

## Call for an MSc research project

### Urban food commons: scaling up or out?

**Requisite:** Student of the Master in Interdisciplinary Studies in Environmental, Economic and Social Sustainability (MEISAES, ICTA-UAB) or alike. She/he must be fluent in Spanish and/or Catalan. She/he must be willing to do interviews.

**Research context:** The COVID-19 emergency has revealed the extreme fragility of conventional food systems to border closure and movement restrictions and added new concerns about the sustainability of the current agrobusiness model. At the same time, the pandemic has also put in evidence the potential of alternative urban agriculture experiences as a food security solution, especially for vegetables and perishable goods. The scalability and sustainability of urban agriculture, however, requires solving some puzzles. On the one hand, there is a need to better understand the relationships between urban agriculture and material and energy fluxes of cities, the “urban metabolism”, i.e., to assess the impacts on the environment from urban food production activities. A barrier that has so far prevented further progress in said direction is the ever-increasing diversity of experiences, which range from conventional ground farming in brown fields and greenhouses, all the way to aeroponic vertical indoor farming. On the other hand, there is a dearth of knowledge on the organizational and governance models associated to current experiences and their scalability. A central conundrum in this regard is the extent to which different processes along the food chain shall benefit from centralized (scaling up) vs. community networks or market governance (scaling out).

**Description & Objectives:** This project addresses those knowledge gaps through a comparative case study of the food system in the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona. The thesis will grow out of a preliminary literature review and a series of exploratory interviews with representatives of alternative urban food system initiatives. The results of the project will not only contribute to the design of policies that support alternative urban food systems but also give visibility to the diversity of experiences that currently populate the urban agricultural field in the Area. The student will co design with the supervisors

**Technical details:** The thesis will be directed by Sergio Villamayor-Tomas (ICTA) and a second supervisor. We expect that a revised version of the MSc Thesis to be part of a publication on the topic.

**If you are interested on writing your MSc thesis on this topic, please contact**

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