selected subset of that population, the selection of which depends on the sampling strategy (Ventura, 2017). The sampling design is essential to reduce the time and costs of the research, as well as to explore the identified variables or categories in depth.

Ventura and Barboza (2017) note that sample size should be determined based on two criteria: available resources and the requirements of the research analysis. Although more samples can increase the representativeness of the results, sample selection should also be based on input from stakeholders and an assumed margin of error, reliability and probability (Ventura & Barboza, 2017).

Given the focus and objectives of the present research, it was decided to use non-probability sampling, also known as purposive or deliberate sampling, in which not all units of the population have the same probability of being selected (Otzen & Manterola, 2017). Thus, the choice of sample elements was made deliberately by the researcher, according to the objectives of the study and the particular factors of the population of interest.

Kross & Giust (2019) suggest that, in qualitative studies, the sample tends to be small and non-random. In these cases, the depth and quality of the information is more relevant than the sample size. The sample for this study was selected based on its key position in the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona.

The actors selected for the sample were identified on the basis of their involvement in the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona. It should be noted that policies related to SDG 11 are not always referred to as such, but are often referred to as sustainability, urbanism, community, housing and other policies. This reflects the inherent complexity of SDG 11 implementation, which encompasses diverse areas. The institutions selected for the sample had been involved

in policies related to the four central axes of SDG 11 and their area of influence covers the city of Barcelona.

Key actors from different public institutions in Barcelona were asked to participate in the triangulation and data collection. These participants, with their diversity of roles and responsibilities, provided a valuable contribution to the research.

ASSIGNED CODE	POSITION	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	INSTITUTION AND ITS COMPETENCE AREA
RC	Director of the Technical Office for Programming and Agenda 2030	28	**Barcelona City Council.** The Barcelona City Council is the body with the most significant powers in the city, as it regulates the daily life of citizens and essential issues such as urban planning, transport, road safety management, or maintenance of public roads. It is also responsible for constructing municipal facilities, such as kindergartens, sports centers, libraries, residences for older adults, and public housing.
AT	Director of the Agenda 2030 and SDGs Unit	16	**Barcelona Provincial Council**. The Barcelona Provincial Council is a local government institution that promotes the progress and welfare of the citizens of its territorial scope: the province of Barcelona, 311 connected municipalities. This represents 24% of the total surface area of Catalonia and 74% of the Catalan population (5.7 million people). It acts directly by providing services and, above all, in cooperation with the municipalities.
AR	Director of the Sustainability and Environmental Education Service	24	**Barcelona Metropolitan Area.** The AMB is the public administration of the metropolitan area of Barcelona, a large urban conurbation comprising 36 municipalities. The AMB has competencies in three areas: land use planning, urban planning, and infrastructures of metropolitan interest.
LA	Director of the equipment for the Caramel neighbourhood centre	11	**Equipment for the Caramel neighbourhood centre.** The Equipment for the Neighbourhood Centre is a community-based facility that promotes creating projects, participation, and activities based on dialogue with the environment and networking with organizations and people in the neighborhood to respond to social needs and demands in a participatory and inclusive manner.
JP	Director of Sustainability at FC Barcelona	30	**FC Barcelona.** Futbol Club Barcelona is a Catalan sports association of a private nature, constituted on 29 November 1899.

Table 2. Description of participants.

The table above shows the description of each participant's responsibilities, highlighting the diversity and richness of their experience. Most of the participants were women, and all were of Spanish nationality, which did not limit the representativeness of the results, given that they all share a common worldview and customs framed in the Spanish context.

4.4 Data collection techniques

4.4.1 Semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview, according to Díaz and Martínez (2013), is defined by its flexibility and adaptability in research, favouring a deeper understanding of the subject of study beyond the immediate answers. Following Díaz and Martínez (2013) they highlight the importance of a thorough preparation of the questions, which, being open-ended, require a flexible posture from the interviewer to accommodate unforeseen answers and guide the interview as it develops. This creates an environment in which the interviewee feels comfortable to freely express his or her point of view, which in turn allows the researcher to deepen his or her study. The structure used for the semi-structured interviews conducted in this study is reflected on *Appendix 1*.

4.4.2 Documentary analysis

Bowen (2009) characterises documentary analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents to identify gaps in knowledge worthy of further research. This includes bibliographic description, classification, indexing and data mining. According to Ngulube (2015), information analysis is fundamental to make decisions based on the interpretation and synthesis of the underlying messages in documents. This process has evolved beyond the mere collection and reading of texts, requiring a more detailed and prospective analysis (Ngulube, 2015). He also argues that documentary and informational processes are complementary, focused on presenting information in a way that is accessible to the user. For this study, official documents of Barcelona City Council and Barcelona Provincial Council, as well as decrees, plans and regulations related to the topic of study will be used in the analysis.

4.5 Development of the research

This chapter focuses on describing the analysis of data collected from key informants representing public institutions linked to the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona. The aim is to understand the impact of power dynamics on these processes.

The informants were carefully selected following the principles of qualitative research, and confidentiality was guaranteed during the interview process. A sample of the Confidentiality Document signed by the interviewees can be found in *Appendix 2*. Subsequently, the interviews were meticulously transcribed, preserving grammar and punctuation, to capture the full context of the discourse.

The data analysis followed a two-level approach. First, the transcripts were analysed through a process of discursive and thematic interpretation, following techniques recognised in qualitative research (Sayago, 2014). This process included the creation of notes, identification of emerging categories and discursive structures, which facilitated the credibility of the findings. Then, a triangulation of the observed categories with the theories and concepts previously defined in the theoretical framework of this research was carried out.

In the second level of analysis, the discursive and thematic syntheses of the informants were grouped, considering all the emerging categories. The most significant phrases were highlighted in italics to underline their importance in each emerging category.

The discursive and thematic approach was selected for its potential to reveal variable categories and units of analysis, providing a precise and detailed analysis (Sayago, 2014). Furthermore, this approach was chosen in recognition of the researcher's autonomy to define an appropriate research method depending on the context and circumstances of their study.

In summary, discursive, and thematic analysis was fundamental to reveal the influence of power dynamics on the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona's public institutions.

4.6 Rigour Criteria in Qualitative Research

Methodological rigour in qualitative research enhances the originality and credibility of the study. In this case study, the criteria proposed by Stake (2005) are adopted, which emphasise the use of multiple data collection techniques to ensure the validity and verifiability of the results. Furthermore, Creswell & Miller (2000) identify triangulation and the reflexivity of the

researcher as essential elements for this rigour (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The quality criteria used in this study are presented below.

4.6.1 Triangulation

There are different types of triangulation: of sources, theories, methods and researchers (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Our study employed triangulation of sources and methods, between the information from the semi-structured interviews and the documentary analysis. Theoretical triangulation was also used to inform and analyse the findings, promoting a deeper understanding of the study.

4.6.2 Researcher reflexivity

Creswell and Miller (2000) highlight the relevance of researcher reflexivity, i.e. self-awareness about assumptions, beliefs, biases and prejudices that may influence the course of the research. This criterion allows for an understanding of positions and perspectives that change throughout the study and allows for the identification and reduction of biases.

In the present study, potential bias related to the participation and openness of the interviewees, given the importance of their roles, was mitigated by ensuring their comfort and the confidentiality of their responses for academic use only. Sufficient time was provided for the full expression of their ideas, and a commitment was made to objective acceptance of the research findings. With these approaches, the veracity of the data obtained was confirmed.

4.7 Research ethics

The researcher, as part of his preparation, has become familiar with the Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and the Dutch Code of Ethics. These codes are of utmost importance for all social and behavioural science research conducted at Dutch universities. Accordingly, the researcher undertakes to comply strictly with these codes during the conduct of this study (The Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), n.d.).

5. Interpretation of results and analysis

As explained in the previous section, in order to proceed with the analysis of the interviews and the literature review, a triangulation of the categories observed with the theories and concepts previously defined in the theoretical framework of this research has been carried out. In this sense, in this section we proceed to answer the three sub-questions derived from the main research question, using the lenses of Historical Institutionalism and Discursive Institutionalism, which in turn have been categorised by different themes that have been identified in the analysis of the interviews.

5.1 Data Analysis through the Lens of Historical Institutionalism

For the analysis of historical institutionalism, the themes that emerged from the coding of the interviews are identified and are set out in the coded data tables, in Appendix 3.

5.1.1 Institutional change resistance mechanisms

5.1.1.1 Resistance to change

Resistance to change is a multifaceted phenomenon that can be observed at multiple levels, from economic to cultural. In this section, the testimony of different key actors in the context of sustainability in Barcelona is analysed in order to understand these challenges from different perspectives.

In this sense, JP points to the economic perspective: "*The problem with sustainability is that it is often expensive and requires financial resources. These investments end up paying off over the years, but to make the numbers add up you have to "juggle". The budgetary issue is always uncomfortable*".

This response illustrates one of the main obstacles to implementing sustainability measures: cost and return on investment. Economics becomes a factor of resistance when the initial cost of these measures is valued, without taking into account their long-term cost-effectiveness.

AT points to another form of resistance to change: cultural resistance in organisations. "*For indicators that are easier to measure, there is more willingness to implement them, but with those that are difficult to measure (education, equality or R&D), there is more reluctance. I think it is a question of working culture within the organisation, rather than political will*".

Such a statement suggests that the willingness to implement sustainable change may be limited by entrenched cultural practices within the organisation, rather than a lack of political will.

AT adds another layer to this cultural resistance when she mentions: "*What we are trying to do at the Barcelona Provincial Council, together with Barcelona City Council and other municipalities, is to encourage these internal dynamics to change, but it is not always easy as not everyone is willing to listen to experiences and practices of other institutions. Solving this aspect is very complicated and burdensome. It takes a lot of time and patience. We see how information barriers and the lack of cooperation and communication in organisations can be an obstacle to change*".

Finally, RC points out that it is the global political dynamics that may be affecting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: "*The world is in a very complicated dynamic at the political level. It was not expected either that all these beastly leaderships like Trump, Putin and Erdogan, all of them older, ultra-conservative men, would emerge. People who have no global agenda in mind, only national interests. I think that this has permeated, it has gradually transferred itself into society*".

This analysis points to resistance at the macro, political and global level, which can influence the willingness and ability to implement change at the local level. This type of resistance, systemic resistance to change, can be more difficult to address than internal organisational resistance.

How do organisations and their individuals deal with these obstacles and thus with resistance to change?

AT indicates that "*actions are promoted at the institutional level, as well as from the private sector, through universities or third sector organisations. But what is proving more difficult is to build a multi-sectoral dialogue. The 2030 Agenda, in its discourse, proposes a paradigm shift, doesn't it? Well, it is clear that, if we continue as we have been doing, we will not solve anything*".

This statement reflects the importance of cross-sectoral cooperation in overcoming sustainability challenges. Multi-sectoral dialogue and collaboration can help overcome internal resistance, bringing diverse perspectives and creating a shared understanding of problems and solutions.

On the other hand, RC discusses the influence of the global context on local sustainability efforts, highlighting the resilience of local actors in the face of global adversity. "*There was progress being made in some areas, but the pandemic had a strong impact. Another important issue is global inflation, war, climate change, rising food prices, energy... issues that are on everyone's lips*".

However, RC provides a concrete example of resistance and overcoming in relation to SDG 11 and the provision of social housing: "*it was the only one of all the targets where there was resistance, where other areas and sectors told us 'we don't want it, we don't want these targets, we don't want these levels'. We discussed it a lot, but in the end they accepted it because it was very ambitious, and if it is ambitious it is an incentive for the City Council to continue investing, because it is good publicity*".

This experience illustrates how initial resistance can be overcome with an ambitious strategy, turning challenges into opportunities for improvement. This section has shown that, despite the presence of resistance to change at multiple levels, there are strategies for overcoming it.

5.1.1.2 Difficulty in implementing new policies

The policy field, especially when it comes to implementing new policies, is fraught with substantial challenges. The need for coordination and governance is fundamental to the implementation of new policies, but it is a challenge that organisations are often unable to overcome. JP hints at this, stating that "*sustainability issues are very cross-cutting and need governance. There needs to be improved internal coordination and the usual cross-cutting*".

Following this line and examining this problem in more depth, RC indicates that "*intra-institutional participation is indeed a major challenge, as it involves not only time and resources, but also the management of collective expectation, which can easily lead to frustration. As you mentioned, finding a balance in a choir with a diversity of voices is a complex task. How can we integrate them all? Even more, how do we integrate them with the firmly established vision that a government needs to maintain its structure?*"

This perspective adds an additional layer of complexity, suggesting that successful policy implementation depends not only on coordination, but also on managing expectations and integrating diverse voices into a single chorus.

In this context, successful implementation of sustainability policies requires a change of mindset in society, a task that can be long and difficult. Lack of institutional support is another major obstacle to policy implementation, as highlighted by AR, who states that "*local administrations carry out most sustainability policies, but they are not provided with sufficient resources*".

AT points to a similar problem in her response: "*The problem with the implementation of these agendas at the local level is that there is no concrete data. A municipality does not know what level of achievement it has in water management issues, for example, because this is normally handled by the Metropolitan Area*".

This lack of information and coordination between different levels of government can make it more difficult to implement new policies. To explore this problem further, it is useful to review the insight of LP, who highlights the important issue of continuity and follow-up in policy implementation: "*It would be important that things were here to stay for a while and could be developed in the long term. If there is a change of government and policies, you never know if what you have implemented so far works, or how it can be improved. It seems that what one has done, the other wants to erase*".

In summary, implementing new policies presents a wide range of challenges, including the need for improved coordination and transversality, the management of collective expectation, cultural resistance to sustainability, lack of institutional support, lack of accurate information, the need for continuity in policy implementation, and financial problems. Understanding these challenges is an important step towards developing more effective and sustainable policies.

