

# PLAGA

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MACBA STUDY CENTRE

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The concept of plague indicates a relationship between life and territory:

life forms that, from this point on, will be considered excessive in a given space. Being a plague means that

you are categorized as an agent that destabilises a standardized relationship system. The plague is a mathematical notion and an economic matrix: the number of individuals considered problematic for a given economic operation in a territory. There are about 50,000,000 pigs in Spain. These pigs are animals bred for the purpose of being sold as dead animal protein. There are also 1,000,000 wild boars. The former are part of the life-and-death economy of contemporary capitalism; the latter are considered a nuisance because they get in the way of real-estate speculation in forest areas. Although both are of the same species —*Sus scrofa*— pigs are considered breeding stock and wild boars, a pest. Lives to be produced and lives to be eliminated, respectively. The exhibition ties the concept of plague into the way living things are categorized. Eucalyptus, parrots, urban grasses, water, native species and invasive species; the Cultural Ecologies group of the Independent Studies Programme offers us a critical look at the different forms of “nature” management currently applied.

The cartography, which occupies a central position in the hall, suggests a critical exercise involving the hegemonic planisphere and the map of the city of Barcelona. It indicates the location of the problems that form part of the exhibition, as well as some of the trade, migration and resource extraction flows that converge in the city.

*Loros rebeldes (Rebel parrots)* is a polyphonic video designed to link strange files (interviews, memes, animal languages, news and other materials) to discuss the political status of migrant animals, with the Argentine parrot as

the focus. Argentine parrots arrived on the Iberian Peninsula as pets to be raised in cages because they were a smaller and more economical alternative to other similar species, such as the macaw, bred for the same purpose. They escaped or were released by their owners because they were noisy; they adapted to life in the city and learned to coexist with other species. The only threat they pose is the size of their nests (which other species often occupy after the parrots abandon them) and the noise of constant communication with which they ensure the well-being of the rest of the community. They speak loudly because their vocal volume has increased to be heard over city noises. There is, however, a growing economy around the forms of extermination derived from their being labelled as a plague.

Eucalyptus trees originated in Australia and in the mid-20th century they spread to other parts of the globe as part of an industrial project aimed at producing fuel, paper for offices, pizza boxes, books and so on. Although there is a consensus among the scientific community and a large section of the population that they should be considered a plague, the European and Spanish legislative frameworks do not recognize any species of the genus *Eucalyptus* as invasive.

The piece *Real Decreto Exóticas Invasoras* (*Royal Decree on Invasive Aliens*) is an experiment in cutting up the text that regulates the Spanish state's actions with regard to species considered alien and invasive, and seeking transparency in it. The intervention plays with the approximation and deletion of words and thus suggests intratextual readings and relationships. The terms and practices of this text invite us to reflect on the frameworks for the management of living beings and control over life.

*Revolutionary Herbarium* is an expanding compendium of ethnobotanical drawings that elucidates how some me-

dicinal plants are banned and in the process of being made invisible and monopolized by pharmaceutical lobbies. The herbarium is conceived as a work in progress to be enriched with new plants over time. The exhibition includes plants from South America and Europe, as well as several pages of medicinal plants collected in Barcelona's green areas.

The work of gathering accounts of hydroelectric power production seeks to inspire a reflection on this capitalization of water's strength that threatens communities and interdependent ecosystems in the territories where hydroelectric power plants and dams are located.

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