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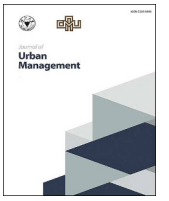

Research Article

Atmospheric urban symphonies: Collaborative video to explore and generate affective spaces in marginalized young communities

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ABSTRACT

Young people, despite their active role in urban life, have historically been excluded from urban planning processes. Integrating their everyday experiences into these processes is essential for imagining and creating more inclusive and just cities. This article introduces the concept of atmospheric urban symphonies as a methodological and epistemological framework for analyzing how collaborative video creation can evoke and transform the everyday urban experiences of young people in marginalized neighborhoods. Drawing on the concepts of affective atmospheres and Perec's notion of the infraordinary, the research presents two audiovisual projects co-created by public high school students from the Besòs-Maresme neighborhood in Barcelona. Following a collaborative research-creation methodology, the students attuned themselves to the affective, material, and sensory dimensions of their urban environment, filming, editing, and producing videos that move beyond documentation to actively shape their relationship with the city. The results highlight the transformative role of video as both a creative and critical tool, revealing how the creation of atmospheric symphonies can foster a sense of agency and belonging among participants vis-à-vis their neighborhood. The findings demonstrate the potential of art-based research as a non-representational and participatory methodology for producing situated, affective, and multisensory narratives that reconfigure how marginalized communities inhabit and generate knowledge about their urban spaces. Building on this, we argue that atmospheric urban symphonies can serve as a valuable tool for incorporating young people's voices into urban planning.

1. Introduction

Building inclusive cities that address the diversity of their inhabitants is impossible without recognizing and giving voice to a wide range of groups. In this article, we focus on young people, whose voices, experiences, and needs have often been excluded from urban planning processes despite the active role they play in city life (Deitz et al., 2018; Horton, 2006; O'Sullivan et al., 2020). The challenge is, therefore, twofold: "recognizing young people's agency while adopting participatory methods that resonate with their everyday practices, including the use of digital media" (Gutiérrez-Ujaque et al., 2025, p. 2). Only an approach grounded in methods and tools that connect with young people's daily practices can help us envision urban policies (Wang et al., 2024) that acknowledge their unique ways of experiencing and transforming urban space. Thus, we consider collective video creation, a tool familiar to young people and commonly used in their everyday lives, an effective means of amplifying their voices and legitimizing their experiences and knowledge

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in the city, placing them on equal footing with the adult-centric consensus that typically governs urban planning. We understand that a methodology such as the one presented here can serve as a complementary tool for urban planning, as it takes into account young people's urban experiences and their decision-making regarding the use of public space.

Over the past few decades, the use of visual research methods has grown in the social sciences, urbanism, the humanities, and geography. These methods have evolved from treating images as purely illustrative to considering them as research data (Banks, 2001; Rose, 2014b). Collaborative audiovisual projects have opened new possibilities for engaging marginalized communities in content creation, offering a platform to express their experiences and perspectives on the places they inhabit (White, 2003; Lunch & Lunch, 2006; Yang, 2016; Mirizio, 2017; Balaguer & Alberich-Pascual, 2023). This approach enables active participation in decision-making, while also challenging traditional notions of authorship, as the resulting audiovisual work is a shared product.

Despite the large number of studies that have used video as a research tool in recent years (Bauch, 2010; Garrett, 2011; Lukinbeal & Sommerlad, 2022), its affective and non-representational capacities are still infrequently addressed (Arboleda, 2023; Ernwein, 2022), largely because video has primarily been understood as a tool to document and represent observable reality. Nevertheless, many researchers aligned with what are known as non-representational theories began long ago to explore the potential of video to evoke the sensory, material, affective, and emotional qualities of places (Latham & McCormack, 2004; Latham & McCormack, 2009; Lorimer, 2010; Vannini, 2015), particularly through the notions of “affect” and “affective atmospheres” (Bates, 2015; Simpson, 2015), which emerge from interactions between bodies—human and non-human—and their surroundings, a space in constant transformation that influences how places are perceived (McCormack, 2008).

This article resonates with this research framework by analyzing two collaborative video projects carried out by secondary school students from the El Besòs i el Maresme neighborhood in Barcelona. This area is identified as one of the most vulnerable urban zones in the city, with pronounced deficits in housing quality, energy efficiency, social cohesion, and functional diversity, which make it a priority target for comprehensive regeneration under Barcelona's urban renewal strategy (Instituto Nacional de Urbanismo, 2020). The projects presented in our study, developed in collaboration with the neighborhood's school philosophy teacher and an independent audiovisual communication company, demonstrate how videos can act as active agents in the production of meaning around the urban environment. Beyond being merely creative products, the videos produced by the students generate new forms of interaction with the places they inhabit, allowing meanings and sensations to emerge that go beyond the documentation of their everyday experiences.

The main objective of this article is to examine how video creation can foster a sense of agency and belonging among young people regarding their urban environment, enabling them to develop a deeper and more reflective understanding of the spaces they inhabit. Through the practice of video, the students document their daily lives and participate in a creative process that helps them reconfigure their relationship with the neighborhood. At the same time, this act of collective creation can be seen as an empowering tool for young people in marginalized communities and also offers valuable insights for urban planning. To this end, we propose the notion of *atmospheric symphony*, which, as we shall see, draws on the filmic tradition of the urban symphonies of the first third of the 20th century. This analytical framework is put to the test through Georges Perec's (1973) notion of the *infraordinary* and through the concept of *affective atmospheres* taken from non-representational theory.

This work seeks to contribute to the growing literature on research methods based on artistic creation, exploring ways to move beyond methods focused solely on written text and offering new approaches to understanding everyday urban interactions in marginalized neighborhoods. In this sense, we argue that the notion of *atmospheric symphonies* helps to shift the use of video in social research from serving merely as a representational tool to functioning as an active means of exploring, feeling, and transforming urban spaces.

2. Theoretical frameworks

This research is framed within several theoretical frameworks related to different dimensions of urban life and audiovisual representation. These include the concept of *urban symphonies*, which sought to evoke the experience of the city; Georges Perec's notion of the *infraordinary*, focused on the seemingly meaningless and repetitive aspects of daily urban life; and the idea of *affective atmospheres* drawn from non-representational theory, which helps us understand the co-creation and experience of urban spaces in sensory, affective, material, and emotional ways.

