

Research supports protestors' concerns about the future of Llobregat Delta

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Llobregat Delta, in Barcelona. (Author: ICTA-UAB)

A new study undertaken by researchers at the Institute of Environmental

Science and Technology of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (ICTA-UAB) supports protestors' concerns about damage to the Llobregat Delta in Barcelona Airport expansion plans.

The research, carried out in 2019, found that the well-maintained and unique natural environment of the Llobregat Delta is important or very important to 100 percent residents and 98.8 percent of visitors who responded to the survey.

The recently published article in *Environmental Science and Policy* found that the greatest frustrations that residents and visitors expressed related to the expansion of the airport and [urban areas](#). Participants surveyed expressed concern about future airport expansion plans, and expressed their desire that these plans be modified.

"What is remarkable about the results is the amount of agreement among residents and visitors about the importance of the natural values of the Llobregat Delta. Even though the airport is nearby, people value being able to be able to access a protected [natural area](#) so close to Barcelona", explains Dr. Sonia Graham, the researcher leading the project. Dr. Graham recalls that, "during the interviews, a Barcelona [resident](#) told researchers that they would not like the airport to grow larger, and to have an impact on the area. They stated that the impact on the beach area by a possible expansion would be quite a hard blow, horrific". The wetlands, birdwatching huts and walking paths are highly valued [ecosystem services](#) and infrastructure that enable residents and visitors to experience and appreciate this unique area.



Llobregat Delta, in Barcelona. Credit: ICTA-UAB

Beatrice Meo, the lead author of the article, explains that not only are people concerned about the expansion of the [airport](#), they are also worried about the impacts of climate change. "About 90 percent of residents and visitors are very or fairly concerned about the impacts of climate change on the Llobregat Delta. More than 60 percent of respondents believe we are already feeling the effects of climate change now", she says.

The work took place between March and June 2019. It involved in-depth

interviews and a survey of residents and visitors to the Llobregat Delta. The interviews and survey collected data on what residents and visitors value about the natural environment, and how concerned they are about the impacts of climate change on the [delta](#).

More information: Beatrice Meo et al, The resident and visitor gaze: A comparison of coastal social values at risk due to sea-level rise, *Environmental Science & Policy* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.envsci.2021.05.017](#)

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