

Volume Preface

The Llobregat basin has received the effect of human presence since historical times. Barcelona, one of the most populated cities in the north bank of the Mediterranean, has historically developed using – and avoiding – the river. The Llobregat has provided its water resources and has been at the base of the industrial development of the city and of the whole region. Therefore if something characterizes the story of the Llobregat is the human pressure.

As such, the story of the Llobregat is not different of some others in humanized rivers elsewhere. However, the pressures on the whole watershed are overwhelming. Hydraulic exploitation, water abstraction, channelization, and damming have added to mining exploitation, eutrophication, pollution, and the arrival of invasive species in successive steps of increasing pressures on the ecosystem. These man-made disturbances add to those naturally derived from its Mediterranean character, that is, the irregular and unreliable provision of water resources.

The wide array of pressures, together with the necessity of preserving the river resources, provides the framework to justify the Llobregat as one of the best studied and monitored river basins in Europe. Several groups from different Universities and Research Institutions, both Spanish and European, have placed their efforts to understand the hazards and resilience of such a river system. The basic and applied research in the Llobregat has been immense, and most of the times has been triggered by the water administration remarkably in the context of the WFD development and its subsequent deployment. The knowledge gathered on the Llobregat is a paradigm of collaboration between scientists and managers. Such collaboration historically characterized the management of the most problematic water issues in Catalonia.

As a whole, the proper management of the water cycle – both natural and anthropogenic – in the Llobregat River basin is a cumbersome (but challenging) task, requiring a lot of “fine-tuning” effort. Its successful achievement will be only feasible with the active and collaborative involvement of science, authorities, and stakeholders participation.

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The Llobregat

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