2.1. On urban symphonies

Urban symphonies were a film genre that emerged in the 1920s, closely linked to aesthetic movements such as constructivism and surrealism. Two well-known examples among the small number of titles that define this genre are *A Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) by Dziga Vertov and *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927) by Walter Ruttmann. These documentaries portrayed the daily lives of the inhabitants of modern metropolises, often encompassing a single day in cities such as Berlin, Paris, or Moscow. Both directors also pioneered the practice of taking the camera out of the studio and into the streets, situating their films in the spaces and environments of the modern industrial and cosmopolitan city (Shapins, 2011). A more recent example is the documentary *Helsinki, Ikuisesti (Helsinki, Forever)* (2008) by Peter von Bagh, an essay on the city and Finnish culture more broadly. This urban symphony portrays Helsinki's history and ghosts, as well as filmmaker Chris Marker's personal connection to the city.

Scholarship on these productions, drawing on authors such as Simmel and Benjamin, often focuses on recurring themes: the urban experience of early 20th-century inhabitants, the figure of the distant and detached urban observer akin to Baudelaire's *flâneur*, and the fragmentary nature of modern metropolitan life (Schwartz, 2016, p. 1). According to Schwartz (2016), this experience has frequently been examined through the Benjaminian dichotomy between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, in which *Erlebnis* (or lived experience) refers to

the quantitative, repetitive, and fragmented aspects of life associated with machines and modernity. Conversely, *Erfahrung* (the experience) denotes something qualitative, spiritual, and artistic, endowed with a more integrated meaning (Lima & Magalhães, 2010).

In the past few years, research on urban symphonies has adopted new perspectives. These works have been interpreted, for instance, as enabling audiences to form a political community through an exercise of "sounding together" (*syn-phonia*) (Schwartz, 2016). They have also been shown to challenge the standardization of modern time by proposing an affective and embodied cinematic temporality (Levin, 2018). In this regard, the emergence of new media, particularly the internet, mobile devices, and wireless technologies, has transformed the lived experience of the city into an "active read/write database" (Shapins, 2011), allowing such symphonies to be produced in almost real time and to be democratized among a broader range of creators, including ordinary citizens. From a different angle, we draw on Robbins' (2017) argument that these films were intended to raise social awareness through their poetic, aesthetic, and social engagement with the everyday and the ordinary. Together, these qualities generated a vision of social order that revealed the magic embedded in urban daily life. While this idea leads us back to the Benjaminian dichotomy between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, this framework proves insufficient as the sole explanation of urban experience in the 21st century. For this reason, we turn to additional theoretical approaches to move beyond its limitations.

2.2. On the infraordinary

A useful notion for overcoming the dichotomy between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* is the concept of the *infraordinary*, proposed by the French writer Georges Perec (1973). Perec criticized the tendency of mass media to equate the "significant" with the "abnormal" (Schilling, 2006, p. 58). Accordingly, part of his literary project consisted of recording everyday reality while rejecting the extraordinary or scandalous events that typically capture the media's attention. Aware of this, Perec sought to give value to the banal, the ordinary, and the infraordinary, that is, those aspects of daily life which, because they are repetitive and form part of the backdrop of our everyday routines, tend to go unnoticed but are essential for understanding reality in its entirety. This approach forms part of a post-World War II intellectual tradition that identifies the everyday as a crucial area of study for challenging structures of control and revealing the intolerable in daily life (Lefebvre, 1961; Perec, 1973).

Perec employs a meticulous observation of everyday life as a tool to explore reality without distorting it, seeking to grasp the truth and richness of human existence in its most immediate form (Livesey, 2022, p. 253). In this way, the notion of the infraordinary collapses the dichotomy between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, for in the repetitive and seemingly insignificant aspects of everyday life we find both the most alienating dimensions of existence and the potential for social transformation (Schilling, 2006, p. 39). Such transformation would grant the *citizen-consumer* the agency to become a *citizen-producer* (De Certeau, 1990, pp. 57–63).

An example of the infraordinary in an urban context is the drawing series *Particules urbaines* by the French philosopher Anne Sauvagnargues, who for the past 30 years has been sketching what she calls "urban companions" (RichterBuxtorf, 2016). Her work attends to the ways in which the urban environment is shaped by mobility, energy, and supply networks that often go unappreciated. These industrial structures are arranged according to a rhythmic urban plan and repeat endlessly, describing a kind of alphabet of standardized shapes: the F of streetlamps, the O of car wheels, the H of bridges. Sauvagnargues most often draws these elements while in motion, seeing everything in fragments, facets caught amid the city's chaos, the jumble of the landscape, which she later reassembles like a seismograph (RichterBuxtorf, 2016).

2.3. On affective atmospheres

In the vein of what the notion of the infraordinary pursues, and following Anderson and Ash, we can say that this backdrop of everyday life "is not an inert, natural backdrop but a collectively lived and shaped condition" (Anderson & Ash, 2015, p. 34). This notion is closely related to non-representational theories (Thrift, 2007; Simpson, 2021) and to the concept of affective atmospheres. Affective atmospheres are deeply intertwined with our emotional, affective, material, and sensory experiences of the places in which we live. They envelop spaces with nuances that establish a distinctive tone, affecting those present within them (Anderson, 2009; Bille et al., 2015). These atmospheres "are not simply properties of the physical space but emerge in the interactions between bodies, objects, and environments" (McCormack, 2008, p. 415).

These interactions reveal the blurred boundary between people and their environment, emphasizing a shared existence in which both influence and affect one another. Atmospheres, which are ephemeral and distributed in nature, create spaces in constant flux, shaped by and shaping both human and non-human entities, without a clear distinction between them.

Furthermore, atmospheres can be deliberately designed through architecture, lighting, and sound, among other techniques. This intentional design can serve various purposes, from the aesthetic to the commercial, subtly influencing mood, behavior, and experience in spaces created to produce specific effects (Bille et al., 2015; Böhme, 2013). Such strategic manipulation of atmospheres demonstrates their power as tools for shaping human interactions in place. Affective interactions within atmospheres do not individualize citizens but generate relationships of irreducible complexity that require constant adjustment to differences in power, history, and lived experience (Leff, 2021). These atmospheres constitute both present and past spaces, making it essential to consider them as decisive cultural parameters when seeking to understand the ongoing renovations occurring in urban contexts and to reshape the residents' experiences embedded within them (Wang et al., 2024).

2.4. On atmospheric urban symphonies

In this context, the notion of *atmospheric urban symphonies* that we propose exceeds the simple representation of urban reality and invites a multisensory, material, affective, and emotional engagement that reinforces the idea of a shared and constantly transforming urban experience. Like Debord's technique of the *dérive* (drifting) (Debord, 1958), the concept of the urban symphony may be enacted by aimlessly and unstructurally experiencing the city, guided not by work or leisure, but by the inherent allure of the surroundings and their psychological, affective, and creative impacts. This notion moves beyond experiencing the city from a distance, instead proposing a vision in which citizens, neighbors, and residents find themselves deeply involved with it. In an experience of reciprocity, atmospheric symphonies become an act of discovery and belonging, encouraging deeper engagement with the community and alternative forms of spatial production, narrative creation, and affective relation.

3. Methods

3.1. Research context

The geography of Besòs-Maresme constitutes a point of connection between Barcelona, the beach, and its neighboring cities (Santa Coloma de Gramenet and Sant Adrià), separated by the Besòs River, the city's quintessential backwater, which flows into the Mediterranean Sea. The neighborhood was developed from the late 1950s on a former rural area adjacent to the city's most important industrial districts, as a housing-estate polygon for the working class. In 2020, the Besòs-Maresme neighborhood was identified by the National Institute of Urbanism's Regeneration Urban Program of Barcelona (*Programa de Regeneració Urbana de Barcelona*, PRU, 2020) as one of the most vulnerable areas in Barcelona, facing acute socio-demographic and economic challenges (Fig. 1). Socially, the area shows significant fragility due to a high rate of evictions, low educational attainment, and minimal civic participation.

In terms of the built environment, Besòs-Maresme suffers from building degradation and insufficient investment in rehabilitation and maintenance (Ibid., 2020, pp. 28-29). Collectively, indicators across five strategic axes—urban quality, resource efficiency, social cohesion, functional diversity, and territorial integration—make Besòs-Maresme a priority area for urban regeneration (Ibid., 2020, pp. 24, 34-35). These pillars structure the analysis and action plan for urban regeneration, and each one includes specific goals and indicators used to diagnose problems and design tailored interventions.

Over the past years, beginning with the mega-event of the *Universal Forum of Cultures* held in 2004, a series of renovations have taken place in the industrial surroundings of the neighborhood. In this ongoing process, former industrial and warehouse areas have been replaced by high-end residential districts, public and recreational spaces, museums, a large urban shopping mall, and luxury hotels. The river has transformed from a rundown, unhealthy, and contaminated site into a large park with cleaner water. At the same time, the land has become an appetizing spot for the construction of massive private housing developments near the seafront.

These transformations have generated increasing urban tensions among speculators, visitors, and residents—35% of whom are non-EU migrants out of a total population of 25,000, according to the latest census provided by the Department of Statistics and Data Dissemination of Barcelona (Departament d'Estadística i Difusió de Dades, 2021, p. 2). These sociopolitical tensions reveal many of the

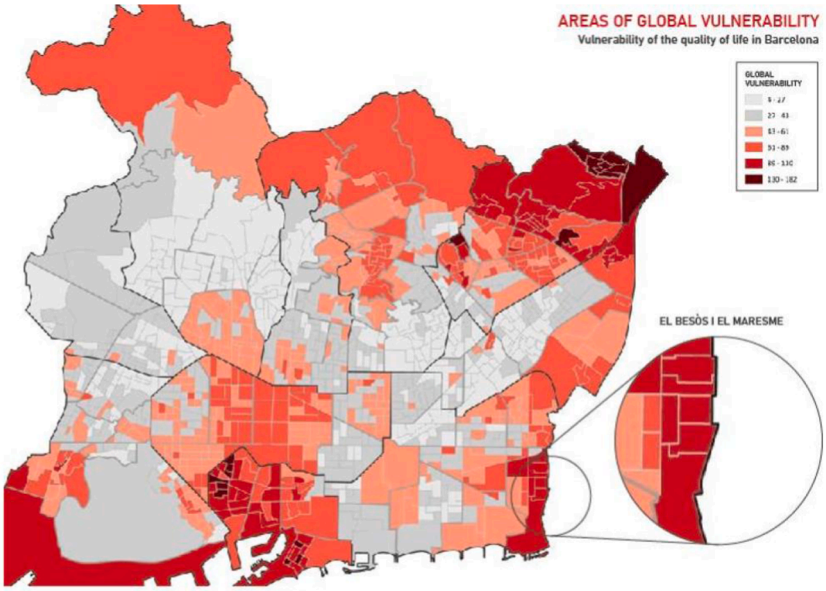

Fig. 1. Global vulnerability map of Barcelona and the Besòs-Maresme axis. Source: Instituto Municipal de Urbanismo, 2020, p. 25. Translated by authors.

weaknesses behind supposed structural achievements while also opening opportunities for radical change. In this context, social and cultural initiatives have continued to emerge in the area, asserting the rights and plural identities of the neighborhood.

3.2. Research design

Following a set of methods that aim at collaboration and co-creation, the project seeks to *symphonize* and make visible the geographic density of Besòs–Maresme, like a metaphorical excavation that foregrounds the different layers of the area. In this context, we began to explore the potential of video creation for producing atmospheric symphonies and for developing participatory artistic practices in the neighborhood. For our research, we aimed to foster among participants four of the 24 objectives of urban regeneration proposed by the National Institute of Urbanism: "10. Foster access to culture; 11. Foster an educated and trained population; 12. Foster the social implication of citizenship; […] 24. Foster residents' sense of belonging to their neighborhood" (Instituto Municipal de Urbanismo, 2020, p. 8). We consider this approach useful for incorporating the everyday experiences of young people into urban planning processes from a situated and affective perspective.

These methods seek to propose a composition of spatial sequences depicted through the collective perceptions of students, in what Neutelings and Fastenaekens describe as an *urban patchwork*: "In the same way as modern TV programmes are made by home-watchers as they zap from channel to channel, the customized modern city is made by individual montage of its users, turning them into instant dada-urbanists" (Neutelings & Fastenaekens, 1990, p. 58). This synthesis begins in the films and is translated into new atmospheric symphonies of the city.

This investigation is framed within research approaches that work with creative and artistic methodologies such as Research-Creation, Practice-as-Research, or Arts-Based Research, among other denominations (Barone & Eisner, 2011; Barrett & Bolt, 2010; Manning, 2016). In these approaches, creative processes are not merely tools for data collection but constitute the object of study themselves, serving as the primary data of the research. In this inductive, grounded way of constructing knowledge through artistic activities and practices, Borgdorff explains:

> "Characteristic of artistic research is that art practice (the works of art, the artistic actions, the creative process) is not just the motivating force for the subject matter of research, but that this artistic practice – the practice of creating and performing […] – is central to the research process itself. Methodologically speaking, the creative process forms the pathway (or part of it) through which new insights, understandings and products come into being" (Borgdorff, 2011).

Creative practices, therefore, invite unfinished thinking, where knowledge seeks not so much to make explicit a form of knowledge production as to provide a pre-reflective, non-conceptual content. As such, the use of video as a research tool responds to the need to explore sensory, affective, material, and emotional dimensions of the urban environment that more traditional research methods do not allow us to apprehend with the same depth. In our case, artistic creation—or the "practice turn" in the social sciences and geography (Borgdorff, 2011)—acts not only as a means of material-symbolic expression but also as a process of knowledge production, allowing the students to explore and reconfigure their relationship with the space they live in. This approach, which follows the principles of Research-Creation, enables access to non-representational forms of knowledge that go beyond purely textual, numerical, or representational approaches, as argued by authors such as Barrett and Bolt (2010), Chapman and Sawchuk (2012), Loveless (2015), and Manning (2016).

The project was carried out during the first semester of 2023 with 14 students aged between 15 and 16, from diverse cultural backgrounds and, in most cases, disadvantaged socio-economic contexts. All students completed the project as part of the Philosophy course taken in the fourth year of secondary education at Institut Barri Besòs, a public school in the Besòs and Maresme neighborhood of Barcelona. The students' participation in this research formed part of the school curriculum and was approved by the educational center. Permissions were obtained from parents for the use of images and for the dissemination of the videos in an educational context.

The methodology was implemented over nine sessions, each lasting two hours, during which the students participated in the creative process from the initial conceptualization to the final editing of the videos (Table 1), working in two groups of seven students each. Inspired by the urban symphonies of the early 20th century, and after viewing *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927) by Walter Ruttmann, the students were asked to create videos that reflected their experience of their neighborhood.

The first three sessions were dedicated to watching Ruttmann's film and discussing how the students felt about their neighborhood

Table 1
Methodology phases.

Project stage	Object of work	Description
Phase 1 (Sessions 1-3)	Viewing of *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*	- Sensitize students to the arts by watching Ruttmann's film. - Carry out sensory and reflective exercises. - Draft a preliminary script. - Discuss ideas in groups.
Phase 2 (Sessions 4-6)	Collection of students' neighborhood recordings	- Choose areas or spaces to work in. - Record video material in the neighborhood. - Work collaboratively in groups.
Phase 3 (Sessions 7-9)	Composition of students' movies	- Compose and edit the movie using digital video-making tools. - Choose the soundtrack. - Present the videos and discuss them collectively.

through an exercise that explored its sensory, material, affective, and emotional dimensions. The concepts of the infraordinary and affective atmospheres were not explained to the students explicitly because, given their complexity, we did not want to create a barrier or a sense of detachment from the project. However, after viewing Ruttmann's film, we discussed and worked on topics that implicitly led to the evocation of these concepts and to an understanding developed through practice. During these exercises, a series of prompt questions were used to evoke the aforementioned perceptions: "If the neighborhood had a taste, what would it taste like?", "What does the neighborhood smell like?", "What sounds prevail?", "What is the texture of the neighborhood?", "And its atmosphere?". The results aimed to reflect the material, sensory, affective, and emotional aspects of the area, ranging from the familiar taste of a mixed döner kebab and the smell of marijuana to sounds such as shouting or the tram, textures such as concrete, and atmospheres ranging from hostile to calm. These responses guided the creation of a minimal script that served as the basis for beginning the shooting process, recording images of the neighborhood that evoked its affective atmospheres.

The following three sessions were dedicated to shooting in the neighborhood, where students were encouraged to walk through their surroundings and film their images. Each of the two groups, freely following the minimal script they had written and using a semi-professional camera provided by Teleduca, a collaborative film association, had the autonomy to interpret and record their perception and experience of the urban space and the atmospheres that emerged within it. Prior to and throughout the filming process, the Teleduca staff involved in the project spoke with the students about what they wanted to film and how best to convey what they wished to express in each sequence, also taking editing considerations into account, despite the absence of a fixed, finalized script. This approach offered a direct experience of place, in which spatial and sensorial stimuli were taken in immediately by the students, without external interference. From this experiential standpoint, their understanding deepened as they immersed themselves in the area, seeking knowledge and meaning. It was through this attentive, sensorial engagement –an engagement inherent in the act of dwelling– that the neighborhood progressively revealed itself to them (Bruscato Portella, 2024). Upon returning to class, the final three sessions were dedicated to editing and finalizing the videos.

In this research, the two videos generated by the students –***El Recuerdo*** and ***Con-trastos en el Besòs: Una historia de cartón y madera***– constitute the primary data and the main object of analysis. They are not secondary records of an observation process but creative products that embody the students' experiences in their interaction with their neighborhood. Through the artistic practice of video, these teenagers not only documented their experiences of the neighborhood but also transformed them into an aesthetic production that reflects their subjectivities and their everyday uses of urban space, no matter how elusive these experiences may be.

The context in which this group of students worked is not peripheral, and its limitations must be acknowledged, as it is central to understanding both the process and the results discussed in the following sections. First, these students had not received formal education in film culture or professional videomaking prior to this exercise, nor were they expected to replicate industry standards. Rather, our aim was to provide, through video tools, a pedagogical, social, and affective framework that would allow them to explore and generate affective, embodied, and sensory relations within their immediate surroundings.

Second, the students worked with limited resources: only one semi-professional camera was available for each group; access to editing software (e.g., Adobe Premiere) was limited to trial versions; and there was no professional lighting, sound design, or post-production support. In addition, students had to work within restricted timeframes, often sharing devices and working in crowded or noisy environments using school-provided computers. These material and environmental constraints inevitably influenced the aesthetic and technical quality of the videos. Despite these limitations, and aware that videos produced to higher technical standards might appear more relevant in terms of their practical usefulness for the administration, we believe that such technically refined outputs would not necessarily be of greater value for urban planning or regeneration projects. These conditions are valuable precisely because they reflect a raw and authentic viewpoint of young teenagers navigating complex social realities with the tools available to them.

In this sense, the approach based on artistic creation, as suggested by Manning (2016), allows for the generation of "new forms of knowledge" that cannot be fully addressed through traditional academic research methods and analysis. Hence, the videos created are not only vehicles of expression but also research devices in which sensory, material, affective, and emotional experiences of the environment are condensed, but also, as we shall see, social experiences rooted in the location where the videos were generated, Besòs–Maresme.

Finally, it is also important to note that an element of uncertainty was a persistent factor in the methodology, due to our inability to fully control the outcomes of the workshop activities, which often led to entirely unexpected results. By acknowledging uncertainty as a fundamental component of our research and of students' video outcomes, "the unknown, unknowable and the possible become counterpoints to the predictive, quantitative modes of seeking to understand and act" (Pink et al., 2022, pp. 17–18) on urban challenges and spaces shaped by industrial, political, or governmental agendas. This lack of predictability also provided fertile ground for creative exploration and tacit, empirical learning, benefiting both the instructors and the students, as we shall discuss in the following sections.

4. Results and discussion

As discussed above, the concept of *atmospheric urban symphonies* can be understood as a conceptual and methodological framework for exploring urban life through collaboratively created video, drawing on the concepts of the infraordinary and affective atmospheres. In the following sections, we develop this concept based on the analysis of the two videos created with the students.

To do so, the first section examines how the Perecquian notion of the infraordinary enables us to move beyond the dichotomy between integration and fragmentation in the experience of the city, as proposed through the Benjaminian notions of *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. The second section shows the potential of video-making to evoke and generate an atmospheric sense of the city. Finally, the

last section explains how the cooperative creation of video becomes an instrument capable of generating collective narratives that transform both the perception of the neighborhood and the neighborhood itself, while also fostering a sense of community among the teenage students.

4.1. The infraordinary to understand urban space

The concept of the infraordinary is tied to Georges Perec's interest in the everyday, the banal, and the repetitive. That is, in those elements which, in the construction of meaning, tend to go unnoticed in favor of the extraordinary and the spectacular. The notion of the infraordinary is useful for moving beyond a vision of urban experience as a dichotomy between the fragmented, repetitive, and quantitative on the one hand, and the integrated, spiritual, artistic, and unique on the other. It collapses these two contrasting visions of urban experience, conferring equal importance on both perspectives.

This also reveals a political dimension, since the insignificant details of everyday life often conceal what is intolerable about the ordinary (Basset, 2017), that which is inadmissible and which, in many cases, becomes visible only through repeated iteration leading to extraordinary outcomes. We argue that our experience of reality intermingles the ordinary and the extraordinary, the qualitative and the quantitative, the spiritual and the banal, the structured and the unstructured, and the repetitive and the seemingly unimportant. Without the experiential layer that Perec refers to as the infraordinary, we clearly miss a substantial part of reality. Comparable approaches in urban planning, such as the creation of affective atmospheres in participatory urban village renewal (Wang et al., 2024) and the use of GIF-based methods to access young people's experiential urban perceptions (Gutiérrez-Ujaque et al., 2025), further demonstrate how other projects are also integrating sensory and emotional dimensions into the understanding of everyday urban life.

Besides, it is important to note that our approach to the infraordinary is a methodological one, not a deconstructive attempt to reveal a hidden truth between the lines of the "text" of urban spaces. Instead, inspired by the Perecquian method of imposing constraints on his writing (e.g., making lists, composing a text without the letter e, etc.), our approach was an attitude of attending to those events we may designate as infraordinary without assigning them a precise meaning, allowing them instead to operate affectively within the video.

This was achieved by the students through a deliberate wandering around the area. De Certeau (1990) reminds us that walking serves as an intervention in space, leaving no physical marks while inviting the city and nature to co-create experience. It requires a deliberate slowing down, fostering an attentive appreciation of one's surroundings (Bruscato Portella, 2024). As an act of exploration and imagination, walking becomes central to the discovery of the infraordinary—denoting the repetitive, banal, visceral, and subjective memories, observations, and projections that arise from embodied interaction with space. Both videos generated by the students embraced this philosophy. In contrast to Baudelaire's "view from a distance," the students describe the city from within, even through a fragmented approach. As they observe, they actively engage with and merge into the neighborhood.

One of the videos created in class, ***El Recuerdo*** ("The Memory"), takes the metaphor of the psychoanalyst as its point of departure. For *El Recuerdo*, the group of students reconstructed a memory shared among them. These memories unfold through images of candy stores, from pastry shops to bakeries to the local Pakistani spot, where pleasure, consumption, tenderness, resistance, and endurance coexist. Provocations appear throughout the video, such as a scene depicting a cart full of clothes typically carried by homeless people, contrasted with images of an empty sports shop in the local mall. This juxtaposition portrays the contradictions present in the neighborhood as perceived by the students.

The infraordinary, being more than the mundane, being "what lies hidden beneath the surface of ordinariness" (James, 2009, p. 198), reveals the seemingly invisible phenomena that structure urban life through repetition. This confers a political dimension upon the concept. Events that ordinarily go unnoticed, yet are exposed through iteration, bring to light some of the contradictions experienced by the students in the city. These range from the presence of homelessness, indirectly perceived through a shopping trolley filled with discarded objects, to the proximity between their vulnerable neighborhood and one of the city's most exclusive urban developments, where a shopping mall with elegant stores stands in stark contrast to the Pakistani bakery or the local poultry shop (Fig. 2a). This recording of the infraordinary thus emerges as a heuristic tool for exploring emergent generalities and totalities in formation within the students' experience of the neighborhood (Highmore, 2017, p. 110).

The second video, ***Con-trastos en el Besòs: Una historia de cartón y madera*** ("Con-trasts in Besòs: A History of Cardboard and Wood"), presents a sequence of wide and medium shots of spaces and activities that contrast with one another. The term *con-trastos* also refers to a wordplay in Spanish, combining the literal "contrasts" with *con trastos* ("with pieces of useless or broken stuff"). The infraordinary emerges in the constant repetition of the smallest elements that resist the surrounding concrete, those pieces of useless or broken objects that form part of the neighborhood's identity and its ongoing transformations: a graffiti tag encoding a language linked to local movements; a plant pushing its way up between blocks of stone near the seashore; the demolition of popular housing areas replaced by "extraordinary" new skyscrapers in their pomposity, extravagance, and scale; the disappearance of vernacular façades of old buildings or businesses; the fabrication of cement (Fig. 2b). These elements make visible the passage of time and reveal, through its inevitability and opacity, part of what is inadmissible in the everyday (Basset, 2017). As Perec puts it, "'Social problems' aren't 'a matter of concern' when there's a strike, they're intolerable 24 h out of twenty-four, three hundred and sixty-five days a year" (Perec, 1973, p. 126).

Both videos value the sense of repetition and the small, familiar, or subtle details of daily life, the inadvertent or underappreciated rather than the monumental or grandiose. The basis for this shift in perspective is the "receptive disposition" described by Anke Gleber (1999, p. 26): a curiosity and openness toward the surrounding environment, the city as spectacle. The practice of collaborative videomaking was intended to encourage such a receptive disposition in the students toward the infraordinary.

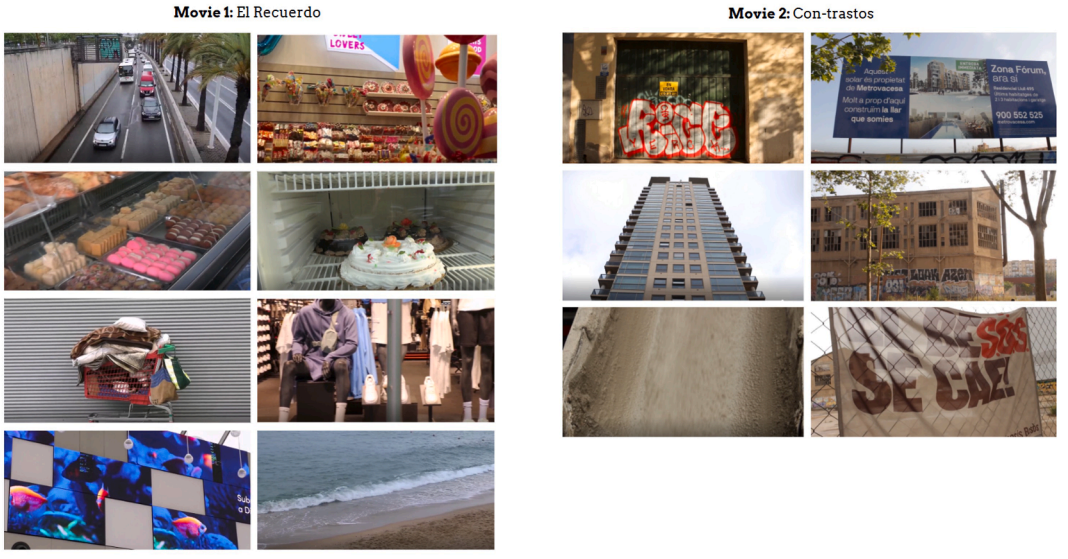

Fig. 2. The infraordinary in *El Recuerdo* (a) and *Con-trastos* (b).

For Perec, there is also a concern that what is presented as significant often bears the mark of *doxa*, that is, a taken-for-granted belief that reproduces a social order (Highmore, 2017). These videos expose this *doxa* but, at the same time, position themselves against it, creating a doxa of their own by delving into the details of the everyday that have not yet been marked as significant.

An example of this appears in the second video, in a banner hanging loosely from a metal fence with the Spanish text "¡EL BESÒS SE CAE!" printed in bold letters (Fig. 2b). The message translates into English as "(Be)SOS, it's collapsing!" This small, subtle sign shows how the infraordinary can signal systemic issues noticed by the students, giving voice to what urban discourse often renders silent, such as the gentrification of the area.

These observations provide valuable insight into how young people experience their urban surroundings and social inequalities, as they echo the indicators identified by the Regeneration Urban Program of Barcelona's as key areas of priority for urban regeneration in the Besòs-Maresme. Urban quality, social cohesion, functional diversity, and territorial integration emerge as critical themes identified from these students in the neighborhood and highlight the visible impact of austerity politics and rising gentrification on young people's experience of places. Using methodologies that engage young people on their terms empowers young people and offers a lens through which to understand how city planners should respond to their lived realities. These videos reflect youths' acute awareness of societal challenges, often brushed aside and stress the importance of incorporating these perspectives into urban development strategies (Gutiérrez-Ujaque et al., 2025, p. 2).

4.2. Audiovisual narratives to explore, evoke and create affective atmospheres

A significant finding of this project is the potential of video to evoke the affective atmospheres of the neighborhood for the young students involved, and, at the same time, the capacity of these videos to generate an atmospheric sense of the neighborhood for both the students and potential viewers. This process did not unfold in a straightforward way. During the editing phase, students had to determine how the images could be arranged and connected. Once the first edits were completed, new meanings emerged unexpectedly. With each viewing of the video, additional relations and interpretations continue to arise.

The ability of video to recreate and amplify affective atmospheres lies in its capacity to "reproduce the bodily and sensory interactions" between space and the subjects who inhabit it (Simpson, 2015, p. 29). Videos not only capture space visually but also generate a sensory immersion that transports the viewer beyond the visible. Walking together, shooting, editing, choosing the music, and sequencing the images in particular ways helped students embed themselves in the neighborhood and in the artistic practice, enabling them to manipulate, generate, and create this narrative and sensorial atmosphere. This approach reinforces the value of video as a tool that is not only representational but also affective and performative.

Videos are thus useful in evoking the continuous interaction between space and body, their sensory tones and affective intensities, since they "can convey feelings, emotions, states of mind, affective states, sensual effects: and all these are important in understanding the lively and enchanted materialities of urban places" (Rose, 2014a, p. 8). On the other hand, these collaboratively created videos share with other digital technologies the capacity to open up new possibilities of becoming (Deleuze, 1989/2013) and to perform the urban and social practices in which they are embedded (Rose, 2014a, pp. 9–12), serving as "a trace of social identities, practices, experiences, institutions and relations" (Rose, 2014b, p. 33).

Returning to the first movie, ***El Recuerdo***, it narrates the city from the setting of a psychoanalyst's divan, evoking a situation in which the deepest and most intimate thoughts and emotions are embodied and unlocked. When asked to describe his neighborhood to the psychoanalyst, the student under analysis corrects himself from saying *the neighborhood is* to *the neighborhood are*, suggesting a

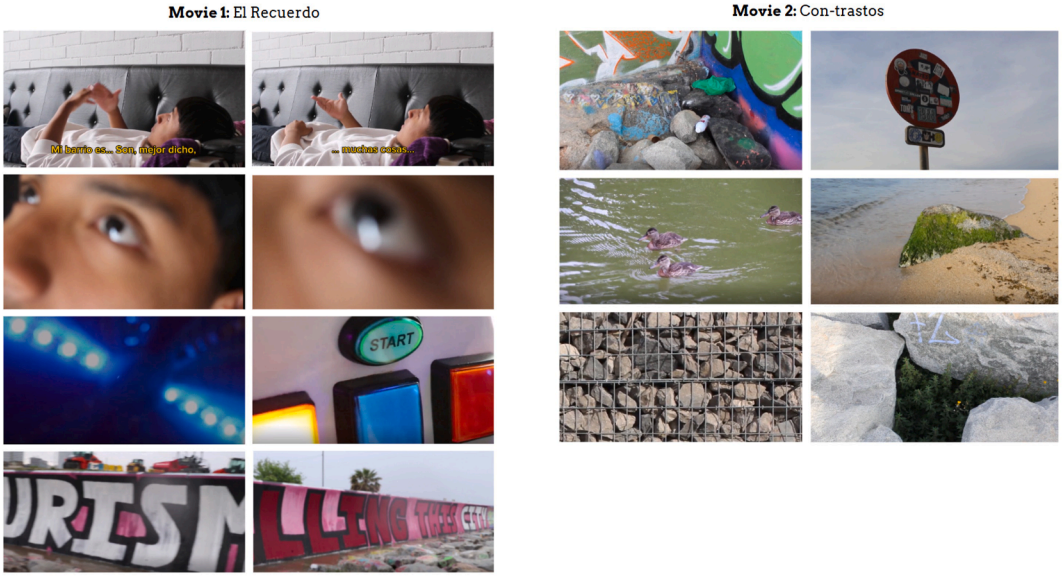

Fig. 3. Affective atmospheres in *El Recuerdo* (a) and *Con-trastos* (b).

plurality of narratives and possible descriptions for the area (Fig. 3a). This initial scene unfolds in silence, and after this first provocation, the camera zooms in on the student's eye, transporting the viewer into his mind, where sound is introduced and the camera begins to wander through the neighborhood and the students' imaginaries.

