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(De)politicizing low emission zones through collective and individual narratives: the case of Madrid and Paris

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Abstract

The issue of urban sustainability has been studied by different authors from an urban political economy approach as a techno-managerialist issue, characteristic of the post-political city (Swyngedouw, 2007). Authors such as Reigner & Brennac (2019) approach low emission zones (LEZ) as a narrative, being the element of the cognitive structure of public policy. Arguing that authorities at different levels of government use discursive frameworks and registers to vehicle economic and neoliberal rationalities, the authors conclude that LEZs inhibit the political conditions of debate and dissensus, depoliticizing sustainability and urban mobility by pushing them towards consensual techno-managerialism. Starting from this analytical framework, the aim of this thesis is to explore how low emission zones can be politicized by shifting the focus of attention towards the local agents who, individually or collectively, are mobilizing diverse discursive frames and registers creating alternative narratives of urban sustainability. This is a comparative and qualitative research that explores two case studies from a longitudinal perspective: Madrid and Paris, cities that, from a European call, share the same public policy objective to reduce their pollutant emissions levels since the early 2010s. The analysis is manifold. First, urban sustainability is approached from its multilevel governance aspect through a threefold discourse analysis: multi-level policies, local actors and trans-local comparison. Second, this threefold discourse is approached from narrative analysis to identify discursive frames and registers. Third, these narratives are analyzed from Iris Marion Young's political-communicative theory to find the political aspects that are traditionally neglected from the public discourse. The findings show how LEZs have indeed propitiated debate, both from groups in favor and against, mobilizing narratives with highly politicized discursive elements such as the call to protect individual and collective health and the inclusion of different bodies. It also analyzes how the challenges and contradictions of multilevel governance of urban sustainability activate the politicization of LEZs.

Abstrakt

Das Thema der städtischen Nachhaltigkeit wurde von verschiedenen Autoren mit einem stadtpolitischen Wirtschaftsansatz als techno-managerialistisches Thema untersucht, das für die post-politische Stadt charakteristisch ist (Swyngedouw, 2007). Autoren wie Reigner & Brennac (2019) betrachten Umweltzonen als ein Narrativ, das ein Element der kognitiven Struktur der öffentlichen Politik ist. Die Autoren argumentieren, dass Behörden auf verschiedenen Regierungsebenen diskursive Rahmen und Register verwenden, um

wirtschaftliche und neoliberale Rationalitäten zu transportieren, und kommen zu dem Schluss, dass Umweltzonen die politischen Bedingungen für Debatten und Dissens verhindern und Nachhaltigkeit und urbane Mobilität entpolitisieren, indem sie sie in Richtung eines konsensorientierten Techno-Managerialismus drängen. Ausgehend von diesem analytischen Rahmen soll in dieser Arbeit untersucht werden, wie Umweltzonen politisiert werden können, indem der Fokus der Aufmerksamkeit auf die lokalen Akteure gelenkt wird, die individuell oder kollektiv verschiedene diskursive Rahmen und Register mobilisieren, um alternative Narrative der städtischen Nachhaltigkeit zu schaffen. Es handelt sich um eine vergleichende und qualitative Forschung, die zwei Fallstudien aus einer Langzeitperspektive untersucht: Madrid und Paris, Städte, die aus europäischer Sicht dasselbe politische Ziel verfolgen, nämlich die Verringerung ihrer Schadstoffemissionen seit Anfang der 2010er Jahre. Die Analyse ist vielschichtig. Erstens wird die städtische Nachhaltigkeit unter dem Aspekt der Multi-Level-Governance durch eine dreifache Diskursanalyse betrachtet: Multi-Level-Politik, lokale Akteure und translokaler Vergleich. Zweitens wird dieser dreifache Diskurs durch eine narrative Analyse angegangen, um diskursive Frames und Register zu identifizieren. Drittens werden diese Narrative mit Hilfe der Theorie der politischen Kommunikation von Iris Marion Young analysiert, um die politischen Aspekte zu finden, die im öffentlichen Diskurs traditionell vernachlässigt werden. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die Umweltzonen in der Tat eine Debatte ausgelöst haben, sowohl bei den Befürwortern als auch bei den Gegnern, die Narrative mit hochgradig politisierten diskursiven Elementen mobilisieren, wie z. B. die Forderung nach dem Schutz der individuellen und kollektiven Gesundheit und die Einbeziehung verschiedener Körpern. Es wird auch analysiert, wie die Herausforderungen und Widersprüche der Multi-Level-Governance der städtischen Nachhaltigkeit die Politisierung von Umweltzonen aktivieren.

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Introduction

Air pollution causes the premature death of around 400,000 people in Europe each year and is considered to be "the single largest environmental health risk in Europe" (EEA, 2020). Since the EU adopted sustainable development as a policy objective with the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997, it has sought to make its legislation "more urban sensitive" (EU, 1998, p. 2) in order to achieve better implementation. Therefore, the urban arena has been framed as the scale where actions must be implemented to achieve a more sustainable future. Especially because currently 60% of Europe's population lives in urban areas, where transport generates 40% of CO_2 emissions and 70% of emissions of other pollutants (European Commission, 2019).

In recent decades, cities have mobilized a myriad of policies to reduce air pollution levels. Low emission zones (LEZ) are one of these policies. Until 2020, it has been implemented in 250 European cities (ECF, 2020). Sweden became the first country in Europe to enforce it in 1996 (Ku et al., 2020). Since then, the EU has encouraged other cities to deploy LEZ, considering them an "example of possible actions" (EEA, 2010, p. 3) to reduce air pollution in urban areas. However, different authors have drawn attention to the depoliticized character of these measures.

For Reigner & Brennac (2019), LEZs are depoliticized policies because they inhibit debate and dissent. By approaching this policy as narratives, the authors find that, more than tackling air pollution, the authorities mobilize discursive frames and registers that appeal to morality and economic and neoliberal rationalities. For them, morality acts as a powerful inhibitor of debate. Meanwhile, they argue that economic and neoliberal rationalities reproduce socio-spatial segregation. In sum, the authors frame LEZs as policies from a post-political urban governance, as they are used as a marketing strategy to boost urban competitiveness.

Nevertheless, as Blanco (2015, p. 124) notes: the neoliberal model is just one more of the "meta-narratives of urban governance". Hence, attention should be paid to "'micro-level accounts' of the 'messiness' of local politics and practices" (Blanco, Griggs, & Sullivan, 2014, p. 3130-3131). In order to analyze how the same policy can be (de)politicized in different contexts, drawing on urban regime theory can be useful. This approach developed by Stone (1989; as cited by Mossberger & Stoker, 2001, p. 811) pays attention to the different coalitions mobilizing different sets of resources within different policy arenas. This alternative framework

for approaching urban sustainability policies takes into account that they are not only shaped by political and economic elites in a depoliticized way. On the contrary, it highlights that urban sustainability policies can be politicized if there is a coalition advocating for them.

For this reason, the aim of this thesis is to explore the different urban governance trajectories that Madrid and Paris followed on matters of air pollution and sustainability: their coordination with other levels of government, the policies to address them, as well as the individual and collective narratives around them, whether depoliticized or politicized. Based on the analytical framework of Reigner & Brennac (2019) to approach policies as narratives and on urban regime theory to pay attention to how they are mobilized in different contexts, this thesis seeks to answer the following research questions:

➤ Which are the frames and discursive registers (de)politicizing narratives around low emission zones policies in different geographies?
➤ Which are the challenges, contradictions but also possibilities in the implementation of low emission zones regarding the multilevel aspect of urban sustainability governance?

The first part of this thesis is devoted to a literature review to unravel urban sustainability. First, from its multilevel governance, second, from its depoliticized character in the post-political city and, third, from the possibility of politicization in other geographies.

The second part is dedicated to the methodology used. This thesis is a comparative and qualitative research based on two case studies: Madrid and Paris. The emerging narratives in both cities are analyzed from a discourse, narrative and longitudinal perspective. In addition, a reflection on why comparative research in urban governance is necessary is included.

The third section shows the analysis of the findings from the research. First the case of Madrid is presented, then the case of Paris and then the collaboration between the mayors of both cities, Anne Hidalgo and Manuela Carmena for the period 2015-2019. Finally, it presents the frames, discursive registers and alternative narratives that groups for and against LEZs are positioning in the debate around these measures.

The last part presents the conclusions of this work, showing how LEZs can be politicized from the alternative narratives that people, whether for or against, are mobilizing around these measures. Furthermore, the contradictions, challenges and possibilities of multilevel governance of urban sustainability in the implementation of LEZs are explored.

Literature Review

The multilevel governance of urban sustainability

The 'sustainable city' was conceived at a supranational level. At least one of the ways for understanding this concept. Since the 1970s, the focus on rapid urbanization and its impacts on the environment started to gain international attention. In 1972 the Club of Rome published its first report, the *Limits to growth*, to evidence the resource depletion caused at the expense of economic profit. In 1976, the UN conference Habitat I raised awareness of the link between inequality and urbanization without the control of national and international action. In 1987 the Brundtland Report was published. Specifically in chapter 9 'The urban challenge', following the oft-heard argument that the bulk of the population worldwide will live in urban areas, it highlighted the crucial role of cities in tackling the challenge of sustainable development and, in particular, climate change. The report was named after Gro Harlem Brundtland, who was the former Norwegian Prime Minister from 1981 to 1996. She chaired the World Commission on Environment and Development, which decided on boosting the rhetorical significance of the 'sustainability' concept in the political international agenda.

The Brundtland Report also introduced that if the world needs to walk towards a more sustainable future, it has to start somewhere. Thus the city was established as the 'key arena' (Bulkeley & Betsill, 2005, p. 42) where the concept of sustainable development could be applied regarding its three pillars: economic, social and environmental concerns. The narrative introduced concepts of 'sustainable cities' and 'urban sustainability'. In 1997, these concepts were formally introduced at the European policy level with the adoption of the *Sustainable Urban Development in the European Union: A Framework for Action*. The intention was to examine the impact of EU policies in the cities and to improve policy integration at the urban level. From this document, Bulkeley & Betsell (2003) stress that the EU assigned relevance to the role of urban planning in the pursuit of sustainable development. Consequently, the boundaries between the global and the local meshed in the presence of the nation-state. Since then, academia has paid attention to the multilevel aspect of urban sustainability governance. In this power dynamic, the EU is the entity scale where problems are framed and sustainability policies for addressing them are designed; meanwhile, the city is the observable and tangible scale where the cause of the problems can be found and tackled, and at the same time it is the place where the solutions can take place and be implemented by local authorities. One of these

specific sustainability goals framed by the EU is the 'management of air quality' in urban areas where pollution levels exceed the established parameters. According to different analysts (Lambright et al., 1996; Collier, 1997; DeAngelo & Harvey, 1998; Wilbanks & Kates, 1999), the urban arena is the key scale in reducing greenhouse gas emissions since cities are places of high energy consumption and waste production, where local authorities have more influence in the management of planning, transport and resources supply.

Drawing on this multilevel approach is useful to shed light on the opportunities and contradictions resulting from the interpretation and implementation of urban sustainability governance across different scales. One of these challenges is the "material and discursive struggles over sustainability" (Bulkeley & Betsill, 2005, p. 42), in which the idea of the local scale as the place to achieve a sustainable future is defined as the 'new localism'. This approach to urban sustainability has been defined by Marvin & Guy as 'a powerful discourse' shared by a coalition of academics and policy makers. Specifically, several EU programmes, national government policies and transnational municipal networks frame sustainability projects within this imaginary. Their way to address environmental challenges is through 'best practices' that can be applied on the urban scale, learnt from and transferred between cities. This discursive strategy is used because, according to Porritt (1995, as cited by Marvin & Guy, 1997, p. 313), it is possible only at the local level to translate the technical jargon of environmentalism into a 'new language' that is understood by the people. In this sense, Marvin & Guy state that the authorities create 'sustainability myths' underpinning localist discourses rather than actual sustainability. The use of 'myths' as a concept is used to illustrate how governments roll out narratives to frame the way in which sustainability, the problems and 'the solutions' are conventionally conceived. This approach is problematic because the localist story leaves aside a holistic analysis of the different factors that shape cities and affect the environment, sectorializing reality in a set of problems to be solved by specific policies, constraining the actions only to the urban scale. Why does the narrative matter? Because the way in which a problem is framed and the discourse is performed determines how the situation is understood and how stakeholders will react from their agency: from the actors affected or involved in facing the challenges, passing by the institutional practices that must be put in place, to the scales at which action must be undertaken. Taking this into account, the analysis of the 'local' and its importance can be unravelled deepening in the different contexts and spatial levels, and hence move towards other ways for framing sustainability and tackling environmental pollution.

Since the early 1990s, the European Union approach of 'new localism' to urban sustainability consists of revisions to planning policy, specifically related to land use zoning to reduce distance and mobility for reducing the need to travel (Healy & Shaw, 1994; Owens, 1994; Bruff & Wood, 2000; Owens & Cowell, 2002). Likewise, it involves carrying out analysis to determine to what extent cities are, or are not, becoming more sustainable, documenting this through the use of indicators, flows, footprints, rankings and other quantitative methods. The multilevel approach to sustainability deattaches the 'local' from the 'national' and the 'global', ignoring the interaction with other economic, social and political processes taking place at different scales and systems of governance (Gibbs & Jonas, 2000; Gleeson & Low, 2000). It also draws attention away from the role and influence of other policies and politics coming from outside the urban arena. Hence, there is hardly any questioning of the "geographical imaginations which underpin the idea of nested and discrete scales of political authority over the environment" (Bulkeley & Betsill, 2005, p. 43). Moreover, the technocentric models and wish-lists of measures overlook critical concerns related to the 'political struggles' which are involved in what urban sustainability might imply (Marvin & Guy, 1997; Evans et al., 2001; Whitehead, 2003). These dynamics coming from the supranational level have real consequences materialized in the city, for these processes shape the capacity and the political will of local authorities to address sustainable development. From the multilevel governance approach, urban sustainability is a supranational technical requirement in the city. Hence, it is a frame contained in a constrained spatial scale tackled with strategies that are also limited, hampering its implementation and outreach. This can be further explained by what Swyngedouw (2007) denominated consensual techno-managerialism of a neoliberal governmentality, which characterizes the post-political city.

The post-political city: depoliticizing urban sustainability

For Eric Swyngedouw & Japhy Wilson (2014), post-politics is "the reduction of the political to politics and to the consensual management of economic necessity" (pp. 7-8), meaning that "the political contradictions are reduced to policy problems to be managed by experts and legitimated through participatory processes in which the scope of possible outcomes is narrowly defined in advance" (ibid, p. 6). Swyngedouw started with his work on defining this condition in 2007, building on a set of definitions of 'the political', 'politics' and 'the post-political' provided by Chantal Mouffe, Jacques Rancière and Slavoj Žižek. It is precisely

from the latter author that he draws the definition of "post-politics", considered as the collaboration between 'enlightened technocrats'—economists, public opinion and specialists—and 'liberal multiculturalists', foreclosing the 'space of litigation' in which the excluded can protest against the 'wrong' or the 'injustice' perpetrated against them.

