Roots, mobilities and collective action during the pandemic and the post-pandemic: the right to the territory

Margarita Barañano Cid[a], Cristina López Villanueva[b] and José Ariza de la Cruz[a]

Analysing the cities of Madrid, Barcelona, São Paulo, Mexico City and Buenos Aires, the aim of this article is to identify the impact of the pandemic on patterns of rootedness and residential mobility and the importance of collective action, community initiatives and mutual aid. The article proposes the convenience of making visible the social relevance of rootedness in local spaces and relative proximity as central socio-existential supports in the case of the most vulnerable neighbourhoods and social groups. The weakening of these roots during the pandemic seems to respond more to the reactivation of the processes of expulsion, gentrification and financiarization of cities than to the residential mobility resulting from the desire to move away from the densest urban areas. This work finally raises the need to consider the right to territory as part of the right to the city.

1. Thesis and proposals

Since the onset of the pandemic, the exceptional circumstances triggered by the crisis and, subsequently, the post-pandemic situation, has been accompanied by multiple forecasts about the social change it may lead to, including but not limited to the way in which territory is occupied and life in big cities. In particular in 2020, a number of these diagnoses depicted a significant shift resulting from the abandonment of large cities, considered hotspots for the spread of the virus, towards smaller hubs, where maintaining social distancing was easier. This decentralisation hypothesis was accompanied by others, in relation to the reduction of demand in urban centres or changes of preference as regards the location and type of dwelling, to the benefit of less populated, more dispersed options.

It was also suggested that there would be a drastic reduction in touristification and gentrification or, in general, the expulsion of local people due to urban processes like those mentioned, which had been intense in the years leading up to the pandemic, in particular in the central city areas. Likewise, there was often talk of the transformation that would be seen in the demand for provisions and services in relation to housing, as well as for adjacent spaces. Priority would now be given to larger-sized properties; the ability to perform paid work from home; the existence or proximity to outdoor spaces or green areas; or the availability of natural lighting and ventilation. Some descriptions celebrated these transformations, seen as unavoidable, while others were accompanied by a more sceptical tone or fear in relation to the uncertainty posed by a future that was difficult to predict (López-Villanueva, 2021).

In the meantime, other analyses focussed on different aspects, such as the impact of inequality and spacial segregation in the spread of the coronavirus (Franco, 2020), as had been the case historically with other pandemics (Barañano and Ariza, 2021). Or they emphasised the importance of collective action and community organisations, with different levels of

institutionalisation deployed at a local level, like neighbourhoods, analysing their contribution in the context of the first two years of the new decade.

Following this initial period but straddling the successive waves of the pandemic that continue to plague society and the post-pandemic phase that has already started, a number of these initial predictions seem to have lost force. In particular, those predicting a turning point in the relocation of a large part of the urban population as a result of their abandoning major hubs (González Leonardo *et al.*, 2022a; 2022b). The scaling back of such predictions has largely gone hand in hand with the discovery that remote work, although now more extensive and coinciding with the repopulation of rural areas, has not been accompanied by a radical overhaul in the organisation of work that some authors predicted. Furthermore, the confirmation of its unequal distribution between different income sectors and areas of the city has placed a question mark over this theory (Barañano y Ariza, 2021), as it is much less the case in working-class neighbourhoods. These are home to manual workers whose access to such work is significantly more limited. Other trends, such as those in relation to the social and spacial inequality of the impact of the pandemic (Franco, 2020), or the centrality of collective action in overcoming its consequences, are currently being studied with a view to understanding their complexity.

This article focuses on two aspects that, in our opinion, have been overlooked. Firstly, the importance of roots in the context of the pandemic and the post-pandemic period, in terms of the manifestation of a broadly territorialised social life that is ever present in the cities of southern Europe and, more generally, across Ibero-America. Secondly, the association of this life "anchored", much more extensively than has been recognised, in the predominance of collective or community practices or initiatives at a local level. This was probably twice as important in the context of the pandemic as, generally speaking, it happens in crisis situations (Bosi and Zamponi, 2019). The recent crisis generated by the impact of the coronavirus was also probably accompanied by a notable intensification in the mixing of these activities with those performed using digital means, leading to the reconfiguration, rather than elimination, in many cases, of proximity spaces and their social relevance.