5.1.1.3 Bureaucratic or organisational obstacles

The bureaucracy and organisation of sustainability projects often encounter numerous obstacles to effective implementation. JP describes this situation as a coordination challenge: "*In order to carry out sustainability actions from the public administration, coordination between public and private entities is necessary, since a part of public urbanism is being affected, where there are also private uses. Therefore, it is essential that both internal and external stakeholders intervene*".

This coordination implies the alliance of all actors, a definition of concise objectives and their commitment to defend them. RC also highlights the importance of participation in this process,

and suggests that better management of participation could facilitate the implementation of initiatives: "*many people perceive participation as merely informative. However, if properly managed, informative participation can be extremely valuable. Ideally, the aim should be to make decisions after having listened to all those who have something relevant to contribute. This goal is worth aiming for.*"

In the same direction, AT highlights the lack of cooperation and coordination as a major obstacle: "*We now work in a sectoral way, and we find that sometimes we have cross-impacts, i.e. by carrying out an initiative that we think is beneficial for one thing, we end up harming an initiative of another department, organisation or sector, and this is due to a lack of cooperation and coordination*".

This lack of synchronisation can result in poor project performance, and even in a counterproductive effect, which ends up harming rather than benefiting.

Another relevant difficulty, mentioned by AT, is the lack of reliable and accessible data, preventing informed and effective decision-making: "*Municipalities do not have the data for these indicators, they do not have many competences and they cannot reorient their policies because they do not have the necessary data*".

In response to this situation, AR suggests a change of attitude within administrations: "*Sustainability departments need to get used to requesting resources, as these are often available to administrations, as well as demanding that teams be multidisciplinary, incorporating professionals from the social sciences (…), a common practice in other countries*".

This change would imply breaking with the current dynamic. Resources, both financial and human, are a key factor for the success of sustainability projects.

Another obstacle posed by AT is the bureaucracy of administrations. The bureaucratic barrier can paralyse projects and make their implementation slow and costly, especially in a context of constant change, where it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of projects and make improvements. AT points out that "*the culture within the administration and the administrative procedure is one of the biggest barriers we face in our work*".

In a similar spirit, AR points out that "*it is essential to simplify bureaucracy in order to be able to implement sustainability projects. Currently, the procedures are very complicated and costly, which makes it difficult to implement them*".

LP poses another challenge, which is the lack of human resources dedicated to sustainability management. Staff shortages can limit the capacity to implement initiatives and can reduce the efficiency of projects.

In addition, according to LP, the existence of restrictive regulations can also complicate the implementation of sustainability initiatives: "*Regulations are very necessary because they give you the legal framework to be able to operate. However, we find that there are very restrictive regulations that limit us a lot when it comes to being able to implement actions that seem interesting to us and that could have a positive impact*".

In conclusion, the effective implementation of sustainability projects is obstructed by a number of bureaucratic and organisational challenges. The solution to these obstacles would be better coordination and cooperation between different administrations and sectors, the creation of multidisciplinary working teams, the revision and adaptation of restrictive regulations, the simplification of bureaucratic procedures and the implementation of a long-term strategic vision. This, together with an increase in human resources dedicated to sustainability, could allow for more effective and efficient implementation of sustainability projects.

5.1.1.4 Dependence on existing policies or practices

Dependence on existing policies or practices is a challenge that hinders the effective implementation of sustainability policies. According to JP, this dependence is "*more pronounced in public institutions compared to the private sector, where there is greater flexibility to change existing practices*". This institutional inertia can hinder the successful implementation of sustainable policies, representing the need to find ways to overcome this dependency.

AT highlights how reliance on existing political practices can "*make it difficult to harmonise different agendas*", such as the 2030 Agenda and the Urban Agenda. The lack of synchronization between these agendas due to the dependence on existing political practices "*creates difficulties in working together*".

In addition, periodic elections every four years creates "*dependence on past practices*", which often leads to the dismantling of efforts made by the previous administration and undermines the continuity of long-term goals. AT points out that "*it is very difficult to make progress, because on issues such as the SDGs, the force of time is much greater than municipal politics*".

In this regard, RC highlights how "*the dependence on the existing organisational structure of the City Council may hinder a greater centralisation of the areas responsible for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs*". In order to improve this situation, RC suggests "*establishing a clearer reporting standard*" and placing the areas dedicated to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs more centrally within the municipal organisation. He says: "*Sometimes the messages we receive are too diverse. These are not contradictory messages, but the diversity can create confusion. Perhaps a clearer and more direct message from the centre of the organisation would be helpful*".

This dependence on existing policies or practices can blur the coherence of messages and strategies related to the implementation of sustainability policies. In order to achieve more effective and coherent implementation of sustainability policies, it is necessary to address this dependency and look for ways to encourage flexibility and adaptation to new approaches and practices.

5.1.2   Path dependence
5.1.2.1 Past decisions

<u>Influence of International Agreements</u>

As JP points out, there has been a change in the mindset towards sustainability in recent years, mainly influenced by various international agreements. The Paris agreements and the ratification of Glasgow, as well as EU policies and the UN SDGs, have led to sustainability being seen as essential for human survival. According to JP, these agreements "*define a framework that accelerates the conviction that more needs to be done in the area of sustainability*". In this way, the impact of these international agreements on the shaping of sustainability policies and practices at the local level is evident.

This perception of sustainability as an urgent necessity is consistent with AR's comments. In her words, "*Barcelona has done formidable work on sustainability*" since its participation in the 1992 Rio Conference. This conference marked a turning point in the mindset towards

sustainability, establishing the Sustainability Council and promoting Agenda 21. Here we can see how the adoption of international policies has influenced sustainability practices in Barcelona. The result, in AR's words, has been that:

"Barcelona has not only maintained but also expanded these commitments, bringing together more than 1,000 local entities, including hundreds of schools and working together with internationally recognised municipal organisations such as CGLU and Metropolis. This effort has allowed the sustainability discourse to permeate the whole city".

RC, meanwhile, points out that Barcelona's increased involvement in international affairs has been a decisive factor in the consolidation of its sustainability policy. According to him, "*Barcelona, as a city, not only participates in all international networks, but often finds itself leading them and hosting their headquarters*". This international involvement would have favoured the exchange of practices and knowledge of global trends, pushing the city to develop a solid sustainability strategy and practice.

Incorporating the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into local policies

The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs have been another key influence on sustainability policies and practices. According to AT, since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, the County Council of Barcelona (Diputació) started working within this framework. This engagement was done through the International Relations Office, as the 2030 Agenda is a United Nations initiative. This implementation was facilitated by the fact that other Agendas already existed, according to AT, "*The fact that other Agendas already existed made it easier for this format and framework to be well received*". This highlights the importance of existing practices and policies in facilitating new initiatives.

In the same vein, RC reaffirms the impact of these international frameworks on local policies, pointing out that "*the incorporation of the SDGs in Barcelona City Council has not been difficult*" as "*there was already a line of work in this direction*".

The persistence of past sustainability practices: urban ecology as a precursor to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

Another idea that stands out in this section is the importance of the persistence of past sustainability practices. Indeed, new policies and practices often do not emerge in a vacuum,

but are deeply influenced by pre-existing initiatives and frameworks. For example, the concept of urban ecology in Barcelona, as AR notes, *"was a precursor to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs"*.

RC also points out that the city already had two major policy initiatives, "The Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona" and "The Commitment to Sustainability". The latter, born out of the Local Agenda 21 movement in the 1990s, has been in place for more than two decades, consolidating itself as a key policy of Barcelona City Council. This previous trajectory, according to RC, "*facilitated the reception and implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the city*".

This reliance on existing sustainability practices highlights the importance of analysing sustainability practices and policies within their historical context. A broader understanding of precedents can provide clearer directions for future sustainability policies. The incorporation of sustainability involves not only the implementation of new policies and practices, but also the continuity and adaptation of existing sustainability practices.

EU Policy Influence

The European Union is another key actor that has had a significant influence on sustainability policies and practices in Barcelona. According to AT, "the EU has a very important role" in promoting sustainability, as many of Spain's sustainability policies are based on EU directives. This EU influence can be seen in the areas of energy and climate change, where the County Council (Diputació) has adopted EU guidelines on clean energy and the fight against climate change. AT stresses that "*the County Council has incorporated these European directives into its daily work, to the extent that they are an essential part of its sustainability policy*".

Influence of national politics

Furthermore, the nomination of Pedro Sánchez as Prime Minister of Spain in 2018, in a context of growing awareness of sustainability, had a decisive influence. As RC notes, one of Sánchez's first actions was the creation of the Agenda 2030 Office, "*an entity operating directly under his supervision from Moncloa*". This decision was an important additional boost for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the local level.

For RC, Barcelona's commitment to sustainability intensified in the first decade of the 21st century, under the mayoralty of Joan Clos. This commitment, together with increased

international involvement, made Barcelona City Council aware that other cities and organisations were setting sustainability goals and targets, and that Barcelona had not yet developed a solid strategy and practice in this regard. At that time, according to RC: "*it was decided that it was necessary to take action to rise to this challenge. This effort was backed by the impetus that the Spanish government, led by Pedro Sánchez, was pushing for progress in this area*".

For the future, it is crucial that these factors continue to be considered in the formulation of sustainability policies and practices. This will require not only the consideration of international directives and agreements, but also a thorough understanding of existing local practices and policies. This historical institutionalist approach helps us to understand how current sustainability policies and practices are the result of a dynamic process that combines the influence of existing policies with the incorporation of new international directives and agreements.

5.1.2.2 Consequences of past decisions on the current situation

According to AR, tactical urbanism policies such as the "superblocks" developed under the umbrella of urban sustainability and SDG 11 have had mixed consequences. While biodiversity has increased and pollution has been reduced, this rapid transformation has come as a shock to many citizens. In AR's words, "*The rapid emergence of bike lanes and superblocks has been a change that has affected many citizens, even though as an environmentalist I personally benefit from it*". This statement makes us reflect on the impact that rapid urban transformations can have on the population, highlighting the need to consider the citizens' perspective in these decisions.

This idea connects to AR's second point: the innovative use of climate shelters. In her experience, a simple and low-cost measure, such as opening air-conditioned facilities during high temperatures, can have a big impact.

"*After the good result in the city of Barcelona, we proposed a line of action dedicated to climate shelters. Since then, several municipalities have applied for 6 million euros for shelters, demonstrating that this small measure, originally almost without a budget, has gained value and expanded beyond Barcelona. I consider this expansion a great success*".

To link this conversation to SDG 11, let's consider the words of AT:

"*In these last few years, following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Barcelona Provincial Council* (Diputació) *has trained more than a thousand workers both internal and external in relation to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, therefore, we could say that since its adoption, a lot of resources have been allocated in this regard*."

These initiatives seem to be positive responses to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. But AT also mentions the existence of "*municipalities that have formulated a '2030 Urban Agenda', a mix of Agendas*". This observation raises the question of whether the convergence of agendas can complicate the implementation of effective policies. She adds: "*In fact, it is often the only way they can work these agendas with the few resources they have*".

On the other hand, RC mentions the establishment of concrete targets to reduce water consumption and promote social inclusion, highlighting the importance of measurement in the implementation of public policies. In his own words, "*the 2018 Climate Plan already set concrete targets, accompanied by measurable indicators, such as reducing annual water consumption to less than 100 litres per person, and according to the data we have collected, by 2030 this target will be achievable*". This quote makes us reflect on the importance of having clear and measurable objectives in the implementation of public policies.

RC also mentions the creation of a cross-cutting commission in early 2020, which has been responsible for defining these objectives. This statement makes us think about how internal organisation and inter-departmental collaboration are essential for the successful implementation of public policies.

Finally, RC mentions that "*on many occasions, we have collaborated bilaterally to develop these objectives, particularly in areas such as public safety, international trade, economy, among others, which did not previously have strategies with specific objectives*". This shows how Barcelona City Council has collaborated bilaterally to develop these objectives with other areas, especially in sectors that previously did not have strategies with specific objectives.

In summary, this section has delved into the consequences of past decisions on the current situation through a critical analysis of the interviews. The interconnection between the different statements provides a more complete picture of the impact of the implementation of SDG 11 and the 2030 Agenda. This analysis serves as an example of how past decisions can shape and influence the future trajectory of public policy.

5.1.3 Critical junctures

Beginning with the analysis of our sources, AR highlights Barcelona's persistence in promoting sustainability since its participation in the 1992 Rio Conference. This initial involvement led to the creation of the Sustainability Council, along with the promotion of Agenda 21, and over time, this commitment was strengthened by incorporating more than 1,000 local entities in this cause. According to AR, the intensity of this dedication has had a profound impact on the city, making sustainability a fundamental element of its discourse and identity.

Regarding changes in administration and policies, AR notes that "*in recent years, the fight against climate change has been a common hallmark of city governments, almost regardless of political party, although with significant differences*".

Despite the fact that there have been differences in the implementation of this commitment, the political party "Comuns i Iniciativa" are notable for their dedication to environmental policies. An example of this orientation is the "climate refuge schools" project, the superilles, the Climate Plan and a long list of sustainability policies. These initiatives have had an impact beyond Barcelona, influencing other municipalities to replicate these practices.

AR's opinion is complemented by AT's view. According to the later, the Provincial Council decided to implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs as soon as they were adopted in 2015. However, AT also points out that: "*Politically, we have had some complicated years that I think have not helped us in many ways, because it has divided citizens more and perhaps more social and sustainability issues have been neglected. It is also true that the current moment does not help either, I would rather say that we are worse off now than when the 2030 Agenda was adopted*", which may have had an impact on progress on social and sustainability issues and on the implementation of the SDGs.