Although he does not mention it explicitly, Swyngedouw identifies the birth of this narrative in the 1980s with the global city. In the *World city hypothesis* (1986), John Friedman highlighted the fact that the city is shaped by global economic forces. One of the hypotheses is that some key cities around the world are deemed as "basing points" for accumulation and concentration of global capital. In this way, a competitive city model appears, framing and shaping the urban based on rankings and hierarchies measuring the extent to which it is connected to the global economy. To determine this, the selection criteria pays attention to numbers: population size, headquarters for transnational corporations, international institutions. As Swyngedouw narrates (2007), from the late 1980s onwards, in the quest for positioning themselves in the 'map of globally competitive metropolises', local authorities started to rely heavily on planning and implementation of Large-Scale Urban Development Projects, changing the city form to spatially organize the production and markets for global capital. The aim of this developmental logic is to generate future economic growth by attracting investment capital and consumers. Friedmann is aware of the contradictions of global capitalism in this new city model, causing both spatial and social polarization. The first one is expressed at the urban scale in the form of poor inner-city ghettos or ethnic working-class enclaves. The second one is expressed in the labour division, which segregates people between the 'specialized dominant elites' and the 'poor low-skilled workers' (1986, p. 77).

Precisely the elites gain the power to adapt the built environment for the sake of their accumulation strategies. Consequently, the policy focus is taken from regulation and distribution and redirected towards the promotion of economic growth, entrepreneurship and creativity (Oatley 1998; Roberts and Sykes 2000; as cited by Swyngedouw, 2007). Elites draw on neoliberal urban strategies to enhance the competitive city. Peck, Theodore and Brenner (2009) identify that, since the 1990s, cities have become important arenas for economic growth via the neoliberalization of forms of creative destruction of institutional arrangements and political compromises. Precisely, for the authors one of these forms is "the increasing exposure of local and regional economies to global competitive forces'' (Peck et al., 2009, p. 61).

Territorial development is turned into a neoliberal mechanism for the creation of new infrastructure aimed at market-oriented economic growth. To do this, the urban policy is redirected towards 'glocal' strategies that redirect economic capacities and infrastructure investments towards globally connected agglomerations. Under this logic, elites turn the city into an institutional laboratory for neoliberal policy experiments, in the form of 'short-termist forms' of interspatial competition, place-marketing and incentives to attract economic investment. This leads to a market-driven transformation of the urban, that is not only socio-spatial, but also political and societal. Politically, the institutional framework is used to facilitate the market expansion through urban projects and also to manage the consequences and contradictions of these marketization initiatives, evidencing the narrative behind the myth of the free-market forces. Socially, neoliberal processes promote an ideology based on values of individual liberty, private property rights and antipathy towards the public and social solidarity.

Neoliberalism is a multiscalar phenomenon, for it needs scaled relationships between institutions and economic actors to operate, downloading risks and responsibilities to the local scale. This condition of multiscale opens up the possibility of associating the mode of operation of neoliberalism with the multilevel approach of sustainability governance, which is also centred on action at the local level inside. Neoliberalism speaks directly to the 'new localism' approach. Consequently, it is necessary to revisit the neoliberal nature of the policy imposed by the European Union to the urban scale in order to achieve sustainability, specifically for this study, the mobility policy.

Since the 1950s, mobility has been inserted in a neoclassical approach (Kębłowski & Bassens, 2018). It focuses on transport infrastructure, rather than in movement of people. Thereupon, the main mobility-related problem is framed as 'traffic congestion' provoked by poor road and parking performance. Looking at the transport network from an intelligent and rational manner, neoclassical mobility is expert-driven, envisioning it as a technical matter, rather than a social process, to be managed by engineers and planners, who consider certain needs and certain users, while overlooking others, such as marginalised community members. Hence, problems are addressed from a top-down perspective, meaning that there is little consultation from all relevant stakeholders, such as daily users. Given its technical approach, the neoclassical approach to mobility relies heavily on scientific knowledge for planning and policy making, obtaining it from empirical data instead of theoretical conceptualisations, taking a positivist

stance (Kębłowski & Bassens, 2018). Under this logic, users are framed as 'rational individuals' who make 'travel choices'. It is believed that the traveller's behaviour relies on choices of destination, mode, route and time to maximize utilities. This 'travel choices' notion is central in modelling processes in this 'mainstream approach' of transport planning (Avinieri, 2012, pp. 513 - 518; Levy, 2013, pp. 48-49), oriented towards efficiency, in relation to saving time and maximising profit. Consequently, the narrative promoted is one centred on autonomy and freedom of movement for individuals: travelling from and to wherever it is desired, moving as much and as far as wanted.

Drawing on a narrative of autonomy, Berger et al. (2014) argue that mobility budgets, policy and planning are oriented towards the element that has been framed as providing the myth of freedom of movement: the automobile. The authors refer to a "self-expanding regime of automobility" (p. 6), arguing that allocating large parts of public budgets for building roads and subsidies to fuels leaves aside the promotion of 'alternative modes of mobility', such as cycling and walking. This car dependence creates inequality, excluding those who cannot afford it. Berger et al. go so far to argue that those dependent on public transport suffer from 'time poverty' due to long travel times. Generally, all users are believed to assess transportation options according to their individual needs and values, prioritizing social and economic aspects such as the accessibility of the workplace or the convenience and comfort of the travel experience, neglecting environmental and societal considerations. In short, the overarching values of the neoclassical paradigm could be summed as: efficiency, time, the 'rationality' of transport, individualism/autonomy, profit, and top-down planning. These values are in line with those values of individuality and market-economic growth promoted by neoliberalism and neoliberal urbanism.

Contesting the idea of a 'conventional approach' of planning and engineering, and taking into account the negative externalities created by the car, David Banister (2008) proposes the 'Sustainable Mobility Paradigm'. The main proposal of this approach is to reduce the need to travel and to reorient mobility away from fossil fuel-based towards greener ways of moving and living. To do this, Banister proposes four actions (p. 75):

1. substitution: Replacing the trip with a non-travel activity (like home-office), reducing it through technology (Internet shopping). The emphasis is put on the relation between ICT and transport.

2. modal shift: Promoting transport policy to reduce levels of car use through the promotion of cycling and walking. This is complemented with the development of a new transport hierarchy and a different way of viewing the street, no longer as a road but as a space for people, green modes and public transport. Mechanisms as parking controls, road pricing and public transport improvement are included within this action.

3. distance reduction: Encouraging land-use policy measures to reduce the distance between activities and increasing densities and concentration through mixed use development, housing location, design of buildings, space and route layouts.

4. efficiency increase: placing importance on the use of 'best available' technology for engine design, clean fuels and renewable energy sources. The goal also includes reducing noise and environmental pollution from emissions, this by implementing measures to ban access to certain parts of the city for vehicles that are not labelled as 'environmentally clean'. The strategy involves a combination of 'technological efficiency' and behavioural change (switch to ecological vehicles and adherence to speed limits).

The proposal pays the attention on the need to combine these actions with these elements into a series of 'consistent' policy measures:

1. making the best use of technology: in transport modes and information systems.

2. regulation and pricing: to reflect the external costs of transport in the actual costs of travel, through higher fuel prices or road user charging.

3. land use development: planning and regulations to support shorter travel distances and improve levels of proximity.

Additionally, Banister establishes a detachment from the 'conventional approach' of planning and engineering by paying attention to: people, rather than traffic congestion; streets as space, rather than roads; and social and environmental concerns through a multicriteria analysis, rather than economic evaluation. Still, this paradigm is embedded within the values of neoliberalism: making an apology for the use of technology and technique (through urban planning in transport and land use for densification) with the goal that the private sector keeps profits,

counting with the operation of governments. This goes in line with Frank W. Geels' (2012) note on the neoclassical frame of environmental problems made by economists. From this perspective, environmental problems are seen as "negative externalities resulting from market failures" (p. 471). Considering this logic, the frame that dominates policy making and discussions around sustainability is one composed by an interplay between governments, establishing favourable conditions to internalize external costs (taxes or emissions trading) and private actors, finding optimal solutions (economic profit, utility maximizing, or cost-benefit), under a narrative that consists on leading to the most 'socially desirable outcomes'.

As shown, one of the policies proposed by Banister to achieve 'efficiency increase' is the implementation of areas in the city oriented to ban the circulation of vehicles other than the ones labelled as "environmentally clean", known as 'low emission zones' (LEZ). For the purpose of the research, this concept is unravelled from a critical perspective by Reigner & Brenac (2019). The authors argue that, precisely, the competitive city model and the neoliberal rationality values shape this urban transport policy, for it is part of urban marketing strategies of cities oriented towards inter-city competition processes. For the authors, contemporary policies for 'sustainable mobility' do not intend to discourage the use of polluting modes of transport, but rather remove the traffic flow and its negative impacts on the main sites of the city while displacing them to other areas, mainly road infrastructures located in the periphery. The logic is that these car-free zones are located in strategic areas of the city to gain or increase its value and attractiveness, while the problems—noise and environmental pollution, traffic jams, car accidents—are intentionally displaced to other peripheral and marginalized areas. Hence, these "sustainable mobility urban projects tend to exacerbate intra-urban spatial and social specialisation" (p. 218). For these reasons, Reigner & Brenac propose to analyze LEZ drawing on the work of sociologists of public action, who argue that policies are vehicles for narratives, myths, dramatic fictions, frameworks and worldviews (Radaelli, 2000; Sfez, 2002; Barthes, 1957; Muller, 1994; as cited by the authors, p. 220). In consequence, attention should be paid to the discourse and the discursive forms within these policies, since the framing of the problems—and the actions to tackle them—represent "cognitive and argumentative repertoires" (*ibid*). These are the narratives used by stakeholders to define and legitimize their actions. Moreover, taking a Foucauldian approach to the policies and the narratives they vehicle, the authors suggest that the framing of sustainable transport policies is characterized by a neoliberal rationality, aimed at governing the behaviour of individuals, depoliticizing LEZ. This

narrative is composed by a series of frames and discursive registers that suppress important 'democratic' aspects, promoting a post-political city model. For this research, these frames and discursive registers are labelled as 'moments of depoliticization' that operate simultaneously, which are:

1. economic rationality approach for individuals: through policy tools-incentives or sanctions-citizens are moulded to do every activity in their lives, individually and socially, on the basis of economic calculation. Thus, people are framed as individual entrepreneurs, customers or consumers, limited to thinking of themselves as 'economically rational individuals'. In this sense, every aspect of their lives is reduced to 'self-care', without any possibility to act towards the common good. For Reigner & Brennac, health policies employ these discursive frames and registers of 'behavioural economisation' in their policies, developing a 'process of individualization' to tackle public problems. This framing depoliticizes social inequalities, the macrosocial aspects of mobility and the structural causes of pollution. The reason for this is that the individual is labelled as responsible for her/his own fate and the source of problems linked to car use, hence, is also in charge of solving them.

2. the 'free mode choice' mirage for modal shift: Reigner & Brennac argue that the principle of "free mode choice" is used to frame transport policies to encourage a modal shift. Within this principle, users are offered a series of transport modes—pedestrian streets, bicycles, public transportation—so they can choose between them and discourage the use of the car. Beyond the fact that the decision is not really free, because mobility options represent constraints, for the authors, the problem lies in the fact that individuals only have to think about which mode of transport to choose, without being aware of the social elements that determine traffic flows in the city. Furthermore, by drawing on the work of other authors (Dupuy, 2006; Orfeuil, 2010), Reigner & Brennac question the validity of the "free mode choice" paradigm, considering aspects such as the high household automobile ownership that exists in certain cities, or the large share of public space and infrastructure that motorized vehicles take up.

3. use of a morality framework: according to the authors, morality has been mobilized within sustainable transport policies through various registers. In combination with a sustainability discourse, public health and road safety are two of the main drivers

mobilized by transport policies. On the one hand, policies convey narratives to justify state intervention to improve air quality and promote active mobility. On the other hand, in terms of safety, public space users are framed as vulnerable pedestrians and cyclists vis-à-vis car drivers, who are seen as responsible for holding a behaviour to avoid or cause traffic accidents. Again, for the authors, these framings prevent from conceiving mobility from its social aspects, or from considering matters related to infrastructure, urban layout, the traffic environment, or any other element related to the complex mobility system, its determinants and its stakes. For example, it is revealing that the authors bring into the debate issues such as "the fragmentation of the territories of daily life"—which implies that people have to commute due to long distances between housing and workplaces—and "the fragmentation of work"—precarization, hourly or staggered work, lack of contracts—.

4. the morality framework as a powerful anesthetic of democracy: the use of morality in public policy serves as a powerful democratic anaesthetic, a condition of a post-political urban administration. This narrative to discourage car use due to its negative effects on the environment, health and safety, creates polarization between users of public space in the city. A discursive struggle emerges, in which users who are unable to stop making use of the car are framed as those maintaining a 'bad' behaviour, ignoring the particular circumstances behind this decision. Hence, debate is narrowed, depoliticizing environmental problems and its treatment.

This approach to sustainable urban mobility policies draws on the application of communication strategies from the local government, with the intention to impose this behavioural standard and regulate individuals through the use of morality. Thus, the individual is framed as being responsible for achieving a city with fewer cars and less air pollution, through the communication of moral mandates like: "move without polluting", "walk thirty minutes a day for your health", "move safely and don't kill". These narratives appeal to the individual, rather than recognizing that sustainability is a joint effort that must include different actors and take into account different factors at all scales.

LEZs also have a translation in the built environment of the city. Thus, road layouts are modified to support less vehicular traffic, sometimes expanding public space for cycling or pedestrian use. This modification of layouts is legitimized by the use of morality. However, by encouraging

certain uses (pedestrian, cycling, leisure, recreational), it makes other uses impossible (commercial, unloading of goods), segregating certain users who are considered unvirtuous.

Following Reigner & Brenac's critical analysis, not only the LEZs policy is depoliticized, but also users. Policies, and basically all contemporary public action, approach individuals as 'homo economicus' in every life aspect. This neoliberal rationality incentivizes a 'process of deactivation of democracy' at considering citizens as nothing more than "rational economic actors", without any political agency in the city. Thus, another moment of depoliticization arises in which, by focusing only on the individual and the city, this neoliberal framework of sustainable mobility does not encourage the search for collective and integral solutions to social problems that involve participation at other geographical scales.

It is important to highlight that Reigner & Brennac take as their starting point Swyngedouw (2005; as cited by the authors) observation on the depoliticization of the contemporary framing of environmental issues. Depoliticization stands out for the narrowness of public debates (specifically around sustainability), the impossibility of pursuing alternative socio-ecological trajectories (through the use of moral mandates) and the replacement of redistributive policies by urban marketing strategies. Firstly, the public debate on sustainable mobility is limited to reflecting on the negative environmental effects of the car (air and noise pollution, congestion), social effects (road accidents and traffic jams) and spatial effects (loss of public space and urban sprawl). Secondly, the socio-ecological alternatives are once again restricted to the car and the use of technology to improve its emission levels, instead of reflecting on other mobilities. Thirdly, taking the car as a starting point leads to the implementation of policies such as LEZs that increase the attractiveness of the area where they are implemented, while causing other problems such as gentrification and the transfer of pollution and congestion to other areas of the city.