The thesis proposed in relation to this rootedness, which includes both long periods of being enclosed in the home and short-distance trips to nearby locations, is that it not only represents a characteristic feature of many urban conglomerates in southern Europe and the Ibero-American world (Palomares-Linares, Duque and Susino, 2019; Barañano and Santiago, 2021; Barañano *et al.*, 2021; Domínguez, Leal and Barañano, 2021), but also that, in some aspects, it has been enhanced by the impact of the pandemic and the post-pandemic period. This has occurred, for example, with the unfolding of life in the neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the empirical evidence available seems to suggest that the main threat to these powerful roots in local spaces with a long history continues to come, mainly, from the processes that see locals forced out of cities (Sassen, 2013) rather than the pandemic. Some of these, such as gentrification or the monetisation of property, which intensified during the financial crisis that was unleashed during the first decade of the new millennium, seem to have reawakened in this post-pandemic period.

Secondly, thanks to research performed or under way, it has been possible to confirm that some of the formal and informal social initiatives, rolled out at a local level and geared towards promoting mutual support networks, emerged or were strengthened in the context of the pandemic. It is true that, at the same time, situations of isolation or difficulty in maintaining social contact have been noted, something that has even affected the mental health of different age groups. In short, this is a very complex aspect that continues to be plagued by ambivalence and paradoxes and, therefore, there is no one way of interpreting the situation given the variety of different circumstances. However, that does not mean that the emergence of collective or community initiatives aimed at providing support or redefining social links between households or in nearby spaces, including their digital versions, should be downplayed (López Villanueva, Crespi, Barañano, Domínguez, 2021). Similarly, it should be noted that these practices and

initiatives are not rolled out in isolation, nor are they separate compartments, rather, they form part of a mesh of vital and socio-existential supports (Castel, 2010; Castel y Haroche, 2001; Barañano, 2021; Barañano and Santiago, 2021; Barañano *et. al*, 2021; Santiago, ed., 2021), that together make up an essential part of public provisions and, on a less extensive basis, commodified provisions.

Furthermore, although the aim here is to focus on their local dimension, processes managed in other spacial spheres play a decisive role in their make-up, in particular those at a regional or national/State level, as well as those at a transnational or global level. Thus, public mediation at the regional, local or State level, rather than being on the margins of the practices rolled out at a local level, play a very important role in their facilitation or continuity. In the same vein, it is worth bearing in mind just how quickly the pandemic spread globally as well as the measures adopted to overcome it. The "top-down" intervention of transnational European institutions, driving a wide range of actions to that end, like those developed "bottom-up" by a series of transnational agents and groups (migrants, NGOs, etc.) that develop their way of life and actions in specific local spaces, are other examples of the multiscale dimension of these processes. Clearly, rather than collective local actions, we should be talking about collective initiatives or "glocal" or multiscale communities, although, as reiterated, what interests us in this work is how their multiscale configuration combines with the roots in specific urban territories.

The article concludes by outlining certain considerations about the sociopolitical considerations of processes drawn in the direction of what could be referred to as the right to territory, understood as a relevant part of the right to the city, in particular in contexts like those studied, that is, vulnerable urban spaces in Ibero-American cities. The proposed use of this notion is supported precisely by the importance in these environments of the two aspects previously studied, namely, social life in the context of roots and proximity spaces on the one hand, and the local nature of a notable part of mutual support networks on the other. Both social processes can be understood as forming part of what social movement scholars have dubbed as a characteristic feature of "bottom-up" social everyday mobilisation in southern Europe, in other words, the importance of this "direct collective action" in the "resistance" to the crises experienced in these contexts (Bosi and Zamponi, 2019). We would add here the local dimension and its link with remaining in the territory. For some time now, importance has been placed on local spaces and areas in the configuration of identities of resistance to the space of hegemonic flows (Castells, 1997). This gives rise to the hypothesis, to be considered in other works, regarding the double negative impact of forced expulsions (Abaunza, 2019; Sassen, 2013) in these environments.