RC, for his part, deals with the political context, alluding to the 2008 crisis and its influence on the municipalist left. In his words:

"*I believe that the onset of the crisis in 2008 marked a moment of major debacle, especially in the economic and construction fields. This problematic situation was further aggravated when, in 2011, there was a significant setback for the municipalist left in Barcelona and Catalonia. After a long and remarkable trajectory, the municipalist left found itself in the midst of an identity crisis, making the search for a new ideological framework essential. We needed to*

raise our heads with pride, with the conviction to say 'we have new ideas, we have a vision and a project'. It was in this complex context that the 2030 Agenda emerged".

According to RC, this decision contributed to giving a more defined political identity to Sánchez's government and to the incorporation of socialist municipalism in Barcelona City Council.

Also relevant is LP's response, who mentions that *"currently there is a concern that goes down vertically. In the dialogue now there are tasks that have to do with feminism, interculturalism, the most vulnerable population, sustainability. This conversation is on the table, and some time ago it wasn't. It has been on the table for about 5 years and it is being translated into action".* This is evidence that a paradigm shift has taken place in recent years.

In her analysis, AT also considers the change of mandate at Barcelona Provincial Council (Diputació) as an important change for Barcelona and for the future implementation of SDG 11. This change brought the Office of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs under the presidency department, a decision that reflects the desire to incorporate the 2030 Agenda throughout the organisation.

AT also mentions the politicisation of the 2030 Agenda, and in this sense, it can be alluded to the fact that "T*he PSOE government took this Agenda and somehow used it as a banner and although it has been politicised a lot, it is also true that the government and the administration have been very concerned about its proper implementation*", suggesting that, despite political adversities, the 2030 Agenda has been an important objective for the administration.

In the same vein, RC highlights Barcelona City Council's commitment to sustainability, which intensified after the Olympic Games and was consolidated during the first decade of the 21st century under former Mayor Joan Clos and subsequently under the left-wing governments of Ada Colau. This commitment was further strengthened when other cities began to set sustainability goals and targets, motivating Barcelona to develop stronger strategies and practices in this area.

In summary, the opinions of the sources cited indicate that, despite the political difficulties and crises that have affected Catalonia and Barcelona, there has been a constant commitment to sustainability and the 2030 Agenda. This commitment has been reflected in initiatives such as the Sustainability Council, the 2030 Agenda Office and the SDGs, and projects such as "climate

refuge schools", among others. This dedication to sustainability is manifested in increased awareness of issues such as feminism, interculturalism, social vulnerability and sustainability, all of which are important components of SDG 11. However, sources also point to the need for continued engagement and the search for new strategies to improve the implementation of Agenda 2030 and SDG 11 in Barcelona and the metropolitan area.

5.1.4 How have historical and political events shaped the configuration and evolution of contemporary power dynamics in Barcelona's public institutions responsible for implementing SDG 11?

The influence of historical and political events on the configuration and evolution of contemporary power dynamics in Barcelona's public institutions responsible for the implementation of SDG 11 can be explained through three variables studied in this thesis: institutional change resistance, path dependency and critical junctures, all of which are concepts from historical institutionalism.

Institutional change resistance, as we have seen, is a phenomenon that leads to the maintenance of the status quo and resistance to change in public institutions. Specifically, in the context of Barcelona, this phenomenon or variable has directly affected the implementation of policies and practices related to the SDGs and, in particular, SDG 11.

It has also been observed that Institutional Change Resistance is manifested through four identified phenomena: Resistance to change, which arises from economic, cultural and structural barriers and is manifested in the slowing down of the adoption of sustainability measures; the implementation of new policies, which is shown to be a challenge due to the lack of intra-institutional and inter-institutional support; bureaucratic and organisational obstacles, especially coordination difficulties, lack of access to reliable data or scarcity of human resources specialised in sustainability; and finally, dependence on existing policies or practices, which makes it difficult to harmonise different agendas or policies, dismantling previous efforts that become obsolete.

However, through this analysis and in each of these phenomena, it has also been possible to identify alternative measures to overcome the obstacles they present, including promoting multi-sectoral dialogue, developing strategic resilience to global adversity, improving inter-institutional coordination, as well as simplifying bureaucratic procedures and increasing transparency.

Path dependency, on its part, is a phenomenon whose materialisation is embodied in the conditioning generated by previous decisions. These decisions, which range from international agreements to local policies, have the capacity to shape the adoption and implementation of new policies. In the context of Barcelona, this phenomenon or variable has directly influenced the current state of implementation of SDG 11. Specifically, it has done so at all levels: international, national and local.

At the international level, various events stand out, such as the Paris and Glasgow agreements and Barcelona's participation in the 1992 Rio Conference, which, together with the policies of the European Union, have had a strong influence at both national and local level.

In this sense, this influence is evident at the national level with political events such as the appointment of Pedro Sánchez and his willingness to align national policies with global commitments, highlighting in this case the creation of the Office of the 2030 Agenda, whose role is fundamental for the adoption of the SDGs in Spain.

However, at the local level and specifically in the city of Barcelona, this influence or dependence has not been only generated by international or national decisions or events, but also by its own path dependence, as Barcelona has been committed to sustainability since the 1990s, following the global and local reorientation towards sustainability.

The analysis of the above phenomena sheds light on the functioning and maintenance of certain dynamics anchored in Barcelona's public institutions. However, they do it only partially, as these dynamics cannot be understood without the presence of a third phenomenon or variable: critical junctures.

Critical junctures are understood as key moments or events with the capacity to alter and/or solidify the dependence of the institutional trajectory or inertia towards the aforementioned institutional dynamics. In the case of Barcelona, the city's participation in the 1992 Rio Conference, the Commitment to sustainability after the Olympic Games during the mandate of Joan Clos, the 2008 financial crisis and the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in 2015, among other events, deserve special attention. These events led to a change in the practices and dynamics that had been in place up to that point and, in turn, gave rise to new dynamics that today influence the implementation of SDG 11 by Barcelona's public institutions.

Thus, on the basis of the case study analysed through the lens of historical institutionalism, we have been able to accredit the fulfilment of the first hypothesis put forward at the start. The practices rooted in Barcelona's public institutions, characterised by norms and customs maintained over time, have played an essential role in the configuration and maintenance of the power dynamics involved in the implementation of SDG 11. It is clear that the influential dynamics of SDG 11 implementation in Barcelona are the result of different critical junctures originating in the 1990s, the result of which was the construction and solidification of power dynamics that have positively influenced the implementation of sustainability policies, and specifically the implementation of SDG 11.

5.2   Data analysis from the lens of Discursive Institutionalism

For the analysis of discursive institutionalism, the themes that emerged from the coding of the interviews are identified and are set out in coded data tables, in Appendix 4.

5.2.1 Urban sustainability: How it's conceptualized and how it's represented in terms of problems and solutions?

The effective application of discursive institutionalism requires not only collecting quotes from interviews, but also a detailed and critical analysis of the ideas and perspectives expressed. This section provides this level of in-depth analysis by exploring the conceptualisations of urban sustainability presented by various individuals in positions of authority.

Starting with AR, an optimistic view of urban sustainability can be observed. She considers society to be in a moment of change, despite challenges that can be perceived as "*almost apocalyptic*". Her reference to "*degrowth*" is indicative of emerging visions of sustainability that challenge traditional economic conventions, highlighting the presence of new narratives in the discursivity of urban sustainability. She believes that "*younger people (...) are eager to change things. Even a few years ago, talking about degrowth was absolutely taboo. Now, the European Union itself is funding a study to see how Europe could de-grow*".

However, her recognition of the need to learn to "live differently" and "give things up" suggests a perspective that understands sustainability as a commitment that requires significant lifestyle changes.

AT presents a more critical and practical view of sustainability: she criticises the fragmentation of the work, suggesting that the distribution of responsibilities between administrations is problematic. She states: "*Sometimes they have been used as a political weapon* (the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and the Urban Agenda) *because if you understand what their role is, it doesn't make sense for one administration to take one Agenda and another administration to take a different one*".

In this sense, her discourse points to the relationship between politics and the implementation of sustainability policies, highlighting the tension between the theoretical imperatives of sustainability and the practical realities of governance.

Her point about the public perception of sustainability as a predominantly environmental issue, as opposed to the broader concept of "*sustainable development*", reminds us of the importance of discourse in shaping ideas about sustainability.

Furthermore, her observations on the international acceptance of Barcelona's policies, in contrast to their "high unpopularity at the local level", highlight the importance of taking local perspectives into account in discussions on urban sustainability. Finally, her statement: "*progress is being made and we are going in the right direction, often a little slowly. There are political mandates that last four years and then it is very likely that if one has decided something, the one who comes after touches it and spoils it*", underlines on the one hand how the slowness of the process affects morally and on the other hand a frustration shared by many actors in this field: the limitations of electoral cycles when it comes to implementing long-lasting changes.

This perception demonstrates the complexity of adapting global goals to specific local contexts. RC, in this sense, argues that the 2030 Agenda offers a unique opportunity to unify government actions around a common goal of transformation, thus highlighting the importance of coherence and transparency in sustainability governance.

JP, on the other hand, offers a different perspective on urban sustainability. He identifies a growing concern for issues such as feminism, interculturality, social vulnerability and sustainability, suggesting that these issues are now firmly present in the public dialogue. His observation on recent change in this regard is in line with LP's view, who notes that these issues "*were not present about 5 years ago*", indicating the rapidity with which narratives on urban

sustainability can change, highlighting the inherent dynamism in the field of sustainability discourse.

RC highlights the complexity of the interpretation and implementation of the SDGs at the local level. In his speech, some tensions can be observed between the global vision proposed by the SDGs and Barcelona's local needs and priorities. According to RC, "*Something happens with the SDGs, there are issues that are very important for Barcelona City Council and do not appear in the SDGs, such as culture, democracy, sexual diversity and freedom, animal welfare, etc., all these things do not appear explicitly*". This observation gives us a deeper insight into how urban sustainability is interpreted and applied at the local level. It highlights that the conceptualisation of sustainability is a dynamic process that can evolve, and that this adaptation of global goals to local realities may require a creative reinterpretation of the SDGs.

Finally, RC proposes to overcome these challenges and move towards urban sustainability by establishing "*a more connected governance framework that corresponds to Barcelona's aspirations and is more accessible and transparent to all, which allows for an integrated understanding of the City Council's actions, facilitating the detection of any inconsistencies, synergies, neglected areas or insufficient actions, as well as the identification of priorities*".

This statement highlights the importance of effective management and the need for greater transparency in decision-making to promote urban sustainability.

In this way, the interpretation of institutional discourse in relation to urban sustainability helps us to better understand the differences between global and local perspectives, and how these perspectives are negotiated and reinterpreted in the specific context of Barcelona. This analysis gives us a better understanding of the complexities and challenges surrounding the implementation of sustainability policies at the local level.

5.2.2 The role of institutions: How are institutions described and how are they perceived in terms of their role and effectiveness in implementing SDG 11?

Using the freedom of discursive analysis proposed by Schmidt (2011), we explore how institutional actors perceive and describe the role of their respective organisations in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 and the perceived effectiveness of such actions.

AR's discourse is characterised by its perspective on the need to move from individual action to collective transformation. This vision emphasises an institutional conception that values decision-making and policy implementation through awareness-raising and training, but also through the imposition of corrective measures if necessary. AR states: "*Some individuals, already aware, adopt environmental commitment as a matter of course. Others need information or training to act. However, there are those who are indifferent or resistant to change. In these cases, the administration must take action, such as fines or taxes, because it has been shown that without this pressure, certain practices will not change*". Such a view represents an inherent tension in many political-administrative systems, where the balance between education and regulation is seen as crucial for behavioural change. She also welcomes the success of the climate shelter project, underlining the role of inter-institutional cooperation and resource sharing.

AT's discourse offers a vision of a more hierarchical organisational structure with limited interaction between the different administrations. AT suggests that the limited collaboration with Barcelona City Council is due to the relative autonomy of the city, its financial capacity and self-sufficiency in the implementation of its own initiatives. AT says: "*We* (Barcelona Provincial Council), *with the Technical Office of Programming and Agenda 2030, which is the department that handles the whole issue of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs in Barcelona City Council, have a fairly close relationship and we share information, but we do not normally work together, unless it is in the framework of the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, in the framework of the Generalitat. Why? Because Barcelona is absolutely autonomous and has more money and more resources than almost all of us*". This position illustrates the importance of a historical institutionalist perspective, in line with Pierson (2004), where the historical context and specific political trajectories influence the dynamics of cooperation and competition.

In response to this, RC argues: "*There is an indisputable autonomy* (in Barcelona City Council). *We do not offer services that can compete with the private sector, the third sector or other public institutions. So, basically, we work within this autonomy to plan and organise ourselves as we want, and we organise all our policies and services based on this idea, this paradigm and this approach*". RC's perspective sees Barcelona's autonomy as an opportunity to organise and plan policies and services according to the city's own approach, emphasising the importance of the local dimension in the implementation of the SDGs (Carstensen, 2011).

JP argues that the implementation of sustainability policies is a shared responsibility between public and private actors. This underlines a neoliberal approach in which the private sector is a key actor in the implementation of public goals, in line with the literature on network governance (Rhodes, 2007).

Taken together, these discourses evidence diverse conceptions of the role of institutions in the implementation of SDG 11.

While AR emphasises the importance of education and regulation, AT and RC address the challenges of intra-institutional cooperation, highlighting the importance of effective communication within the organisation. On the other hand, JP stresses the role of the private sector, a view that contrasts with the others, which tend to focus more on government action.

This analysis highlights the complexity of SDG implementation at the local and regional level and the importance of understanding institutional actors' perceptions of their role in this process. In addition, it emphasises the need to analyse and resolve possible tensions between actors' perceptions in order to facilitate inter-institutional cooperation and ensure effective implementation of the SDGs.

