

Culture and gender perspectives in the city of Barcelona

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, many countries and local governments have paid special attention to the circumstances and needs of women as creators and producers of diverse artistic expressions. The inclusion of gender equality in the political agenda has emerged, in many cities, at the hand of feminist movements and the activism of professionals in the cultural sector. This article aims to explore the role of Barcelona as a laboratory city for good practices in the field of culture and gender. After a previous diagnosis of gender inequalities in the field of arts and culture in the city of Barcelona, this original research used a qualitative methodology. This was based on a series of semi-structured interviews with leading professionals in the sector of culture and gender. We also analysed different cases of innovative experiences in the cultural field located in different neighbourhoods of the city. The article concludes that, although the feminist movements and cultural sector of Barcelona have worked to put gender equality on the political-institutional agenda, there is still a long way to go in implementing programmatic activities able to transform our society.

Keywords: culture, gender, inequalities, local cultural policies

SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

Culture is a mechanism through which society shapes its visions of reality, which it can help transform while also reinforcing specific imaginaries (MacNeill et al., 2018). Likewise, it is a fundamental instrument in the fight for equality and the transformation of societies (O'Brien et al., 2017). From this point of view, it is an ideal tool for dismantling the different patriarchal dominations and discriminations based on gender that take place in our societies. In this sense, artistic and cultural practices can offer experiences of empowerment and the creation of constructive and non-coercive meanings that can contribute to achieving, among other human rights, gender equality. The latter is understood as the equality of rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality therefore implies that the interests, needs, and priorities of both sexes are considered, recog-

nising the diversity of different groups of women and men (UN Women, 2021). From this perspective, the consideration of gender, referring to the set of social, cultural, political, psychological, legal, and economic characteristics that each society assigns to people in a differentiated way based on their sex (UN Women, 2021), is also a prerequisite for a wide range of cultural expressions. Disregarding the creative potential of both women and LGTBI groups drastically reduces the diversity of cultural goods and services (Villarroya, 2016; Joseph, 2018). The opportunity to actively participate in the full variety of artistic creation, contribute to the creation and enhancement of cultural expressions, participate in the identification and protection of cultural heritage, and familiarisation with the range of creations, expressions, and heritage must be guaranteed to everyone (Romainville, 2015), including women and minority groups.

To this we must add the increasingly important role of cities in the social, political, economic (Culture Action Europe and Agenda 21 for Culture, the World Organisation of United Cities and Local Governments, 2016), and cultural landscapes (Yudice, 2002). Since the 1990s, many cities have used culture as a vehicle for economic growth as well as a tool for integration and inclusion (Canclini and Moneta, 1999). In this sense, the city of Barcelona has not remained on the side lines, with culture playing a central role in the construction of the so-called Barcelona model (Rius-Ulldemolins and Gisbert, 2018). Framed in a strongly culturally decentralised state, Barcelona City Council has assumed a leading role in the maintenance and financing of the main Catalan cultural institutions (Villarroya, 2012) and in promoting the emergence and consolidation of private initiatives throughout the city.

The relevance of Barcelona as a cultural capital was initially recognised through the Municipal Charter (Law 22/1998, of December 30) and later consolidated by an agreement signed between the Spanish Ministries of Culture, Economy, and Finance and Barcelona City Council (Law 1/2006, of 13 March). The city's cultural role has also materialised in its leading role in the implementation of Culture 21: Actions and the activities of the Committee for Culture of the World Organisation of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). In line with the Agenda 21 for Culture (UCLG, 2004), in 2018, the person in charge of the cultural affairs of the Barcelona City Council affirmed that “personal autonomy, equality, and diversity are three clear political parameters in the construction of the cultural policy of any city, and also of Barcelona” (Subirats, 2018, p. 11).

Despite the general perception that culture and the arts provide an open space for people of all genders, evidence shows that gender inequalities are also reflected in the domain of culture (Pujar, 2016). In this sense, the Culture 21: Actions document (UCLG, 2015), which currently guides cultural public policies in local governments and aligned with the Agenda 21 for Culture, includes gender equality when referring

to cultural rights. Specifically, it mentions the need for cultural policies to include expanded opportunities for the participation of women in cultural life and to adopt measures against all gender discrimination among their objectives. Likewise, in the field of cultural governance, cultural programmes and institutions that receive public support are urged to develop a gender perspective. In other words, making the concerns and experiences of women, as well as men, an integral element of the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes so that both sexes benefit equally, in so preventing the perpetuation of inequality (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1997). Finally, in relation to equality and social inclusion, the Culture 21: Actions document urges local governments to allocate a part of their cultural budget and public resources to the active promotion of women's participation in cultural activities and organisations, especially in higher profile and management levels. They must value, promote, and increase the visibility and prestige of cultural activities in which there is usually a greater involvement of women.