This article is supported by two research works: GENREDAB, launched in 2019 and completed in December 2021, focussing on a comparative international analysis of the cities of Madrid, Barcelona, São Paulo, Mexico City and Buenos Aires, and COMURES, begun in 2020 and due to end in April 2023. The context of the pandemic and the post-pandemic period, although not decisively included in either of them, had a significant impact on both and redirected both their objectives and the design of the research itself. The following is inspired by a number of the findings of these works, especially in the case of Barcelona, and is illustrated with evidence taken from them.

2. Roots, mobilities and retreating to the neighbourhoods during the pandemic and the post-pandemic period

An initial estimate of the pandemic's impact on major cities focussed on their abandonment by a growing sector of the population in favour of smaller population hubs. It was assumed then that the health crisis would see the process of deconcentration, dispersed urbanisation and repopulation of rural areas step up another gear, given the increased danger of living in major urban hubs. In some cases, this situation was considered short-term. In others, it was presented as a point of no return in the deurbanisation process, combined with the strengthening of the repopulation of abandoned areas, outside even the major metropolitan regions. The switch to

the digitalisation of life and work seen during the peak of the lockdown period fed this drastic change in the urbanisation model.

Two years later, there has been no sudden shift as a result of the pandemic, as had been predicted, although there has been a slight increase in relocation to other towns across Catalonia.

A total of 45,339 people left Barcelona during 2020 (1,866 more than in 2019), resulting in a negative balance of 19,536 individuals, according to the Residential Variation Statistics (EVR initials in Catalan). Emigration figures and the migratory balance with the rest of Catalonia in 2020 failed to surpass the average seen in the pre-Covid period (which saw significant suburbanising activity). The migratory balance in 2020 can be traced to a significant decrease in arrivals and a progressive increase in the departures first registered in 2017 (Table 1).

Table 1. Average annual internal migrations from Barcelona to the rest of Catalonia, 2008-2014, 2015-2019 and 2020

	Arrivals	Departures	Balance
2000-2007	24,987	47,381	-22,394
2008-2014	35,096	40,806	-5,710
2015-2019	29,890	38,842	-8,952
2020	25,803	45,339	-19,536

Source: IDESCAT based on residential variation statistics. IDESCAT based on data from the National Statistics Institute (INE).

In 2020, small towns took on a new appeal (Graph 1). The, the destination of 21.93% of people emigrating from Barcelona to other locations in Catalonia were to towns with a population of less than 10,000 inhabitants. The appeal of rural areas should be subject to analysis in the coming years to assess whether this is circumstantial or represents a change in trend. As indicated by certain works (Bayona-i-Carrasco, 2022; González Leonardo *et al.*, 2022a), patterns suggest that individuals have relocated to second residences.

Graph 1. Distribution of the target destination by size of the town chosen by internal emigrants relocating from Barcelona to elsewhere in Catalonia. 2015-2019 and 2020
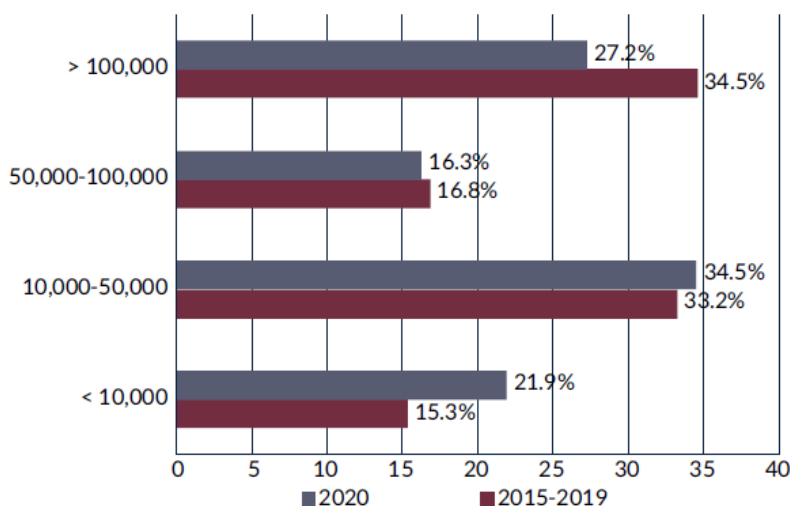
Source: Author's compilation based on residential variation statistics. National Institute of Statistics (INE).

