



## INTERREG EUROPE POLICY LEARNING PLATFORM - PEER REVIEW

### Public-social-private river governance and green infrastructure in Quart de Poblet, Comunitat Valenciana, Spain

(Intercambio técnico / Peer Review - Gobernanza fluvial público-social-privada  
e infraestructura verde en Quart de Poblet)

#### Base document



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**Cover photo:** Citizen awareness visit to the Túria river.

## 1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT QUART DE POBLET

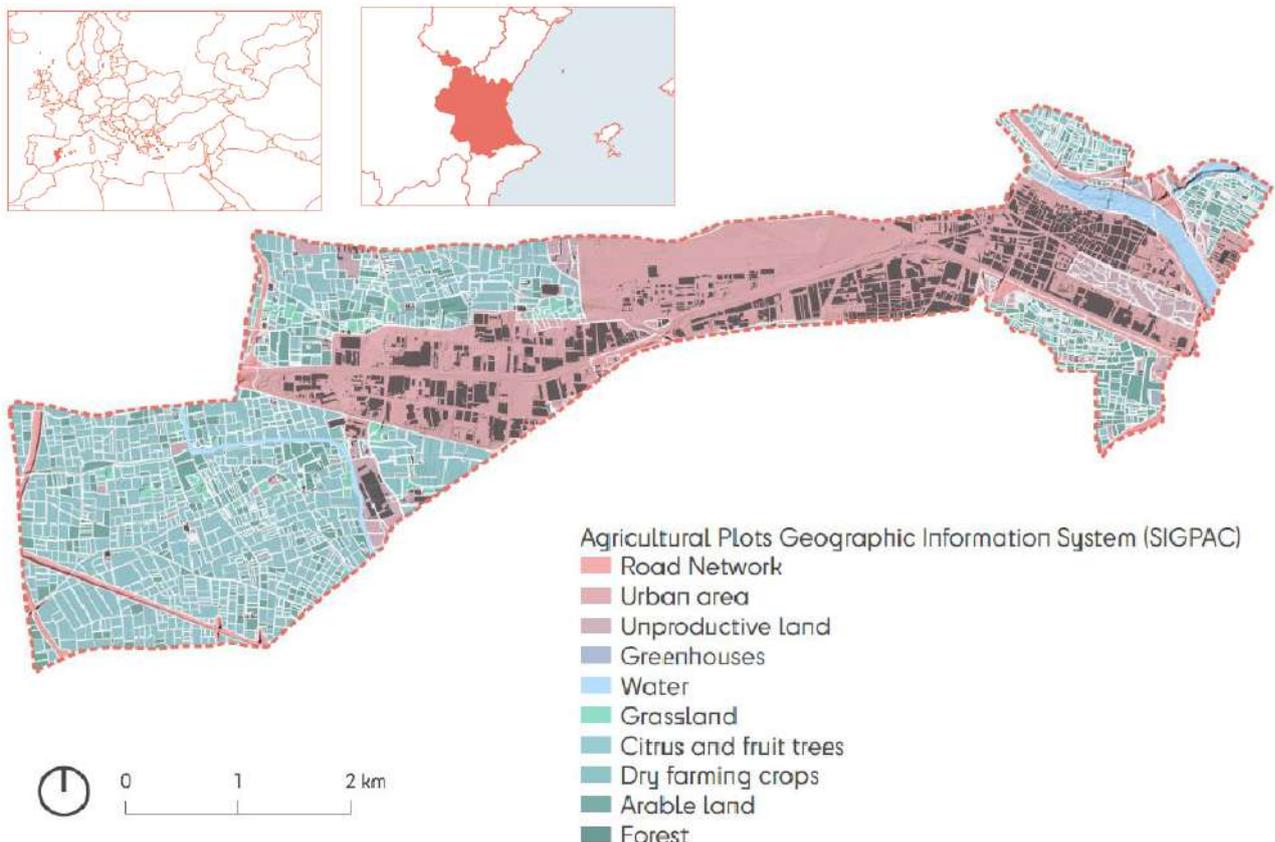
The town of *Quart de Poblet* is located in the central coastal part of the Valencian Community in the State of Spain. It covers 19.6 km<sup>2</sup> and is 18 km long from one end to the other. Bordering the sea, it is located only 4.9 km from Valencia, the capital city. The **Túria River** (diverted from its natural course to run into the Mediterranean via a channel) runs through *Quart de Poblet* from the north; and to the west lies the **Barranc del Poio (Poio Ravine)** (with its mouth in the **Albufera** natural park coastal lagoon), as shown in the map. Along with 17 other towns, *Quart de Poblet* forms part of the *Horta Sud* Region (*Huerta Sur*), in the Hydrographic Demarcation of Xúquer (*Júcar* in Spanish). The town is located at an altitude of 40 m, surrounded by fruit crops with urban areas, housing estates, industrial estates and transport infrastructure (motorways and railways), a landscape typical of the metropolitan environment of a large city (Valencia, 800,000 inhabitants).