5.2.3 Perceptions of change and inertia: How are these processes described and what discourses emphasize continuity or change?

The application of discursive theories to the analysis of the interviews offers an enriching perspective on the dynamics between change and inertia in the implementation of sustainability policies in Barcelona.

All the interviews exhibit a certain institutional inertia, though with varying degrees of nuance. This is evident in AR's statement, which highlights the ideological continuum of environmental policies among left-wing parties in Barcelona: "*The political party of the Comuns is distinguished by its orientation towards environmental policies, just as Iniciativa (another left-wing political party) did when it was in the City Council years ago. Sustainability policies are a central element of its brand*". However, RC qualifies these words by arguing that "*the ideology of the Comuns can sometimes lead to the perception that the private sector is either under-represented or, on the contrary, over-represented. This depends on the level of controversy surrounding the issue in question*".

On the other hand, institutional inertia is detected in the resistance to change within the administration. AT argues that *"The main resistance comes from internal bodies or internal services, i.e. the secretariat, the intervention department and the contracting department. The most important thing is that the offer is economical"*. This resistance can be interpreted from a Foucauldian perspective (Foucault, 1972) as a manifestation of the persistence of existing power systems.

Moreover, this institutional inertia is visible in JP's response, who reflects on the implementation of sustainability policies by saying: "*The evolution that has taken place leads to a point where you can't get everything right, but you can't not be sustainable. That's what makes you take action. Sustainability issues will become more and more important out of necessity and conviction*". Thus, he acknowledges the progressive change that has taken place, as well as the inertia that has emerged. According to Schmidt (2008) and Carstensen (2011), this inertia manifests itself in "persistent cognitive and normative constructs" (Carstensen, 2011) that are maintained over time, despite pressures for change (Schmidt, 2008).

Simultaneously, sustainability discourses encourage active change within the system. Schmidt (2011) mentions how change can be induced through discourse, as demonstrated in the 'climate safe schools' initiative mentioned by AR, as well as her call for restructuring for more effective resource management. This dynamic reflects Schmidt's (2011) concept of 'foregrounding discursive skills', where actors deliberately employ discourse to induce change. This aspect is also reflected in RC's observations on global political dynamics, where he argues that the presence of ultra-conservative political leaders influences the implementation of a global agenda such as the 2030 Agenda, affecting the dynamics of change and inertia. Thus, Foucault (1980) argues that power is central to the generation and reproduction of social discourses.

This dynamic is also reflected in the resistance to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda that AT identifies in her response: "*We are now globally in a much worse situation than when the 2030 Agenda was adopted (war in Ukraine, energy crisis, post covid, etc). Therefore, priorities have changed*". Thus, discourses not only reflect social reality, but also shape it, as described by Fairclough (1992) and Wodak (2001). However, AT adds a touch of hope: "*Fortunately, unlike the Millennium Goals or others, the 2030 Agenda has not yet gone out of fashion so to speak, and it is indeed permeating deeply at the local level, in many cases more so than at the state level*".

To conclude, it is pertinent to note that, although this discursive analysis provides a detailed understanding of the interplay between change and inertia in the implementation of sustainability policies in Barcelona, there are certain limitations. A more comprehensive analysis would require broadening the scope to include other relevant actors, such as civil society organisations, interest groups and the media. In addition, a more complete picture of sustainability in Barcelona could be obtained by studying discourses occurring at other levels of governance, such as the national, regional and global levels.

5.2.4 Actors and roles: Who is perceived to be responsible for SDG 11 implementation and how are the roles and relationships between different actors conceptualised?

We begin our analysis with AR's interview. In the course of her entire interview, it becomes clear that her rhetoric highlights the need for increased institutional support for sustainability projects and underlines the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration. To quote her: *"Increased institutional support for sustainability projects and the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration are essential"*. In this particular, her perspective seems to align with the concepts of coordination and communication proposed by Schmidt (2008), seeking a redistribution of power and resources through his discourse (Fairclough, 1992).

We continue our analysis with AT, whose interview sheds light on the concentration of power in Barcelona City Council, a claim that evokes Fairclough's (1992) concept of discursive hegemony. In this construct, the City Council emerges as the dominant entity, relegating other actors to more marginal roles in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and in the centralised management of the EU's Next Generation Funds. AT's critique of the management of these funds is made explicit in her own words:

"EU's Next Generation Funds have encouradged the preparation of Sustainable Agendas by municipalities. The result of this initiative is that all municipalities are implementing this strategy, which is quite common in municipal politics, where they start many actions in a short period of time in order to justify the European Union the obtaining of these funds. This situation has intensified especially in the last year, as the elections are coming up in a matter of weeks".

This observation illustrates the technique of strategic discourse (Schmidt, 2008), where actors use rhetoric to achieve specific goals, in this case, fundraising. Such actions exemplify Carstensen's (2011) concept of 'problem politics', where the definition and treatment of problems by different actors influence policy formation.

RC's perspective, on the other hand, focuses on the tension between different narratives and discourses in the formulation of policies and implementation of SDG 11, as he demonstrates with his testimony: *"With SDG 11 and the issue of providing housing and social renting we had a lot of problems, (...) it was the only one of all the goals that there was resistance from other areas and sectors. We were told "we don't want these goals, we don't want these targets'"*. RC emphasises the need for horizontal and transversal leadership: *"We believe that our area, dedicated to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, should occupy a more central place within the organisation. Currently, it is in a more peripheral mayoral tenure, attributed to the smallest party in the coalition"*.

On his part, JP expresses a clear understanding of the processes and the need for collaboration between actors in the implementation of sustainability policies. As he states, *"In the implementation of sustainability policies, the most important thing is that there is coordination between public and private entities, especially because of the influence that the latter have on the actual implementation of these policies. Therefore, it is imperative that the public administration involves the various stakeholders when planning policies and especially when planning and carrying out their implementation"*.

These interviews, although conducted independently, offer a unique insight into the power dynamics, resource distribution and discursive practices prevalent in the field of sustainability in Barcelona. Despite the different perspectives, they are complementary and together provide a complete picture of the political landscape of sustainability.

To conclude, the interviews with AR, AT, RC and JP illustrate the varied power dynamics, the relevance of collaboration and the crucial role of discourse in the formulation and implementation of sustainability policies in Barcelona. By using various discursive theories, we have been able to better understand how sustainability policies are constructed, communicated and negotiated. Although these actors offer different perspectives, they all contribute to a more complete picture of the power dynamics surrounding sustainability policies.

5.2.5 How do these power dynamics affect the implementation and success of SDG 11 in Barcelona?

To address the second subquestion raised, and as argued throughout the thesis, the theoretical framework used was Discursive Institutionalism, which provided the analytical tools to

examine how ideas and discourses around SDG 11 are formulated, negotiated and communicated in Barcelona's public institutions, and how these interactions could lead to changes or deadlocks in institutions. To this end, four areas have been identified whose perception by key actors in the institutions facilitates the understanding of these interactions and their effect on the implementation of SDG 11.

In this sense, we have examined key actors' perceptions of urban sustainability, the perceived role of institutions, change and inertia and, finally, their perceptions of the different stakeholders and their roles.

The perceived objective and purpose of urban sustainability is seen as a positive one by all interviewed actors. However, when respondents were asked about obstacles in the process of implementation, such as political instrumentalisation, lack of cooperation, stagnation and limitation of implementation due to electoral cycles, or lack of coherence and transparency in the process, their perception turned into a negative one.

Despite this, some of the interviewees show a glimpse of optimism by suggesting that thanks to the discussion of urban sustainability, some issues have emerged in the public debate that were previously minor or even irrelevant, such as feminism, interculturality, social vulnerability or de-growth. In this sense, a variety of perceptions have been identified, ranging from optimistic visions to more critical and practical approaches, highlighting the complexity and dynamism of the perception of urban sustainability by the actors involved in its implementation.

Regarding the perception of the role of institutions in the implementation of SDG 11, the interviews revealed that this perception varied according to the power and competences attributed to each of the institutions. While actors belonging to institutions with independent decision-making power in the implementation of SDG 11 see this high degree of autonomy as positive, actors belonging to institutions with less responsibility in the process perceive this autonomy by central institutions as a problem to be addressed. Therefore, this perception identified in the analysis emphasises, once again, one of the main needs and demands of the interviewees for effective implementation and success of SDG 11 in Barcelona: inter-institutional cooperation.

In terms of the interviewees' perception of institutional change and inertia, criticisms were identified, but especially very diverse and varied observations. In the majority of the interviews,

a shared and critical view on the prioritisation of economic efficiency over sustainability initiatives by internal organs was identified. However, looking at the more neutral reflections made by the interviewees, a wide spectrum of observations on change were identified. Some reflected on the use of discourse as a tool to promote change, while others pointed to the influence of global policy dynamics and leadership on the implementation of local sustainability policies, highlighting the importance of power in the production and propagation of social discourses. It is important to note, however, that a common observation converges in all the interviews: a remarkable institutional inertia regarding environmental policies by left-wing political parties, both at national and local levels.

The last aspect analysed was the perception that the interviewees, all of whom are relevant actors in the SDG 11 implementation process in Barcelona, had of the different actors and their roles. It was identified that the view or perception in this regard was that the responsibility for the implementation of SDG 11 had to be shared, so that more collaboration and coordination was needed between institutions, as well as with private entities.

Therefore, based on the case study analysed through the lens of discursive institutionalism, the second hypothesis set out at the beginning could be confirmed. Power relations within public institutions do indeed influence the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona. Firstly, due to the current distribution of power in Barcelona's public institutions: a lack of balance in the distribution and attribution of competences and resources is detected. Secondly, there is a strong political will committed to sustainability policies: the perceptions about the success of SDG 11 implementation are that it is strongly influenced by the discourses on sustainability of the governing institutions.

5.3 Contextualization of the results

The purpose of this section is none other than to connect the findings derived from this case study with the existing literature presented in the literature review section, as well as to answer the last sub-question posed in this thesis.

As a starting point, it is worth noting that in section 2.5 of the literature review, a set of gaps were identified related to the topic of study: the implementation of the SDGs in general, and the influence that power dynamics have on their implementation in particular.

The first gap identified in the literature review is the one suggested by Redclift (2005), who suggested that more attention needed to be paid on how power relations might influence the

interpretation and implementation of the SDGs. Throughout the analysis, particular attention has been paid to this phenomenon, and it has been found that power relations do indeed influence the interpretation and implementation of the SDGs. This has been responded to with the help of both HI and DI, although in distinct ways. While HI provided us with the theoretical rationale for the existing power dynamics in institutions, the ID gave us an insight into how these operate.

The second gap identified in the literature review was highlighted by McKenzie & Abdulkadri (2018), who identified a lack of insight into the specific practices that could enable local communities to effectively implement the SDGs, as also pointed out by Saiu & Blečić (2022). In this sense, this study aims to be a practical and specific contribution, both on the theoretical and the methodological level.

The third identified gap is presented by Fowler & Biekart (2017) and Boorman, Jackson & Burkett (2023). These scholars claim that the implementation of the SDGs requires a multi-level governance approach that integrates various actors and levels of government. However, there is a need to investigate how this can be achieved in practice. Although it is true that the concept of multilevel governance has not been explicitly referred to in this paper, and the case study is confined to the local level, it has been observed how necessary and indispensable cooperation between actors involved in the implementation of SDG 11 is. This finding leads us to believe that, while inter-institutional cooperation is necessary at the local level, once the levels of national and international governance are scaled up, inter-institutional cooperation becomes vital.

In terms of the findings derived from this research, the following linkages with the literature review are worth highlighting.

In the course of the analysis, it became evident that one of the major problems in the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona was precisely the unbalanced distribution of competences, resources and priorities and, therefore, of decision-making power among the different stakeholders. This finding, obtained through the documentary study and interview analysis, supports the contribution made by Fisher and Fukuda-Parr (2019), who suggest that the influence of actors, as well as financial forces, has a considerable impact on the implementation of the SDGs. In particular, the results of the analysis show that the private sector has an importance in the implementation of the SDGs that is not entirely intuitive: its influence in Barcelona is particularly insignificant.

Another significant finding of the study, and especially consistent in the opinions of the key actors that participated in the interviews and throughout the documentary analysis, is the need for effective cooperation between the different public institutions and stakeholders for the proper implementation of the SDGs. This idea appears throughout the literature review on the part of various academics. Particularly noteworthy are Fox & McLeod (2021) and Leavesly (2022), who agree on the importance of multi-level governance in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting the crucial role of effective coordination between various stakeholders and levels of government, as well as McBride et al. (2019) and Bexell and Jönsson (2021), who claim that participatory governance and the inclusion of a wide range of actors are key to the successful implementation of the SDGs.

Another important finding that can be connected to the literature review is the importance of political will. Like the interviewees, the scholars reviewed also perceive that certain kind of political will can have a negative impact on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, with Fisher and Fukuda-Parr (2019), as well as Sachs, Schmidt-Traub and Lafortune (2020) arguing that the lack of progress in some cases can be attributed to the absence of political will and support from affluent nations. On the other hand, there are authors such as Zografos et al. (2020) who see political will as instrumentalisation. Their study examines the "superblocks" project and argues that urban transformation is not only motivated by environmental and quality of life benefits, but also by competitive urbanism and short-term political gains.

The importance of the use of discourse also deserves to be highlighted in this section, as it has been observed both from the perspective of path dependency and from the perspective of discursive institutionalism, through the analysis of the influence and perception of the role of actors and institutions. This idea is not new, as Hartley (2021) suggests cities, as influential actors, can perpetuate misleading narratives through the use of alternative discourses, such as those related to the SDGs, which have a strong political character.