News articles published in the press in relation to this phenomenon have also turned in the same direction. During the initial months of the pandemic, reference was often made to a decrease in demand for property in major cities, though this topic subsequently received less

attention. Now, references often point in the opposite direction, that there has been an increase in demand and that prices have increased once again, in some cases, close to pre-pandemic levels[1] (Table 2).

Table 2. Property purchases registered and price €/m2 constructed. Barcelona 2015-2019, 2020, 2021

	Purchases				Price €/m2		
	Total	New free property	New protected property	Used property	Total	New property	Used property
2015-2019	**13,874**	1,082	62	12,730	**3,615**	4,045	3,564
2020	**9,861**	857	21	8,983	**4,170**	4,953	4,067
2021	**13,803**	1,261	58	12,484	**4,120**	4,369	4,084

Source: Association of Land and Mercantile Registrars of Spain Department of Statistics and Data Dissemination. Barcelona City Council.

The abandonment of major cities can be traced, in part, to the availability of housing and its price. There is a relationship between the location of new properties and territorial patterns of inter-municipal migration, which in the Barcelona metropolitan region are focussed on satellite towns[2], county capitals and coastal areas (Ruiz, Marco y Velasco, 2022).

Although the socio-economic conditions of the population residing within the first crown of metropolitan Barcelona (in relation to the city centre) is unequal, this situation can be traced in greater part to the social make-up in terms of class in both territories rather than the suburbanisation of poverty (Porcel, Navarro-Varas, Antón y Cruz, 2018). However, the dynamics of the property market, which are highly commercialised and strained on account of competition between demand for housing for residential use and as an investment, lead to a significant increase in prices that has widened the gap between Barcelona and its metropolitan region. After the shutdown triggered by the pandemic, processes such as touristification have returned to pre-Covid levels.

A second important aspect that contradicts the anticipated departure from major cities in the post-pandemic period in relation to daily mobility is the trajectory of mobility in this context. We have already seen that social life in neighbourhoods has retreated in the case of Madrid (Barañano and Ariza, 2021).

The data for Barcelona seems to suggest the same. Although in the latter the percentage of people leaving their neighbourhood on a daily basis recovered slightly once lockdown ended, the figures remain well below those recorded in 2019, as reflected in Graph 2. In other words, following the pandemic, the number of people who remain in their neighbourhood has increased considerably.

This demonstrates the strength with which social life has retreated to spaces of relative proximity in major cities like Madrid or Barcelona, which, in our opinion, represents a significant feature of the spacial system (McDowell, 2000) prevailing in them.

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1. Consult, inter alia: https://www.europapress.es/economia/noticia-demanda-vivienda-vuelve-centrarse-ciudades-pisoscom-20220210105204.html.
2. In total, Barcelona is regarded as having 12 satellite towns. They are: El Prat de Llobregat, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Cornellà de Llobregat, Sant Joan Despí, Esplugues de Llobregat, Sant Just Desvern, Sant Feliu de Llobregat, Santa Coloma de Gramenet, Badalona, Sant Adrià del Besòs, Tiana and Montgat.