UNESCO also compels governments to incorporate the perspective of gender parity at the international level (UNESCO, 2014; Joseph, 2015, 2018) in all cultural policies and measures, enabling the participation of women in cultural life as creators and producers, as well as in their condition as citizens and consumers. Otherwise, the diversity of cultural expressions will appear as an unattainable challenge (Joseph, 2018). From another perspective, social cohesion within a community can be more easily achieved if all groups within it participate in cultural life. In this sense, the 2005 UNESCO convention on the protection and promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO, 2005) emphasises the importance of culture for social cohesion and, in particular, its potential to improve the status and role of women in society (Preamble). Consequently, the functioning of a democratic community necessarily involves the right to participate in cultural life.

Gender inequalities in the cultural sector take multiple forms, manifesting themselves in the entry to certain professions and industries, professional progression, recognition through prizes, access to resources, and also in the visibility of cultural works (Villarroya, 2019). All this must be added to the problems that have historically characterised the cultural sector (and continue to do so today), the precariousness of the artistic labour market, enormous difficulties in developing professional careers (Barrios and Villarroya, 2021), and a structural fragility that has led to a systemic crisis in the cultural world (Rubio-Arostegui and Rius-Ulledemolins, 2016).

Despite the aforementioned international claims, gender equality has never been a central issue on the agenda of the authorities responsible for culture in the city of Barcelona. In the first 30 years of democracy in Spain, Barcelona City Council's cultural policies were led by the *Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya* (Catalan Socialist Party) that, in 1996, created the Institute of Culture as the main body responsible for cultural affairs in the city. Socialist governments, with a social democratic orientation in the 1980s and more socio-liberal direction from 1990 to 2010 (Rius-Ulledemolins and Gisbert, 2018, p. 108) gave way, in 2011, to *Convergència i Unió* (Convergence and Union, or CiU), a conservative nationalist party. However, the party's tenure leading the city did not last long, with the *Barcelona en Comú* (Barcelona in Common, or BeC) party—a citizen platform launched in June 2014—winning the municipal elections. BeC has been in power since then and has governed in a minority, except in the period between 2016 and the end of 2017, when it governed in coalition with the Catalan Socialist Party. Its political agenda includes the defence of social justice and community rights, promotion of participatory democracy, introduction of mechanisms to combat corruption, and development of a new tourism model for Barcelona.

In cultural matters, the so-called new policy proclaims itself as an alternative cultural policy pro-

posal aimed at promoting a common culture far from the economic and tourist instrumentalisation of culture (Rius-Ulledemolins and Gisbert, 2018). This new proposal explores and rethinks the cultural sector through a community culture that integrates feminism, social economy, urbanism, and ecology. Despite the feminist discourse of the last legislature (2015–2019), gender equality has rarely been explicitly included among the objectives of cultural policies. Thus, from March to July 2019, the constitution of the Culture and Gender working group within the *Cultura Viva* (Live Culture) programme of the Barcelona Institute of Culture, was commissioned to prepare a set of initiatives aimed at achieving parity and to incorporate the gender perspective into projects and facilities in the city of Barcelona. Beyond that, most of the measures taken within the cultural sphere originated in the Barcelona City Council's Department of Feminisms and LGTBI Affairs, as well as in the private sector.

Although this resistance to the implementation of gender mainstreaming has been little explored in the field of cultural policies, its analysis in other political fields has shown how efforts towards gender equality are often the object of strong resistance in existing institutional contexts (Cavaghan, 2017). These analyses have shown how the bias towards masculine interests and the assumptions regarding gender differences between men and women present in all public policies have reinforced the advantages of men (Hawkesworth, 1994). Thus, when policies designed to change gender relationships are incorporated into a pre-existing governance regime, their impact may be hindered or transformed in ways that make them less powerful (Jansson, 2019). This resistance has also sometimes been attributed to managers of institutions who often express positive attitudes towards gender equality and diversity as principles but resist the implementation of real actions aimed at changing the gender order (Wahl and Holgersson, 2003). Beyond these factors endogenous to institutional change, recent research points to the

idea that institutions and politics are not isolated from society and can be influenced by the agency of different actors, such as cultural elites or large recipients of aid (Jancovich, 2017). It is possible that some of these (external) agents influence and even change the institutions and direction of policies. Feminist and cultural movements may be one of these social actors contributing to achieving changes in cultural policies. In fact, they have played a leading role in promoting knowledge and awareness of gender disparities in cultural fields as well as in the inclusion of gender equality in the political agenda of many governments.

In this context, this article aims to explore how the feminist agenda has been introduced into the cultural reality of the city of Barcelona based on analysis of a set of innovative experiences in the cultural field in several of its different neighbourhoods. Thus, in the following sections we will refer, firstly, to the current situation of the cultural sector in the city from a gender perspective. Next, we will present the methodology used as well as the main data sources. After this, the third section presents results of the analysis of a set of initiatives that incorporate the gender perspective in the field of culture. These were promoted by feminist movements, the cultural sector (such as cultural managers, networks of museums with a gender perspective, and cultural institutions), and the civil society of Barcelona. Finally, the main conclusions of the study are presented in the last section.

