

# MANIFESTA 15 Barcelona 2024

## Press Annex 1 Manifesta 15 Barcelona 2024: Biennial Research

### 01. Towards Barcelona's Eco-Social "Magna Carta"

Manifesta 15 Barcelona, connecting local and international participants, will be a framework for action, attention and cure to identify the needs for urgent socio-ecological transformations in the metropolitan region through creating innovative artistic projects.

During the past half year, Manifesta 15 Barcelona has focused on generating a set of critical questions which will lead to the presentation of socio-cultural and ecological participatory projects in the metropolitan region. A communal process launched in May 2023 will be created in between civil society working alongside cultural practitioners from different regions and disciplines. The outcome of this research and knowledge production co-created with the team of Manifesta and the communities Manifesta 15 collaborates with, will present the key finding of this research in an alternative eco-social "Magna Carta".

### 02. Departing from Barcelona's natural boundaries

The 15th edition of Manifesta, which will open its doors to the general public on the 8th of September 2024, will have a scale never addressed in the previous fourteen editions of the European Nomadic Biennial. The scale and the context require a new perspective. The research process implemented by Manifesta 15 takes into consideration the urban transformations that the city of Barcelona and its metropolitan area have experienced over the last four decades. The city of Barcelona and its metropolitan region has been and is continuing to be an international benchmark in urban issues. Since the opening of the medieval walls and the unfolding of Pla Cerdà, several urban plans and projects have become development models. The city of Barcelona has hosted large-scale international events that have not only contributed to boosting the city's economy and projecting its image internationally but have also had a radical impact on its urban transformation. One of the most radical transformations were the ring



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roads inaugurated in 1992. The ring roads articulated the four nodes of the Olympics. They opened the city to the sea and connected it with the mountains and with the Llobregat and Besòs rivers. The ring roads have now become the walls of the 21st century. They enclose and touch everything. From the ring inwards, we have a consolidated and very dense city. Outside of the ring roads we find a fundamental touchpoint of the city's relationship with the large natural systems and open spaces that surround the city: contact with the Collserola mountain range, contact with the coast and the Llobregat and Besòs rivers. Rethinking the future of the current metropolis is rethinking its wall, not only as a channel of mobility but as a territory, with its access to the sea, to its green lung and to its rivers.

Today, the urban model is changing through a series of urban strategies. Learning from these processes, Manifesta 15 Barcelona wants to embrace and expand this paradigm shift. One of the key innovations is how the expansion of the city into its metropolitan region is going to develop whilst considering the natural boundaries of the mountains, the

sea and the rivers. How can these natural boundaries not limit the function of growth but instead create opportunities for ecological transformation and prospects?

### 03. An alternative Eco-Social “Magna Carta”

Today, and especially after the Covid-19 period, it seems that that sense of caring for another and for our planet is not our highest priority. It can be said to have happened many decades ago, while the common was standardised: language, consumption, housing, the commodification of land, the dissolution of traditional city limits. Currently, capitalist societies are collapsing, the welfare state is weakening, colonial realities are being maintained and social democracies are struggling. Our sense of caring for ourselves, for one another and for our planet is diminishing.

In response, we must look to new sources of creation and hope. Artistic practices - not the system that sustains it, but the creators, social designers, architects, biologists and environmentalists, all different interdisciplinary professionals and profiles who drive it - often arrive at the opportune moments to offer alternative narratives and approaches to eco-social problems.

Manifesta 15 Barcelona works on developing and staging alternative stories through cultural and artistic imaginary language, whilst identifying how these ideas can be implemented in a bottom-up manner.

The health of our democracies depends to a large extent on how we can sustain, activate and articulate the proximity to our territories to anticipate the urgent changes needed for our economy and our environment. For this, new dynamics are needed, a certain empirical activism that could demand changes. Can we as citizens promote them, or in the best case, be an active part of a new paradigm through transformative actions?

The city of Barcelona and its densely populated metropolitan region will be the mirror where this eco-social transformation is reflected. Manifesta 15 will act as an incubator which aims to create processes for a sustainable collective action from the different territories and cities that make up the metropolis. Collectives of artists, educators, thinkers, biologists, designers and urban planners will work together from a deep perception of the historical reality of the environment to address current problems and challenges, through artistic projects that attempt to face and show the difficulties and dangers generated by the climate emergency.

During its process, individuals, social entities and groups that integrate or activate the 15th edition of Manifesta will have a voice. Situations, processes, and cognitive maps will be created to promote this eco-social process and visitors to the biennial will be invited,

regardless of their provenance, to imagine their active role in the current state.