Graph 2. Evolution in the percentage number of people who leave their neighbourhood on a daily basis. Barcelona, 2019-2021
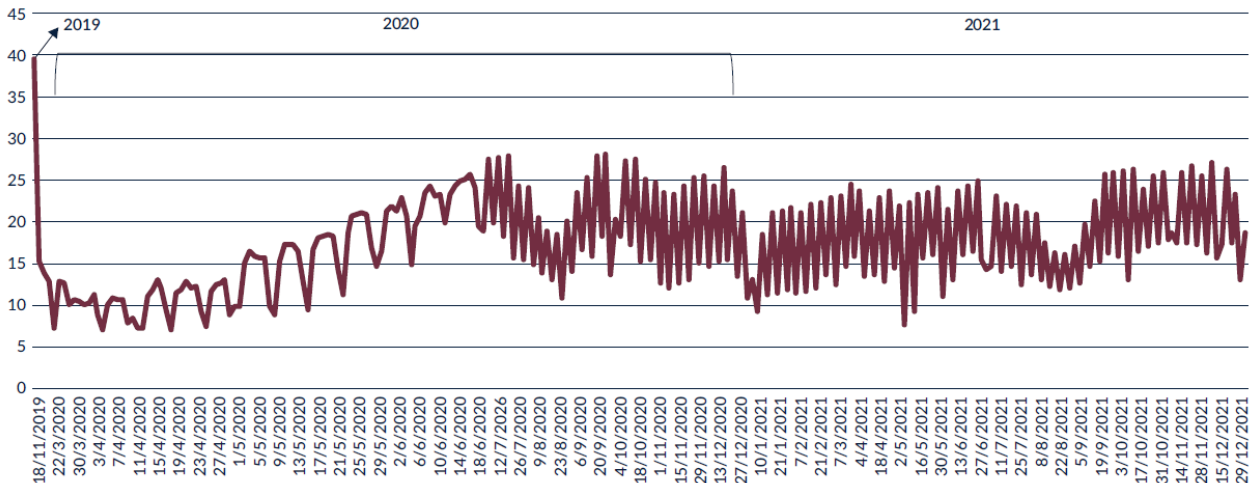
Source: Population mobility studies based on mobile phone, 2020-2021 National Institute of Statistics (INE).

3. Collective action, community initiatives, local wellbeing and cares during the pandemic and the post-pandemic period

From the outset of the pandemic, many predictions were also made about its impact on the shift in social links in multiple directions. Some, more dystopian, showed concern for their inevitable erosion. Others were more interested in anticipating the new types of links that would appear, in particular with regard to the hybridisation of face-to-face and remote formats. Almost all were concerned about the situation of single-person households, in particular those made up of the elderly. And many of these forecasts likewise alluded to the depth of the change and how there was no way back.

In light of the time that has elapsed, and also the contributions made by research on this topic (including COMURES and GENREDAB), we need to stress another aspect that, in our opinion, is of great importance when it comes to analysing the pandemic's impact on the future of major Ibero-American cities. This is the major role of social links between cohabitees and between households linked by relationships of mutual exchange and support. The same goes for the role of collective and community practices at a local level in overcoming the consequences of the pandemic and, currently, the post-pandemic period. Have these links and practices been weakened? Should it be argued that, on they contrary, the impact of the situations we have experienced has been complex, including both the rethinking of their modalities and the configuration of new initiatives?

A definitive response to this question would surely require further applied research on the matter, which is necessary in order to understand the full complexity of the processes underway and to distinguish between the different impacts depending on the different social and urban contexts. Now, however, we need to illustrate the theses outlined by drawing on some of the conclusions reached. More specifically, the following is based on the analysis of the situation in two Barcelona neighbourhoods: Sant Antoni (district II), located in the centre, and Montbau (district VII) on the outskirts, both considered in the GENREDAB[3] research (López Villanueva and Crespi, 2021; López Villanueva, Crespi, Barañano and Domínguez 2021).