- **Quart de Poblet population data**

<b>Population:</b> 25,035 inhabitants (2021)	<b>Density:</b> 1249 inhabitants/km <sup>2</sup>	<b>Economically active population:</b> 60.8%
<b>Average age of the population:</b> 44 years	<b>Per capita income:</b> €11,000 (2019)	<b>Unemployment rate:</b> 12.6%

Source: INE data (National Statistics Institute, 2021)

- **Location of the Valencian Community in Europe** (upper left), the **Valencia Province** (upper right) and the **Town of Quart de Poblet** (centre, with the river Túria and Barranc del Poio (Poio ravine) highlighted in light blue, including land uses throughout the administrative district).





**Map 1.** Territorial situation of the Valencian Community, the Town of Quart de Poblet and its land uses.

- **Economic activity**

The economic activity of *Quart de Poblet* is focused on the tertiary services sector, representing about 77%, and industry occupying 15%. A large area of the town is occupied by an industrial estate which houses transnational companies, traditional industries and distribution warehouses. Construction accounts for 6.6% and agricultural activity 1.8%. The main crops are irrigated: orange trees, pear trees, vegetables, onions, potatoes, etc. Cereals, vines, olive and carob trees are grown on dry land.

- **Leisure and tourism**

*Quart de Poblet's* cultural activity centres upon visits to monuments and emblematic buildings which narrate the history of the town (the old quarter, the medieval cistern, the Avenue and San Onofre Hermitage, the Molí de Vila Auditorium, the Arab Aqueduct and the Enric Valor town library).

*"Quart de Poblet has the privilege of being located on the Túria River, so life here has always been related to it" ([Quart tourism website](#)). It has green areas and significant ecological value for passive leisure, contemplation of nature and environmental awareness (Riu Túria Park, connected to the Túria Gardens, the old riverbed to Villamarchante, and a picnic area, *the Pinaeta*). Within the Túria Natural Park, the *Official Water Route* stands out, running through part of the town's Hydraulic Heritage, Quart's Acequia and its two branches, Mislata's irrigation channel and various wooden bridges, together with the Centre of Interpretation managed by *Fundación Limne* and its exhibition *Fets d'Aigua* (Water facts).*



Photo: Quart de Poblet Tourism.

- **Key data on the state of biodiversity and ecosystems**

According to the town Urban Plan, *Quart de Poblet* demonstrates a strong process of anthropization as a result of residential and industrial development alongside agricultural transformation that have destroyed the original landscape. Due to the large surface area that the crops occupy in the district, the areas of natural vegetation are scarce, reducing the presence of forest mass to very localized points. This highlights the fertile plain landscape on the banks of the River Túria next to the town centre.

Water resources: *Quart de Poblet* has a flat relief without orographic elevations that make up simple hydrographic networks, consisting mainly of the Túria River Basin and the Barranc del Poio. As it occupies the plain adjacent to the Gulf of Valencia, marine intrusion problems are present. These include high salt content and the existence of a highly degraded upper level of the aquifer as a result of chemical fertilizers from agricultural activities, industrial discharges and urban wastewater infiltration. Another consequence of anthropic activity is the intense uptake in aquifer levels with the consequent high vulnerability of groundwater.



Vegetation: Only 2% of the area of the district is forest vegetation, dominated by rosemary, vegetation associated with rivers and ravines, grasslands and kermes oaks.