GENDER INEQUALITIES IN THE CULTURAL SECTOR OF THE CITY

A very important weakness that can be seen in the field of art and local culture in Barcelona is the absence of cultural statistics at the local level disaggregated by sex. This information would allow for regular and systematic data collection regarding the gender equality situation in the sector and therefore, would facilitate awareness and a prospective view of this issue. Although some

relevant studies have been developed (Cabó and Sánchez, 2018)¹, these are still insufficient to give us a real and compared diagnosis of the situation of gender inequality in the cultural sector of the city of Barcelona.

The study by Cabó and Sánchez (2017) shows how the type of activities most often undertaken by women in the cultural sector tend to be production (audiovisual or scenic) or teaching (workshop or trainer), with more than 60% participation in each of these fields. The former is usually linked to the organisation and supervision of events and does not usually have much visibility in cultural spaces. In turn, the latter is most often conducted in small-format and local spaces and, therefore, tends to have a modest scope in terms of resources and recognition. In solo performance tasks, only 35.06% (2017) of women were solo performers at festivals, while in large auditoriums this number exceeded 40%. The authorship of women ranged from 1.25% (2017) in musical performances to 32% in interpretations in performing arts centres. In the area of programming, two extreme situations should also be highlighted: on the one hand, is the high level of feminisation of activities in libraries and civic centres, where the total number of activities is very high, but with a modest budget and projection; on the other hand is the masculinisation of activities carried out in spaces more linked to high culture (such as museums, large auditoriums, or theatres). In 2017, the average percentage of women in each area of programming ranged from 23% in the case of large auditoriums to 59% in the case of libraries (Cabó and Sánchez, 2018).

In this same line, the study by Villarroja (2017) showed how women were less represented in cultural professions (44%, in 2014) and in decision-making positions (43% in the Department of Culture of the Catalan government). While women

¹ Some reports that the Observatori Cultural de Gènere (Cultural Gender Observatory) has been carrying out on a regular basis could also be considered.

more frequently had part-time and temporary contracts and carried out management and administration tasks, men tended to engage in more technical and creative activities. The analysis by sectors also showed a low representation of women artists exhibiting their work in art galleries (37.5% in 2013) and in the audiovisual sector (40.6% in 2012) compared to their global representation in the cultural market (44%). At the opposite extreme, women comprised the majority of the personnel employed in the autonomous administrations (62.4%, Department of Culture) and local administration (64.4%), as well as in traditionally feminised sectors such as record keeping (58.5%), collections (59.4%), and in art galleries (57.3%).

However, in the specific medium of exhibitions, the study by Baygual, Brugat, and Cabré (2016) on 10 art centres in Barcelona over the 2011–2015 period showed how only the Miró Foundation treated women artists on equal terms as male artists. In this sense, the large number of solo exhibitions by men in centres such as the Fundació Catalunya-La Pedrera, La Virreina, or the Fundació Vila Casas shows that male artists are still the repository of artistic prestige, to a much greater extent than their female counterparts. Similarly, the 0% sample of women recorded in centres as different as the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya and Caixafòrum shows how the incorporation of women artists does not depend on the artistic periods exhibited. Likewise, the study by Cabó and Sánchez (2018) revealed how decision-making spaces are far from being equal, although here too the participation of women varies depending on the type of cultural infrastructure. Thus, while the management of the city's large cultural spaces such as museums is usually placed in the hands of men (71%), that of local facilities usually falls to women, with 76% being directors of civic centres and 82% of libraries. In turn, the presence of women in the management structures of the Institut de cultura de Barcelona (Institute of Culture of Barcelona or ICUB) was reduced to barely 30%.

Therefore, based on all the above, we can deduce that there is a lack of representation of women in the most institutionalised cultural life of the city. This simultaneously coexists with a key role for women in cultural activity, often from the viewpoint of the culture of proximity, with less public and private support and little social power (Villarroya, 2017). Contrary to the scenario presented so far, women obtained more recognition than men throughout 2017 (57% and 43%, respectively), although the distribution by gender varied depending on the theme, territorial scope, media visibility, if it was about distinctions or prizes, and the economic endowment. Thus, for example, women received special recognition in gender-themed awards (sexist violence and women's participation, etc.), receiving 83% of the awards (Cabó and Sánchez, 2018). Although women are slowly beginning to be recognised in terms of prizes, accolades with the greatest financial endowments and media visibility were still usually awarded to men. Indeed, the average remuneration of the prizes obtained by women was 34% lower than that of men, a difference that was accentuated by up to 52% in case of prizes without a gender theme (Cabó and Sánchez, 2018). Finally, Cabó and Sánchez (2018) highlighted how, for the first time in recent years, in 2017, women received more distinctions than men (60% and 40%, respectively). However, it should be noted that certain awards such as the Gold Medal for cultural, scientific, civic, or sports merit have not been awarded to any women for years.