The analysis of the discourses of those interviewed in the neighbourhoods highlights, first and foremost, the extensive impact of the pandemic on the population. This may have combined

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3. This research sought to take a closer look at the issues raised, amongst other aspects, based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis. This included conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews in neighbourhoods in Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Madrid, Mexico City and São Paulo. In the case of Barcelona, interviews were conducted with elderly and middle-aged people of different genders, with and without family duties, as well as individuals born abroad, based on the characteristics of the neighbourhood's population.

with different impacts on different age groups, genders, types of household and family duties, in addition to other factors. Concern was central to many descriptions of the situation, in addition to fear as regards the uncertainty created. On the other hand, however, a number of interviewees downplayed the negative impacts, with some even mentioning unexpected positive impacts. This is the case, for example, of the perceived isolation of the elderly, with negative connotations often expressed more regularly amongst third parties than members of the collective itself, at least amongst those who continue to live at home. Some of the elderly population declared that they were used to the situation and the difficulty it represents, without there having been any major change. Obviously, this does not lessen its importance in terms of addressing its causal relationship with the Covid-19 crisis. This is also partly the case when looking at remote work or remote educational activities. Often, exposure to the negative consequences of the crisis, for example, in relation to an increase in social inequality, is accompanied by acknowledgement of the need for and usefulness of such measures in such exceptional circumstances.

One very interesting finding, in all cases, is the repeated reference, first, to how closer social links (family, neighbours and communities) are perceived as essential in overcoming the lockdown and post-pandemic crisis. This goes for both relationships within households and those between different households and at a community level. In terms of the former, mention is made, for example, of the extra help offered to young people to continue with their education from home. Not far behind is the fact that this represents an additional burden. Given the significance of this factor, it was assumed by families who, given their education or availability, were able to offer this support:

> Obviously, those who had... who are structured families with a medium level, right? They will have continued because their parents will have been on top of them and they will have had the resources. The problem is when it comes to single-parent families. It depends on who. And with economic problems that mean they don't have access to tablets, nor mobile phones or systems and their parents don't know about some things either. The pandemic affects work however it affects it, as it affects the different social layers, [but] in this case it is much more serious, and what could happen is that the children, who are not to blame for the parents they have, depending on where they were born, it could have created for them... I think that has an impact on them! (SA004)

The importance of the household during the pandemic is also reflected in the activation of family regrouping processes, by no means exempt from conflict, that seek to reduce the impact of isolation:

> My daughter would come to see me, we'd go to the square together. But when I saw that at home I couldn't... she would bring me lunch and dinner prepared, she made it for me. [...]. One day, I had a little of that thing that twists your mouth a bit, what's it called? [...] then all the medication and things they put me on [...] and they brought me here. I'm fine here, well taken care of. (SA009)
> So it's been hard... it's been hard for her too, she works from home... we've been forced into living with one another... There have been hard times? More because of having to adapt to one another again... but given the circumstances it was unavoidable [...]. (M003)

In other cases, it shows how relationships between people from different households might have been maintained by recreating them at a distance, especially by telephone or digital means, and accompanying them, as far as possible, with physical exchanges in close proximity. This ranges from phone calls and daily or weekly catch-ups to doing shopping for a relative or acquaintance. All these examples are a testament to the importance placed on this constant supervision or guidance, especially in relation to those regarded as being most in need:

I have especially helped out a sister of mine who has been single for the past 24 years. I keep an eye on her to see if she is eating or not... Because she lives with you? Yes. (M004)

Beyond helping out in the home, or between homes, mention has often been made of the important role played by community networks developed in the neighbourhoods or local spaces. Including both formal and informal relationships, in the form of different types of associations or initiatives or those lacking such organisation:

[...] but here, both the association and neighbours, everybody offered to help, but I didn't need it... they gave people living by themselves free food, but I thought I could cook for myself and buy my groceries. I didn't do it because I was OK. Then a neighbour who lives opposite called [Júlia] would say "I've made vegetable paella" and give me a plate full now and again. (M010)

In any event, in the two Barcelona neighbourhoods included in the study, there were reports of an increase in neighbour support catalysed by different formal community networks.

It's true that there was a group of young people who got together and offered a phone to people who needed one. That was great, as then they would ring up and I'd say "I need this". So they would bring you what you needed, put it in the lift downstairs or come upstairs and put it by the door and leave. What I mean to say is that, yes, people have been able to help, they have done, over the phone too. Through a programme set up by Barcelona City Council called Radar. (M009)

The role assigned to these aid networks is reflects how highly the existing network of residents' associations are appreciated in these neighbourhoods, due to their strong involvement in sustaining the well-being of local residents, whether through solidarity or neighbourhood struggles over many years.