Protected areas: A small part of *Quart de Poblet's* surface area belongs to the **Túria River Natural Park** (see photos) of approximately 62 hectares and 1.3 km of river. Natural Park status is the maximum protection offered to an area in Valencian regulations. The Túria National Park was declared as such in 2007 and was expanded in 2021 to incorporate all the towns from Xulella (Chulilla) to Valencia (+50 linear km).

In Quart's council's zoning plan, the main protection item is called the SNU for Flood Protection, which includes the natural riverbeds and the Túria river. The total floodable area in Quart de Poblet is 693.20 ha (35% of the district area).



Source: <https://parquesnaturales.gva.es/va/web/pn-turia>



Source: Quart de Poblet Council

Land uses: The main land uses in the district area are urban, occupying 24% for residences, industry, the tertiary sector and facilities. Other usage comprises of the land destined for agriculture, extractive activities and land for livestock.



● Alliance between the LIMNE Foundation and Quart de Poblet City Council

LIMNE<sup>1</sup> is a non-profit foundation created in 2007 by scientists with extensive training and experience in freshwater ecosystems and their management in both rivers and Mediterranean wetlands. LIMNE specializes in biodiversity research and the mitigation of anthropogenic impacts on aquatic environments through practical river restoration and nature-based solutions, including the participation of society and public-private partnerships.

LIMNE's four main lines of action are:

- i) restoration of rivers and wetlands through land stewardship, ii) community science, iii) environmental volunteering and iv) environmental education.

Concerned about the disconnection of the Túria riverbed from the towns it runs through and returning it to its natural course, the Limne Foundation and the Quart de Poblet City Council have collaborated in various programmes since 2012, which include a river restoration project and the management of an Environmental Interpretation Centre, carrying out the actions detailed in the table on the following page.

**LIMNE FUNDACIÓ PER A LA RESTAURACIÓ DELS RIUS**

Limne: non-profit foundation established in 2007

**Field of work:** Freshwater Ecosystems Management and Restoration in Mediterranean rivers and wetlands.

- biodiversity **research**;
- **mitigation** of anthropogenic impacts;
- river **restoration** and nature-based solutions;
- **society engagement** and public-private partnerships.

research

restoration

social engagement



Likewise, LIMNE and Quart de Poblet City Council are collaborating in this Peer Review of the Interreg Europe programme, with the aim of improving the public-social-private governance of the district river ecosystems, working on the restoration of the urban riverside, in compliance with article 28.4 of Law 10/2001 dated on July 5 of the National Hydrological Plan, and promoting an active participation process in line with Directive 2000/60/EC.