An unexpected finding has been the importance of local contexts in implementing the SDGs. Local contexts are key actors in sustainability, as cities have the most concrete knowledge on how these policies can be succesfully implemented. This view is shared by Zinkernagel et al. (2018) and Pradhan et al. (2017) who highlight the interconnectedness between SDG 11 and the other SDGs, suggesting that cities are key actors for sustainability. In a similar direction, Hartley (2021) examines the role of powerful cities and their influence on the SDGs. Also

Cibrario and Ciambra (2020) highlight the critical role of local and regional governments in the implementation of the SDGs.

In addition, two interviews raised the issue of cross-impacts at both inter- and intra-institutional levels, a view shared by Aust and du Plessis (2018) who argue that not all SDG 11 sub-targets can be achieved simultaneously without negatively affecting other SDGs, due to possible conflicts between concepts such as "security" and "inclusion".

Finally, the selection of the city of Barcelona was especially interesting, not only because of its culture favourable to the implementation of sustainability policies, supported by left-wing governments, but also because of the important institutional network it has at its disposal. This matches the findings of Bibri and Krogstie (2020) claim, who state that Barcelona stands out in relation to its European competition in terms of sustainability.

5.3.1 *What lessons could be drawn from the Barcelona experience that could apply to other urban contexts?*

To answer the third and last question, and as argued throughout the paper, Barcelona offers a myriad of valuable ideas useful for other urban contexts, thereby confirming the hypothesis presented. These findings are perceived both from a positive point of view, with ideas and practices that can be transferred to other cities, as well as from a negative viewpoint, identifying some negative practices that should be avoided in the case of similar urban contexts.

On the positive side, the successful implementation of the SDGs and especially SDG 11 in the city of Barcelona by its institutions stands out. This study reveals that the relative success achieved is due to the efficient deployment of economic and technical resources, as well as the skilful framing of discourse by the different political parties that have led the city's institutions. This has resulted in a high level of responsibility and awareness in all strata of Barcelona society, making it easier for citizens to understand how essential these policies are. Thus, facilitating the adoption and implementation of sustainable policies and global agendas.

On the negative side, the lack of inter-institutional and intra-institutional cooperation, as well as the diffuse distribution of competences together with the unbalanced degree of autonomy in the institutions involved in the implementation of SDG 11 stand out. In this sense, these findings should be considered as practices to be avoided by cities seeking to successfully implement the SDGs, and specifically SDG 11. For it becomes evident that even in the context

of Barcelona, with a strong sustainable path dependency, practices such as the ones mentioned above hinder the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Another practice to avoid identified through the case study is the need to overcome the detrimental tendency to prioritise sustainable policies not on the basis of their potential impact, but on the basis of their cost-effectiveness, low cost or image-enhancing potential. The politicisation and instrumentalisation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs does not lead to positive results. This is demonstrated by the experiences shared by the key actors interviewed, who have encountered internal blockages when negotiating goals, targets and budgets for policies with high transformative potential.

To maximise the potential of the SDGs, and especially SDG 11, it is essential that the allocation of resources to sustainable projects and policies is always guided by the goal of increasing the quality of life of city dwellers. It is necessary to overcome the view of sustainability as a mere instrument of profitability or publicity, and recognise it as the powerful tool it is, driving genuine and meaningful change in cities.

It is undeniable that, as stated in the hypothesis, certain findings are strongly conditioned by the specific contextual factors of the city. An example of this is the particular network of actors, norms, competences and interests that make up Barcelona's institutional framework. The city faces specific risks due to its location and global context, such as touristification and gentrification. In addition, the city is also affected by specific risks stemming from different economic crises, and the impact of the climate crisis. These findings could be particularly relevant and highly applicable to places with similar political contexts to the one of Barcelona. Specifically, we refer to cities with a sustainability-oriented institutional environment, a progressive government that seeks to implement sustainable policies, and a prominent position at a global level. According to the results of our documentary and interview analysis, if these conditions are met, the findings could be transferable to other urban contexts. In this way, cities would be able to avoid the negative practices identified in Barcelona and enhance the good ones.

6   Conclusion

This thesis aims to explore the issue of power dynamics in public institutions and their influence on the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona, a city that, despite its commitment to sustainable urban development, faces challenges such as rapid urbanisation, gentrification and touristification, poor infrastructure and a lack of coordination between actors. In this context, the research focuses on three central objectives: analyzing how Barcelona's history and traditions have influenced power dynamics in public institutions, examining how these dynamics impact on the implementation and success of SDG 11, and identifying lessons that could benefit other urban contexts. Whilst focusing on the specific case of Barcelona, the investigation aims to provide findings applicable to other cities and local governments with similar challenges in the implementation of sustainable urban development policies.

In terms of methodology, this thesis follows a critical realism approach to explore the historical power and political dynamics in the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona. A case -study methodological design is used to provide an in-depth and contextual understanding of the phenomenon in question. Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis, allowing for a detailed and multifaceted view of the case. The sample was selected in a non-probabilistic way, deciding to include key actors implicated in the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona, with the objective of gathering relevant insights. The analysis of the data collected was carried out in two stages: an initial discursive and thematic interpretation, followed by a triangulation with the theories and concepts established in the theoretical framework. During the process an effort was made to maintain methodological rigour, employing triangulation techniques and practising researcher reflexivity in order to reduce bias and improve the validity of the results. The entire process was carried out in strict compliance with ethical codes and codes of conduct to ensure the integrity of the research. Through this methodology, the study provides a valuable contribution to the understanding of the processes that influence the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona, shedding light on the influence of power dynamics in this context.

Turning to the findings, our analysis began by addressing the first of the three reseacrch questions, which sought to understand how current power dynamics in Barcelona's public institutions have influenced the implementation of SDG 11. Our analysis identified key factors that emerged over the last three decades, such as the 'critical junctures' - participation in the Rio Conference in 1992, the focus on sustainability after the Olympic Games under the

guidance of Joan Clos, the financial crisis of 2008, and the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in 2015 - as having been determinant in altering and shaping institutional pathways. We also note that these alterations created new institutional inertias. 'Path dependency' became evident as we saw how decisions taken after these critical junctures shaped the current implementation of SDG 11. In addition, we identified "Institutional change resistance mechanisms", such as barriers to new policies, bureaucratic bottlenecks and the persistence of long-standing practices, which helped to keep the institutional path and the status quo stable. With these findings, we have confirmed the first hypothesis that suggests that institutionalised practices, governed by embedded norms and customs, have shaped the power dynamics that affect the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona. The implementation of SDG 11 in the city is the result of a series of critical junctures since the 1990s, all of which generated an institutional inertia that favoured the implementation of sustainability policies.

To answer the second research question - understanding power dynamics and identifying their influence on the implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona - we identified several dimensions and perceptions. While there was a positive vision for urban sustainability, political and institutional challenges emerged as obstacles to progress. Our analysis highlighted the prioritisation of economic efficiency over sustainability, evidencing tensions between economic development and sustainable planning. In addition, it emphasised the need for inter-agency collaboration as well as a more integrated governance in order to achieve an effective implementation of SDG 11. This reflection illustrated the significant impact of power dynamics on the implementation of SDG 11, and highlighted the need to reevaluate existing strategies.

Finally, in relation to the third question, Barcelona's experiences in implementing the SDGs provide valuable lessons for similar urban contexts. It is concluded that efficient resource management, effective inter-institutional cooperation, and quality of life-based decisions are vital for achieving these sustainable goals. However, it is important to stress that these lessons are not universally transferable, but depend on similar political and institutional characteristics in each urban context.

To sum up, in response to the main research question - How do power dynamics within Barcelona's public institutions influence the implementation of SDG 11, and what lessons can be drawn for other urban contexts? - this research conludes that power dynamics in Barcelona's public institutions have been crucial in the implementation and success of SDG 11. Resistance to change, path dependency and critical junctures have all had the potential to influence the

adoption and effectiveness of sustainable policies in the current context. This analysis underlines the importance of considering power dynamics embedded in institutional structures when promoting sustainability goals and policies. In other urban contexts, it is important to consider these aspects when designing strategies for the effective implementation of the SDGs. Furthermore, these other urban contexts should be prepared to take advantage of critical junctures to leverage lasting changes in their commitment to sustainability. In sum, Barcelona's experience serves as a valuable reminder that the path to urban sustainability is inherently linked to the nature and functioning of our public institutions.

In terms of its theoretical and practical relevance, we believe that this thesis contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical implications of the SDGs. From a theoretical point of view, it enriches Redclift's (2005) ideas by contributing to the debate on the impact of power dynamics on the implementation of the SDGs. Additionally, it offers new perspectives on the practices that facilitate successful implementation at the local level, responding to the concerns raised by McKenzie & Abdulkadri (2018) and Saiu & Blečić (2022). Moreover, it also highlights the need for a multi-level governance approach to SDG implementation, echoing the considerations made by Fowler & Biekart (2017) and Boorman, Jackson & Burkett (2023).

From a practical perspective, the findings about Barcelona provide a set of valuable lessons, both positive and negative, for other cities that are seeking to implement SDGs. By emphasising the importance of a balanced distribution of competences, resources and priorities, and effective inter-agency cooperation, the thesis offers practical insights for improvement in the implementation of the SDGs. All in all, this thesis has the potential to inform both future research and urban sustainability policy.

However, some limitations inherent to the study must be recognised.

First, while our qualitative approach provides us with the necessary toolkit for a thorough analysis of power dynamics and SDG implementation processes, it is important to stress that it may be subject to researcher biases. These, in turn, might limit the extrapolation of findings to other contexts. To offset this potential source of error, a rigorous methodology of data collection and analysis was adopted, and triangulation of data sources was used to ensure a higher degree of accuracy and validity.

In second place, focusing on Barcelona's public institutions might have led us to ignore the views of other key actors, such as non-governmental organisations, the private sector and

citizens. Although this bias was partially mitigated by including interviews with stakeholders from other spheres, such as the private sector, it is crucial to recognise that a comprehensive assessment of all stakeholder perspectives has not been possible within the framework of this study.

By highlighting and addressing these limitations, our aim has been to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on power dynamics in public institutions and the implementation of the SDGs, especially in the setting of a large city like Barcelona or similar local administrations facing similar issues in the implementation of sustainable urban development policies.

Given the scope of this study, future research could be expanded to other sustainable development goals to provide a more holistic view of sustainability policies in urban contexts. In addition, it would be interesting to explore other urban contexts with similar characteristics as Barcelona and to determine the transferability of the findings of this research. In this sense, it is important to assess to what extent factors such as resistance to change, path dependency and critical moments affect the implementation of the SDGs in other cities. Moreover, it would be valuable to investigate the role of non-governmental and private actors in the implementation of the SDGs, as well as to understand the citizens' perspectives. While this study has identified the need for inter-agency cooperation, future research could concentrate on analysing strategies for effective collaboration and multilevel governance. Lastly, further research could consider how inherent challenges to SDG implementation, such as institutional inertia and the prioritisation of economic efficiency over sustainability, can be addressed. These types of research could provide valuable insights to facilitate the adoption of sustainable development policies in other contexts.

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Sample

Interview

1.   The implementation of SDG 11 in Barcelona involves collaboration between different levels of government and actors**. How have the relationships between different levels of government and actors involved in the implementation of SDG 11 in the province of Barcelona been affected? What aspects of these relationships have been particularly challenging or successful in the implementation of SDG 11?**

2. Public institutions may face institutional challenges in implementing public policies, such as SDG 11. **What factors or institutional challenges have influenced the capacity of public institutions to implement SDG 11 in the province of Barcelona? What solutions have been proposed or implemented to overcome these institutional challenges?**

3. Can key actors in decision-making and policy-making influence the implementation of goals such as SDG 11? **How have the actors involved in decision-making and policy-making related to SDG 11 at Barcelona Provincial Council influenced the implementation of this goal? How have policies and approaches to SDG 11 changed as a result of these influences?**

4. The implementation of sustainable initiatives such as the superlatives can be affected by the relationships between key actors. **How have the relationships between the Barcelona Provincial Council, the municipalities and other actors involved in the design and implementation of these initiatives been affected? How have these actors dealt with the challenges and opportunities that have arisen in the implementation process?**

5. Collaboration between the Diputació de Barcelona, universities and other entities can be crucial for the development of sustainable tourism indicators. **What has been the role of interactions and cooperation between Barcelona Provincial Council, universities and other entities in the research and development of tourism indicators for the sustainable management of tourist destinations? What lessons and good practices can be drawn from this collaboration for future research and development projects?**

6. In relation to the localisation of the SDGs, including SDG 11, it involves the identification and selection of local indicators to measure progress in sustainable development. **How have the relationships between different actors influenced the identification and selection of local indicators to measure progress on SDG 11 and other sustainable development goals in the province of Barcelona? What challenges and opportunities have arisen during the process of identifying and selecting local indicators?**

7. Addressing and overcoming institutional and political barriers can be key to the successful implementation of SDG 11 in the province of Barcelona. **What strategies and approaches has Barcelona used to address and overcome institutional and political barriers to SDG 11 implementation? What have been the results of these strategies and approaches, and what lessons can be learned to improve future implementation of similar public policies?**

8. Access to resources and technical support can be crucial for the successful implementation of SDG 11 and other public policies in the province of Barcelona. **How have the relationships between different actors influenced access to resources and technical support for the implementation of SDG 11 in the province of Barcelona? What strategies and approaches have been used to facilitate collaboration and access to resources and technical support in the implementation of SDG 11 and other similar public policies?**

9. Effective decision-making in the implementation of public policies, such as SDG 11, can be affected by transparency and citizen participation. **How have transparency and citizen participation influenced decision-making in the implementation of SDG 11 in the province of Barcelona? What initiatives or approaches have been undertaken to improve transparency and citizen participation in decision-making related to SDG 11 and other similar public policies?**

10. The monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of SDG 11 and other public policies in the province of Barcelona can be affected by the relationships between different actors. **How have the relationships between different actors influenced the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of SDG 11 and other public policies in the province of Barcelona? What challenges and opportunities have arisen in the monitoring and evaluation process, and how have they been addressed to improve the implementation and impact of public policies in the future?**

Conformity document:

Dear interviewee

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. To ensure that this research is carried out in an ethical and professional manner, I would like to provide you with information about how the study will be conducted and how your information will be treated.