In that sense, having roots and living in the neighbourhood are other aspects viewed very positively, as they often helped to maintain these networks mutual support and welfare networks. We also believe it is significant, when addressing the threats facing these local roots and networks of relationships and help, that people did not cite the pandemic as the main cause but rather the possibility of locals being driven out of neighbourhoods due to the rise in property prices which, by the way, was a particular concern in Sant Antoni, where gentrification has had a bigger impact:

If people live here it's because we live well and we own our flat. If we didn't own them, we'd... Well, not everybody, obviously, but we'd be worried because, look, I've got friends who were paying 600 euros a month and now their rent has been put up to 1,200. And that was that, they've gone. [...]. Young people and the elderly now, poor things. I can't bear thinking about it. (SA006)

4. Some final considerations: the importance of roots and formal and informal "arrangements" in the context of the pandemic and post-pandemic period. Foundation of a right to the territory?

The pandemic that we have survived and the current post-pandemic period have not only placed a question mark over future changes but also fuelled the fear and uncertainty about the end of the world as we have known it until now (Wallerstein, 2002). Needless to say, the recent outbreak of war, involving a nuclear power on this occasion, has reinforced both issues. All this plus other worrying news items regarding the impact on supply chains or shortages of products and basic energy supplies, or in relation to more long-term problems, such as those related to climate change.

Concern about serious macrostructural problems has, since the pandemic, been compounded with concern about worsening living conditions in the context of Covid-19, in particular when it comes to the most vulnerable persons and groups. Factors such as the "epidemic of loneliness" (Ilouz, 2019) and its impact on mental health have been subject to special consideration. Likewise, there have been many disparate assessments about the growth in digitalisation, not only in the workplace, but in life in general, including the realm of social relationships, with even the closest relationships not exempt from this phenomenon.

Life in cities, as well as the urbanisation model and the relationship with the territory or home, are topics that have found themselves in the spotlight of debates on changes underway. Predictions have abounded in this field that have insisted on profound changes in housing preferences, ways of occupying the territory or staying in the same home, in contrast to what had prevailed previously. It has also been common for this major transformation to be interpreted in terms of an unstoppable exodus from major cities to smaller hubs, even rural areas, to achieve a healthier lifestyle closer to nature.

Without denying these shifts, in this article we have chosen to place the emphasis on other aspects of the complex processes under way which, by contrast, allow us, firstly, to highlight the maintenance of roots in households and nearby spaces. Secondly, something similar can be said of the important role played by social links both within households and networks that link households and other local neighbourhood spaces together (Blokland, 2018; 2017; 2003; Blokland and Savage, eds., 2008; Gastrignanò and Manella, 2011).

In relation to the former, it should be noted that now that more than two years have gone by since the lockdown measures were adopted, the data seems to confirm an exodus from major cities, although to a much lesser extent than hypothesised and forecast. Furthermore, everyday mobility data in Barcelona also shows that there has been a retreat to the neighbourhoods, as had previously been seen in Madrid (Barañano and Ariza, 2021).

The accumulated qualitative evidence has demonstrated that although there have been emergencies associated with isolation and loneliness, countless references have been made to the support offered or received in the three areas in question. This has happened by resorting, when necessary, to the hybridisation of relationships vis a vis other remote connection, including within the home. In other cases, support from relatives or acquaintances has been combined with support from other external networks or organisations, or formal and informal help, both from public authorities and community initiatives. The repeated allusion to the local nature of these networks is interesting, in particular in the case of vulnerable neighbourhoods and the importance of proximity spaces in the request for or provision of help.

