

Building the Multispecies City.

Rethinking urban cohabitation with the Llobregat Delta

Round table. 27 November 2021, 5.00 pm

Espai Finestres, Centre d'Art La Capella. In-person and remote

Prior registration required

Participants:

Ferran López. Professional ornithologist, Consorci per a la Gestió i Protecció dels Espais Naturals Delta del Llobregat

Olivier Chantry. Farmer at Cal Notari and Head of Climate Change and Biodiversity for the Unió de Pagesos in Baix Llobregat

Andrea Conte. Member of Ni un Pam de Terra, a neighbourhood platform that campaigns to protect the land in El Prat de Llobregat

Narcís Prat. Professor Emeritus of Ecology, Universitat de Barcelona. Researcher and founding member of the research group Freshwater Ecology, Hydrology and Management (FEHM)

Christian Alonso, Vicky Benítez, Ferran Lega, Eduardo Ruiz and Chiara Sgaramella. Researchers of the Working group on the hybrid ecologies of the Llobregat Delta

The Llobregat River Delta is a rich and fragile natural and cultural biotope located where Barcelona Airport is situated, just fifteen kilometres from the centre of Barcelona. Its marshes, coastal woodland and flood-meadows provide a habitat for different birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and many other species protected by the Catalan Plan for Areas of Natural Interest and the European network Natura 2000. In addition, it is a strategic site on the migratory routes followed by birds between Africa and Europe, and it is the most important agricultural region in the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona. Nevertheless, the state of the delta has been severely degraded by infrastructure such as the airport, the logistics port and the extensive road network, which have cut off areas within the delta from each other and hindered

the mobility of non-human species; the dumping of industrial and urban waste and pesticide and fertiliser runoff throughout the entire river basin; and the salinisation of underground water as a result of the river's lack of traction and seawater intrusion caused by the diversion of the mouth of the river 2.5 km to the south in 2005.

Even though the Spanish Minister of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda, Raquel Sánchez (former mayor of Gavà for the Socialist Party of Catalonia), officially turned down the expansion of the third runway in September 2021, AENA, the Spanish and Catalan governments and economic elites remain in talks over the airport's enlargement. And they do so by arguing that the promised investment of €1.7 billion will not only double the number of travellers a year and solve the environmental impact by means of compensatory measures, but will also create sufficient jobs to put an end to unemployment in Catalonia. This is not seen as likely by the many organisations, entities and authorities opposed to the expansion on the grounds that it is at odds with Catalonia and Spain's climate commitments in relation to the green transition and efforts to combat climate change. In the recent citizen protests that they have organised, they have claimed that the expansion will lead to an increase in greenhouse gases, will promote an unsustainable economy based solely on tourism, and that it will harm still further ecosystems that have suffered severely because the promised off-set measures in previous projects have not been realised.

Building the Multispecies City offers a space for rethinking the model of cohabitation in the city of Barcelona and beyond in response to the dynamics that are contributing to the precariousness of human and non-human life. The round table brings together agents who have local, agroecological, technical, scientific and land-related expertise. With them, we will analyse the complexity of life in the Llobregat Delta, the connections between culture and nature, subjects and objects, and the heroes and those left behind by progress. The activity is an initiative of the Working group on the hybrid ecologies of the Llobregat Delta, a transdisciplinary research office that promotes artistic creation, mediation and experimentation projects in the Llobregat delta. The group believes that in order to achieve multispecies sustainability, we need to reconsider urban life from a point of view that takes into account non-human

agency. Consequently, it cultivates new forms of attentiveness to different life forms that inhabit the delta, and builds narratives that provide new modes of understanding, relation and responsibility in a diverse world.

Director, coordinator and moderator: Christian Alonso (Working group on the hybrid ecologies of the Llobregat Delta)

Context: *Multispecies Imaginaries* curatorial project (Centre d'Art La Capella, 3 February – 30 April 2022)