1. Informed consent: Your participation in this study will be completely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without reprisal.
2. Confidentiality: Although your position and position will be mentioned in the thesis, I undertake not to disclose any personal or sensitive information that could compromise your privacy or that of the institution you represent.
3. Data collection: The data collected during the interview will be stored on a password-protected electronic device, to which only I will have access. Once the project has finished, the data will be securely deleted.
4. Use of information: The information collected during the interview will be used exclusively for research and analysis purposes in relation to my Master's thesis.

If you still agree to participate in the study, I would be grateful if you could sign the following informed consent form:

"I hereby confirm that I have read and understood the information provided and that I agree to participate in the research entitled "Power dynamics in SDG implementation: The case of Barcelona Public Institutions and SDG 11" carried out by Adrià Lladó. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and I can withdraw at any time without reprisals".

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Once again, I sincerely thank you for your support and collaboration in my research. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at Adriallado95@gmail.com or +34697183523.

APPENDIX 3. Coded data table HI.

HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM: CRITICAL JUNCTURES

Code	Interview phrases	Interviewed person	Theme
Significant change (references to significant changes in policy, strategy or implementation of SDG 11)		JP	
	- "I firmly believe that since 1992, Barcelona has done a formidable job in terms of sustainability. Its active participation in the Rio Conference marks a decisive moment. At that time, the city established the basis of what is today the Council of Sustainability, promoting Agenda 21, a popular initiative at the time. Over time, Barcelona has not only maintained but expanded this commitment, bringing together more than 1,000 local entities, including many schools. This effort has allowed the discourse of sustainability permeates the entire city."	AR	EFFORTS
	- Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, the Provincial Council has already committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and started working within this framework	AT	INCREASING RERTURNS
	- Currently there is a concern that descends vertically from above. In the dialogue there are now tasks that have to do with feminism, interculturality, the most vulnerable population, sustainability. This conversation is on the table, and it wasn't there a while ago. This has been on the table for about 5 years and is taking shape in actions.	LP	POWER DYNAMICS
	- "The 2030 Agenda costs a lot because the world is in a very complicated dynamic at the political level. It was also not expected that all these beastly leaders like Trump, Putin and Erdogan, all very old and very ultra-conservative men, would emerge, like the Bolsonaro. People who do not take into account any kind of global agenda, only national interests. And I think this has permeated, has ended up moving little by little into society. And well, yes there are institutions, there is a internationalist framework, but of course, they fight against dynamics that are stronger."	RC	GLOBAL VIEW
Crisis (references to critical events that have influenced the trajectory of SDG 11 implementation)		JP	
		AR	
	- "What happens is that in Catalonia we spend a little, but not because we do, but because we have many problems at government level. Agenda 2030 has been changing."	AT	CURRENT SITUATION
	- "Politically we have had some complicated years which I believe has not helped us in many ways, because it has divided the public more and perhaps more social issues and sustainability have been neglected. It is also true that the current moment is not helping either. I would rather say that we are worse off now than when the 2030 Agenda was adopted."	LP	
	- "I believe that the beginning of the crisis in 2008 marked a moment of major debacle, especially in the economic and construction spheres. This problematic situation was further aggravated when, in 2011, a significant setback occurred for the municipalist left in Barcelona and Catalonia. After a long and remarkable trajectory, the municipalist left found itself in the middle of an identity crisis, the search for a new ideological framework being essential. We needed to raise the head proudly, with the conviction to say "we have new ideas, we have a vision and a project". It was in this complex context that the 2030 Agenda emerged."	RC	CRITICAL JUNCTURE

HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM: CRITICAL JUNCTURES

Code	Interview phrases	Interviewed person	Theme
	"- "In recent years, the fight against climate change has been a common hallmark of city governments, almost regardless of political party, although with significant differences."	**JP**	
	"- "The political party of the Commons stands out for its orientation towards environmental policies, as did Iniciativa (another left-wing political party) when it was in the City Council years ago. They have placed a special emphasis on the policies of sustainability, a central element of its brand. A good example of this is its "climate shelter schools" project, funded by a European project, which has enabled the reform of ten schools. These schools, in addition to improving students' conditions, serve as climate shelters outside school hours for the local community. This initiative has spread throughout the metropolitan area, demonstrating Barcelona's influence as an engine of change, driving other municipalities to replicate their successful practices."	**AR**	PATH DEPENDENCE
New administration / policy (changes in administration or policies that resulted in significant changes)	"- "The PSOE government took this Agenda and in some way used it as a flag and although it has become very politicized, it is also true that the Government and the administration have been very concerned for its correct implementation" "- "There was a change of mandate a few years ago and also by logical evolution, the Office of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs ceased to be in the department of international relations and went to the department of the presidency. Why? Because if you really want to impact the entire organization, the best thing is to be part of the department that has the ability to impact globally within the institution"	**AT**	CRITICAL JUNCTURE
	"Sustainability has to do with an issue of taking advantage of resources. In this sense, here we have a lot of information and many services from the neighborhood. We connect the neighborhood with these services, and we try to be as effective as possible to connect services and that people can reach them. We network the resources that are there."	**LP**	PERCEPTION
	"- "The appointment of Pedro Sánchez as President of the Spanish Government in 2018 took place in a context marked by a confluence of factors. One of his first actions was to establish the Agenda 2030 Office, an entity that operated directly under his supervision from Moncloa. Despite the short period of time he had before the next general elections - due to the motion of no confidence - Sánchez decided to promote this initiative to give his government a more defined political and ideological identity." "- "Although I cannot pinpoint the exact date, the commitment to sustainability began to intensify after the Olympic Games and was consolidated, I believe, during the first decade of the 21st century, under the baton of former mayor Joan Conclusion From this point, with the increase in international involvement, the Barcelona City Council realized that other cities and entities were establishing sustainability goals and objectives, while Barcelona had not yet developed a strategy or a solid practice in this sense. Therefore, from the City Council, it was decided that it was necessary to take measures to rise to this challenge. This effort was supported by the current that the Spanish government, led by Pedro Sánchez, was pushing to advance in this area. Through this demonstration of interest on the part of Sánchez, socialist municipalism took over and was incorporated into the Barcelona City Council with the new government"	**RC**	CRITICAL JUNCTURE

HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM: PATH DEPENDENCY

Code	Interview phrases	Interviewed person	Theme
Past decisions (past decisions that have influenced the implementation of SDG 11)	'- A few years ago, sustainability was well regarded, but in no case was it considered urgent or important. It's different now. People are aware that it is an important issue for human viability. The Paris Agreements and the Glasgow Ratification, the EU's own agreements and the UN's SDGs define a framework that accelerates the conviction that more must be done in the area of sustainability and facilitates that can go ahead, because there are enough subsidies to change the energy and city model.	JP	SUSTAINABILITY
	'- I firmly believe that since 1992, Barcelona has done a formidable job in terms of sustainability. Its active participation in the Rio Conference marks a decisive moment. At that time, the city established the basis of what is today the Council of Sustainability, promoting Agenda 21, a popular initiative at the time. Over time, Barcelona has not only maintained but expanded this commitment, bringing together more than 1,000 local entities, including many schools. This effort has allowed the discourse of sustainability permeates the entire city. '- In recent years, the fight against climate change has been a common hallmark of city governments, almost regardless of political party, although with significant differences.	AR	PATH DEPENDENCE
	'- Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, the Provincial Council already committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the ODS and began to work within this framework, but since it was still a new issue the Office of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs had been created and therefore work was done from the Office of International Relations since it was an Agenda that came from the United Nations. '- The fact that other Agendas already exist made it easier for this format and framework to be well received '- With the application of the 2030 Agenda as a political framework, we started by understanding what the 2030 Agenda was and then we promoted training, especially with UCLG, which is the World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments. and others like Metropolis, etc. Since then we have been working a lot with them and we focused a lot on the part of the agendas, the global agendas, especially the 2030 Agenda, to be able to start making the first documents on how it could be implemented at the local level and give tools to the municipalities because we were beginning to know how it worked. '- The 2030 agenda is understood as a framework, an umbrella for other global agendas. But it is true that these agendas are approved before the 2030 Agenda, except for the Urban Agenda, which is approved the year after. The Urban agenda, approved by the United Nations, is what it wants to be the action plan of local governments to implement the 2030 Agenda and focuses on ODS 11 above all. We can say that this has helped in its implementation.	AT	PATH DEPENDENCE
		LP	
	'- "In Barcelona, we have two major political and managerial initiatives, "The Agreement for Inclusive Barcelona" and "The Commitment to Sustainability", which already had and have a strong presence in the social and environmental spheres. Commitment to Sustainability, which originated from the local Agenda 21 movement in the 90s, has more than two decades of history, consolidating itself as a key policy of Barcelona City Council. With more than a thousand participating entities, including schools and businesses, this commitment was signed in 2002 and has been renewed until 2012 and then until 2022. When the 2030 Agenda was introduced, we simply confirmed through a short report that we are already carrying out the necessary actions." '- "The appointment of Pedro Sánchez as President of the Spanish Government in 2018 took place in a context marked by a confluence of factors. One of his first actions was to establish the Agenda 2030 Office, an entity that operated directly under his supervision from Moncloa. Despite the short period of time he had before the next general elections - due to the motion of no confidence - Sánchez decided to promote this initiative to confer a more defined political and ideological identity on his government." '- "I believe that this unwavering dedication to sustainability, which dates back to the 1990s, is crucial to the current progression of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda. In addition, our involvement in matters international networks has experienced a remarkable increase in its global reach. Barcelona, as a city, not only participates in all international networks, but often finds itself leading them and hosting their headquarters." '- "Although I cannot pinpoint the exact date, the commitment to sustainability began to intensify after the Olympic Games and was consolidated, I believe, during the first decade of the 21st century, under the baton of former mayor Joan Conclusion From this point, with the increase in international involvement, the Barcelona City Council realized that other cities and entities were establishing sustainability goals and objectives, while Barcelona had not yet developed a strategy or a solid practice in this sense. Therefore, from the City Council, it was decided that it was necessary to take measures to rise to this challenge. This effort was supported by the current that the Spanish government, led by Pedro Sánchez, was pushing to advance in this area. Through this demonstration of interest on the part of Sánchez, socialist municipalism took over and was incorporated into the Barcelona City Council with the new government."	RC	CRITICAL MOMENT

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HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM: PATH DEPENDENCY

Code	Interview phrases	Interviewed person	Theme
Consequences of past decisions in the current situation	" The policies related to ODS 11, which the current government promotes, have positive and negative aspects. They promote superblocks, which integrally transform the dynamics of neighborhoods or parts of them, eliminating cars and creating spaces for play, rest and green This increases biodiversity, acoustic quality and reduces air pollution. However, there is a downside. These changes have been rapid, partly due to the pandemic, becoming a type of tactical urbanism. Barcelona, a city known for its architecture and design, has seen a drastic change in a short time. As an environmentalist, it benefits me personally, but I understand that there are people who find these changes hasty. The rapid appearance of bike lanes and superblocks has been a change that has affected many citizens.	JP	
	'-Based on Barcelona's experience with climate shelters, we started opening air-conditioned facilities during the high summer temperatures in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. This measure, simple and low-cost, required changing the opening hours and providing personal attention. With the collaboration of 10 metropolitan councils, the Diputació's teleassistance service, and a communication campaign, we were able to implement this initiative. At the same time, the Metropolitan Area approved the Environmental Sustainability Plan, an investment plan of 100 million euros intended to reactivate the economy after the pandemic. We invited the different departments of the AMB to propose projects that could be financed by this plan. As a result, we proposed a line of action dedicated to climate shelters. Several councils have requested 6 million euros for shelters, showing that this small measure, originally with almost no budget, has gained value and has expanded beyond Barcelona. I consider this expansion a great success.	AR	PROJECTS
	". In recent years following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Provincial Council has trained more than a thousand internal and external workers in relation to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, so we could say that since its adoption many resources have been allocated in this regard. - With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, a catalog of services and subsidies was created that today municipalities can consult and apply for various subsidies related to the SDGs - Due to the fact that there are several agendas that overlap and coincide in many points, there are municipalities that have formulated an "Urbana 2030 Agenda", a mix of Agendas, in this way they can work with the few resources they have. '- Very good initiatives are starting to appear from the private sector, first they started with corporate social responsibility (CSR), but little by little, together with universities and organizations in the third sector, more and more work is being done to adopt the SDGs. '- Since Barcelona decided to bet on the 2030 Agenda and the ODS, almost all the policies they have made have been very well evaluated at an international level, which has made the city council continue on this path if great steps have been taken to adopt the SDGs.	AT	INCREASED RETURNS
		LP	
	-"To give as an example, the 2018 Climate Plan already established specific objectives, accompanied by measurable indicators, such as reducing annual water consumption to less than 100 liters per person. Likewise, in the Inclusion Strategy 'have defined 12 communicable objectives. Before these objectives were conceived, we were the ones who were in charge of this task ourselves. To this end, we established a transversal commission that started in January 2020. In addition, on many occasions, we have collaborated bilaterally to develop these objectives, particularly in areas such as public security, international trade, the economy, among others, which did not previously have strategies with specific objectives."	RC	PROJECTS

HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM: PATH DEPENDENCY

Code	Interview phrases	Interviewed person	Theme
	- It would be best to create an economy of scale. If public entities introduce a new product to the market and this market is increasingly in demand, it becomes more affordable, and is therefore placed in the hands of the intervention of the private party. Therefore, leadership must be public, and result in an economy of scale. '- Sustainability has currently been included in my company as a key part of the strategic plan. In addition, we have received Green Bonds, which widens our financing field. '-Every time cities represent a greater percentage of the people living in the world, because they concentrate large services that are not payable on a small scale, such as healthcare or education. The fact of generating capital generates attraction in the territory, and this implies that winning in sustainability makes more sense for big cities now more than ever.	JP	ALTERNATIVES
		AR	
Trajectory changes that could happen in the future	- "In the case of the Provincial Council, for the next mandate I would say that we are moving towards a model more like that of the city of Barcelona, with more localized and concrete milestones that make it easier to obtain more concrete indicators and in this way move forward with the ODS commitment"	AT	FUTURE
		LP	
		RC	

HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM: INSTITUTIONAL INERTIA

Code	Interview phrases	Interviewed person	Theme
	'- The problem with sustainability is that it is usually expensive and implies having financial resources. These are investments that end up paying off after a few years, but for the numbers to come out you have to put in your "hands and sleeves". The budget issue is always an uncomfortable issue, but in the area of sustainability it costs more. For example, if someone now proposes to the company to install a bar for the workers, no one will consider that it is too expensive or that it may pose a problem. On the other hand, if I plan to place electric chargers for vehicles in the workers' parking lot, questions begin to arise that would not arise with the bar. You end up asking about payback period, warranty, profitability... so budget is an important issue.	JP	Sustainability
		AR	
Resistance to change	-Sometimes you find that for the indicators that are easier to measure, there is more will to carry them out, but with those that are difficult to measure such as educational issues, equality issues or I+ issues D, more reteicences appear here. Personally, I think it is a matter of work culture within the organization rather than political will. '- Things are being done at an institutional level, things are also being done from the private sector, work is also being done from universities and third sector organisations. But what is costing more is building a multisectoral dialogue. The 2030 Agenda, in its speech, proposes a paradigm shift, doesn't it? Well, it is clear that if we will never achieve this paradigm shift in this way, actions cannot be taken on a sectoral basis. '- What we are trying to do from the Provincial Council, together with the Barcelona City Council and also other municipalities is to promote that these internal dynamics of lack of cooperation and communication change, but it is not always easy and not everyone is ready to hear about the experiences and practices of other institutions. And solving this aspect is very complicated, very heavy and requires a lot of time and patience. There is a lot of internal resistance at times. '- There are councils and municipalities that are reluctant to the SDGs due to their intangible nature, on the other hand others like Barcelona are always more open to this type of proposals.	AT	INDICATORS + INTER- INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
		LP	
	""The 2030 Agenda costs a lot because the world is in a very complicated dynamic at a political level. Nor was it expected that all these beastly leaders like Trump, Putin and Erdogan, all very old and very ultra-conservative men, like Bolsonaro, would emerge. People who do not take into account any kind of global agenda, only national interests. And I think this has permeated, has ended up moving little by little into society. And yes, there are institutions, there is an internationalist framework, but of course, they are fighting against stronger dynamics."" '- There was progress that could be seen in some fields, but of course the pandemic was also going to have a very strong impact at times. And then there was the whole issue of inflation on a global scale, the war, climate change itself, rising food prices, energy is a topic that is also on everyone's lips. - With ODS 11 and the issue of providing housing and social rent, the issue of avoiding evictions, etc., it was the only one of all the milestones that there was resistance, which from other areas and sectors they said ""we don't want, we don't want these milestones, we don't want these levels"". They discussed it with us a lot but in the end they ended up accepting because it was in fact very ambitious, and also if it's ambitious it's an incentive for the City Council to keep investing a lot and apart from that it's good publicity.""	RC	POLITICS + BUROCRATIC RESISTANCE

HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM: INSTITUTIONAL INERTIA

Code	Interview phrases	Interviewed person	Theme
Difficulty implementing new policies	"- Sustainability issues are very cross-cutting and require governance, in which different elements must be brought together. There must be an improvement in internal coordination and the usual transversality. In this sense, pacts must be established very broadly. - Until now, sustainability had not been believed or given importance. Nowadays, more people are aware of its importance, but they don't want to get involved. This implies that it takes a long time to be able to succeed in sustainability programs - In order for sustainability policies to be implemented, a parallel action of application by the public but also the private sector is essential. Because for example, if the city council or the administration wants the hotels to be sustainable, the hotel association is the one who has to implement it, no matter how much the city council gives aid or facilities. - The problem with sustainability is that it is usually expensive and implies having financial resources. These are investments that end up paying off after a few years, but for the numbers to come out you have to work ""hands and sleeves"". The budget issue is always an uncomfortable issue, but in the area of sustainability it costs more. For example, if someone now proposes to the company to install a bar for the workers, no one will consider that it is too expensive or that it may pose a problem. On the other hand, if I plan to place electric chargers for vehicles in the workers' parking lot, questions begin to arise that would not arise with the bar. You end up asking about the payback period, the warranty, the profitability... so the budget is an important issue."	JP	SUSTAINABILITY
	"-I firmly believe that local management dynamics are easily identifiable. However, the problem lies in the lack of resources that reach local administrations, as well as towns and cities. These are the places where most of the policies to fight climate change take place, but they do not receive enough support.	AR	POWER DYNAMICS
	"- The problem with the implementation of these agendas at the local level is that there is no concrete data. A municipality does not know what level of achievement it has in matters of water management, because normally this will be carried out by the Metropolitan Area.	AT	INDICATORS
	The Carmel neighborhood is very numerous, there are almost 30,000 people, and it is a very heterogeneous and diverse population due to the migration stage of the 60s, coming from the interior of the country, and the 2000s, which is more intercultural. The camp is located in the lower part of the Carmel, and the Carmel is divided between the upper part and the lower part of the Carmel. Therefore, we serve more people from the lower part of Carmel, and it is more difficult for us to reach the needs of the upper part of the neighborhood. The dialogue to move forward is two-way: with the company and with the City Council. In this sense, we speak with the various areas of the district, and with the company on a daily basis. The company must ensure that it complies with the conditions set out in the tender documents. It would be important if things arrived to stay for a while and could develop over a long period of 10 years. Now we are fully into it. There is a change of government and policy, so you never quite know if what you have implemented so far is working. it seems that what one has done, the other wants to erase. It would be important to be able to have this time, especially to detect if what has been done is correct and in what way things can be improved. "	LP	INTER-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
	-Intra-institutional participation is, without a doubt, a major challenge, since it involves not only time and resources, but also the management of collective expectations, which can easily lead to frustration. As you mentioned, finding a balance in a choir with diverse voices is a complex task. How can we integrate them all? More so, how do we integrate them with the firmly established vision that a government needs to maintain in its structure? In this context, it is not surprising that many people perceive participation as merely informative. However, we must recognize that if managed properly, informative participation can be extremely valuable. In an ideal sense, the goal should be to have decisions made after hearing from everyone who has something relevant to contribute. Although this is an ambitious goal and often difficult to achieve, it is worth striving for.	RC	INTRA-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM: INSTITUTIONAL INERTIA

Code	Interview phrases	Interviewed person	Theme
Bureaucratic or organizational obstacles	" In order to be able to include new sustainability issues from the public administration, coordination between public and private entities is necessary, because you are affecting part of the public urban development, where there are uses of a private nature as well. Therefore, it is essential that both internal and external stakeholders intervene. " One of the main aspects not only in public administrations, but also in private companies, is to have aligned all the actors and actresses who participate in a decision. Organizational culture and good governance are very important here. There must be improvements in internal coordination and an agreement to defend concise objectives, where everyone does their part. - In terms of sustainability, the most relevant administration for Barcelona in terms of sustainability will always depend on each of the projects and their territorial location. - The problem with sustainability is that it is usually expensive and implies having financial resources. They are investments that end up paying off after a few years, but for the numbers to come out you have to work "hands and sleeves". The budget issue is always an uncomfortable issue, but in the area of sustainability it costs more. For example, if someone now proposes to the company to install a bar for the workers, no one will consider that it is too expensive or that it may pose a problem. On the other hand, if I plan to place electric chargers for vehicles in the workers' parking lot, questions begin to arise that would not arise with the bar. You end up asking about payback period, warranty, profitability... so budget is an important issue. "	JP	INTER-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
	- "Sustainability departments need to get used to requesting resources, as administrations often have them. If we want to carry out communication and environmental education campaigns, despite the lack of resources, we can rely on the awareness of the sector to to boost projects. It is essential that the teams are multidisciplinary, incorporating social science professionals such as geographers, sociologists, political scientists and psychologists, a common practice in other countries such as France. This could speed up projects such as climate shelters, helping to better understand the needs of the beneficiaries, often single women, an aspect that an environmentalist may not know. This, therefore, is a crucial factor."	AR	INTRA-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
	" ... The municipalities really don't have the data for these indicators, they don't have many powers and they can't correct their policies because they don't have the data." " "Working the way we work now, sectorally, we find that we sometimes cause cross-impacts, that is to say, carrying out an initiative that seems beneficial for one thing, we end up realizing that we are harming an initiative of another department, organization or sector, and this is due to the lack of cooperation and coordination." " There are departments and areas that are very far from these speeches, departments for example accounting, contracting or finance never want to hear about the ODS" - The internal dynamics of the institution often slows down progress. I think that there should be a change in mentality at the level and go more towards a more transparent, transversal and more cooperative model." - The culture of the public administration and the administrative procedure is one of the biggest barriers we face in our work. It's a dynamic that is costing a lot to change"	AT	INDICATORS + INTRA-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
	We depend on the city council and the district we are in. In that sense, the management is done by a private company, and the City Council takes out a public tender to hire private companies or entities. In this case, it won the our company. For this reason, management is outsourced. We are not public workers. Therefore, as Casal de Barri, we depend on community action. In general, what can make us unable to carry out something or an activity is usually the budget. Being a public competition, we cannot go beyond the budget offered.	LP	DEPENDENCE
	" "...those of the "Commitment for Sustainable Barcelona" have always seen us us "The Technical Cabinet for Programming and Agenda 2030") as something they were already doing, but of course we say "you are doing something which is Agenda 21 which has already been replaced by Agenda 2030". But of course, since they are not directly involved, they have focused a lot on the climate issue. On a technical level there has been a cordial relationship and all that. But, of course, it is known that at a political level it is a coalition that has never finished functioning, both in terms of regulations, loyalty and sharing in some way a comprehensive discourse, but that each has always gone to his own . " "What happens is that someone brings one issue and another brings another, and immediately differences are generated that do not make much sense. Other internal areas in the City Council work in different ways to us and for what it seems within the organization itself there is a bit of a lack of control." " ...it should be said that the coalition is 10 and 8, but I don't know how the negotiation went that in the end most of the substantive policies are governed by the commons (The "En Comú Podem" political party) , then influencing issues of health, education, urban planning is complicated. These are political things that are sometimes difficult to understand if you don't have all the information." - "The issue is that the New High Commissioner of the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations (political position designated by the Government of the Spanish State), of course, is a political role that had to be more a more horizontal and at the same time transversal leadership, without wanting too much prominence, but of course, it is already very difficult for a politician to accept this transversal issues because there is no visibility or publicity, because you cannot sell it externally, but you work for the whole of the organization and moreover, in this case, he is a person who has a lot of political profile and a lot of desire to be seen politically.Speaker2: In fact, he changed jobs last year and was head of cabinet and is now head of the campaign of the candidate on the list. Of course with this political burden sometimes it was also a factor that made this collaboration difficult"	RC	INTRA-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM: INSTITUTIONAL INERTIA

Code	Interview phrases	Interviewed person	Theme
Dependence on existing policies or practices	"- I am now working for a private company, as Director of the Sustainability Area. When I was offered the job, what I asked from the start was to report directly to the Executive President, without the need to depend on no one else, which never happened until I arrived. '- I believe that sustainability issues will become more and more important out of necessity and conviction. It should never be underestimated that there are obligations, and that non-compliance can lead to penalties. In addition, the fact that there is money from international organizations conditional on the development plans of administrations or companies makes being sustainable important."	JP	EXPERIENCES
		AR	
	"- "There is the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and then there is also the Urban Agenda in force, part of the institutions work with one agenda, and another part works with the other and it's a mess. Because if you understand the concept you would know that these two Agendas should be worked on together, but well, this is a political issue and with political issues rationality does not reign." '- "There is also something at stake here, and that is that we must never forget that here every four years after the election, everything that the previous candidate has promoted is very likely to be changed with the new candidate . And so it is very difficult to move forward with issues such as the ODS because the time frame is much greater than that of municipal politics."	AT	OTHER AGENDAS + POLITICS
		LP	
	-"We believe that our area, dedicated to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, should occupy a more central place within the organization. Currently, it is in a more peripheral mayoralty, attributed to the smallest party in the coalition. One step towards improvement would be to establish a clearer reporting standard. Although there is great collaboration in this area, sometimes the messages received are too diverse. No these are mixed messages, but diversity can create confusion Perhaps a clearer, more direct message from the center of the organization would be helpful."	RC	INTRA-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