With a broader territorial scope, the study by Cabré and Alvarado (2015) analysed a sample of 70 literary prizes from the territory of the Catalan Countries dedicated to rewarding different genders for a period of 15 years, from 2000 to 2014. The study yielded very unequal results for women, ranging from 4.8% of women winning drama awards to 36.4% in the case of children's and youth fiction. In the field of cultural participation, some data included in the Survey of Cultural Participation and Cultural Needs in Barcelona (ICUB, 2020)

showed, however, a certain equality between men and women. This balance manifested itself both in legitimised cultural activities (such as going to the theatre or concerts, etc.) and in community, popular, religious, or public space culture. A more detailed analysis of the data, however, shows that women participated more than men in social organisations, collectives, and movements, while men participated more in sports clubs or excursion centres. In this way, the apparent balance between the sexes was tempered by the different gender roles that exist in our societies.

To all of the above, it is worth adding the crucial role of feminist movements and activism in the cultural sector in the city of Barcelona that, in recent years, has persistently documented the lack of effective equality between men and women in the cultural sector and the need for urgent intervention (Baygual, Brugat, and Cabré, 2016; Bou, Cabré, and Porté, 2014; Cabré, 2017; Cabré and Alvarado, 2015). Despite the few institutional initiatives aimed at introducing the gender perspective into the city's cultural policies, its feminist movements and the sector itself have been promoters of good practices in the field of culture and gender in Barcelona city.

GENERAL METHODOLOGY AND FIELD WORK CONDUCTED

For the analysis of this article, a qualitative methodology was used based on semi-structured interviews with experts and leaders in the field of gender perspectives in the cultural field of the city of Barcelona. The interview guidelines divided the questions into two large blocks. The first focused on a description of Barcelona's cultural policies from a feminist perspective and the second directly related to the results presented in this article and on the qualitative evaluation of these cultural policies in the city. They emphasised the description of experiences and initiatives carried out in the city by the public administration, civil society

agents, and the third cultural sector. In addition, at the beginning of each interview, we collected the general data of the interviewees, who were mainly professionals in fields related to the object of this study. The interviews were conducted electronically² between May and September 2020.

The sample was selected from among the members of the Culture and Gender working group within the Cultura Viva Program launched by the ICUB and other references in the field of study investigated, always with the purpose of obtaining a sample that, despite not being representative of the sector, was critical and diverse. Specifically, the interviewees were Mireia Mora (cultural communicator at La Tremenda), M. Àngels Cabré (director of the Observatori Cultural de Gènere, the Gender Cultural Observatory), Anna Cabó (founder and director of La Groc Solutions, a consultancy on gender and diversity issues), Karo Moret (a doctor in history from Pompeu Fabra University and researcher on African heritage and its diasporas in the Caribbean), Eulàlia Espinàs (manager of the Ateneu Barcelonès), Marta Vergonyós (a visual artist and filmmaker and director of the Centre de Cultura de Dones Francesca Bonnemaison (Bonne-maison Centre for French Women's Culture), later re-invented as La Bonne, Marina Marcian (a cultural technician and PhD student in social movements and cultural diversity at the University of Barcelona), and Ione Hermosa (a cultural technician and manager of La Central del Circ, the Circus Central, up until 2021).

Based on the exploratory field work carried out for this research, and as a result of the interviews we conducted, 24 proposals for good practice experiences emerged in the field of gender perspectives within the cultural sector of the city of Barcelona (table 1).

² They were mainly carried out through video calls or by email, because of the pandemic situation generated by COVID-19.

Table 1 Proposals for good practices in the field of gender and culture in the city of Barcelona.

Project type	Projects proposed as good practice experiences
Civic centre and library	Centre Cívic Sagrada Família (Sagrada Família Civic Centre) and El Sortidor Civic Centre in Poble Sec.
Centre of culture and creation	El Graner, La Bonne, and L'Ateneu de 9 Barris.
Women's collective	Dones Visuals (Visual Women), Projecte Minerva (Minerva Project), Union of Home Workers and Caregivers (Sindillar), Ca la Dona, and the Wikidones Project.
Festival	Festival Escena Poblenou, International Women's Film Festival of Barcelona, and Festival of Visible Lesbian Cultures.
Artistic production	Wanafrica Ediciones with the 'African-meninas' collection, La Raposa's programming, No es país para negras (It's no country for black women) play, artistic projects by Nus Cooperativa, and the parity agenda of the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya.
Museum	Museu de Pedralbes and Photographic Archive of Barcelona City Council.
Working group	The Grup Dones i Cultura (Women and Culture Group), 'Culture and Gender' working group of the Barcelona City Council's Live Culture Program, and Report on cultural programming 16/17, written in a feminist key.
Training	'Afro-feminism' training course by Karo Moret at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (Centre for Contemporary Culture of Barcelona, or CCCB), and Talleres Fil a l'agulla (needlework workshops).
Management and cultural communication	La Tremenda
Award and recognition	Young Creators Award
Largescale celebrations	The Poble Sec Festival

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Of these 24 examples, the 10 presented in table 2 were selected for the purpose of this current work. Their selection responded to three criteria:

(i) The plurality of the audiovisual, theatrical, museum, etc. artistic and cultural sectors involved.

(ii) The diversity in the typology of the projects, with the presence of both production and exhibition units.

(iii) Their ownership (public or private).

Table 2 Examples of good practices in the field of gender and culture in the city of Barcelona

Institution	Cultural sector	Typology	Ownership
1. Sagrada Família Civic Centre and Sagrada Família Library - Josep M. Ainaud de Lasarte	Multidisciplinary (proximity centre) and heritage sector (library)	Civic centre and library	Public
2. Francesca Bonnemaison Cultural Centre for Women	Multidisciplinary (audiovisual, scenic, and musical arts, etc.)	Culture centre	Private
3. El Graner, centre for the creation of dance and live arts	Performing arts (dance and live arts)	Creation centre	Public
4. <i>No es país para negras</i> production	Performing arts (theatre)	Theatre production	Private for profit
5. Barcelona International Women's Film Festival	Audiovisual sector (cinema)	Audiovisual festival	Private
6. Poble Sec Feminista	Social action	Largescale celebration	Public
7. Ca la Dona	Multidisciplinary (heritage and social action, etc.)	Feminist action space	Private
8. Afrofeminisms at the Contemporary Culture of Barcelona	Heritage sector (museums and training)	Museum	Public
9. Minerva Project	Multidisciplinary	Collective of creators	Public
10. La Tremenda	Communication	Management and cultural communication	Cooperative – private non-profit

Source: Prepared by the authors.

GOOD PRACTICES IN THE FIELD OF GENDER AND CULTURE IN THE CITY OF BARCELONA

Characterisation of the projects

Following the example of the mapping of experiences presented in the *Cultura per la Inclusió Social a Barcelona, Mapatge d'experiències 1.0* (Culture for Social Inclusion in Barcelona, Experience mapping 1.0 document; Baltà and Grimaldi, 2011), the characterisation of each of the selected projects is presented below. For each of them, it includes the title of the

project, institution or entity that manages it, a brief description of its context, the feminist objectives it pursues, and the main activities conducted within the framework of gender perspectives.

The Sagrada Família Civic Centre is a publicly owned municipal facility located in the Sagrada Família neighbourhood, whose main focus of work is gender equality. Since 2013, it has specialised in gender issues with the dual objective of offering citizens a cultural offer in this field and of implementing good professional practices in the promotion

of equality in its internal management. Its main activities aimed at citizens are concentrated in its cultural agenda (exhibitions, film cycles, shows, and concerts, etc.), holding workshops, as well as supporting the creation of projects specialised in gender and equality (Ajuntament de Barcelona, n.d.-a). In the field of internal management, it promotes periodic training within its team with the aim of ensuring the promotion of the gender perspective in all its initiatives and forms. One of the most relevant results was the preparation of the Guide for the Incorporation of the Gender Perspective into the Work of the Sagrada Família Civic Centre (Alexanian and Tejón, 2017).

In turn, the Sagrada Família - Josep M. Ainaud de Lasarte Library, located in the same building as the Civic Centre and also publicly owned, houses a special collection on feminism, LGTBI themes, and queer theory, in addition to offering reference public library services for the neighbourhood (Ajuntament de Barcelona, n.d.-b).

The Francesca Bonnemaison Cultural Centre for Women and later, La Bonne, is a “space for meeting, exchange, and creation of feminist cultural projects” (La Bonne, n.d.), focused on specialties in the audiovisual and performance fields. This centre also conducts research and thinking activities on feminist movements and anti-racism. The centre has its origins in the Institut de Cultura Popular (Institute of Popular Culture), founded in 1909 together with the Biblioteca Popular de la Dona (Women’s Popular Library, the first public library for women in all of Europe) by the pedagogue Francesca Bonnemaison. After years of petitions and work to recover the legacy of Francesca Bonnemaison, in 2003, the Barcelona Provincial Council formally approved the agreement to transfer the space to the association promoting the Centre for Women’s Culture. A year later, the space was formally inaugurated and with it, the aforementioned centre was born. However, in 2012, the Women’s Cultural Centre suffered the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis with severe cuts to its budget and decided to reaffirm its desire

to continue the work of Francesca Bonnemaison by starting a new phase of its work with a new name: La Bonne.

The objectives of this new stage focused on its consolidation as a space for meeting, exchange, and creation for women and feminists aimed at the whole of society, aiming to win the loyalty of the heterogeneous Bonne Community from an intersectional, anti-racist, and decolonial praxis, implementation of a circular logic in the promotion of women’s culture (training → production → dissemination → archiving), and to become a meeting point for women from the world of culture and different feminisms in Barcelona. La Bonne also created the Wikidones Project, an initiative to generate content with a gender and feminist perspective, on Wikipedia. It also promotes the Young Creators Award³, in collaboration with the Department of Feminisms and LGTBI of the Barcelona City Council, aimed at promoting audiovisual creation by women residing in the city of Barcelona. Furthermore, La Bonne promotes the Visible Lesbian Cultures Festival⁴, which seeks to promote the city’s lesbian cultural production.

El Graner is a publicly owned creation centre dedicated to dance and live arts, managed by the Mercat de les Flors (Flower Market) with the collaboration of the Associació de Professionals de la Dansa de Catalunya (Association of Dance Professionals of Catalonia, or APDC) and the Associació de Companyies Professionals de Dansa de Catalunya (Association of Professional Dance Companies of Catalonia, or ACPDC). The centre is part of the Creation Factories programme managed by the Barcelona City Council and works to support artistic creation within the field of dance and body languages, through experimentation, rehearsal, creation, and training, and in turn, to establish links with diverse audiences,

3 For more information see: <https://labonne.org/projectes/premijovescreadores/>

4 For more information see: <https://labonne.org/projectes/visibles/>

all based on a “horizontal and feminist management model that investigates new sustainable and inclusive governance models” (El Graner, n.d.). In 2019, El Graner’s team participated in the presentation of the *Guia de bones pràctiques per a una programació cultural paritària a Barcelona* (Guide to best practices to achieve parity in the Barcelona cultural program; Soley-Beltran, 2019), included as part of the Barcelona City Council Plan for Gender Justice (2016–2020), which aimed to eradicate gender inequalities in the city.

The theatrical production *No es país para negras* (It’s no country for black women) is a work co-written and starring the playwright and actress Silvia Albert Sopalet, with the collaboration of Laura Freijo and Carolina Torres Topaga (with the latter also directing), produced by Maripaz Correa. The production is a comic–dramatic monologue about the history of black Spanish women, which premiered in Barcelona in 2014, within the XV *Mostra de Creadores Escèniques, Novembre Vaca* (15th Exhibition of Scenic Creators in the Novembre Vaca festival), and since then it has been performed on multiple stages throughout Spain. Throughout all the programmed seasons (and those that continue to be programmed), at the end of the work there is always a space for discussion between the creator and the public. These interactions are moderated, in each case, by a leader from the African diaspora from the city in which the representation takes place, and the public is invited to comment on issues related to racism and African descendants (*No es país para negras*, n.d.). In addition, in 2020, the company of *No es país para negras* premiered a new play entitled *Blackface y otras vergüenzas* (Blackface and other shames).

The *Mostra Internacional de Films de Dones de Barcelona* (The International Women’s Film Show of Barcelona) is a film festival born in 1993, created and directed by Drac Màgic Cultura Audiovisual (Magic Dragon Audiovisual Culture), with the aim of making audiovisual culture made by women visible. Parallel to the international exhibition held

every year, usually at the beginning of June, they have also created an archive of films containing more than 2,500 works made by women, as well as an online archive with all the information on the works the festival has programmed over the years (*Mostra Internacional de Films de Dones de Barcelona*, n.d.). La Mostra is part of and the co-founder of TRAMA, a coordinator of film, video, and multimedia samples and festivals created by women from Spain. In addition, it offers to distribute some of the works presented at the festival and works to give value to cinema made by women.

In 2015, different entities from the Poble Sec neighbourhood formed the Poble Sec Feminist working group to develop an action protocol⁵ against sexist attacks and harassment within the framework of the neighbourhood festival held every year in the second half of July. The protocol aimed to guarantee a space of security and respect within this festive space and presented a proposal for action against any sexist attacks that might occur during these festive days. The protocol stresses the importance of carrying out activities to raise awareness beforehand, through talks, graphic and audiovisual material, and workshops, etc. with neighbourhood organisations and groups. At the same time, their intent to promote the representation of non-hegemonic genders and sexualities in the following years was also expressed.

Ca la Dona is a self-defined space for ‘feminist action,’ a meeting place for women, lesbians, and transgender people and a reference point for feminist movements which has been active since 1987 and has been located in the old quarter of Barcelona since 2012. Reflection and debate activities, the production of feminist thought, exchange of political experiences, and a whole series of socio-cultural activities are carried out in this space. One of their outstanding projects is the *Ca la Dona* Documentation Centre, a documentary collection and library that collects, preserves and disseminates a multitude of works (books, magazines,

⁵ Available here: <http://labase.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/PROTOCOL-AGRESSIONS-FM15-1.pdf>

films, writings, and posters, etc.) related to the feminist movement. In turn, Ca la Dona has a space for information on legal rights and resources and FemArt, an art exhibition made by women mainly from Spain and Latin America (Ca la Dona, n.d.).