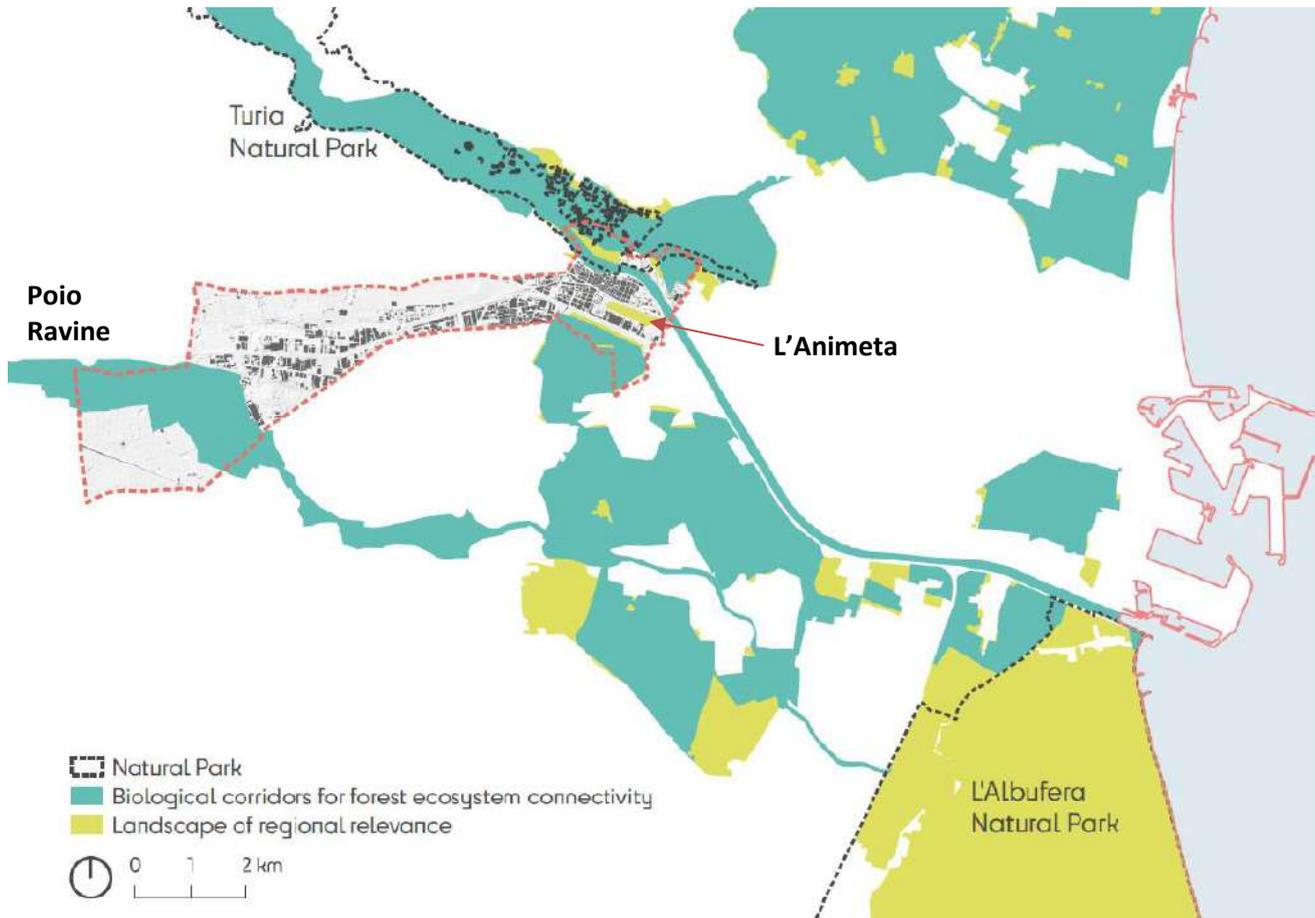
These collaborations between the public, social and private sectors must result in improvements in the Valencian Community Green Infrastructure in general and, in particular, in the connectivity between the Túria Natural Park and the El Poio ravine, and the Albufera Natural Park in Valencia. The map below indicates the town location, the two protected areas and the corridors of biological continuity. On the right, the presence of the Port of Valencia provides a reference point for the location of the city.

<sup>1</sup> Official webpage: [www.limne.org](http://www.limne.org)



**Table 1. Partnership framework Municipality of Quart de Poblet- LIMNE Foundation**

Project	Main Actions
<p>River Restoration Project: The <b>restoration</b> of a 44,700 m2 area of the Túria river (2012-present).</p>	<p>Pruning and clearing work, creation of paths, elimination of American cane (<i>Arundo donax</i>) strips of as well as other invasive vegetation from monoculture. Planting different strata of native species (including endangered).</p>
<p><b>Technical advice</b> (2019-present)</p>	<p>Limne has strengthened the alliance between both entities through a technical advisory service focused on processing aid and methods of financing river restoration actions. It also participates in the Town Environment Council and, as a guest, occasionally attends the meetings of the Association of Towns linked to the Túria Natural Park. Between the City Council and Limne, there is also an attempt to bring together different entities in order to create a Consortium for the renaturalisation of the new Túria riverbed (a grey infrastructure created from the floods of 1957).</p>
<p><b>Nature Interpretation Centre (CIN)</b> (2018-present)</p>	<p>Management of the Centre located within the Túria Natural Park whose objective is the promotion of environmental education and citizen participation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● School workshops</li> <li>● Family activities</li> <li>● Exhibitions, conferences and seminars</li> <li>● Research and scientific publications</li> <li>● Management of river restoration projects</li> </ul>
<p><b>Riverbank species nursery</b> (2022)</p>	<p>The City Council donates Limne a space for the start-up of a nursery specialized in riverbank vegetation.</p>
<p><b>Educational tours</b> (2018-present)</p>	<p>Weekly environmental interpretation tours along the banks of the River Túria open to the general public.</p>
<p><b>Volunteering</b> (2012-present)</p>	<p>Public sessions open to citizens to involve them in the conservation and improvement of the Túria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Plantation of helophytes and shrubs</li> <li>● Waste removal</li> <li>● Wildlife tracking</li> </ul>