To operationalize this approach, a neoliberalization of urban policies occurs, which are used as vehicles for narratives that promote the values of the free market: individual freedom, private property, rationality, expertise, efficiency and profit. However, in order to hide the fact that these values are materialized at the expense of the social tissue and the environment, the semantics of sustainable development are used to legitimize policies that, while purported as the opposite, intentionally reproduce the 'self-expanding regime of automobility'. As Berger et al. (2014) point

out, one of the problems lies precisely in the abstract quality of the concept of 'sustainable mobility'. The authors argue that there is no political or scientific consensus on the definition of 'sustainable mobility'. Consequently, it falls into the trap of 'new localism', ignoring precisely what other authors have already pointed out: the global challenges and macro-social factors that also need to be taken into account. For this reason, the authors suggest that the concept "might become diluted and end up as mere rhetoric with little guidance for policy-makers and scientists" (p. 307).

Reigner & Brennac (2019) zoom out to draw attention to the fact that the effects, rather than being caused by the narrative, correspond to the evolution of urban governance in late capitalist Western societies. Under this model, redistributive policies shift to neoliberal urban policies to prioritize a competitive city model that excels in the globalized economy. In line with David Harvey (1989; as cited by Reigner & Brennac, 2019), this has an impact in the way space is approached, which is understood more as a 'place' rather than a 'territory'. For this author, the economic politics of a 'place' is more about attracting investment, rather than resources, skilled workers, consumers and tourists, rather than addressing the needs of the population that actually lives in the urban 'territory'.If the politics of 'territory' approaches it holistically by connecting it to its surroundings and the other related scales, the economic politics of 'place' creates sectoralized policies implemented in segregated spaces. In this way, the urban design and urban policies that shape the city, and which are the result of a series of decisions made by the elite, leave out some needs, while prioritizing others, excluding a number of users who cannot afford to enter the *homo economicus* model.

Precisely, by supporting environmental solutions on the automobile, the economic individual and the local level without taking into account other macro-social aspects, democratic life is reduced. For Rancière, consensus on managing the local consequences of global problems is a common condition of post-politics. Moreover, if the debate is reduced to framing car use or driving a car powered by 'greener energies' as 'good behaviour' and everything else that does not fall within the aforementioned as 'bad behaviour', the possibility of antagonism is eliminated, another post-political condition pointed out by Mouffe (as cited by Swyngedouw & Wilson, 2014). Thus, an 'urban post-political arrangement' emerges, characterized by a "neo-liberal governmentality that has replaced debate, disagreement and dissensus with a series of

technologies of governing that fuse around consensus, agreement, and technocratic management" (Swyngedouw, 2007, n.p.).

And what about the people? The result is that the policies of the neoliberal urban governance model that prioritize certain uses and users over others exclude certain vulnerable social groups. Citizens are reduced to 'consumers-customers-stakeholders' (based on Reigner & Brennac, 2019, p. 224) with no choice other than self-care and individualization. The possibility of recovering the social tissue and orienting public action towards the commons is eliminated due to the dissemination of the values of individual freedom and a state that operates as a facilitator of the market.

Politicizing urban sustainability?

Although the post-political condition draws on a variety of 'critical authors' (Chantal Mouffe, Jacques Rancière, Slavoj Žižek and Mustafa Dikeç) that have shed light on the depoliticized gestures of neoliberal urban politics, this approach is not the ultimate reading of what happens in cities. While the market and elites play an important role in shaping public policies, these critical perspectives run the risk of forgetting the all-important role of people and their agency to organize collectively and claim their right to shape urban processes and engage in the daily production of space. Authors such as Velasco et al. (2016) point out that the post-political condition was never fully completed in certain cities. Despite the dominance of a neoliberal governance model in European cities such as Madrid in the early 20th century, the authors recall the existence of urban coalitions that used their 'collective voice' to critique that model and improve the system. Moreover, Velasco et al. (2016) argue that, after 15M, new urban actors appeared with new demands conveyed through new discourses to disrupt the 'discursive hegemony' (p. 1) of the neoliberal urban governance model and thus gain a place in the public discourse.

Precisely, Blanco (2015) emphasizes that approaching the model of a city from a democratic governance or critical perspective can be 'excessively reductionist', since it ignores the recognition of the complexity of the 'inter-relationships' and dependencies between different urban trajectories. For Blanco, the neoliberal model is just one more of the 'meta-narratives' of urban governance and he argues that, to avoid falling into the reductionist trap, it is necessary to connect these 'meta-narratives' with "'micro-level accounts' of the 'messiness' of local

politics and practices" (Blanco, Griggs, & Sullivan, 2014; as cited by Blanco, 2015, p. 124). This author recalls that in the same city, different coalitions might exist mobilizing different sets of resources within different policy arenas, occurring in different spaces and over different periods of time. This alternative framework for approaching urban sustainability policies takes into account that they are not only shaped by political and economic elites in a 'depoliticized' way. On the contrary, it highlights that urban sustainability policies can be politicized if there is a coalition advocating for their creation to address a concrete need, such as the right to a city with fewer cars, more breathable air, more public space, more bicycle lanes. As Leach and Percy-Smith (2001, p. 1; as cited by Blanco, 2015, p. 123) clearly stated: "the traditional conception of local government as 'what the council does' had to be replaced by a new one in which local policymaking increasingly involves multi-agency working, partnerships and policy networks which cut across organizational boundaries''.

In order to take the context into account when analyzing how the same policy can be politicized or depoliticized in different geographies, drawing on urban regime theory can be useful, as it illustrates how regime-governance patterns can vary between and even within cities. Stone uses the concept of 'regime' from a political economic perspective to reject two assumptions: pluralist assumptions that government authority is adequate to make and implement policy; and structural assumptions that approach policy as determined by economic market forces. In this way, Stone is interested in exploring "the middle ground between'' (p. 2, 1993; as cited by Mossberger & Stoker, 2001, p. 811), moving away from the reductionism of studying policies only from both their economic or political nature, paying attention to the complexity of the relationships that shape them. Thus, the concept of 'regime' is defined as "the agency that mediates between causal variables in environmental and public policy outcomes'' (ibid.). While perspectives such as 'actually existing neoliberalism' (Peck, Theodore & Brenner, 2009), 'new localism' (Marvin & Guy, 1997) or the 'post-political city' (Swyngedouw, 2007; Swyngedouw & Wilson, 2014), put the focus on the lack of attention to the macro-social aspects that reproduce inequality at the urban scale, the focus of urban regime theory is on the internal dynamics occurring at the city level, specifically on coalition formation, on 'civic cooperation' (Stone, 1989, p. 5; as cited by Mossberger & Stoker, 2001, p. 811) and informal modes of coordination across institutional boundaries.

For the sake of not forgetting the agency that people have to coordinate and form coalitions of 'civic cooperation' to advocate within an urban public policy field, Stone proposes a classification to understand how political power functions in different urban regimes: 'power to' or the capacity to act, rather than 'power over' others or social control. Complementally, this definition of 'power to' directly dialogues with perspectives that constrain people as shaped by governments as 'rational individuals' or '*homo economicus*', from a 'power over' through narratives conveyed through 'depoliticized' public policies. Stone also challenges the definition of 'consensus', which under post-political managerialism inhibits debate and antagonism (necessary conditions of the political), by proposing that it does not mean having the same values and beliefs, but rather "participation to achieve small opportunities" (1993, p. 11; as cited by Mossberger & Stoker, 2001, p. 811). It is precisely collaboration that leads to the production of consensus on policy. Understanding that politics cannot be reduced to the control of a few, nor can it be read from a pluralist perspective, Stone brings into the picture the key political power represented by the capacity of long-term coalitions to achieve change on the ground. However, Stone does not overlook the similarly key power of business and its strength, whilst acknowledging that the exact composition of regimes and the strength of their elements varies according to the institutional resources available and how they are divided in each context. Although authors such as Dowding et al. (1999, as cited by Mossberger & Stoker, 2001, p. 811) indicate that 'urban regime theory' is more of a concept or model than a theory, its importance lies in its attention to the context: through demographic change, economic restructuring and political mobilization.

Building on Stone's work, Mossberger & Stoker (2001, p. 829) provide a definition of 'urban regimes' as coalitions based on informal networks and formal relationships. This implies that the resources mobilized by coalitions can come from governmental and non-governmental sources, recognizing the role of business, but not limited to this. Furthermore, regimes are tied to an 'identifiable policy agenda' related to the composition of coalition participants. For this reason, collaboration is an important aspect, based on social production to bring 'fragmented resources' together into power to achieve tasks and 'small opportunities'. However, there must be a long-term pattern of cooperation, rather than a temporary coalition. For Stone, it is temporary stability, rather than whether the group is a formal or informal network, that allows the coalition to access institutional resources and thus have a sustained role in making governance decisions. Precisely, Velasco et al. (2016, p. 2) propose that a new political

condition emerged in Madrid, for the first time since 1989, thanks to a 'new coalition of parties' and a 'civic platform' that managed to form a municipal government. According to the authors, this 'disruption of the post-political condition' was achieved through the 'dismantling of institutional mechanisms of participation and the politicization of new social, material and post-material demands'. In this way, urban regime theory can shed light on the emergence of "new discursive opportunities against the neoliberal model" (*ibid*, p. 12).

These new discursive opportunities make it necessary to look at the discourse produced by coalitions, networks—whether formal or informal—of all those engaged in multi-agency working and, why not, of those who, from their individuality, stand up for their individual needs to have a place in the daily production of space. Coming back to Swyngedouw, this time in the company of Cook (2012), in the midst of the techno-managerial discourses that shape sustainability policies, it is necessary to illuminate "more alternative and radical" frameworks which place the social at the centre. Thus, both authors take up the concept of Urban Environmental Justice (UEJ), which is used to refer to a series of social movements that emphasize diversity: how different social groups experience environmental goods and hazards differently. UEJ itself contains an object of contestation, since the notion of justice—what is fair and why—represents a debate for its definition. In this way, Schlosberg (2003, 2007; as cited by Swyngedouw & Cook, 2012), draws on Iris Marion Young's work on the notion of justice, identifying simultaneous dimensions of justice which highlight the recognition of diversity, specifically of the most disadvantaged groups, as well as their inclusion in decision-making processes, the need to (re)distribute environmental bads more equally and to provide the capabilities necessary to create a healthy community.

Using Young's political theory to study the narratives vehiculated in urban sustainability policies can bring a politicized reading, revealing those aspects that have been relegated from public discourse. Affectivity, desire, the plurality of linguistic and communicative relations, as well as the body and the bodily experience are elements to be politicized, as they mediate our relation with the world. For this author, these elements are the ones that mark the diversity between people and, for this reason, they have been displaced to the 'private sphere' and excluded from rationality, since they are 'the difference'. In this way, human experience has been fragmented, separating 'the reason' from the body. What is presented as 'the rational' and 'the universal', Young recalls, is often the worldview of the most privileged groups, conveying 'totalizing

narratives' in public discourse. For this reason, Young claims an array of diverse methods, such as the metaphorical and playful aspects, emotional and artistic expressions, poetic discourse and the narration of personal experiences to identify the specific needs of particular individuals and politicize them. Young proposes a communicative ethic that does not oppose reason to desire and affectivity. Whereas in Habermas's communicative ethics the public is homogeneous, consensus is often the privilege of the best argument, and there is a lack of sympathy for claims of diversity, Young distinguishes: heterogeneous groups formed by persons who stand from different positions in the social structure, multiple forms of reason, mutual understanding rather than consensus, the assumption that 'truth' and 'justice' do not emerge spontaneously but from processes of discussion, sympathy for claims of otherness and difference, since there is room for desires, emotions, affects and multiple bodily experiences. "A reflection on the body——and I venture to add: inserted in the city and urban processes—becomes an urgent political exercise".

Methodology

Research

This thesis is a comparative qualitative research built upon two case studies. The aim is to explore how low emission zones (LEZ) can be depoliticized or politicized in different geographies through individual and collective narratives that pay attention to the body, affections and desires. For this, it is identified how sustainability is framed by different social agents, mayors and local authorities, as well as in the policy at different levels of governance.

Case studies: different cities, same policy

As case studies, the cities of Madrid and Paris are addressed, specifically with their LEZ projects. In the case of Madrid, the main focus of study is Madrid Central. As for Paris, the main focus is the LEZ, but attention is also paid to other projects that complement it in the fight to reduce air pollution, further details will be developed on this point in the findings section. Throughout the workshops to develop this research, a question arose: why comparing Madrid and Paris? The reason is that in 2010, the EU, through the European Environment Agency (EEA), flagged Spain and France as the only Member States that exceeded NO_X emission limits by a significant percentage. By 2017 they remained part of the group of six Member States with emissions still exceeding European parameters (EEA, 2020), this time for ammonia (NH3). In the same year, the European Commission published the first *Environmental Implementation Review*, a tool for analysis, dialogue and collaboration to improve the implementation of environmental policies in Member States. In this document, Madrid and Paris were explicitly identified as cities where NO_X levels remained significantly above European air quality standards.

Methods

Discourse analysis

As the aim of this thesis is to explore the sustainability narratives that emerge from LEZ policy, discourse analysis is the tool that helps me to approach the case studies. Discourse is language in action. Its signifying process "constitutes the point of intersection of a set of 'discursive practices'" (Beristáin, 1995, p. 153; own translation), which includes verbal and sensorial behaviours. Each 'discursive practice', in turn, is a product of history and space, for it

is shaped by anonymous rules that have been defined at different times and in different geographies. In this sense, discourse analysis helps to approach the ways in which language in action is constructed, "the functions it serves in different contexts and the contradictions that emerge across them" (Parker, p. 308). For this thesis, discourse analysis is conducted at three levels:

1. a multiscalar analysis: of policies concerning the governance of urban sustainability, specifically air pollution, starting from the policies in each of the two cities, scaling up to the regional and national policies of both countries, up to the European level.

2. a local analysis:
   ➤ of the individual and collective actors positioning themselves in favour and against Madrid Central and Paris LEZ.
   ➤ of the mayors of both cities: for Madrid, the discourses of the previous mayor Manuela Carmena and the current one José Luis Martínez-Almeida (due to the change of government in 2019); for Paris, the discourse of Anne Hidalgo is analyzed, due to the repetition of her mandate. Similarly, when necessary for this thesis, the speeches of local authorities in charge of mobility are approached: Inés Sabanés (Madrid); Christophe Najdovski and David Belliard (Paris).

3. a translocal comparative analysis: as a result of the previous discourse analysis, a translocal comparative analysis is carried out between the two cities to identify urban governance trends and (de)politicized narratives; their similarities, diversities, contradictions and opportunities.