DISCURSIVE INSTITUTIONALISM

Code	Interview phrases	Interviewed person	Theme
Urban sustainability (how it is conceptualized, how it is presented in terms of problems and solutions)	- Sustainability is currently considered a job to be done, but one that there is no rush to do. In a city, the two main issues are energy and mobility. I had skills in public transport and transport in the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona. The way to attack sustainability from my performance was through energy issues. It was well seen, but not considered urgent or important. - Now a very important construction will be done in my company. In this construction, sustainability is particularly valued, which is one of the points we have been working on lately from my Area. Sustainable mobility will be promoted, making it easier to get to the building by public transport and promoting electric mobility, including spaces designated for bicycles.	JP	SUSTAINABILITY
	- "I believe that we are in a moment of change now. That is to say, although it seems that the scenario that is ahead of us is sometimes almost apocalyptic. I think that there are reasons to think that it is not so. I don't know, it seems to me that the younger people, maybe because it touches them very closely, they want to change things. Even a few years ago talking about degrowth was absolutely taboo. Now the European Union itself is funding a study to to see how Europe could decline. Yes, I think we will have to adapt, that people will adapt a lot, but we will have to learn to live differently. And in the cities, we will have to give up things."	AR	CHANGE
	- "Sometimes they have been used as a political weapon the 2030 Agenda and the Ods, and the Urban Agenda) because if you understand what their function is, it does not make sense that one agenda is carried by one administration and another agenda be assigned to another administration" - "What is meant by sustainability? If you talk about sustainability, many people will only only think environmental. If you talk about sustainable development it is broader. And here it can enter into social, environmental and economic issues. - "...at an international level, Barcelona's policies are quite popular, even though they are very unpopular at the local level." "Let's see, progress is being made and I think it's going in the right direction, sometimes a little slowly. What happens is that there are political mandates that last four years and then it's very likely that since one has decided this, whoever comes behind, even if it is to change his name, touches and spoils it."	AT	POLITICIZATIONS OF AGENDAS
		LP	
	- "ODS eleven is complicated. Because, for example, 11.1 is very related to the right to housing, but other targets are related to the community, to bringing more biodiversity to cities, etc." - "To decide which milestone we set we first say to ourselves "we must locate this milestone". At the beginning everything is very open, and based on meetings with other teams we end up identifying which is the best milestone and how much priority it is for the city council. In the meetings, it is specified what should be measured and how it can be measured, from here everything becomes more specific each time until we end up with a measurable and beneficial milestone for the city of Barcelona. - " One thing happens with the SDGs, there are topics that are very important for the Barcelona City Council and do not appear in the SDGs, such as culture, democracy, diversity and sexual freedom, animal welfare, etc. all these things do not appear explicitly. If some of them can be worn a bit with shoes in some ODS, others are an odyssey. - ""I firmly believe that the 2030 Agenda offers a unique opportunity to unify the actions of the administration around a common goal of transformation, transcending ideologies or specific political parties. In addition, it serves as a valuable instrument to improve the evaluation and monitoring of policies. We can establish a well-defined system of goals and indicators that allow us to accurately measure the evolution and progress of our initiatives. This strategy, I believe, will allow us to drive significant and lasting changes." - ""My proposal is to establish a more connected governance framework, which corresponds to the aspirations of Barcelona and which is more accessible and transparent for all. This system should allow an integrated understanding of the City Council's actions, facilitating the detection of any inconsistency, synergy, neglected areas or insufficient action, as well as the identification of priorities.""""	RC	VAGUE COMITMENTS

DISCURSIVE INSTITUTIONALISM

Code	Interview phrases	Interviewed person	Theme
		JP	
	"." "" One thing happens with the SDGs, there are topics that are very important for the Barcelona City Council and do not appear in the SDGs, such as culture, democracy, diversity and sexual freedom, animal welfare, etc. all these things do not appear explicitly. If some of them can be worn a bit with shoes in some ODS, others are an odyssey.	AR	MISSING TARGETS
The role of institutions (How they are described, how they are perceived in terms of their role and effectiveness in the implementation of SDG 11)		AT	
	"." "I firmly believe that the 2030 Agenda offers a unique opportunity to unify the actions of the administration around a common goal of transformation, transcending ideologies or specific political parties. In addition, it serves as a valuable instrument to improve the evaluation and monitoring of policies. We can establish a well-defined system of goals and indicators that allow us to accurately measure the evolution and progress of our initiatives. This strategy, I believe, will allow us to drive significant and lasting changes."	LP	UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY
		RC	

DISCURSIVE INSTITUTIONALISM

Code	Interview phrases	Interviewed person	Theme
Perceptions of change and inertia (how these processes are described, which discourses stand out, continuity or change)	- "My proposal is to establish a more connected governance framework, which corresponds to the aspirations of Barcelona and which is more accessible and transparent for all. This system should allow an integrated understanding of the City Council's actions, facilitating the detection of any inconsistency, synergy, neglected areas or insufficient action, as well as the identification of priorities."	JP	PERSONAL VIEW
	- "The Commons political party stands out for its orientation towards environmental policies, as did Iniciativa (another left-wing political party) when it was in the City Council years ago. They have placed a special emphasis on sustainability policies, a central element of its brand. A good example of this is its "climate shelter schools" project, funded by a European project, which has enabled the reform of ten schools. These schools, in more than improving conditions for students, they serve as climate shelters outside school hours for the local community.This initiative has spread throughout the metropolitan area, demonstrating Barcelona's influence as an engine of change, driving the other municipalities to replicate their successful practices." - "I am convinced that the management of the local administration works, despite the limitation of resources. If these resources were properly organized and increased, their effectiveness would be even greater." - "Barcelona City Council has tried to promote a dynamic with more proactive groups, through citizen networks. However, the young climate fighters, despite already having a few years of experience, are not organized as expected by the administration. These are not conventional groups, now they have a leader. Although they are undecided about joining the Barcelona Sustainability Council due to certain disagreements, this has changed the way they communicate. On the other hand, the cooperative economy usually works better because it is more aligned with their experiences and these groups want to be proactive. But these are small, targeted initiatives that are difficult to scale."	AR	POLITICS
	- " ... municipalities really don't have the data for these indicators, they don't have many powers and they can't correct their policies because they don't have data. Then this is the great challenge of the 2030 Agenda and the ODS as well as the Urban Agenda. We have taken the first step in raising awareness and there are many councils that are online and we believe that the message is reaching the public. But the issue of measuring it is still a bit loose." - "Fortunately, unlike the Millennium Goals or others, the 2030 Agenda has not yet gone out of fashion so to speak, and it is catching on quite a bit at the local level, in many cases more so than at the state level. " - "We are now globally in a much worse situation than when the 2030 Agenda was approved (war in Ukraine, energy crisis, post-covid, etc). Well then, the priorities have changed." - "The culture within the administrations or the administrative procedure does not help either, the administrative procedure is horrible. The main resistances come from the internal bodies or internal services, i.e. secretariat, intervention department and the procurement department . I mean, these departments are the ones who tell you "no, no the most important thing is that the offer is economically viable. The most important thing is that the offer is economical"" .	AT	INTER-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
		LP	
	- "The 2030 Agenda costs a lot because the world is in a very complicated dynamic at a political level. Nor was it expected that all these beastly leaders like Trump, Putin and Erdogan, all very old and very ultra-conservative men, like Bolsonaro, would emerge. People who do not take into account any kind of global agenda, only national interests. And I think this has permeated, has ended up moving little by little into society. And yes, there are institutions, there is an internationalist framework, but of course, they fight against stronger dynamics." - "In terms of content planning and milestones we consider that most plans must be done in a participatory way, we will never know to what extent with the Commons government (The political party that governs the "Barcelona City Council ""En Comú Podem"") may not have been completely done. Due to the ideology of the Commons, it has sometimes been perceived that the private sector has not been represented and sometimes on the contrary, overrepresented. All depending on the level of conflict there was with the subject in question." - "Barcelona City Council has a network of large and enviable participation spaces: sectoral councils, city council, district councils, etc., few cities in Catalonia or Spain must have such a high degree of citizen participation in city policies like Barcelona." - "Certainly, we perceive immense potential in relation to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. In fact, we are hosting a large number of delegations arriving in Barcelona, motivated to understand our operations and the way in which we carry out our tasks . This gives us the opportunity to exchange ideas about projects and initiatives with prominent metropolises, such as several Chinese cities, Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Singapore, among others. This growing interest certainly reflects that we are working in the right direction."	RC	GLOBAL INERTIOA + INTRA-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

DISCURSIVE INSTITUTIONALISM

Code	Interview phrases	Interviewed person	Theme
	"- I was one of the promoters of the implementation of "Bicing" in Barcelona. The implementation process entailed including meetings with all interested external agents, i.e. different bicycle defense associations that existed at that time (...) This innovative proposal had the relevant approval both at the level of the Government and the Plenary of the City Council. - The implementation of "Bicing" in Barcelona led us to make a necessary sustainability proposal, which brought up a whole series of topics, such as the holography of the city of Barcelona, where the stations would go, how they would be collected and distributed and what the logistics would be so that everything would work and demand could be met. Here the governance itself was a proposal of mine as president of the bicycle commission, which was discussed with the commission's governance team, and with the internal bodies of the city council's governance team, and finally is when the approval is done in plenary. - In the implementation of sustainability policies, the most important thing is that there is coordination between public and private entities, especially because of the influence that the latter have on the actual implementation of these policies. Therefore, it is essential that the public administration has the various interested parties when planning policies and especially when planning and carrying out their implementation. Agreements are always cumbersome and long, especially because it is never just a referent who drives and executes them."	JP	SUSTAINABILITY
	- "Sustainability departments need to get used to requesting resources, as administrations often have them. If we want to carry out communication and environmental education campaigns, despite the lack of resources, we can rely on the awareness of the sector to boost projects. It is essential that the teams are multidisciplinary, incorporating social science professionals such as geographers, sociologists, political scientists and psychologists, a common practice in other countries such as France. This could speed up projects such as climate shelters, helping to better understand the needs of the beneficiaries, often single women, an aspect that an environmentalist may not know. This, therefore, is a crucial factor."	AR	INTRA-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
	"- The case of the city of Barcelona is a paradigmatic case, although there are many institutions physically established in the city that work with the implementation of the ODS and specifically ODS 11, few really have a voice in the process of "implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs in the city. And this is for a very simple reason, the City Council has many resources (economic and technical) and prefers to forego receiving aid from other institutions such as the Provincial Council Barcelona in favor of being more autonomous in the political process.This, on the other hand, allows us as the Provincial Council to allocate more financial resources to all the other municipalities, which, apart from the case of the city of Barcelona, all need these resources. - The Next Generation Funds of the European Union have focused on itself as a municipality you had an urban agenda, then now all the municipalities are doing what is very typical in municipalist politics that they want to do many things to justify before the EU to give them these funds. Especially this last year, as you know in a few weeks there are elections and you already know"	AT	BARCELONA'S POLITCS
Actors and roles: Who is perceived to be responsible for SDG 11 implementation and how are the roles and relationships between different actors conceptualised?		LP	
	"- "... those of the "Commitment for Sustainable Barcelona" have always seen us (us "The Technical Cabinet for Programming and Agenda 2030". But of course, since they are not directly involved, they have focused a lot on the climate issue. On a technical level there has been a cordial relationship and all that. But, of course, it is known that at the political level it is a coalition that has never finished functioning, both in terms of regulations, loyalty and sharing in some way a comprehensive discourse, but that each has always gone to his own ." - "Although there are some sectors that take it more into account and incorporate or ask us to do certain analyzes in relation to the ODS, what happens is that it is usually always an exposed analysis. They tell us "come and see how the what we have done with the SDGs" and of course this is not the way to do it, but sometimes they also tell you during the process and then it is time to incorporate new perspectives. Others just mention it, they simply put 2030 of their plan and set milestones." - "The issue is that the New High Commissioner of the Spanish State for the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations (political position appointed by the Government of the Spanish State) is a political role that had to be a more horizontal leadership and at the same time transversal, without wanting too much prominence, but of course, it is already very difficult for a politician to accept this transversal issues because there is no visibility or publicity, because you cannot sell it to the outside, but you work for the organization as a whole and what's more, in this case, he's a person who has a lot of political profile and a lot of desire to be seen politically. In fact, he changed jobs last year and was chief of staff and now he's of the campaign of the candidate on the list. Of course with this political burden sometimes it was also a factor that made this collaboration difficult" - "With ODS 11 and the issue of providing housing and social rent, the issue of avoiding evictions, etc., it was the only one of all the milestones that there was resistance, which from other areas and sectors they told us "we don't want, we don't want these milestones, we don't want these levels". They discussed it a lot with us but in the end they ended up accepting because it was in fact very ambitious, and also if it's ambitious it's an incentive for the City Council to keep investing a lot and besides, it's good publicity." - "We believe that our area, dedicated to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, should occupy a more central place within the organization. Currently, it is in a more peripheral mayoralty, attributed to the smallest party in the coalition. One step towards improvement would be to establish a clearer reporting standard. Although there is great collaboration in this area, sometimes the messages being received are too diverse. It's not about mixed messages, but diversity can create confusion. Perhaps a clearer, more direct message from the center of the organization would be helpful." - "The County Council, along with other institutions, maintains a relationship of some distance with the Barcelona City Council. The City Council, as the administration of the most important city in Catalonia, has robust funding and "abundant resources to manage their tasks. For this reason, the County Council and other entities understand that their attention should focus more on municipalities other than Barcelona. In summary, we could say that responsibilities are distributed equitably . The Provincial Council rarely contributes funds to Barcelona and, for its part, it does not intervene excessively in the decisions we take at a local level in the city." - "The Generalitat maintains a national alliance to achieve development goals, but its strategy diverges from ours. Like us, they also face problems, but they are more acute due to their peripheral position with respect to the Generalitat. The head of the Generalitat, moreover, is not part of its board, but comes from the outside. This reality is useful as a source of reflection, but once we immerse ourselves in the game of power, the situation becomes complicated. They they were pioneers in implementing the 2030 Agenda in Catalonia as soon as it was introduced, but they have had serious difficulties in establishing specific objectives and a system of indicators, unlike what we have done."	RC	INTER-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS + INTRA-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS