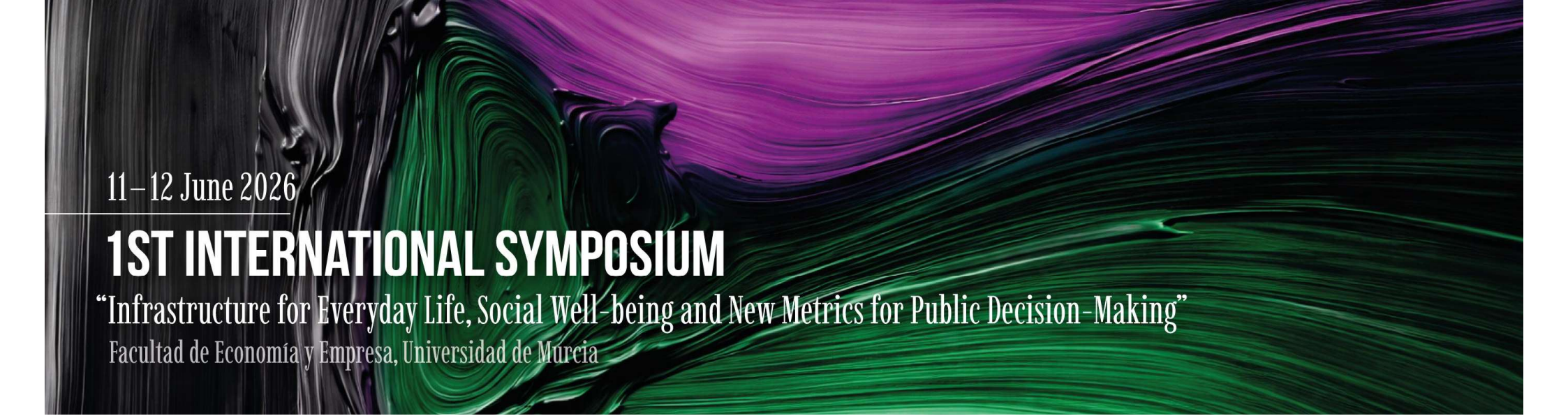




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Facultad de Economía y Empresa, Universidad de Murcia

Care Mobility: An Approach from the Feminist Economics of Well-Being to the Case of Barcelona

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1. Introduction: Infrastructure for Everyday Life and the Centrality of Care

The concept of Infrastructure for everyday life comes from the intersection between

gender studies

urbanism and regional planning

Resolution of concrete problems linked to global challenges, both in terms of the well-being of the population and in terms of the sustainability of economic, social and environmental systems.

Benefits of Gender Equality through Infrastructure Provision: An EU-Wide Survey
(28 EU countries, EIGE 2015)

On public transport, women valued it more highly than men; it the second most important infrastructure service for facilitating everyday life, after healthcare services and medical centres.

The survey analysis showed that:

- 40% of women stated that public transport had been “very important” in enabling access to education, compared with 32% of men.
- 42% of women considered transport “very important” for accessing employment participation, compared with 33% of men.

This paper builds upon a project carried out by the same authors for the Department of Culture, Education, Life Cycles, Feminisms and LGTBI of Barcelona City Council entitled *Fare Analysis of Barcelona Public Transport from a Gender Perspective: The Caring City is Also Designed Through Fares*, developed within the framework of the II Gender Justice Plan (2021–2025)

2. Care, Mobility and Public Transport from a Gender Perspective

In recent decades, incorporating a gender perspective into urban analysis has revealed the profound structural inequalities embedded in transport systems.

Traditional mobility policy design has privileged a productivist vision of movement centred on linear home-to-work journeys

This model has rendered invisible everyday mobility patterns associated with care work, predominantly carried out by women, leading to coin the concept of care mobility
Sánchez de Madariaga (2009)

Care work has a marked spatial dimension

Care also has another component: time

Global geography in terms of care mobility (Martínez Argüello, 2024)

3. Transport Fares as an Apparently Neutral Public Policy

- Relationship with distance travelled
- Relationship with intensity of use
- Relationship with individual personal characteristics
- Relationship between groups
- Relationship with time of use
- The time component
- The purpose of travel
- Relationship with transport mode

4. Survey on Mobility on Working Days, EMEF

The EMEF is an annual survey since 2004, published by the Mobility Observatory in Catalonia.

We worked with the results of the 2023 edition, with a fairly large and balanced total sample in terms of sexes (4,957 men and 5,197 women).

Both the average and median time spent on daily mobility are somewhat lower for women, because a larger proportion of them travel short distances on foot, but another group reveals more complex mobility, with more daily journeys, more means of transport, and a greater diversity of reasons.

Here we will limit ourselves to showing two tables with a description of the results by reasons and means of travel

Table 1. Mode of transport

Modes	Men	Women
Walking less than 5 min	3,073	3,678
Walking more than 5 min	5,934	7,195
Bicycle	428	152
TMB bus	293	666
Other bus	418	666
Metro	735	963
Tram	59	98
FGC (Catalan Railways)	247	363
Rodalies (commuter rail)	374	401
Company bus	21	7
School bus	8	12
Coach	15	17
Taxi	76	86
Regional train	6	8
Car as driver	6,826	4,926
Car as passenger	589	1,428
Motorcycle as driver	878	266
Motorcycle as passenger	15	41
Moped as driver	141	52
Van	492	6
Truck	116	34
Other public transport	11	16
Other private vehicles	14	1

Table 2. Travel times

Purpose	Number		Mean		Standard deviation	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Return	8,895	8,867	21.99	20.43	27.06	27.84
Work	3,613	2,760	26.58	24.19	28.61	22.13
Studies	518	536	29.54	29.97	26.46	25.34
Shopping	2,139	2,650	11.49	12.32	11.81	13.06
Accompanying or caring for people	1,615	2,256	14.77	13.61	13.59	13.01
Leisure	2,096	2,038	19.31	18.40	27.72	21.45
Personal errands	625	589	16.93	15.84	22.58	19.05
Walking	1,168	1,008	30.02	27.97	25.88	24.65
Medical/hospital	286	462	24.22	21.86	17.88	18.26

5. Qualitative Analysis I: In-depth interviews (IDIs)

Six individual interviews with professional and academic experts on the subject

Methodology: Grounded theory developed by Corbin and Strauss (1990)

- Thematic triangulation: detecting patterns, singularities, and disagreements among the profiles Identifying key emerging themes in the discourse and observing recurrences and variations in meaning.
- Recognition of patterns and trends in how interviewees conceptualize mobility and fare inequalities, the structural conditions of the system, and their implications from a gender perspective.
- This analysis has allowed us to detect relationships between categories and concepts, establishing connections between normative, institutional, and social dimensions of the problem.
- Throughout the process, priority has been given to the contextual and semantic density of the narratives, paying attention to the nuances of situated experience and the plurality of interpretations.

The conclusions of this part of the work reveal the following:

- An excessively complex system that penalizes the most vulnerable groups. The current logic, centered on zones and linear journeys, reproduces territorial and gender inequalities.
- Care-related mobility continues to be overlooked in fare design. This type of mobility is fragmented, time- and space-intensive.
- The perception of insecurity limits the use of public transport and generates hidden costs, particularly for women and during nighttime hours, and must be acknowledged and addressed.
- The fare system perpetuates a geography of privilege centered on the central urban area, also in quality and frequent service. This phenomenon fuels dynamics of social and spatial exclusion that extend beyond transportation.
- There is a growing awareness of the need to adapt fares to diverse social realities. Proposals such as care vouchers, differentiated fares per route, and territorial equity measures reflect an openness toward a more flexible, inclusive, and equitable model.
- The lack of sex-disaggregated data is a critical barrier to advancing a gender-sensitive fare policy. This data deficit is perceived as a consequence of male-dominated institutional priorities.

6. Qualitative Report II: Focus Group Analysis (FGs)

Methodological complement to the previous interviews

Exchanges among people with shared experiences

we have been able to identify common patterns, generational shifts, normative contradictions, and micro-conflicts that interviews do not reveal with the same clarity.

Eps: a structural perspective on the conditions of the metropolitan public transport system in Barcelona

FGs: the experiential, situated, and relational dimension of everyday use

Eps: the institutional logic underlying the exclusion of care-related mobility

FGs: how that exclusion is experienced first-hand: through fragmented journeys, financial penalties, or the lack of suitable fare options.

Group 1 consisted exclusively of women whose mobility is related solely to paid work and who do not perform care tasks

Group 2 included women who combine paid work with caregiving responsibilities

Group 3 consisted only of men, three of whom perform both paid work and care tasks, while the other two have no caregiving responsibilities.

The results show significant differences according to participant profiles:

- Women with caregiving responsibilities (Group 2) displayed fragmented, non-linear mobility patterns with multiple stops (work, school, medical appointments, shopping). This implies higher potential costs when flat-rate tickets are not available or fare discounts are not well understood.
- Men without caregiving responsibilities (Group 3) described direct and predictable mobility patterns almost exclusively related to work, with few daily trips. This leads to less dependence on public transport and a greater perception of efficiency per trip.
- Some participants with caregiving responsibilities (within Groups 2 and 3) highlighted physical and structural barriers such as lack of lifts or ramps, which increase both cost and difficulty of mobility.
- Young participants (within Groups 1 and 2) make greater use of discounts such as the T-Jove, but anticipate future difficulties once they are no longer eligible.
- Adult and older women with caregiving responsibilities believe that fares should take into account income and family workload rather than age alone.
- Some older men (within Group 3) propose a metropolitan flat fare, but from a more technical or fiscal fairness perspective, whereas women link it to gender and care justice.

7. Proposals and Conclusions

1. Integration of all transport fares into a single zone, establishing a basic unlimited-use monthly pass priced below €50.
2. If a single-zone system appears to create an excessive divergence between the fare and the actual cost of providing the service, mechanisms should be developed whereby usage-based discounts are attributed to the individual rather than to a specific pass, medium, or geographic zone.
3. Unification of the limited-use monthly passes into a 20-trip, €20 option that replaces the T-casual and the multi-municipality bus passes, allowing the most occasional users to benefit from lower usage. This mobility pattern has traditionally been associated with women, although the expansion of teleworking and the increase in the retired population are extending it to other social profiles.