Semi-structured interviews (plus limitations: some tuits and the story of an interview-survey)

In order to deepen the discourse of the agents involved in the case studies of this thesis, semi-structured interviews were carried out. In the case of Madrid, interviews were conducted via Zoom with 5 people and groups in favour of Madrid Central and with 1 person against. In this phase of the thesis limitations appeared. It was more difficult to identify LEZ detractors as there is no individual or group that takes a publicly stated position against Madrid Central. The search in online newspaper articles allowed me to learn about the existence of the Platform of People Affected by Madrid Central, however, I soon found out that it no longer exists. It was

probably activated for the 2019 municipal elections to be used as a *politics* tool by the Popular Party (PP), whose candidate was Almeida. For this reason, the strategy I followed was to identify tweets from mayors Carmena and Almeida about Madrid Central, then I did a manual search of users who expressed comments against the strategy. Subsequently, I sent them a message to contact them, but I did not receive a response. Finally, I contacted users who posted comments against the measure in a Facebook group about Madrid Central, opened by citizens. These users asked for a survey to respond: 2 people took part in an interview-survey I created. The Paris case and LEZ represented a bigger challenge for me. My first approach to the subject was through journalistic texts published online. In this way, I began to identify the opposing groups, which are the ones that, in this city, have the most public and media presence. However, when I contacted them through their emails and social networks, I did not get a response either. For this reason, I analyzed the discourse found on their websites. I had the same luck in the case of pro-LEZ groups: when I contacted them through different channels, I did not get a response, despite my insistence. For this reason, the discourse on their official websites is analyzed: 5 persons and organizations in favour and 2 organizations aagainst[1]. Fortunately I had the opportunity to interview via Zoom Christophe Najdovski—Deputy Mayor in charge of the transformation of public space, transport and mobility from 2014 to 2020—and one of the promoters of Paris Respire, the quiet zone implemented in each of the Parisian districts. Similarly, with her counterpart in Madrid, Inés Sabanés, I was able to ask her a question online during her participation in a forum on Madrid Central in June 2021. From this same forum I take the participation of David Belliard, the current Deputy Mayor in charge of the transformation of public space, transport and mobility. In the case of Carmena and Hidalgo, speeches at events in which they participated together were selected, retrieved from the official websites of their city municipalities, from the media and from publications on their social networks. As for current Madrid's mayor, Almeida, his discourse is taken from his 2019 political campaign slogan and his current proposal for the LEZ, published in an online newspaper.

Before starting the Zoom conversation, all interviewees gave their verbal consent to record the interview and reproduce their words for the purposes of this master's thesis. Likewise, the author notes that the interviews reproduced here are ethically edited without changing the

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[1] See annex for table of interviewees, survey respondents and organizations which discourse was analyzed.

meaning with an own emphasis and translation to adapt the spoken discourse to the written format in order to make a more fluent text.

Coding

The interviews were analyzed through manual coding. In this way, themes were identified based on urban sustainability and the governance frameworks from the literature review, which function as analytical categories for the discourse of the agents involved and the policies related to the topic of this thesis. As Schmidt (2004) states, the principle of coding as an analytical tool for semi-structured interviews is the exchange between the material and prior theoretical knowledge. For this author, there is an interplay between data collection and theoretical pre-assumptions, which can be confirmed, refuted or changed during this process. Thus, in conducting the interviews and, above all, in transcribing them, the process of identifying analytical categories was initiated due to the prior theoretical knowledge. Subsequently, this process was reinforced by repeated readings of the interviews. These analytical categories of concepts from the literature review serve as the basis for the comparative analysis between the two case study cities.

Narrative analysis: of urban sustainability policies, authorities, collectives and individuals

This thesis is based on the assumption that people live, understand and approach the world through narratives. Narrative is universal: it has been present everywhere since the beginning of humanity; practically, there are no people without narratives, as Barthes (1975) reminds us. Narrative is a type of discourse, clarifies John Pier (2015). It is often linked to the concept of "story", and it is, but it is more than that. Veland et al. have focused on the study of the importance of narratives in sustainability. As these authors recall, narratives are not limited to textual stories or the oral tradition of cultures, but can be defined as an infrastructure that provides "spatio-temporal coordinates for moving through and manipulating the world" (p. 45). In this sense, the authors explain that narratives have an "onto-episthemic" dimension: since narrative is a structure that, on the ontological side, shapes individual and cultural cognition that engenders a sense of the experience of being-in-the-world; and on the epistemic side, narrative constitutes the basis for knowing how the world can be lived, manipulated and changed. Both sides occur simultaneously, giving narrative the capacity to limit what can be thought and said about the world, past, present or future, or to enable other ways of thinking and living it. In this way, while certain groups convey dominant narratives, other groups also resist with

counter-narratives enabling their way of understanding and experiencing the world to gain a space in the discourses. Thus, as Veland et al. (2018) make clear, narratives have the capacity to enable or constrain individual and collective agency in responding to global environmental change. This goes in line with Pier's (2015) call to analyze discourse not only from the structure that constitutes language, but to emphasize the framework of social interaction in which narratives occur, adopting a post-structuralist approach. Even Barthes recognizes narratives as "plural acts" (1975, p. 239), because of their historical, geographical and cultural diversity. This author explains that narratives can be vehiculated through: oral or written articulated language, still or moving images, gestures, or a mixture of these vehicles. As Reigner & Brennac reminded us in the literature review of this thesis, policies also vehicle narratives through frames and discursive registers. And, as will also be explored in this thesis, other people from their agency can vehicle their frames and registers to answer with couter-narratives to dominant narratives.

Narrative analysis through Iris Marion Young's political-communicative theory

To interpret the narrative discourse analysis from the semi-structured interviews, policies and authorities, I draw on Young's political theory and communicative ethics as a basis. As already stated in the literature review, she calls for the politicization of the body and bodily experience, affects, desire and the plurality of linguistic and communicative relations. These elements have been relegated by a 'privileged rationality' to the 'private and intimate spheres'. However, their politicization is urgent since these are the elements that mediate our relationship with the world. Therefore, these elements are intimately related with the shaping of the counter-narratives, which vehicle the claims to include them in the "public space". Similarly, Young reminds us that dominant narratives do not emerge spontaneously, but are the result of a process of discussion carried out by the most privileged groups. What is presented as 'the rational' and 'the universal' is only a privileged point of view. For this reason, it is necessary to pay attention to personal narratives in order to visibilize what is regulated for being considered as 'private, intimate and irrational'.

Longitudinal perspective

Different authors have identified that urban governance is a field of study that has not been consolidated, due to the complications surrounding its concepts and explanations, the focus on single case studies, and the limited empirical support. For this reason, these authors have pointed to the need to introduce and employ new methodologies. Thus, the longitudinal

perspective proves to be a refreshing method (Nuno et al., 2019), as it helps to identify key moments of conflict and change in the study of urban governance. Moreover, for Pierre (2005), to explain how city governance has evolved, it is necessary to pay attention to the particular political, social, cultural and historical contexts. For this work, the discourse of government plans, mayors and authorities is reviewed at different moments. In the case of the interviewees, all were asked when they identified that the public debate on the need for a more sustainable city began[2]. This question was posed in order to understand the change over time in the (de)politicization of urban sustainability. Similarly, throughout the interviews, the interviewees themselves recounted their forms of organization, actions, struggles, gains and comparisons between governments (in the case of Madrid), over time.

Comparative research in urban governance: a necessary field of study

Urban governance is a field of study with an analytical approach to shed light on the institutions and actors involved, as well as the conditions and rules that shape their relationships and interactions, as Nuno et al. (2019) explain. In this way, it becomes an overly complex object of study, which has been relegated to single case study research. For this reason, conducting comparative research becomes a necessary task in this field, specifically with systematically collected data that can be compared (ibid., p. 13). In recent years, authors like Pierre (2005) have pointed out the necessity of comparative research, since urban politics theories are not sufficient to conceptualize or explain patterns of urban governance. Since their object of analysis are actors, institutions and how they interconnect with each other, it is necessary to uncover these dimensions and how they vary across different local, regional and national contexts. Although urban governance depends on the specific social, political, cultural and historical contexts of a city, comparison is possible and necessary because cities are exposed to similar global and international processes. In this way, we can escape from 'neoliberal governance meta-narratives' to pay attention to the alternative values that are shaping emerging governance narratives and their accounts.

Positionality

As the author of this thesis I am aware that everything produced in this study comes from my gaze, which over the past two years has been nourished by the knowledge required to present a solid and thorough work, but I also embrace my limitations as a perfectible subject inserted in

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[2] See Annex for the battery of questions.

this world. I am an active pro-mobility person, I move around by bicycle and I do not know how to drive any motorized vehicle. For this reason I am aware that I am likely to be surrounded by people with a similar profile, so it was probably easier for me to contact people who are pro-LEZ to conduct the interviews that nurture this work. Similarly, being a native Spanish-speaker and having previously lived in Madrid, Madrid Central was not a new topic for me, as Paris was. Thus, I am aware that this made it possible to get in contact with more people in the Spanish capital, than in the French capital. However, it is constructive for me to know this positionality, which in turn opens opportunities of research and knowledge for me in the future.

Findings and Analysis

Once upon a time... the multilevel story of a (de)politicized urban sustainability

In this section, a multilevel analysis is unfolded to pay attention to the frames and discourse registers that shape the narratives of urban sustainability in public policies at different scales. The aim is to explore to what extent European policies convey (de)politicized narratives and whether and how they are downloaded to other levels of government. This in order to find the moments of policy (in)coherence and the discursive struggles at different levels of government emerging from the opportunities and contradictions of multilevel governance. The objective of this analysis is as well to present a nonchronological narrative of policies at different scales concerning urban sustainability and, specifically, to address air pollution through LEZs.

(De)politicized narratives of urban sustainability and air pollution in European policy

The local level plays a non-formal role in the EU's institutional architecture (Grisel & van de Waart, 2011). Nevertheless, the urban arena plays an important role in the European narrative of sustainability. In *Sustainable Urban Development in the European Union: A Framework for Action* (1998), the EU recognizes that several of its policies on sustainability have an important urban relevance that cannot be overlooked in order to ensure an effective implementation, acknowledging the multilevel nature of public policies and the need to integrate them beyond Member States. This document states that, in order to fulfill its objectives, European policies for sustainability need to be "more urban sensitive" (EU, 1998, p. 2), which implies taking into account the potential and challenges of cities, and thus achieving more coordinated EU action to address sustainability problems. A year earlier, in 1997, the EU had adopted sustainable development as an overarching policy objective—and frame—with the signing of the Treaty of Amsterdam. In this way, urban integration of European policies is sought, since the urban arena is internationally framed as the specific scale where to achieve sustainability. Indeed, Swyngedouw & Cook (2012) identify that policy makers' discourses on sustainability started to become hegemonic when talking about the environment and European cities. Specifically, a narrative began to be knitted around the global impact of the 'socio-ecological footprint' of cities. Objective 3 of the *Framework for Action* (1998) focuses explicitly on environmental sustainability, which is framed as simultaneously local and global. The overall aim of this point is "the protection and improvement of the urban environment so as to improve the quality of life, safeguard human health and protect local and global ecosystems" (p. 14). From this moment,

"the protection of human health and the improvement of the quality of life" as well as "the protection of local and global ecosystems" are identified as discursive registers that will be part of the following EU documents regarding urban sustainability. For example, in *The European Environment. State and Outlook 2010*, it is identified that anthropogenic emissions not only damage human health, but also terrestrial and water ecosystems. Moreover, it constructs a holistic narrative of the negative effects of air pollution extending from human aspects to the damaging of the cultural heritage, as pollutants corrode the materials composing them. It is also in this document that air pollution is explicitly framed as having an important link to climate change, as both problems share "common sources of emissions" (EEA, 2010, p. 5): fuel combustion in industry, agriculture, households and transport. This frame about the link between air pollution and climate change is downloaded from supranational and European policy-making into local policy-making arenas, as well as into urban demands for more alternative cities, which will be explored further below.

As the literature review and the previous paragraph begin to point out, transport is a vehicle mobilized by the European policy-making discourse of the urban sustainability narrative. The European narrative (1998) stresses that transport is responsible for a large amount of pollutant emissions in urban areas, damaging air quality, and therefore action should be taken to reduce its local and global environmental impact. The strategies outlined at European level to achieve this objective suggest a shift from the neoclassical mobility model towards the 'Sustainable Mobility Paradigm' (Banister, 2008). A 'modal shift' is proposed, encouraging the use of more sustainable modes of transport. Another concept from Banister that appears is 'efficiency increase', as the European policy determines that technological improvements and fuel switching are necessary to reduce emissions from any type of motorized vehicle. Finally, another element from the 'Sustainable Mobility Paradigm' is 'making the best use of technology'. By defining that the Commission will set high pollutant emission standards for motorized vehicles, it will be necessary to provide urban authorities with "Enhanced Environmentally-friendly Vehicles and engines (EEV)" (European Union, 1998, p. 16), specifically for transport groups such as taxis, buses, delivery vans and refuse collection trucks. The narrative of European policy points to a post-political approach of consensual techno-managerialism of the governance of urban sustainability: since this story tells that transport is a cause of pollutant emissions and can be solved through the shift towards cleaner and more technologically efficient modes. This public policy, designed to address such a broad

issue as environmental sustainability, only considers 'transport', which is just one element of the complex mobility system. The notion of mobility is so broad that it can connote different meanings in different contexts. In an attempt to approach it more holistically, it can be understood as the quality of movement of people, the goods for survival and the vehicles that move them (Hanson, 2010; Berger et al., 2014). Moreover, European policy constrains environmental sustainability to a modal shift, avoiding other sustainable possibilities if the focus would move towards encouraging other mobilities, i.e. other ways for people to move (or not), and considering the social aspects around the question of why people move. The techno-managerialist approach of European environmental sustainability policy unfolds post-political narratives which permeate downwards the framing of policies and actions from Member States, downloading into urban policies.

The post-political narrative of the EU on urban sustainability is not closed. Elements that point towards the politicization of this matter can be found in this narrative. For example, in Objective 3 of *Sustainable Urban Development in the European Union: A Framework for Action*, the EU calls on urban policy-makers to pay attention to the factors that determine the social demand for transport in order to reduce pollutant emissions (1998, p. 16), pointing towards the social aspects of mobility, although it remains a narrow focus only to transport. In the same line, the EU opens the path towards conceiving a shift in the current economic development paradigm, by proposing a less transport-intensive model through the use of more sustainable modes of transport. However, it falls short again by only considering transport among other elements of the current economic development paradigm that also cause polluting emissions, without questioning other elements shaping it, such as the neoliberal values on which it stands. Within the same document, further hints of politicization of sustainability are found when addressing the social pillar of this notion. Point 2 states that the objective is to promote equal opportunities, social and economic inclusion, and to improve working and housing conditions for "socially excluded groups" (pp. 10–11). This objective refers to the concept of UEJ by focusing on disadvantaged groups, acknowledging that there is a diversity of subjects that needs to be included in the (re)distribution of environmental goods. Another moment of politicization of the European narrative on environmental sustainability is that it takes into account other health damages caused by transport. For example, noise pollution, an aspect that is often overlooked in sustainable urban transport policy. As the Spanish Deputy for Más País-Verdes Equo, Esther Gómez, said: "When we talk about mobility we tend to focus on chemical pollution, but there is

another very important factor which is noise pollution and that also affects our health" (Más Madrid, 2021 June 15; own translation). Further on, the EU acknowledges that not only transport is a major source of air pollution. Through *Directive 2001/81/EC of the European Parliament and the European Council*, another moment of politicization of urban sustainability is opened by considering some sectors related to the macro-social aspects of environmental damage, such as: agriculture, domestic heating, energy, industry, inland navigation, road transport, and the use of mobile machinery and solvents. Moreover, maritime transport is also considered as a significant contributor to emissions. This point is in tension with the argument of people against LEZs. For example, Interviewee 1 against Madrid Central mentions:

"I know that Europe rules and there have to be pollution ceilings. The easy thing to do, in one way, is to remove traffic. Although there are also many things that pollute that are not traffic. For example, coal-fired boilers, which are also going to be banned. We are forgetting about the electricity production to power the cars that can move around Madrid Central, but of course, as it is polluting 500km away, we don't care, but that is also polluting."