In addition, the Afrofeminisms: Roots, Experiences, Resistance course was taught at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (Centre for Contemporary Culture of Barcelona, or CCCB) throughout June 2018 by the Afro-Cuban historian, researcher, and professor, Karo Moret Miranda, a doctor in history from Pompeu Fabra University and editor of one of the Wanafrika Editions collections. The training given by Moret Miranda consisted of five sessions in which, “through history, religion, art, and the experiences of women”, wanted to help participants understand “what social, cultural, political, and economic agents have influenced Afro-descendant history and the construction of a feminist Afro-consciousness,” as well as allowing them to study “feminist movements in their complexity and plurality” and “the representation of what it is to be Afro-descendant and the response of the most contemporary artistic activism” (CCCB, n.d.). The course was part of the programming of the Institut d’Humanitats de Barcelona (Humanities Institute of Barcelona), which has been active since 1994.

The Minerva Project is a meeting and promotion project between the artistic creators linked to the Gràcia neighbourhood of Barcelona. It was born in 2011 as a result of the constitution of a working group comprising women from the Consell de Dones de Gràcia (Women’s Council of Gràcia) and other women to debate culture and gender and make the artistic works created by women visible. In 2014, they created the virtual platform in the form of a catalogue to publicise the female creators of multiple artistic disciplines who are residents of or linked in some way to the Gràcia neighbourhood of Barcelona. It currently has the support of the Feminisms and LGBTBI Directorate of Barcelona City Council and the collaboration of the Trama SCCL cooperative. Its main purpose is to promote cultural creation by

women with a gender perspective, establish networks, and promote female talent in the district.

La Tremenda is a cooperative, created in 2017, dedicated to communication and the cultural and social press, also with a gender perspective. Led by Mireia Mora, Bàrbara Branco, Núria Olivé, and Laia Soler, their office is located inside the La Bonne Centre for Women’s Culture where they implement different types of work related to communication and press strategies, content creation, management advertising, and events, as well as providing training and advice. Among other activities, La Tremenda coordinated the Cultural Feminisation: Presentation of the Guide to Good Practices for Equal Cultural Programming in Barcelona event and the subsequent Gender and Culture working group promoted by the Council of Feminisms and LGBTBI of the Barcelona City Council and ICUB.

Cultural projects as good practices: diverse, intersectional, and with a gender perspective

Based on these experiences of good practices with a gender perspective in the cultural sector carried out in the city of Barcelona between 2015 and 2018, a range of initiatives (from programming, training, and documentation to artistic residencies, for example) in different fields of culture (visual arts, audiovisual, and theatre, etc.) were implemented by several types of organisations (from civic centres, theatres, and creation centres to cultural communication companies) and with different management and ownership models. Although the 10 experiences presented here do not claim to be representative of the sector as a whole, they do seek to exemplify different initiatives from a range of sectors and cultural agents.

From among all this diversity, the main role of La Bonne as the promoter of different projects with a strong presence and roots in the city stands out. These range from training to the maintenance of a documentation centre, consultancies, the prize for creators, festival of lesbian cultures, or artistic resi-

dences, for example. Its purpose of disseminating feminist projects places La Bonne as a crucial agent for the revitalisation of feminist cultural experiences in the city. The remaining initiatives analysed ranged from the presence of projects with a strong component of proximity to the territory, such as the Sagrada Família Civic Centre and Sagrada Família-Josep M. Ainaud de Lasarte Library, protocols against sexist attacks by the Poble Sec festival or the Minerva Project, which were linked to the Gràcia neighbourhood, and programmes with greater international projection, such as the International Women's Film Festival of Barcelona.

It should also be noted that intersectionality has been on the agenda of many of these initiatives for some time. Most of them recognise that the gender category is not the only one that structures society and that, therefore, it also intersects with other axes, such as origin, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, functional diversity, and social class. Despite this, there is still a long way to go. One of the interviewees remarked that the Barcelona context is “reluctant to identify other oppressions and other groups with different priorities” and that the transformations that have occurred up until now and that have generated an impact have been “because non-white artists and academics have organised and have offered our own products that we have managed privately, without institutional support” (interviewee 5⁶).

In the specific case of Afrofeminism, initiatives related to training stand out, such as the Afrofeminisms: Roots, experiences, resistance course offered in the CCCB in 2018 and taught by the Afro-Cuban historian Karo Moret Miranda, or the theatre production *No es país para negras* by Silvia Albert Sopale. In addition, to address the discrimination suffered by women in the creative process, which is aggravated by ethnicity, this theatrical production makes the creation

and contributions made by women visible from an intersectional perspective.

Each and every one of these initiatives makes it possible to address different gender gaps that manifest themselves in the cultural sector of the city. Thus, through cultural activity programming, workshops, the use of spaces, and dissemination of activities with a gender perspective, the aim is to provide citizens with a diverse and high-quality cultural offering. One of the interviewees stated that “forcing parity in public institutions and programming should be an obligation and would promote an infinitely healthier cultural ecosystem” (interviewee 6). The use of non-sexist and transformative communication is also a common denominator in all the initiatives we analysed. The existence of La Tremenda, as a cooperative dedicated both to communication and cultural and social press with a gender perspective, is evidence of the key role of communication as a tool for the transmission of messages, meanings and values, whether through words or images.

