

Catalonia: 19-S, against the expansion of EL Prat airport

Via [Sin Permiso](#)

For the second time this month, Catalonia has once again taken to the streets and roads to express its indignation at the economic and public powers that only listen to capital. Thousands of citizens from the popular classes (workers, peasants, children, youth) held 40 marches from the four corners of Catalonia to converge in Barcelona in protest against the airport expansion plans. The organizers speak of 90,000 participants; the local police of 10,000. The images probably reflect the truth more. In any case, it is the second major demonstration after last week's Diada on September 11. There were also rallies in Madrid and Palma de Mallorca for the same reason to expand their airports, without being as numerous. But the success of Barcelona will certainly encourage all mobilizations.

The airport expansion is a plan by the operating company AENA, with the support of the Catalan employers' association and multi-million dollar investors. To expand the airport, they had to destroy the La Ricarda lagoon, a protected, biodiverse and fragile area in the Llobregat delta. A nesting and resting place for migratory birds, it is something of a miracle that it has survived speculation in the middle of a densely inhabited area full of infrastructure. In contravention of European regulations and guidelines for climate change, they would destroy this stronghold in the name of building a "green airport".

In Catalan activism, there is already a lot of awareness and sensitivity to environmental issues and land destruction. Ten years ago, the "Eurovegas" project promoted by the American magnate Adelson failed, despite having the support of the

Generalitat (then presided over by Artur Mas) and the state (of the PP) governments. Since then, there have been significant demonstrations, especially by entities, against urban development plans by specific territories and counties. Some plans have materialized and led to the destruction of the landscape and emblematic places like the Costa Brava; others have been successfully reversed, but the vast majority have only been postponed since the 2008 crisis. Hence the need for a vigilant attitude.

Thus, the employer and speculative offensive of the Barcelona airport expansion plan has been the occasion to put all the local organizations and entities that fight for the environment, for the defense of the territory and for the mitigation of climate change on a war footing. And with great success. The broad unity of truly popular sectors and interests, based on the defense of life, of protected and biodiverse areas, of stopping mass tourism and low quality jobs, of fighting against pollution, has been able to strike a blow against this project. This shows that it is possible to defeat the big interests and their politicians.

The condition was and is to be vigilant and mobilized. This mobilization divided three governments: that of the State (PSOE defending the AENA project and Unidas Podemos against it); that of the Generalitat (with Junts' vice president defending the agreement that he himself negotiated and President Aragonés declaring that his advisors would go to the demonstration); and that of the Barcelona municipal government where the mayor has spoken out against it while her PSC partners defend it. Finally, the president of the government himself, Pedro Sánchez, withdrew the project.

But the mobilization was not only against the specific Barcelona airport project, nor just to save La Ricarda lagoon. Hundreds of banners, posters, slogans, from these tens of thousands of participants, show a concern for the future. In fact, this enlargement should do exactly the opposite of what

needs to be done today: reduce emissions, pharaonic buildings, unsustainable tourism, protect habitats... And many, many banners raise the basic problem of an already predatory system that can only survive by growing and growing, even if it kills everything else. The leftist ideology was therefore very present. This demonstration is linked to the next one being prepared next week, on September 24th, called by Fridays for the Future, under the same idea: change the system, not the climate.