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## 04. The three nodes of Manifesta 15 Barcelona

Through artistic research we will address the different themes in three nodes, three interconnected nerve centres or intersections: the Besòs area, the Llobregat delta and the Collserola mountain range, which will act as relational spaces of transition and expansion. These nodes which connect with their immediate environment and the territory will articulate the three most relevant themes of the eco-social participatory process: how to imagine a future and the tools we have to do so (Besòs area), how to manage disbalances in the framework of the common (Llobregat delta) and how we want to care and be cared for (Collserola mountain range). They will also open paths for other types of mobility from/to these expanding nodes to the remaining ten cities of the first metropolitan ring, including physical and virtual nodes. Finally, the headquarters of Manifesta 15 in the former publishing house of Gustavo Gili will become the central space for discussions, debates and events and will act as a link that surrounds the three nodes, connecting them in real time as the activities in the territory progress.

The nodes of the Besòs river, the Llobregat delta and Collserola mountain range where Manifesta 15's artistic research practices will be concentrated present some

particularities that distinguish them from the rest of the territory of the metropolitan area. These are areas that geographically delimit the city and where the great urban transformations that will define the way of life of future generations are taking place. Besòs and Llobregat are aligned from river to river, they also look out and are connected to the Collserola mountain, the true lung of the metropolis.

In spanning the greater metropolitan region, Manifesta 15 is creating new ways for parts of the territory to interact and connect with each other. These three nodes will be the "expanded worktables" where artists and collectives will be able to develop different projects that together create the eco-social Magna Carta of Barcelona and its metropolitan region.

The results will inform where Manifesta 15 will work and with whom, considering the municipalities that supported the bid: Badalona, Cornellá del Llobregat, El Prat del Llobregat, l'Hospitalet del Llobregat, Granollers, Mataró, Sabadell, Sant Cugat del Vallés, Santa Coloma de Gramanet and Terrassa.

The research and formation of the pre-biennial framework has been conducted by the Spanish architect, Sergio Pardo in close collaboration with the cultural department of the City Hall of Barcelona, key regional stakeholders and the team members of Manifesta 15 Barcelona.

## 05. Manifesta 15 Barcelona Education & Mediation Programme

The Education and Mediation department is an important creative force of the biennial, that develops and takes care of the relationships with the host city and its communities. The programme is a set of interrelated research-based projects that have been born out of encounters with a variety of local actors, ranging from inhabitants and

educators to artists and that will delve into histories and present realities of the city. Having the principle of mediation at the core, it aims at making the biennial programme respond to the interests and needs of non-professional audiences, creating spaces in contemporary culture(s) where more people recognise themselves. The educational research process in Manifesta 15 Barcelona started with exploration of local pedagogical histories in (non)formal education and current state of affairs in the professional field of mediation. These two research processes will help to uncover authentic educational practices of the past as well as current policies.

## 06. Archives of Catalan Education renewal movements

The first research project by Manifesta's Education and Mediation department is focused on progressive pedagogical initiatives of educational renewal movements, that were developed in Barcelona before and after Franco's dictatorship and remained overlooked for a long time. These practices refer to the ideas of co-education in direct contact with nature and environment, direct democracy, self-care, inclusion and accessibility of education. During that time, many innovative and experimental educational initiatives, such as the Escola Moderna and Escola del Bosc, were forced to hide or stop their development, resulting in their memories being scattered across various archives in the metropolitan area of Barcelona. By drawing from the past, the project seeks to contribute to the renewal of the education system and play a role in shaping the future of education in the region.

## 07. Process

The two-year Biennial project will be developed in 2023 and 2024. During 2023, the focus will be on researching various archives and placing artefacts (artworks) from the archives in public schools in the metropolitan area (Residencies). The research will be implemented by local artists/researchers. Residency workshops in schools will be co-led by cultural practitioners and assisting mediators. In 2024, the experience of the Residencies as well as selected methodologies/practices from the archives will be discussed, tested, and reviewed with professional educators from different municipalities (Teachers' camps).

The work of Teachers' camps will result in a publication, a practical toolkit for teachers and educators featuring the revised methodologies, outcomes of the Residencies, as well as theoretical and historical context. The toolkit will be introduced and disseminated in schools and non-formal education organisations of the metropolitan area.



## Notes to the editors

### Sergio Pardo's biography:

Sergio Pardo López is an arts administrator, curator, and architect based in New York City, with a specialisation in cultural policies, creative placemaking and public art. He has participated in the curation and management of projects with institutions including The Venice Architecture Biennale, the Canal de Isabel II Foundation, and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, and advises federal and city governments globally on strategies for using culture as a tool for social engagement, civic pride and economic development. Sergio is currently the Director of the Percent for Art Program at the New York Department of Cultural Affairs and is an Adjunct Professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development.

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