Beyond the circumstantial dimension of these analyses, linked to a pandemic that has disrupted most forms of social life, in this article, we have sought to demonstrate the need to take the general context into consideration, in other words, the prevailing spacial system, to properly understand the processes to be studied. As we have pointed out in regard to other works (Barañano, 2021; Barañano and Ariza, 2021; Barañano et al., 2021; Domínguez, Leal and Barañano, 2021), we believe that relative permanence, both in specific locations and in homes, combined with residential mobility in which short distances or daily journeys above all in nearby spaces such as neighbourhoods prevail (Bericat, 1994), represent one of the main features of this spacial system, at least in terms of the vulnerable areas of major cities. Without doubt, the predominance of property ownership, despite the recent increase in rentals, enhances this phenomenon, as is also the case with the welfare or care system (Allen et al., 2004; Arbaci, 2019; Domínguez, Leal and Barañano, 2021). In this case, worth particular mention is the significant role played by family and social relationships, the limited intervention of public authorities, although this has increased in recent decades, and the notably selective nature of access to the market (Vega, Martínez Buján and Paredes, eds., 2018; Martínez Buján, 2014).

In all likelihood, various other economic, political, cultural, social and even emotional considerations should be added to these aspects, which go beyond the remit of this article. In any event, all this suggests that consideration should be given to the existence of what we have dubbed a spacial system, following the proposal of certain authors (McDowell, 2000), and in line with the predominant nature of these trends, at least at present.

With a view to posing a question to guide our research in the near future, rather than providing a response here, we cannot help but allude to the idea that we have summarised as the notion of the "right to space" (Mela, Belloni and Davico, 2006: 170) or the territory as part of the right to the city. On a positive note, in doing so, we allude to the relevance of territorial affiliation in the spacial system and the prevailing way of life in cities like Madrid or Barcelona and, in a wider context, those in southern Europe and Ibero-America, in particular in areas considered vulnerable, as we have studied in the cited research. We believe that this feature does not tend to be taken into consideration enough. Hence our intention has been to has been to enhance its visibility and analyse it through our research. Secondly, we believe that this feature should be taken into consideration in relation to the processes of expelling people from cities. These may be leading not only to a deepening of spatial segregation or inequality in cities, but also to an erosion of many of the networks of relationships, support and exchange. This might be the case of some of the community organisations most frequently mentioned by residents interviewed who tend not to venture beyond relatively nearby areas. Their very configuration and maintenance seem to benefit, to a certain extent, from this relative proximity to homes, between homes and local spaces.

Social reproduction and care, which are critical elements of social life (Barañano, 2016), could be affected by processes such as gentrification or touristification or other expulsion processes with a similar effect (Luke and Kaika, 2019; Katz, 2001), at least while public cover in these areas is unable to take the necessary step forwards, in particular as regards care and access to housing. Furthermore, all of this is undoubtedly linked to an important gender perspective, as hindering the tasks in this field is tantamount to hampering the lives of many women who continue to assume the burden of these tasks (Martínez Buján, 2014; Vega, Martínez Buján and Paredes, eds., 2018). And, finally, there is an important sociocultural aspect, given that to a large extent, the roots and many of these relationship networks not only help to overcome social emergencies, but also represent important socio existential supports (Barañano and Santiago, 2021; Santiago, ed., 2021; Revilla *et al.*, 2018; Serrano *et al.*, 2019).

Finally, it is hardly necessary to highlight the important political dimension of the processes in question, such as the very notion of the right to the territory or a life with roots and a sense of belonging, in particular, with regard to forced expulsions, a dimension also supported by recognising that local and bottom-up "direct social action" (Bosi and Zamponi, 2019) constitutes a fundamental form of social mobility in major cities like Madrid and Barcelona or other Ibero-American cities. In these cities, resistance to the successive waves of the crisis has been fed specifically by this complex mesh of formal and informal initiatives and organisations at different institutional levels that have been deployed both in homes and beyond in collaboration with other external interventions, in particular, public interventions, and in spaces of relative proximity.

All this seems to have resulted in the desire to protect this right to the territory in the orientation of public policies with a view to facilitating, when desired, residential and territorial permanence in spaces that are sufficiently close enough to those in which support or exchange networks are maintained with a view to ensuring the facilitation of well-being and care and minimising the capacity to face day-to-day social emergencies.

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