Likewise, training, documentation, and research on feminist movements, gender inequalities in the cultural sector, and the creative role of women and other discriminated groups are initiatives that allow us to overcome the androcentric perspective that dominates many of the activities in the city (Perpinyà i Morera, 2020). In this sense, another of the interviewees remarked that “it is necessary to do a lot of training and give support to the current movements and people working in civil society” (interviewee 3). However, in some of the cases analysed, the awards were used as a key instrument to recognise the work and careers of female artists and cultural professionals (Cabrè and Alvarado, 2015). For their part, festivals and exhibitions give visibility to the work of the least represented artists and groups while simultaneously expanding the diversity of cultural expressions in the city.

In addition to promoting a gender perspective in decision-making, the adoption of the gender perspective in the internal management of some of

6 In order to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees when using direct quotes, their numerical identification, which did not correspond to the order in which they appeared in the methodology section, was used.

the institutions considered in this work (such as the Sagrada Família Civic Centre) allows the exercise of professional practices to promote gender equality in the daily functioning of teams. In this sense, one of the interviewees had the following reflection: “on the one hand, [we have] the need to transform existing cultural institutions; on the other, to support existing initiatives on the margin, created by women and feminists” (interviewee 2). A key issue in this area is promoting the reconciliation of family, personal, and work life, both for people who participate in the activities and for those who are part of the centre’s team.

Finally, some of the initiatives analysed were aimed at preventing and addressing sexism and violence against women. This ranged from the provision, dissemination, and use of a protocol for the prevention and action against sexual assaults and harassment in the Poble Sec neighbourhood street festival, to the provision of a protocol for use in the centre itself and internal and external training on sexist violence.

CONCLUSIONS

Barcelona as a ‘cultural city’, a driving force for progress in terms of the economy, social advancement, and tourism, did not include the transformative power of gender equality in its configuration. This limited the enjoyment of cultural rights by all citizens, social cohesion, and the richness of the diversity of cultural expressions. Despite all the gender inequalities affecting women and minority groups, our analysis in this present article showed the merely testimonial nature of the intervention of the local authorities responsible for culture in the city of Barcelona. Despite the feminist discourse of the current governing party in the city (BeC), implementation of these principles in the field of cultural policies has been practically non-existent. Failure to recognise this potential consequently leads to the constriction of cultural rights for women and other minority groups, undermining the strengthening of a public agenda that seeks equality in cultural terms for all its citizens.

Nonetheless, this study highlighted the fundamental role of feminist movements and various initiatives arising from the cultural field, some of them with a long and recognised trajectory and others more recent. These have made it possible to address gender gaps in access to resources and programming, underlining unequal power relationships within institutions as well as traditional gender norms that reinforce these gaps and power imbalances. The initiatives included in this work, which have been highlighted by the cultural sector itself, show the key role of the cultural agents present in the territory, beyond the existence of a road map in the political sphere or the inclusion of gender equality as an objective in the city’s cultural policies.

The relevance that the city itself has assumed, as a ‘cultural city’ and based on the ‘Barcelona model’, has not sufficiently attenuated gender inequalities, nor has it, to date, contemplated a sustainable public policy base to transform the cultural situation of inequality. In this sense, the current situation must be urgently transformed into a collective city project that can mitigate, in depth and in a sustainable way, what is currently happening in the field of art and culture. In order to build more democratic societies, we must also guarantee the cultural rights of every group discriminated against or directly separated from cultural fields.

On the one hand, the creation of social, economic, and cultural projects in the city that consider the gender perspective and make evident, for example, the place of women and LGTBI collectives, are a possible way of helping attenuate these inequalities. On the other hand, specifically in the professional field of culture in the city of Barcelona, beyond the few existing studies and little available data, gender inequality is more than present, even in various cultural sectors. This inequality is not only manifested in the ability to access cultural fields, development of artistic professions, recognition of work or career trajectories, or in prize awards, but also in the lower representation of women in decision-making positions compared to men (Villarroya, 2019). For instance, 7 out of 10 management positions in the city’s large cultural facilities are held by men.

Likewise, the recognition of projects considered as good practices in the field of gender and culture in Barcelona makes it possible to continue delving into transversal policies and lines of action in search of the consolidation of models oriented towards equality in the city. From this point of view, the territory (and its citizens) is constituted as a space of individual creation and as the place in which it is possible to develop initiatives aimed at preventing and raising awareness of sexism and gender violence. In the same way, our analysis of good practices has highlighted how gender, as a social construct, must necessarily be articulated alongside other dimensions (such as ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, functional diversity, or social class)

that enable the recognition of feminist cultural experiences in the city. Although intersectionality is present in several of the experiences analysed, which are still active projects, the transformations achieved in the city have still been moderate.

By way of conclusion, we would like to point out the need to work on gender discrimination from different spaces (cultural activity programming, use and appropriation of spaces, communication, and resources, etc.) and spheres (public, private, and third sector) with the aim of providing a diverse cultural offering. Only in this way will it also be possible to consolidate a more just and egalitarian cultural ecosystem in the city.

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