As the excerpt from this interview shows, the argument that "not only cars pollute" is identified as a discursive register used by people and groups who are against LEZs. This account regarding the constrained focus of only reducing the use of certain cars in certain areas of the city, while traffic shifts to other areas, some users are excluded and space is segregated, can indeed have a depoliticized reading, as shown by Reigner & Brennac (2019).

Within the European narrative to achieve urban sustainability by improving air quality through the reduction of emissions from transport, LEZs appear in *The European Environment: State and Look 2010*. In this document, "establishing LEZs for more polluting vehicles" is framed as an "example of possible actions" by local, regional and national authorities to reduce air pollution in urban areas (p. 33). The debate can be opened regarding to what extent LEZs policy holds a depoliticized nature, since they stem from the European policy on air pollution, which is inserted within the 'Sustainable Mobility Paradigm' that prioritizes a neoliberal rationality by striving for 'efficiency increase' through the implementation of these measures, overlooking the social aspects of mobility. For this reason attention should be paid at how LEZs as policies are politicized or depoliticized by different social agents in different geographies and regime-governance patterns.

Madrid 2000 - 2015: a depoliticized story of urban sustainability and air pollution

Despite the transboundary nature of air pollution, Spain was flagged by the EEA in 2010 for exceeding the levels of O_3 above the alert limit of 240 μg/m^3 and NO_X by 28% above the legal standards—this is significantly high in comparison with other Member States that did not comply the standards by 5%, such as Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom—. However, members of the coalition Plataforma en Defensa de Madrid Central (PEDM) identify that the calls for Spain to reduce the levels of pollutant emissions began two years earlier with *Directive 2008/50/EC* (Respira Madrid, 2021, March 9). In this document, the EU explicitly calls on Member States to take action for compliance with air quality target values. Among these actions, those that make explicit reference to cities are the following. First, developing air quality plans in zones and agglomerations where pollutant concentrations exceed these values. Second, establishing measurement and monitoring stations in urban areas. Third, ensuring policy coherence at different levels and integration with European Directives.

The governance of air pollution in Madrid is considered post-political: from the early 21st century until 2015. Authors (De la Fuente & Velasco, 2012; Velasco et al., 2016) have identified that the policy objectives of Alberto Ruiz Gallardón, mayor of Madrid from 2003 to 2011 by PP, were aimed at making Madrid a global city, specifically an Olympic host in three failed attempts. This was the continuation of the city model initiated by his predecessor José María Álvarez del Manzano in the 1990s and by Gallardón himself during his regional presidency in the Community of Madrid from 1995 to 2003. Juan Bárcena, engineer and head of the Madrid mobility commission of Ecologistas en Acción, recounts that while other European cities such as London and Milan were establishing LEZs in 2008 or establishing policies to take away physical space from the car as in París, Gallardón had just inaugurated the M-45 as regional president in 2002, a motorway "twice as expensive as building a high-speed train" (Mateo, 2019, October 24), and in 2007, already as mayor, a tunnel on the M-30, "the most expensive ever paid by a Spanish city council" (Gutiérrez, 2007, April 1). The latter will continue to be paid for with public money from the municipal coffers until 2042: "a construction project that cost more than 3.6 billion euros, that we are still paying for and that our children will be paying for", says Juan. Air pollution was depoliticized because nobody even talked about it. Ecologistas en Acción's work on air quality began at that time:

"We used to say: 'the measuring stations are 80% or 90% over. We have illegal pollution concentrations, we are not going to comply by 2010'. For 10 years the municipal government responded: 'no, they are not illegal because we are going to be asked for them in 2010'. We counterattacked: 'in 2010 we are not going to reset the meter to 0, we have to start doing things'."

This is how Ecologistas started to become one of the key collectives in the politicization of urban sustainability in Madrid, activating its 'power to': demanding action from the local government to meet the parameters required for 2010, translating the monitoring of air quality values to the public and informing the citizenry about the inaction of the authorities. In this way, a network started to emerge mobilizing its resources within a public policy agenda on urban sustainability and air pollution. However, in the words of Juan, they felt "like martians" at the beginning since there was barely a media echo. Their claims began to reverberate with the EU's warnings in the early 2010s. Inaction on the part of Madrid city council continued until 17 July 2014, when Ana Botella's city council approved the *preventive protocol for action in the event of high pollution episodes due to high levels of nitrogen dioxide*. The city council never applied this protocol, despite the fact that pollution peaks continued to occur.

Madrid 2015 - 2021: the story of a politicized LEZ that was depoliticized by using it as a 'politics' battleground

"Buses were burned, trees were falling, a landfill was set on fire. I found a letter from the European Commission saying that they were sending us to the European Court of Justice for repeated non-compliance with pollution levels since 2009," says Inés Sabanés (Más Madrid, 2021, June 15), who under these conditions took up her position as Councillor for the Environment and Mobility in the government of Manuela Carmena, mayor of Madrid from 2015 to 2019. Sabanés says that to address this situation, her team contacted the EU to communicate that their policy objectives were to improve air quality and address climate change, giving the first hints of a change of urban governance regime. This is how action to reduce air pollution really kicked off.

On 10 November 2015 (EFE, 2016, April 10), the pollution protocol designed by Botella was applied for the first time, albeit the Carmena administration had to lower the levels to "a reasonable threshold because the previous administration had designed them so they would never be activated and yet, they were activated", says Juan. Among the actors interviewed, the

application of the protocols by the Carmena government was identified as one of the most political moments in the governance of urban sustainability and air quality, since, in their opinion, it is when the population started to become aware of the air pollution problem in Madrid and the importance of taking action to address it. For Ecologistas, the municipalist movement behind the Governments for Change, the coalition of parties through which Carmena won the municipal government of Madrid, was key to a "radical change" in the governance of urban sustainability and air pollution: "They switched from ignoring the problem to recognizing it: to comply with EU legality and the fact that this is a serious public health problem. We see a government that wanted to do things on an issue that no one wanted to touch for the fear of losing votes", says Juan. This is a moment of politicization of a local government that was depoliticized during the previous legislature. The people and collectives in favour of Madrid Central identify that, in this first stage, the politicization of air quality came from Carmena's government, as she and her team were responsive to the public sensibility that was already emerging with the implementation of the pollution protocols. There was still no social movement articulating these demands. Juan puts it this way: "They began to take into account that feedback from the citizenry that led to measures that were, shall we say, more courageous, with social support".

Carmena's government also took into account the commitments made at COP 21 held in Paris in 2015 and, from this translocal solidarity, emerged *Plan A: Air Quality and Climate Change*, approved on 21 September 2017. There is a clear statement to drive a shift from "a conventional city model" to a "new low-emission, sustainable urban model" (p. 2). Here, it is recognized that climate change and air quality are directly linked, therefore action on these issues is a priority in public health and quality of life. For this reason, ensuring health protection is framed as one of the policy objectives. Although it is not the only source of pollution, the vehicle fleet is identified as the main source of pollution in Madrid, with 51% of NO_X emissions, 55% of $PM_{2.5}$ and 61% of PM_{10}. To encourage the reduction of private motor vehicle traffic, the plan proposes to promote active mobility: walking, cycling and increasing the BiciMad bike-sharing service, as well as renewing the public transport bus fleet and improving accessibility in non-connected areas. The 'sustainable mobility strategy' of this plan includes the creation of a 'zero emission central area', framed as a 'catalyst for the transition to a low-emission mobility model' (p. 73) and 'prioritizing pedestrians, cycling and public transport' (p. 78). It is made clear that "key sectors with a high impact on mobility patterns" (ibid.), such as taxis and freight distribution, are to be addressed with specific measures. Incentives are

proposed for them to switch to low-emission vehicles. Attention is given to the periphery, undertaking its connection with the centre, prioritizing roadways for public transport. To reduce car use, it is proposed to limit parking at destinations and to establish a network of intermodal car parks in the metropolitan area, complemented with incentives to use public transport. *Plan A* also outlines a change in the urban regime model, since it makes explicit that it is not only a matter of multilevel governance meeting European standards, but that "the objectives are set by the immediacy required to protect people's health" (p. 166). To this end, other actors are invited to be part of the implementation: academics, small and medium-sized enterprises, vulnerable population groups, citizen collectives. With regard to governance, challenges are identified such as requiring national governments to implement legislative measures in terms of management and financing in order to undertake the energy transition. Beyond what is identified on paper, the challenges of governance in practice are described as "demolishing" by Sabanés (Más Madrid, 2021, June 15):

> "The lack of coordination and the disloyalty that the administrations had with our government team is an issue that directly affects health. The regional government denounced: they said we were going to leave Gran Vía without lights, without shop windows. Those real outrages that were said make things go slower, worse, cost more and that they translate into such a vital issue as health, which should be an element of common cause, makes things much more difficult. Good governance in projects of this nature is vital for their success."

In general, the people, groups and authorities interviewed and analyzed identified that Madrid Central had a good social acceptance. However, they also point out that it was used as a "banner and a battle of 'politics'" by Almeida in his campaign as PP candidate for mayor of Madrid in 2019, which he took so far that his campaign slogan was: "#ConAlmeida Madrid Central se acaba el 26 de mayo" (#WithAlmeida Madrid Central will end on 26 May).

Taken from the Twitter account of Más Madrid coordinator Héctor Tejero [@htejero_], used with his authorization

For interviewees, the witness to this is that Madrid Central is an extension of a PP proposal: the Residential Priority Areas (RPAs), implemented by Botella in 2015 to close off car traffic exclusively for residents in some central Madrid neighbourhoods in a total area of 352 hectares. The only change with Madrid Central is that it groups these four former RPAs and extends them to 472 hectares with the inclusion of other neighbourhoods (Madrid City Hall, 2018). Almeida won the municipal elections and took office on 15 June 2019. As he could not legally remove the LEZ, he abolished fines for non-authorized cars, which means it does not exist in practice. This finally activated social mobilization to defend air quality in Madrid, mobilizing alternative narratives of sustainability and the city model through discursive registers that appeal to the protection of individual and collective health, as will be seen below. Now it is the Almeida government that faces a multilevel governance challenge, since from 13 May 2021 the national *Law 7/2021 on Climate Change and Energy Transition* requires that "all municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants must adopt sustainable mobility plans that, among other issues, include LEZs and can only be reversed with a favourable report from the regional government". Recently, in August 2021, Almeida announced that he was about to approve his new LEZ plan, a proposal that PEDM describes as "decaffeinating Madrid Central" (2021, August 20), as it will be more permissive with the entry of vehicles.

On the other side of the coin of the social acceptance of Madrid Central, several individual voices have taken a stand against the measure In the survey published on Facebook, two people involved in the transport, removals and delivery sector consider that Madrid Central did not take into account their needs as workers who need to bring in their vans for deliveries or removals. Respondent 1, who is a removal worker, shared that he has limited entry until 3pm, so there is insufficient time to do a service, which would mean making two trips and therefore double the economic cost for him. Respondent 2 reported a similar problem, asking for more parking and longer opening hours for loading and unloading, which he believes could be solved with a carrier card for Madrid Central to avoid inconvenience to resident customers who have to give them authorization via the web portal. In the case of Interviewee 1, he says that he cannot do without his car because in his daily life he has to drop his children off at school, return home and take his motorbike to work, and make the same journey but on the way back. For him, Madrid Central does not take into account these specific needs of people who cannot leave their car behind for personal or work reasons. For him, the solution would be to take these particular needs into account and make exceptions. However, he understands that it is very difficult to "legislate in a surgical way".

Paris 2000 - 2021: the story of an already (non-completed) politicized urban sustainability with (de)politicized moments of resistance

France was also flagged by the EEA in 2010 for breaching NO_X levels by exceeding them by 32%, slightly higher than Spain. According to Tony Renucci (2018), president of the French air quality association Respire, "public authorities' action on this issue started late, in the 1990s, but was not based on a structured, clear and coherent strategy". However, at the local level, Halpern & Le Galès identify that the election of a Green-Socialist coalition majority at the local and regional level in Paris from 1998 to 2001 prompted the emergence of "strong policy alternatives to the dominant approach to transport" (2016, p. 12): they focused on urban planning and environmental protection. With the Green Party members as Deputy Mayors in the 2000s, "for the first time the city of Paris developed an integrated approach to transport and mobility, focusing first on car reduction by improving public transport, before including sustainable transport modes such as cycling or walking" (pp. 12-13). The authors acknowledge that these measures were inherited from Jean Tiberi, mayor of Paris from 1995 to 2001 for Rassemblement pour la République (a party identified with the 'political right'), such as the Velib bike-sharing system, implemented in 1996 and which, in turn, has a collaborative character, as

it is a measure inspired by other cities, like Vienna and Lyon. These authors highlight the performance of Denis Baupin as Deputy Mayor for Transport, whose book *Tout voiture, no future* is the basis for his policy objectives to reduce car traffic, which were embraced by Mayor Bertrand Delanoë during his double mandate from 2001 to 2014. Delanoë introduced traffic calming strategies, developed pedestrian zones, such as the 'Beaches of Paris' along the Seine, and continued the momentum that Tiberi had already begun to implement noise pollution measurement tools, with the aim of raising awareness among the population. In sum, Halpern & Le Galès identify that with the change of municipal government to the Green-Socialist coalition, a new mode of regional governance emerges characterized by "key actors and innovative forms of collective action between political parties and municipalities" (p. 22). However, the authors stress that this only applies to the policy arena of transport planning, as in other sectors there is still competition between the three levels of government, such as in the case of controversies around air pollution.