At this point, the video cuts to dreamy and fragmented shots of neon lights, accompanied by the music typically heard in carousels during *ferias*, a type of neighborhood or village fair common in many Spanish cities during festivities or summer. The sound is overlaid with imagery that documents scenes of the present: cars circulating densely on the peripheral Besòs highway, waves of the Mediterranean Sea, rain falling on concrete streets, or escalators moving inside a shopping mall. The students turn this into an interactive game with the viewer's imagination, inviting them to fill in the blanks.

The use of a soundtrack in a video whose aim is, from an aesthetic of production (Böhme, 2013), to evoke the atmospheres of a neighborhood by a group of young people might seem contradictory, as such a soundtrack could be viewed as betraying, in some way, the atmospheric qualities of what is filmed. Our argument, however, is that this soundtrack does not undermine the senses of place, affects, or atmospheres evoked in the video. Young people, like many other city dwellers, though perhaps more intensely, often experience the city's public spaces through the mediation of mobile technologies such as headphones (Bull, 2000).

Research shows that having control over the sound they listen to while navigating public space, what has been called sonic privatization or the creation of "private sound environments" (PSEs) (de Silva, 2023), serves multiple functions. These range from creating a secure space –including the ability to manage the cognitive and emotional experience of the street (Bull, 2000, p. 153), mediate unwanted social interactions (Ibid., p. 189), or enhance safety and control (Ibid., p. 108)– to aestheticizing the urban experience. For example, transforming meaningless travel time into something meaningful (Ibid., p. 64) or intensifying the environment and rendering it more cinematic (Ibid., pp. 85–88). For headphone users, this mediated soundscape functions as a means of negotiating, mediating, and appropriating space (O'Keeffe & Kerr, 2015, p. 3566). Thus, the inclusion of a soundtrack in the video contributes to understanding the subjective and mediated experience of urban atmosphere, since personalized sound can be fundamental to the experience of place.

Through this antagonistic montage of image and sound, this expressionist video demonstrates a non-representational intent of leaving interpretation to the viewers. This creates, through the aforementioned blanks, an emergent relation with the spectators in which, on the one hand, the affective relations and encounters of the students in their neighborhood are evoked (Rokka & Hietanen, 2018, p. 9). On the other hand, these relations are reconstructed by the viewers, provoking critical affective atmospheric encounters that have the capacity to reconfigure their taken-for-granted assumptions about the world and force them to think in different ways (Deleuze, 1968/1994, p. 139).

This does not imply that reception must be the same in every case, since we need to understand "how the productive force of these creations exceeds the intentions, desires and capacities of the film-maker" (Garret & Hawkins, 2015, p. 145) and, as Boyd argues,

> audiences receive affective knowledge in ways that cannot be predicted or ensured. From the artist's point of view, it is an attempt to convey a conceptual feeling, but it cannot be anything other than an attempt. It might succeed or it might fail, and the experience of it will be different for each person who witnesses it. Moreover, it is only ever experienced as an encounter with the potential to be re-experienced in a multitude of ways. What this means is that affective knowledge gains must be tentative—framed as propositions rather than conclusions. (Boyd, 2017, p. 96)

The video concludes with a shot of a graffiti wall located near the beach, though not strictly within the perimeter of the

neighborhood, reading "Tourism is killing this city," after which the patient/student opens his eyes again, returning to the psychoanalyst's room. This scene, placed just before the return to the psychoanalyst's couch, makes us aware of the complexity of the students' vision of their neighborhood. The vast majority of the students live strictly within its administrative boundaries (some come from La Mina, an area with a worse reputation that belongs to the adjoining municipality of Sant Adrià del Besòs). However, although no restrictions were imposed on filming locations, when students were asked to film their neighborhood, they expanded the shooting area well beyond its official limits.

For both videos, the students moved into recently developed areas of much higher socioeconomic status surrounding their neighborhood. We do not interpret this movement as aspirational on the part of the students but rather as a performance of urban practices (Rose, 2014a, pp. 9–12) within their lived spaces –spaces they use in their everyday life– and as a process of neighborhood-making through the atmospheric and the affective.

This is also present in the second video, ***Con-trastos***. By mainly using a fixed camera in selected spots of the neighborhood and relaxed instrumental music, the students construct a narrative of Besòs-Maresme that emerges from dichotomies, revealing its extremes or margins, its past and future, its desires and struggles. The video unfolds at a slower tempo, introducing the new skyscrapers that generate tension with the daily life of the area, marked by the circulation of neighbors, the construction sounds of building blocks, the breaking of sea waves, and the silence of a park (Fig. 3b).

The camera, moving at an *andante* pace, shifts from buildings for sale to the fabrication of cement, capturing in short intervals the speed with which vertical growth, and what students perceive as "progress", takes place. Through this rhythm, the video contrasts and translates the pace of ongoing architectural transformations and the social inequalities across the area, creating a patchwork of fragments that, like in a symphony, requires varied tones, pitches, and scales to affect its viewers.

4.3. Empowerment through collaborative and participatory creation

A revealing aspect of this project is how the collaborative creation process allowed students to develop a new understanding of their environment while simultaneously encouraging them to see themselves as active subjects in the production of knowledge. Rather than being mere observers, these teenagers became creators, responsible for making key decisions about the aesthetics and narrative of the videos. This process not only enabled them to critically reflect on their environment but also gave them a capacity for action, highlighting the transformative potential of video as both a pedagogical and critical tool. Both videos helped students immerse themselves in the area and begin inquiring into the issue of empowerment. This empowerment may be understood as an act of "self-esteem, awareness, solidarity and neighborhood cohesion" (Ribalta, 2024, p. 209).

By engaging with their peers through videomaking, students not only discovered new tools for self-expression but were also able to collaboratively build their worlds as much as they inquired into them. This represents a shift from an epistemological stance (where the goal is to understand a subject) to an ontological perspective (where our being-in-the-world is transformative). From this perspective, we understand collaborative video as an expressive and valuable tool for incorporating the voices of young people into urban planning processes:

> "The public participation process in the renovation of urban villages is not only for procedural fairness in the absorption of opinions, but should also include consideration of the affective integration of residents, which can be realized through the creation of an affective atmosphere in the public participation space" (Wang et al., 2024).