On 5 April 2014, Anne Hidalgo became the first woman mayor of Paris as part of a coalition of parties (Socialiste, Communiste, Écologie Les Verts, Génération·s: le mouvement commun, and Radical le Gauge). Since her 2013 campaign proposal, *Paris qui ose*, Hidalgo had already been outlining her policy objectives to make Paris a more sustainable city. Based on this, the LEZ was implemented in 2015 and formalized in 2017 (Plan Climat, 2018). Basically the whole Paris is a LEZ, delimited by the A86 motorway and covering 79 communes (Paris City Hall, 2021, May 31). The measure operates under a phased reinforcement mechanism that every two years restricts the circulation of cars according to its Crit'Air label based on a scale of 1 to 5: the higher the number, the more polluting the car. There is also a Crit'Air Vert label for electric or hydrogen vehicles (Moreno, p. 20). The goal is to achieve the policy objective of banning all diesel vehicles from the city by 2025. The French capital became the first city in this country to implement a LEZ, a measure that has its antecedent in 2010, when the French Environmental Code was amended to require urban communities with more than 100,000 inhabitants to restrict the circulation of vehicles exceeding pollution levels with ZAPAs: *Zones d'Actions Prioritaires pour l'Air* (Charleux, 2014, p. 198). In addition to the LEZ, the current legislature is planning to create a 'Limited Traffic Zone' (LTZ), also called a 'peaceful zone', in the Paris Centre - Saint Germain area, which covers seven arrondissements. This mechanism resembles Madrid Central and the LEZs in the centres of other European cities (Paris, 2021 May 5). Until June 2021, the project is under a consultation phase to define specifically which cars will have

access, but it is known that it will be possible for local residents, delivery drivers, taxis and people with reduced mobility. The current Deputy Mayor for Transport, David Belliard, frames this measure within a "policy toolbox" (Más Madrid, 2021, June 15) with the general objective of reducing car traffic. Specifically, this measure would seek to tackle the traffic that crosses the centre of Paris without stopping.

The 'policy toolbox' is framed within the *Plan Climat*, adopted on 22 March 2018, a document that includes 500 measures designed from a comprehensive approach to move towards a "carbon neutral" city model. It integrates those urban sectors that generate emissions: mobility, transport, construction, energy, food, waste, living environment and finance. As Hidalgo has stated over and over in her discourse: transport is the largest source of air pollution in Paris, generating 64% of NO_X emissions at the regional level. This argument frames the 'policy toolbox' within UEJ, since it seeks to redistribute environmental goods among the most disadvantaged populations, identifying that only 13% of trips in Paris are made by car, yet it occupies 50% of the city's surface area, while more than half of trips are made on foot (Paris City Hall, 2018). For this reason, the policy objective directly addresses the reduction of car use to gain more space for people and outline strategies oriented towards pedestrian, cycling, shared and collective mobility, as well as moving towards a useful approach to car, preferably electric. *Plan Climat* introduces alternative energy transition policy narratives by setting as a goal the creation of a "common culture that is open to the diversity of lifestyles and individual trajectories" (p. 75), mobilizing a shift from an individual rationality towards collective goals ensuring equity within diversity. It also opens up alternative narratives on mobility, framing it as "common and collective" and turning it into a vehicle for strengthening social ties between Parisians through shared mobility (p. 75). Similarly, throughout the document, discursive registers are identified that stress the importance of improving the physical and psychological health and well-being of Parisians, as well as developing a "common culture of environmental health" (p. 60). *Plan Climat* is an ambitious plan that seeks to introduce alternative narratives not only of mobility, but also of lifestyles and forms of participation towards collaborative governance, calling on citizens to: "sparking their imagination and creativity to jointly develop the vision of a desirable future" (p. 81), yet it encounters gaps in governance. As made explicit in the document, the local level lacks definitions and legal means for carbon offsets. The implementation of LEZs at the local level faces the same challenge, as Najdovski (from the party Europe Écologie Les Verts) shares:

"We need to have a good regulatory framework at the national level. For example we are trying to implement a LEZ today but we don't have the tools to control it. If we don't have them, it means that it doesn't exist in reality, it remains virtual, it's not real. So on paper you have a virtual LEZ, but in reality you don't have anything."

Najdovski emphasizes that creation of a LEZ in Paris resulted in policy upscaling, as it was first implemented at the local level and then the national level took steps to regulate it. Precisely until 12 July 2021, the national level passed its *Climate and Resilience Law*, which stipulates that all agglomerations with more than 150,000 inhabitants have to implement a LEZ with a phased approach. "In the 10 metropolitan areas where air quality limits are regularly exceeded, traffic bans on Crit'air 5 vehicles in 2023, Crit'air 4 vehicles in 2024 and Crit'Air 3 vehicles in 2025 will be automatically introduced" (Ministère de la Transition Écologique, 2021). The organization Réseau Action Climat France (RACF) reproaches this national law for not sending a "clear signal regarding the progressive ban on the circulation of diesel vehicles" (2021, July 7). At the regional level, LEZs appear until the *Plan de Protection de l'Atmosphère pour l'Ile-de-France (2018-2025)*. Here, LEZs are framed as Restricted Circulation Zones and air pollution as a "health and environmental problem [...] as each individual cannot do without breathing" (p. 10). A call is made to protect children, the elderly and people with cardiovascular and respiratory problems since they are the most vulnerable to "air quality changes" (ibid.). On 1 January 2016, the Greater Paris Metropolis was established to bring together the actions of the 131 municipalities where almost 7 million people live. In November 2018, *Plan Climat Air Énergie Métropolitain* was approved, which seeks policy coherence with the Paris Agreement and the national level: achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 and ensuring that air quality standards are in line with those of the WHO. This plan is framed as "a common ambition" that invites "collective mobilization" to meet the challenges. For this purpose, it defines a series of transversal actions with a more integrated approach, as it not only takes into account emissions from road transport, but also air transport, housing, energy production, food consumption and waste generation. Here LEZs are considered "as the measure with the greatest impact and rapid effects on improving air quality" (p. 326). Similarly, LEZ implementation in the metropolitan area is based on the agreement *Breathable Cities in 5 years*, signed on 22 November 2017, between the metropolitan administration, the Ministry of Ecological and Solidarity Transition, four territorial public establishments, two departments and the City of Paris. The metropolitan level acknowledges that the implementation of LEZs in this area requires coordination with other

levels of government: at the local level for traffic and parking regulation, and at the national level for police enforcement powers.

The powers of control of the police represent another moment in the contradictions of multilevel governance. As Najdovski illustrates, while Paris has a clear objective to "develop public transport, walking, cycling policies, reduce the use of cars", the objective of the Préfecture de Police, which is under the authority of the Ministry of Interior, is to have a "fluid traffic". For this reason, when Paris wanted to make *Coronapistes* permanent, the temporary cycle lanes opened during the covid lockdown began, they had "long discussions" with the Préfecture de Police, so the implementation time took longer than expected. This has not been the only pothole in France's air pollution governance. Due to the centralized nature of the French government, Hidalgo had to wait for approval from the Ministry of Ecology to implement alternate circulation in Paris during pollution peaks. Finally, on 2 November 2015, Minister Ségène Royal approved it after the demands from Hidalgo and the candidate for the regional presidency of Île-de-France, Jean Paul Huchon. In this regard, then head of the socialist list for the regional elections, Claude Bartolone, pointed to the need for political devolution from the national to the local level in urban sustainability and air pollution governance: "[alternate circulation] is a measure that must be decentralized. There is a responsibility, first of the local elected representatives. We must stop with the bureaucratic devices" (Le Figaro, 2015, November 2).

From the citizenry side, urban sustainability and air pollution started to become politicized in Paris 10 to 15 years ago when the city faced high peaks of pollutant emissions. Najdovski recounts that these events raised awareness among the population about the long-term consequences of air pollution, becoming an important issue in the public debate. This debate grew stronger five years ago with the addition of the consciousness and awareness regarding climate change. "It rose year after year and now we have a majority of the population who is behind, and also the municipality, which is in demand to take actions to tackle air pollution specially and also climate change". Actually, for Hèléne Hernández, who works in a non-profit organization that defends people with disabilities, the public debate around these matters started with mayor Delanoë's policies to reduce car circulation. On several occasions, Hidalgo, Najdovski and Belliard emphasized that all the projects they are undertaking had consultation processes, online and dialogue sessions with neighbours, experts, associations and other

stakeholders such as taxi and delivery drivers, shopkeepers, hospitality entrepreneurs. Likewise, they identify that they have the support of the majority of citizens: they are demanding for the implementation of these measures from different fronts but also because they voted for them twice in the elections through their campaign proposals. However, Najdovski does not fail to recognize that the governance of urban sustainability and air quality is a matter of debate, especially considering that it has generated resistance from the automotive industry lobbies as well as from a number of citizens.

In February 2016, the Paris Council voted in favor of pedestrianizing the Champs-Elysées and the central area one Sunday per month, which would be the start of the Paris Respire strategy that was later extended to all the districts, Sundays and holidays. Also, on 1 July 2016, it was announced that vehicles registered before 1997 would not be allowed to drive in the city on weekdays. This is how the group The banned of July 1st emerged, which was formed from the association 40 Million Motorists. Together with 168 mayors of the region, mainly Republicans, they wrote an open letter to Hidalgo for expressing that: "the quality of life of tens of thousands of people in the region who just want to work, sometimes more than an hour away from their homes, is going to be extremely deteriorated by this pedestrianization because we do not have the possibility to travel on insufficient or already saturated public transport" (Edip, 2018, October 26). In a petition they launched on change.org, The banned of July 1st argue that the measure:

> "constitutes a serious deprivation of freedom, even though the impact of the circulation of
> these cars and motorbikes is only imperceptible. It may not only concern Parisians, if you are
> attached to your freedom and your needs to circulate, which you risk being deprived of very
> quickly in the name of a dogmatism that is much more smoky than your exhaust pipe."

This group, together with ParisPourTous, formed a coalition on 21 June 2016 called French Federation of Citizen Motorists, stating that their objective is:

> "to allow any citizen, road user, to circulate freely on the whole national territory with the
> approved vehicle of which he or she is the owner, without any prohibition or restriction of
> any kind, in total opposition to the policies currently implemented by the public authorities.
> To maintain the freedom to drive the vehicle of your choice and relative to your financial
> means and your constraints".

Two years after these citizen claims, Hidalgo's city council would state in the *Plan Climat* that: "We will need to speed up the burgeoning cultural change that consists of moving on from the perception of the private car as an item of private property to the development of a range of complementary mobility services in which use takes precedence over ownership" (p. 26). Local authorities are aware that these measures to change the myth of "freedom of movement" that the automobile has always mobilized have resistance, despite this, they are still willing to implement them because, as the mayor had already been announcing since 2015: "it is not possible to negotiate with the health of citizens" (Cañas, 2015, December 3). For this reason, as part of her electoral programme for the 2020 municipal elections, she included the 15-minute city as part of her proposals. Apropos the disruption by Covid-19, the city council framed this proposal as "a response to the health crisis", which staged the "local solidarity networks" and the importance of "reestablishing links of mutual aid" at the neighborhood scale, especially to take care of the most vulnerable. In short: "a promotion of the well-being of the inhabitants and a response to the climate and health challenges to come" (Paris City Hall, 2021). Here the question arises to what extent a politicized urban regime is emerging in Paris because it appeals to alternative narratives of a city caring for the health of its citizens and ensuring well-being through a sustainable environment. Hidalgo again has citizen support as she was re-elected mayor in 2020. However, the debate around LEZ is not inhibited; on the contrary, individuals and collectives that agree with her policies only do it to some extent, since they are demanding to intensify them, as will be seen below.

Building translocal solidarities: Paris and Madrid 2015-2019

Hidalgo and Carmena's policy objectives would not be understood without invoking the translocal nature of the solidarity that both municipalities knitted while they coincided as mayors. On 21 July 2015, Hidalgo and Carmena met in the Vatican at the invitation of Pope Francis to hold a forum with more than 60 mayors around the world, asking for their help in the fight against climate change and new forms of slavery. Francis underlined the presence of other cities in the world considered to be 'small', 'because the most serious and profound work is done from the periphery to the centre' (Ordaz, 2015 July 21). That a religious figure such as the Pope encourages and participates in the dialogue on climate change, stressing the vital role of cities is a powerful postcard that represents a trend that has been accentuated in recent years: the inclusion of new actors in governance, opening up a collaborative approach to global challenges.

On December 4th 2015, for cities to ask for a place in the table of the international meetings, Hidalgo and Michael Bloomberg summoned more than a thousand mayors for COP 21 at Paris City Hall. This mayors' meeting was held in parallel to the UN Climate Change Conference where 196 states negotiated the *Paris Agreement*. The COP 21 objective was to highlight the role that local and regional governors, not only the states, have in the fight against climate change. Mayors stressed that it is at the local level where half of the global population lives and where ⅔ of the global greenhouse gas emissions are generated, but also where measures can be developed and implemented due to the proximity to the problem and the inhabitants (UCLGa, 2015 December 5). The *Paris City Hall Declaration* emerged as a result: establishing the commitments at the local level, taking care of coherence with the objectives of the *Paris Agreement*. It is also a demand from mayors for the transfer of financial, budget and legislative capacities to the local level in order to "maximize climate change action" (Climate Summit for Local Leaders, 2015 December 4). COP 21 is part of the new municipalisms movement, since mayors sought to "supersede nation-states" (Thompson, 2021, p. 335) in the fight against climate change.

On 12 September 2016, Carmena travelled to Paris to formalize the intermunicipal collaboration with Hidalgo through an agreement between the two city councils, in which they embraced common alternative policy objectives that no longer had anything to do with those of the competitive global city: equity, equality, environmental sustainability, defense of human rights and defense of peace. In addition to formalizing these translocal solidarities, both mayors continued to push for opening up governance spaces and demanding more financial and policy transfers at international meetings in order to meet urban challenges.

On 14 October 2016, together with the Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, they signed *A New Urban Agenda for European Cities*, a letter in the run-up to Habitat III, evidencing that it would be "the representatives of the cities, and not of the states, who will decide on the agreements that will affect the lives of more than half of the planet's inhabitants", referring to the upcoming elaboration of the New Urban Agenda. They also showed that access to global and European funding mechanisms is restricted only to states, and called for an opening up to the urban level, recalling that "Europe has been built through its cities". Carmena and Hidalgo also collaborated together on other issues such as the promotion of peace and violence. After the Paris attacks in

2015, Carmena opened up a question that once again put the urban arena at the forefront of global challenges: "How is it possible that young people raised in our cities can commit such a horror?" Hidalgo added that: "what we propose as solutions in our cities we have often imagined by talking, in dialogue, looking at what is happening in other cities" (Madrid City Council, 2017). Together they also addressed the issue of historical memory when inaugurating La Nueve park in Madrid in April 2017. They again collaborated with Colau and the mayors of Lesbos and Lampedusa for refugee reception, asking the states for the attribution of competences in this matter to the city councils (Valderrama, 2016 September 12). Hidalgo and Carmena's call for more governance capacities at the local level has to do not only with urban planning policies, but also seeks to address more global challenges where the urban arena plays the main role.

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The international network of cities that synthesizes intermunicipal collaboration on climate change, urban sustainability and resilience at the global level is the C40 Climate Leadership Group, founded in 2005 and of which Hidalgo was chair from 2016 to 2019. From C40, cities recognize that, while their contexts are particular, they share similar and universal elements and challenges that enable them to learn from each other. In this sense, benchmarking, which from

a critical lens has been framed as depoliticized by serving the competitive global city model, is framed within an alternative narrative oriented towards the commons and collaboration. In a study conducted in 2013 and 2018 by Viana et al. (2020) with air quality managers from 12 European cities, including Madrid and Paris, they found that cities strive to share knowledge on best practices not only to know the most efficient measures, but that there is a common understanding of air quality as "one of the components of well-being, among other aspects such as noise, climate change, green spaces" and a common goal to implement actions with "a cross-sectoral approach that brings co-benefits"(p. 6). In other words, politicizing urban sustainability and air quality through a collective approach and framing them from the macro-social aspects involved in these *glocal* challenges.