By exploring a co-creation approach, students may be able to mobilize social creativity while challenging "traditional, top-down models of urban planning, advocating for a more participatory and inclusive approach" (Kitagawa & Candi, 2024, p. 44) to making sense of, imagining, and designing their lived spaces.

It is important to clarify that we were not interested in how these students' behaviors toward places could be changed through the use of video tools. Rather, we were concerned with how video tools could become valuable to them in creating new possibilities to which they can connect, enabling them to establish relations with their lived space and their everyday lives through activities, feelings, and meanings that matter to them (Pink et al., 2022, pp. 9–10). The impulse behind this research includes the desire to "shift institutional perspectives, narratives, policies and practices – rather than to change behavior" (Pink et al., 2022, p. 35).

It is therefore a subtle form of collective empowerment, one grounded in the practice of the infraordinary and the affective, rather than in grand gestures. The videos created by the students, in this sense, are examples of an appropriated neighborhood forged from a collective desire: a landscape that becomes their own, on a human scale (literally and metaphorically), expressing a "vital" need to discover and inhabit communal spaces as extensions of their home.

Finally, the exploration of the infraordinary and affective atmospheres inspired action while also stimulating new perspectives and immediate reflections on the various issues at stake. One of these emerged during the group discussions in the initial sessions, when students articulated a seemingly negative, assembled discourse about their neighborhood. In contrast, when watching the videos, another type of appreciation of the space was revealed: a sensitive, caring, and political one.

A further consideration is the geographical appropriation of space by the students, as noted in the previous section. For instance, the neighborhood does not include the maritime front or the shopping mall within its administrative limits. Even though they are located less than 500 m from the boundaries of Besòs-Maresme, these two areas formally belong to the neighborhoods of Poblenou and Diagonal Mar. Both videos, however, refer to these locations –especially the seafront– as integral parts of the neighborhood's identity and imaginary. If we take into account the affective and the atmospheric, residents exercise agency over space even when it is administratively denied to them. This can empower students to employ atmospheric symphonies –socially, politically, and aesthetically– as a tool to critically reveal lived experiences in the city to its viewers, echoing Robbins's argument (Robbins, 2017).

These examples also indicate critical areas for improvement in how cities and urban consultation processes are conceptualized and developed, emphasizing the importance of addressing children's and youth's needs (Gutiérrez-Ujaque et al., 2025, p. 2). Merely acknowledging marginalized or young people's use of public spaces is insufficient. Urban research must also legitimize and amplify their experiences by integrating the technologies that shape their interactions with the city (O'Sullivan et al., 2020). As they note, meaningful engagement requires:

> "Not only to contribute to acknowledging young people's use of public space but also consider how young people's use of technology could render visible and legitimise their experiences of the city, creating a platform for them to contribute actively to processes of reimagining the city" (p.17).

Building on these insights, we demonstrate how atmospheric urban symphonies could serve as an input for urban regeneration projects and how digital technologies, particularly videos, provide a novel and powerful tool to explore the experiential landscapes of cities in ways that are inclusive, engaging, and methodologically innovative within the field of young people's geographies.

5. Conclusion

With this work, we have tested the possibilities offered by collaborative video to produce situated and affective forms of knowledge by proposing the notion of *atmospheric urban symphonies*. This notion emerged through the work carried out with the videos produced by teenage students from Institut Barri Besòs, a public secondary school in a vulnerable neighborhood of Barcelona. The concept of atmospheric symphonies is grounded in three fundamental dimensions –the infraordinary, affective atmospheres, and collaborative video production– which structure the concept and facilitate different understandings of urban experience from a non-representational point of view.

While the material in both cases is not intended to be generalized into closed-ended conclusions, what it does offer is a capture of participants' collective, affective, and spatial experiences through the use of video tools. Sumartojo and Pink argue that videographic tools are not employed to objectively record experiences; rather, they function as a "trace that enables a process of reflection, discussion and understanding" (Sumartojo & Pink, 2017, p. 40) for the videomaker or the audience. A video trace allows for an empathetic understanding of mobile experience and state, where "recording is a springboard for knowledge-making rather than a record of something that already exists" (Sumartojo & Pink, 2017, p. 40). In this sense, we argue that the coexistence of multiple worlds and interpretations of the space in question is enabled by these tools.

Understanding the urban experience through the infraordinary enables us to focus our attention on the trivial, the recurrent, or the invisible in daily life. This dimension permits a flattening of the usual hierarchies that determine what is considered worthy of documentation or analysis, revealing how seemingly insignificant phenomena can encapsulate social tensions, collective memories, or ways of life that rarely form part of what is conventionally deemed significant. Used from a non-representational approach, the infraordinary does not act deconstructively; rather, it triggers feelings, resonances, and connections arising in direct relation to the everyday.

Working through the notion of affective atmospheres allows for the perception and evocation of the sensible, affective, emotional, and material dimensions of urban spaces. This approach, instead of defining the urban as a passive background, interprets it as a field full of intensities and complexities that are mutually generated through the interaction between bodies, events, feelings, and materialities. Video, as a multisensory medium, enables the evocation of these atmospheres and their activation in the spectator, not only through the representation of places but also through the creation of textures, rhythms, sounds, and images that address the body and lived experience in an exercise of place-making.

The collaborative and participatory dimension of audiovisual production provides a space in which video-makers can determine what to observe, how to record, and how to edit. This allows the barriers between researcher and student, between subject and object, to fade away. What is presented is not an accurate representation of their neighborhood, but rather a situated and embodied product in which an affective gaze dominates, and through which shared atmospheres and feelings are evoked. This process grants authority to the participants not only as creators but also as generators of new forms of bonding with their environment and with one another.

These dimensions crystallize in the notion of *atmospheric urban symphonies* as an epistemological and methodological proposal that challenges the idea of video as merely an instrument of documentation or representation. The videos developed in this project are creative actions that transform the urban experience, stimulate affective forms of knowledge, and generate opportunities to imagine new ways of living in the city, which could translate into new perspectives for public policy-making at the city level. For this reason, we consider *atmospheric urban symphonies* to be a tool with significant potential in urban planning processes that seek greater inclusion of, and sensitivity to, young people's experiences in the city.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Quim Bonastra: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Supervision, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Grazielle Bruscato Portella:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Supervision, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation.

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Conflict of interest

All authors declare that we have no conflicts of interest for the article “Atmospheric Urban Symphonies: Collaborative Video to Explore and Generate Affective Spaces in Marginalized Young Communities".

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jum.2026.03.002.

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