On 2 December 2016, Madrid and Paris, along with Mexico City and Athens, announced a commitment to ban diesel vehicles from their city centres by 2025. The policy objective from which this measure arises has a politicized nature by acknowledging that it is the most disadvantaged groups due to their bodily (young and old) and economic conditions that are most exposed to the danger of air pollution (Hidalgo, Carmena, et al., 2016 December 2). Nevertheless, it can also have a depoliticized reading by constraining this fight to transport, with an orientation towards the 'Sustainable Mobility Paradigm'. However, as will be seen below, this approach also has a political reading by pro-LEZ groups, since they know that transport is the main emitter of pollutants in the city and these measures scape the neoliberal rationality by framing them as "the first stone on the path towards a more sustainable city".

Turning to the contradictions of multilevel governance that also open up opportunities to strengthen new municipalisms and translocal solidarities, Najdovski recalls when Mayor Hidalgo went to the European Court in Luxembourg to bring a legal case against the European Commission for granting a "licence to pollute" (C40, 2018, December 13) to the car industry. One of the contradictions of the EU is that, while demanding member states and cities to comply with air quality standards, the Commission's regulation 2016/646 would have allowed new car models to legally exceed by up to 110% the 80mg/km NOx emission limits, which is the standard agreed by the European Parliament in 2007. The decision was the result of intense lobbying by the auto-manufacturing industry, since it was taken in spite of Dieselgate, the scandal unleashed in 2015 after it came to light that Volkswagen had tampered with the technical controls of pollutant emissions of its cars sold between 2009 and 2015. Finally, on 13

December 2018, "we won before the EU and it was the result of collective action between three mayors: the former mayor of Madrid, Anne Hidalgo as mayor of Paris, and also the mayor Brussels", recalls Najdovski. Appart from highlighting the limitations of local governments due to the challenges and contradictions of multilevel governance, this fact opens new urban possibilities to push for a more sustainable urban future from translocal solidarities.

Individual and collective alternative narratives politicizing LEZ in Madrid & Paris

LEZs are not inhibiting the debate, at least from the citizenry side. People and collectives in favour of these measures in Madrid and Paris support and celebrate the measure without being critical towards it or the governments that are pushing for them and, in the case of Madrid, demanding for its permanence. While there are moments of consensus, there are also moments of dissensus, both mobilized through narratives shaped by very political alternative frames and discursive registers, which are explored in this section.

Madrid

Madrid Central is a good measure, the first step and stone towards other city model
Pro-LEZ individuals and collectives are aware that Madrid Central is a good measure, framing it as a "first step· and the "first stone" that opened the path towards another city model. However, even in this moment of consensus there is dissensus: an ongoing dialogue in which a wide diversity of perspectives on the desired city model is taking place. Alternative narratives of the city are appearing that conceive it as a healthier, cleaner, more human, more walkable, more versatile city because urban space is now open to other uses, not only as a place of circulation, but also for play. This is a very political moment due to the recognition of a diversity of users, uses and needs, and therefore a diversity of perspectives on the sought city model. There is tension between consensus and dissensus in which the narrative could be articulated as: "we need a city without fewer cars to make it a healthy and safe place for the diversity of bodies". As Yetta Aguado from #MadresXElClima (#MothersForClimate) says: "universal urbanism, for all people, and more than a model, we have to find our own identity".

However, there is room for improvement in Madrid Central
There is a moment of consensus in which pro-LEZ people agree that there is room for improvement in Madrid Central, which arises precisely from moments of dissensus with the administration that implemented it, opening up other debates about the aspects that should

have and should be taken into account.

a. Carmena's government shouldn't have taken so long implementing it

Carmena took office in June 2015 and the measure was opened to the public on 30 November 2018. From the perspective of Juan from Ecologistas, the authorities spent too much time on the public consultation dialogue: "These measures need to be discussed, but above all they need to be implemented and evaluated. If it had been implemented for two years before the elections, it would have stayed in place forever". Ecologistas and Yetta Aguado compare the timing of Madrid Central's implementation with that of the anti-smoking law in Spain, as she says: "It involved an important public debate: there was also this game played by the opposition, saying that nobody would want to go to restaurants if no one was allowed to smoke. Now no one would even think of suggesting that smoking should be allowed there again. The difference is that it took years for this rule to be implemented".

b. Madrid Central was so ambitious that it needed to be accompanied by other policies

There are moments of dissensus among the pro-LEZ since some identify that the measure was so ambitious that it needed to be accompanied by other policies oriented to reinforce and offer other forms of mobility. For example, Eduardo Porcel, resident of Puente de Vallecas, a district located in Madrid's periphery, recalls having read that in some cities LEZs are reinforced with a free public transport system to discourage car use, also, he misses a cycling network to perform the daily activities in Madrid. They also refer to the importance of having launched a communication strategy. As Yetta Aguado says, the problem with Madrid Central was also one of narrative: "it is a first measure of something that must necessarily grow and I think that part has not been told well, that message has not reached society. When the other side uses the argument of the districts against the protected and touristic city centre for the better-off classes, it is difficult to defend".

c. Madrid Central was actually accompanied by a series of measures to provide mobility alternatives and reinforce the reduction of air pollution

Some pro-LEZs do consider that Madrid Central was part of an integral strategy. For example, Juan remembers that is one of the main actions of *Plan A*, which contained up to 30 comprehensive measures aimed at reducing air pollution. He also points out that the city centre is an area that already has a "fantastic public transport network". He even highlights that by removing the cars with Madrid Central, bus frequencies are automatically improved "without

spending a single penny". In the same breath, Pedro Díaz from PedaLibre agrees that "public transport in Madrid is already very good and it is difficult to improve it". Another moment of dissensus opens up: despite these arguments, both acknowledge that public transport should be improved in other areas of the city and in other transportation modes, such as the metro and the suburban train network.

d. Madrid Central is actually a weak measure compared with LEZs in other cities

Another moment of dissent is the disagreement between the pro-Madrid Central group and Carmena's administration for the technical aspects, which make it still a "weak" measure regarding the restriction of cars and not "very ambitious'' in terms of extension compared to LEZs in other cities. London is mentioned as a reference with its Congestion Charge Zone, a method that PedaLibre prefers, since people have to pay quite a high fee if they have a polluting vehicle, money that is then used to improve public transport. In the same vein, Pedro mentions that "Madrid Central is a sieve because all the cars get in, specially the taxis that go around while being empty. Juan shares the same perspective and remembers that, during the consultation phase, a debate opened up with the city council because Ecologistas was against allowing cars in Madrid Central, not even those labelled as 'eco-friendly'. Both ProBici and Ecologistas fought for Madrid Central not to be so relaxed regarding the exceptions for cars that are allowed to enter. Moreover, Rubén Casado, from the Sustainable Urban Mobility Observatory of Madrid, considers that this set of exceptions "distorted the project a bit, although they could be understandable".

We are aware that Madrid Central reinforces socio-spatial segregation, but we know the reasons why this measure starts in the city centre and we want it to extend

Rubén is aware that this kind of measures are usually implemented in strategic areas of the city: "Madrid Central stays in a very iconic area, which already has quite large sources of pressure: tourism, overcrowding. I mean, this is great in the centre, but we also need these measures in the peripheral neighbourhoods". Juan accepts being aware of this criticism about Madrid Central only addressing "the significant zones in a very small area", but he says this argument hides a trap: "Yes it is very small, but it is very attractive for traffic, especially the one that crosses Madrid, and that doesn't happen in many cities any more: crossing them by car. If you cut off car traffic in the city centre, you are taking away a lot of trips. By acting in a very small area, you have an impact on the whole city". Another moment of dissent appears from pro-LEZ

groups towards Carmena and Almeida, demanding the extension of Madrid Central to other parts of the city, or to pay attention to the specific contexts of other geographies in Madrid so that more measures of urban sustainability are implemented. Here lies one of the moments of consensus in which it is agreed that "more Madrid Central is needed, not less", a phrase that was the slogan of a report by Ecologistas assessing the effect of Madrid Central on air quality in 2019. Another moment of dissensus between the pro-LEZ groups arises around the question of what kind of measures can be extended to other areas of the city. On the one hand, Rubén and Eduardo agree that LEZs or "similar figures" would be suitable for other districts. On the other hand, Juan considers that, while the objective of reducing traffic should be the same, "not necessarily with the same approach as Madrid Central because the problems are different, for example, pedestrianising the surroundings of the historic areas of the peripheral districts or removing lanes from the main road axes".

Paris

LEZs are effective in the reduction of air pollution: "they are a first step, better than nothing"

This is one of the frameworks that pro-LEZ mobilize to push for the implementation of these measures given their effectiveness in the short and long term. RACF states that "Paris dynamic is considered to be on the right track" since the implementation of the LEZ in conjunction with a gradual ban on diesel and gasoline vehicles "is unique in France" (p. 28). However, the groups open moments of dissensus by putting the finger on the fact that "LEZs should not become the alpha and omega of air pollution control policies" (ibid.). For this reason, this organization repoliticizes the LEZs by pointing out that it is necessary for the city council to clarify certain aspects concerning the implementation, such as timetable, social aspects and financial issues. RACF also demands that the authorities take advantage of the "positive momentum" that these measures open up to develop other measures to address cycling and school streets. Another moment of dissensus between the pro-LEZ groups and the French authorities at all levels is the time it takes to implement actions to reduce air pollution in this country. Renucci (2021, August 18) compares the situation by praising the case of London, where restrictions on polluting cars started in 2008.

a. Improve the technical aspects of LEZ

Another demand from pro-LEZ is the improvement of the technical aspects of these measures. The coalition La Rue est à Nous demands that a system is implemented as soon as possible to

effectively enforce traffic calming measures, since they consider that "signage, stickers on authorized vehicles and regular checks by the municipal police are not enough". They also call for the implementation of a "positive information and awareness campaign". This point is also demanded by the coalition of 11 organizations for *Bien vivre* and moving better in Paris and Great Paris.

It is not the only source of air pollution, but it is indisputable that the major source of pollutant emissions is road transport

One of the discursive registers used by individuals and collectives to defend LEZs is that a large part of the air pollutant emissions generated in cities comes from road transport. RACF stresses that diesel vehicles alone are responsible for 90% of NOx emissions from all road transport (ADEME, 2019; as cited by RACF, 2021). In fact, Respire holds as its motto "making the invisible visible", as they argue that air pollution is invisible, since people barely link their problems to it, including the premature death of 67,000 people in France and 9 million people in the world (2019). However, one of the most politically contentious moments in this framework also comes when associations, such as the RACF, reproach the national government for overlooking the responsibility of companies to reduce their carbon footprint. In fact, this was one of the main political demands that the Citizens' Climate Convention fought to have included in the national *Climate and Resilience Law*, during the debates that they held with the French Parliament, in the run-up to the approval of this ordinance (Greenpeace, 2021, August 4).

LEZs are not just about reducing air pollution: these projects give streets back to the people

The fact that pro-LEZ acknowledge that the effects of these measures are multiple and holistic represents a very political moment. It is directly linked to UEJ by being aware that LEZs redistribute environmental goods and include different users in the city, especially the most vulnerable who have always been excluded. For example, for Hèléne Hernández, LEZs "go beyond any environmental consideration" as they represent an opportunity to give the streets back to the people. She recalls how in the last century, prior to these strategies and the debates around air pollution, many cities pushed people away from the streets and turned them into the " kingdom of cars, buses, trucks and motorcycles". As a result in a city as big as Paris, the dominant narrative excluded walking as a way of transiting and living the city. Hèléne considers that with LEZs and other initiatives such as Paris Respire, an alternative narrative also opens up for people and for the streets. From sustainable urban projects, people can discover

that they are no longer just considered as "pedestrians", but also as "runners or protesters" and that streets can be places where "you can walk, meet someone, stay, enjoy, protest." What could be more political than realizing that streets can also be places of dissensus?

LEZs also alleviates other public health problems

The pro-LEZ mobilize this framework to evidence that discourses of the detractors and of some levels of government only relate the automobile to environmental pollution. Pro-LEZ are aware that the reduction of cars also contributes to the alleviation of "other pollutions", as La Rue est à Nous claims, including noise pollution, and other public health problems such as traffic accidents and sedentary lifestyles. In addition, they are aware that, by removing the promotion of the automobile from being a priority in public mobility policies, it is possible to develop public transport, cycling and walking. "What we call active mobility, which is good for public health, sedentary lifestyles and also shared mobility", as Najdovsky says. It is observed that in this discourse there is room for other mobility narratives, such as "shared mobility".

Caring for people who have no alternative to cars through different solutions

Pro-LEZ are well aware of the socio-spatial segregation that LEZs might promote, therefore they advocate for the inclusion of the needs of those who cannot do without motorized mobility, as they are well known to be "the main victims of current traffic conditions" (FNE et al., 2020). "We also need to have measures for them, to accompany them and give them alternatives," says Najdovski. For this reason he recounts that the implementation of LEZ in Paris is accompanied by other strategies to develop buses, collective and shared mobility, as well as giving grants and subsidies to individuals to buy a cleaner car. "A panel of solutions to accompany those who today have no other alternative", as the Deputy Mayor says. RACF is also fighting for financial aid for professional or private individuals, also for the purchase of bicycles and even bicycles adapted for people with disabilities. One of the demands of the coalition for the *Bien vivre* is precisely to achieve a "more equitable sharing of public space" to "promote social cohesion" by limiting car use to trips and people for whom they are "absolutely necessary".

A reduction, not a shift, of traffic through a real mobility offer

Another of the shortcomings that have been attributed to LEZs is the use of a depoliticized framework that appeals to a modal shift under the mirage of the mode of free choice, which in

reality is limited due to the "self-expanding regime of automobility" (Berger et al., 2014). Despite this, pro-LEZ go further and politicize this measure by proposing not a shift, but a reduction of motorized traffic. This opens the door to new mobility narratives, such as the one introduced by *Bien vivre*: "a more frugal and environmentally friendly travel". Along the same lines, La Rue est a Nous launched its counter-proposal of LEZ to make it "more efficient and fairer" by paying attention to the social aspects of mobility: evaluating the behavioural changes for "adapting and reinforcing the public transport network, cycling and park and ride facilities located in the outskirts". Moreover, pro-LEZ politicize mobility by avoiding the adoption of radical positions against the car. As framed by the Bien *Vivre* coalition: it is necessary to move "from the queen car to the useful car". They understand that the car should be dedicated to necessary trips, preferably through shared mobility. La Rue est à Nous proposes that car-pooling should be allowed to circulate through the LEZ in the first year of its implementation.

a. *Transferring comfort to public transport and LEZ*

This narrative is mobilized by *Bien vivre*, aware that public transport is not very accessible to all, so it is not a real alternative to the car. For this reason, they propose to make it more attractive in terms of "performance, reliability, legibility, intermodality, waiting comfort and openness to the city". Within these alternative discursive registers, the transfer of comfort, which is usually associated with the car, to public transport stands out: through proposals such as building wider carports against bad weather and providing more seats. This narrative is disruptive in politicizing LEZs, as the coalition also identifies that comfort is necessary for any traffic calming strategy. Thus they call for the installation of user comfort facilities, such as benches, fountains, toilets and so on. In this way, the strategies will not only reduce traffic, but also represent real meeting places on a human scale.

b. *Promoting cycle lanes, inclusivity and intermodality towards making cycling a real mobility option and a system*

Pro-LEZ are aware that the current cycling mobility offer has many gaps to be improved in order to consider the bicycle as a real transport option and thus discourage the use of the car. One of these gaps is guaranteeing a safety feeling while riding because "no beginner or parent with children wants to ride in the midst of an uninterrupted stream of cars", as *Bien vivre* notes. For this reason, they push for the construction of wide, continuous cycle lanes on high-traffic roads, separated from pedestrians and cars. In addition to this, the RACF urges public investment to

allocate 25 euros per inhabitant for cycling and to set up "the levers for an efficient cycling system" through lessons for everyone learning to cycle, a diverse rental service, safe parking, repair workshops. This organization agrees with La Rue est à Nous in encouraging intermodality through an express cycling network connecting Paris and the outskirts of the city.

Why only in the city centre?

This is undoubtedly one of the criticisms that academics have made against LEZs and, in general, towards all sustainable urban transport strategies. Hélène Hernandez talks about Paris Respire, which, although it is not an LEZ in the technical sense of the word, employs the same means to recover space for pedestrians: reducing the circulation of motor vehicles. Hèléne is aware that car-free areas can be found all over the city, however the biggest ones are in the city centre. Therefore, she demands larger car-free areas throughout Paris: "is also great to regain your neighbourhood, where you actually live and spend a lot of time. Not everyone in Paris goes to the center every Sunday to shops, museums, bars or restaurants. A lot of people just want to have a 'neighbourhood life', even if they're living in the biggest city of France". For this reason she repoliticizes urban sustainability strategies by calling for their redistribution in the outlying districts, so that people can approach other narratives about living in the city: meeting with neighbours or enjoying outdoors with their families. Even opening up alternative narratives for Paris: from being more than a touristic city where only the centre is visited, but that the crowds can move around to enjoy all kinds of places, "not just the trendy, dynamic and rich ones".

a. *Expanding urban sustainability strategies spatially and temporally.*

While pro-LEZ are well aware of the limitations of these measures, they are not against their implementation. On the contrary, they push for these strategies to be expanded in space and time. Hèléne says that another demand is making Paris Respire happen not only on Sundays or public holidays, but the whole weekend or even during the week. The coalition for *Bien vivre* supports this demand by pleading for an increase in the number of LEZs. The RACF makes a clear framing of LEZ within UEJ at pushing for their expansion to a larger geographic area, explicitly calling for "ensuring that improved air quality benefits everyone by guaranteeing a more equitable distribution of health benefits, not only limited to city centres".

We are aware that these strategies promote socio-spatial segregation, so we push for complementary measures

Hèléne was discovered to be interviewed for this thesis through a tweet in which she asks David Belliard to take care that Paris Respire is accompanied by other mechanisms so that, by blocking the circulation of cars in the centre of Paris, traffic is not pushed out to the peripheral districts. For this reason, she urges to "stop discriminating people based on where they live and provide everyone with a sufficient amount of car-free areas exactly where they live". Through these frames, it is evident that LEZs are getting politicized, as it is clear that they are conceiving the social aspects behind mobility, i.e. "the fragmentation of the territories of daily life and work". Along the same lines, *Bien vivre* focuses on a simple but often overlooked fact in mobility and spatial planning: that very few inhabitants live in the commune where they work. Therefore, they are fighting for the construction of an express cycling network connecting the metropolitan area with the business centres, while continuing to develop the metro and suburban rail network.

Discussion and Conclusion(s)

As seen in the findings, frames and discursive registers mobilized in alternative narratives by individuals and collectives are indeed politicizing LEZ. Although there is a moment of consensus that LEZs are "a good measure", debate is not inhibited. LEZ policy is very political since it unfolds different moments of disenssus and debate with different demands from pro-LEZ. On the one hand, pro-LEZ are demanding the authorities an improvement of the technical aspects, accompaniment of vulnerable groups with measures for them, and the expansion of urban sustainability measures throughout the city. On the other hand, there is debate between pro-LEZ individuals and collectives, as each brings different approaches to how these policies can be improved and expanded.

Beyond whether LEZs inhibit debate, as Reigner & Brennac (2019) argue, pro-LEZ individuals and collectives counter-argue that there should be no such discussion around them because these measures concern health. As the spokesperson of #MothersForClimate says: "In the end the reason why we are in this is for our sons and daughters. It's not something that has required a lot of thinking. It has been something immediate, like a vital need to protect them".

Running the frames and registers identified in the alternative narratives of pro-LEZ groups through the filter of Young's lens leads to the conclusion that LEZs are indeed politicized in both Madrid and Paris. Overall, the call to put health first in the implementation of LEZs policy is an invocation to care for and protect the body, a highly political element in Young's discourse. It is not only a protection of the body individually, but also collectively, specifically of future generations. Hence, affections, desires and emotions are also conveyed, which in Young's discourse are also politicized.

Drawing on Young's communicative ethic, LEZs policies are politicized through the inclusion of the diversity of voices, even of those who are against these measures. Pro-LEZ groups are aware that a debate must be carried with people who disagree, as #MothersForClimate argues: "We have to give options, get the message across, make it understood and get them to join. I mean: you can't not join. You can't disagree that your child doesn't breathe better air and if you agree you have a problem. You have a problem of blindness. And so there is a lot to be done".

In fact, some of the people against LEZ are also the most vulnerable since, for personal, work and economic reasons, cannot do without a car. Therefore, LEZ detractors also have a politicized discourse in moments because they are aware of the need to include particular necessities in public decisions. The narrative of those who are against LEZs was particularly evident in the case of Paris, which goes more or less as follows: "I cannot do without my car because I already lose time and life quality since I live far from the precarious job I have, and on top of that I have to move around on insufficient public transport". It can be observed that their discourse also vehicles the social aspects behind mobility: "the fragmentation of the territories of daily life and work" that Reigner & Brennac talk about (2019, p. 224). Instead of considering them as "the others who do not want to give up their cars", it is a matter of taking into account the social aspects, specifically of their daily lives, that are driving them to use the car.

The call for the inclusion of other voices also goes for those that are pushed out of the 'public' discourse of rationality by the difference of their bodies. Therefore, LEZ are repoliticized through the mobilization of an emerging narrative about the need to collectivize the claim to protect health: to do it for those who cannot due to their bodily conditions. In recent years, the coalition La Rue est à Nous, has mobilized a narrative in favour of protecting children's health by framing them as "the most vulnerable to pollution" due to the specificities of their bodies: "their immune and respiratory systems are still immature, they breathe faster, they are smaller and therefore closer to vehicle exhausts" (2019, September 10). The same goes for #MothersForClimate: "Our role is also to give a voice to babies, 5 or 6 year old children, who do not yet have that capacity to be part of #FridaysForFuture, but we do want them to have a voice and a presence".

Babies cannot yet articulate speech or children cannot protest, but their bodies are amongst the most severely affected by the effects of air pollution. This is a politicized narrative that pro-LEZ are mobilizing in their demands to policy makers: to take into account that the inaction and the exclusion of diverse bodies from measures to reduce pollutant emissions of transport has direct health consequences and even death. These consequences are stressed especially for the most vulnerable due to the condition of their bodies.

As recently as December 2020, a coroner in London ruled that the cause of death of nine-year-old Ella Kissi-Debrah was "excessive exposure to air pollution" (Laville, 2021,

December 16). Ella lived next to the South Circular Way in London and died of an asthma attack, the result of being exposed to high levels of NO_x and PM_{10}. For two years, her mother demanded a second examination of her daughter's body to prove that her asthma was aggravated by air pollution. Whitehouse & Grigg (2021, p. 1) consider this judgement as a "a real-life example of what has been known for some time from epidemiological studies, that traffic-derived air pollution not only contributes to incident asthma but also triggers fatal asthma attacks". The authors call for an urgent reduction of children's exposure to air pollutants from traffic through policies ensuring the right to breathe cleaner air. Specifically, these researchers in paedatrics suggest the implementation of "small scale local interventions" and "both city-wide and national actions" to tackle both short and long term air pollution effects (ibid.).

The above argument and this thesis evidence that the delay, inaction or gaps in LEZ implementation is also a consequence of the contradictions and challenges of multilevel governance. As seen in the case of Paris, the problems come from the centralized character of the French government and the lack of coordination between levels. In the case of Madrid, the problem starts when health is converted from a politicized issue to a banner of 'politics' or to a neglected issue in the policy agendas of different urban regimes through time. For example, as the municipal and regional government of the PP did and continues to do. Moreover, due to the decentralized character of the Spanish government (European Commission, 2017, p. 29), the problem comes from the different policy objectives of different levels of government.

For cities in general, the EU represents a challenge and perhaps even a pothole hindering progress towards sustainability in certain times. On the one hand, the EU mobilizes discursive registers highlighting the importance of the urban arena to improve air quality by imposing emission standards. On the other hand, the Commission reduces these pollution standards to the automotive industry, resulting in a paradox: urban authorities have to comply with emission standards while in their cities cars are circulating with a "license to pollute" extended by the EU (C40, 2018, December 13).

Another contradiction of multilevel governance for cities is the lack of devolution and financial transfers, as demanded by the open letter of Carmena, Colau and Hidalgo (2017). Despite this, when there is a politicized government sensitive to political issues of sustainability and health, as was the case of Carmena's Madrid and continues to be the case of Hidalgo, there are

possibilities for cities to push for these initiatives from the local arena. Urban sustainability activated movements of new municipalisms and the building of translocal solidarities. "Local loyalties" (Thompson, 2021, p. 317) mobilized at the international level demanding for more adequate governance competencies to city governments.

These contradictions of governance opened up possibilities for politicizing urban sustainability from other fronts. With the debate on air pollution and the need for action in the face of government inaction at different levels, New Urban Activisms (NUA) (Walliser, 2013) and urban coalitions emerged. It can be seen how existing air quality organizations, such as Ecologistas in Madrid and Respire in Paris, joined with other emerging individuals and collectives to build coalitions calling for more sustainable cities. Thus emerged "constellations of groups organised to find creative solutions" through the articulation of alternative narratives to protect collective health or urban inhabitants.

As Walliser says, these NUAs share "collective knowledge" through a "collective culture" that started intraurban but now is spreading to other cities in Europe. Organizations in Madrid, such as Ecologistas and #MadresXElClima, are currently collaborating with the School Revolt movement in Catalonia. Collectives in other European cities, including La Rue est à Nous and Alternativa Paris, are learning from Spanish cities how to reclaim the environments surrounding schools. This initiative seeks to protect children's health starting from schools, calling for the inclusion of new urban actors in the fight against air pollution, such as educational centres.

The latter raises concerns for future research. Throughout this work, a lack of research on multilevel governance of sustainability, air pollution and urban regimes in Paris was noted. Also, a gap was found regarding research on collaborative governance of air pollution in Europe (this issue is already being addressed in the case of China). Finally, it is necessary to delve deeper into gender aspects and to what extent women, who assume or are assigned a caretaker role, are more involved in mobilizing these narratives. In the meantime, this research is revealing because it shows how multilevel governance, urban regimes and the (de)politicized narratives of urban sustainability have direct implications on the body, being onthologically a higly political aspect.

The governance of urban sustainability is like a stream of water coming down from a fountain:

the EU and post-political governmentalities are that faucet from which the water issues and, even if it comes out of a pipe rusted by depoliticized narratives, when that stream of water falls towards the ground it is not lost in the sewer to feed the cycle of neoliberalism, but it impacts with force, shaking the ground of neoliberal urban regimes to politicize them, and returns upwards with more force, so much that the water splash becomes a wave that breaks towards other geographies to soak them with its political spirit. That political moment is all the mayors, the social movements, the collectives, the cyclists, the mothers, the children, the people who with their alternative narratives are bathing European cities with political force to politicize the multilevel governance of urban sustainability.

Barcelona, September 2021

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Annex

Table of interviewees, survey respondents and organizations which discourse was analyzed.

City		
Madrid: in favor	Juan Bárcena	Head of the mobility commission in Madrid for Ecologistas en Acción
	Yetta Aguado	Communications Director of the Plataform in Defense of Madrid Central & #MothersForClimate
	Pedro Díaz Alejo	Spokesperson ProBici: organization in defense of cycling mobility in Spain and Madrid
	Rubén Casado	Delegate of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Observatory of Madrid
	Eduardo Porcel	Puente de Vallecas Resident
Madrid: against	Interviewee 1	Salesman
	Survey Respondent 1	Transport sector worker
	Survey Respondent 2	Delivery and removals worker
Paris: in favour	Christophe Najdovski	Deputy Mayor in charge of the transformation of public space, transport and mobility from 2014 to 2020 and current Deputy Mayor of Vegetation of public spaces, green spaces, biodiversity, animal conditions.
	Hèléne Hernandez	Works in a non-profit organization that defends people with disabilities
Paris in favour: analyzed speech	David Belliard	Current Deputy Mayor in charge of the transformation of public space, transport and mobility
	Tonny Rennucci	President of Respire Association
	Respire Association	National Association for the Improvement of Air Quality
	Réseau Action Climat France	Federation of national and local associations fighting against the causes of climate change. At the same time, it is the representative in France of a global and European network of NGO's with around 1,300 members

City		
	La Rue est à Nous	Coalition gathering 11 members mobilized on the stakes of air pollution linked to road traffic, including Alternatiba Paris, Respire, Paris Sans Voiture, FNE Paris, MDB, Transport & Environnement, Greenpeace Paris, Extinction Rebellion IDF, Amis de la Terre Paris, La Voie est Libre, InCOPruptibles. With the support of Rue de l'Avenir and RAFC.
	Bien vivre and moving better in Paris and Great Paris	Letter extended to the candidates for the regional presidency of Île-de-France, signed by a coalition of 10 organizations (France Nature Environnement Paris, Rue de l'Avenir Ile de France, 60 Millions de Piétons, Fédération Française de Randonée Pédestre Paris, Association des usager des transports FNAUT IDF, Mieux se Déplacer à Bicyclette, Paris en selle, La Seine n'est pas à vendre, Alternativa Paris, Respire).
Paris: against	The banned of July 1st (Les Bannies du 1er juillet)	Formed from the association 40 Million Motorists.
	French Federation of Citizen Motorists (Fédération Française des Automobilistes Citoyens)	Formed from the association between The banned of July 1st and ParisPourTous

Base battery of questions for interviewees and survey respondents:

- When do you identify that the public debate about the need for a cleaner city began in Madrid/Paris?
- What is your opinion about Madrid Central/Paris authorities' policies and measures to reduce the car circulation?
- Do you feel that your demands are politicized enough, i.e. taken into account?
- How do you conceive the city? (i.e. what is your idea of what a city should be?)