**Map 2.** Location of Quart de Poblet in relation to protected areas and regional biological corridors.

## 2 POLITICAL-ADMINISTRATIVE COMPETENCES IN REGARDS TO RIVER GOVERNANCE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE.

At state level, the Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Law<sup>2</sup>, as stipulated in Law 33/2015, incorporates the concept of Green Infrastructure (IV) in the legal system, and article 15.1 determines the obligation to develop a **State Strategy for Green Infrastructure and Connectivity and Ecological Restoration (EEIVCRE)**, with the participation of the Autonomous Communities. The Law is intended to be in harmony with the Communication of the European Commission on green infrastructures<sup>3</sup> and also to incorporate some of the objectives of the EU Strategy on biodiversity until 2022.

The **Green Infrastructure of the Valencian Community** is defined by *Law 5/2014 on Spatial Planning, Urbanism and Landscape*, subsequently endorsed in Legislative Decree 1/2021<sup>4</sup> of 18th June, in articles 4, 5 and others. According to this regulation, “The green infrastructure is the basic territorial system made up of

<sup>2</sup> Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Law 42/2007 of 13th December.

<sup>3</sup> Communication from the European Parliament Commission to the European Parliament, Council, Economic and Social Committee and the Regional Green Infrastructure Committee: Improvement of natural capital in Europe. 06/05/2013. COM/2013/0249 end

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=DOGV-r-2021-90283#dd>



*the following spaces: the areas and places of the most relevant environmental, cultural, agricultural and landscape value; the critical areas of the territory whose transformation implies environmental risks or costs for the community; and the territorial framework of ecological corridors and functional connections that link all the above elements.”*

Within this framework, the Green Infrastructure is a competence of territorial, not environmental, planning and is specified in different planning instruments, both regional and in the general structural plans of local scope. For the town of Quart de Poblet, it is detailed later in the Town General Structural Plan.

According to the Law, once the Green Infrastructure has been previously delimited at council level, it constitutes the reference for structuring the planning decisions for residential, endowment and economic uses, and must be integrated into all sectors and areas of the city. **Thus, the regulation of the different uses must be in coherence with the Green Infrastructure, so that nature and landscape values enhance the quality of life of the population.**

## 2.1 From the green infrastructure and national planning, to governing the management and restoration of the river environment in Quart de Poblet.

At a community level, the Water Framework Directive<sup>5</sup> establishes the objective of conserving and restoring the good condition of our rivers. Towards this goal, the coordination and participation of all public and private actors is essential<sup>6</sup>. In order to *generate proposals for improvement in collaboration with institutional actors and stakeholders*, in 2020 the [Green Paper on Water Governance in Spain](#)<sup>7</sup> was written. The green paper addresses water governance to respond to the people, economic activities and ecosystems that regulate the hydrological cycle, and introduces the concept of **river stewardship**, which is discussed later.

In Spain, state **hydrological planning** is organized through basins (*Demarcaciones* (DH) and Hydrographic Confederations (CH)), with Quart de Poblet in the area of the **Xúquer (Júcar in Spanish) River Hydrographic Confederation**. The map on the following page locates the Xúquer DH in Spain (left), and the blue grid of the water courses within the DH, indicating the location of Quart (right, large map).

### - Basin planning and management structure: Xúquer River Basin Hydrological Plan

The Túria River, which runs through Quart de Poblet, forms part of the territorial planning scope of the Xúquer River Hydrological Plan, whose promoting body is the Xúquer Hydrographic Confederation. Said Plan has identified the Sustainability of irrigation: traditional irrigation in the lower reaches of the Túria and Xúquer as one of the main problems that prevent the achievement of the district hydrological planning objectives, such

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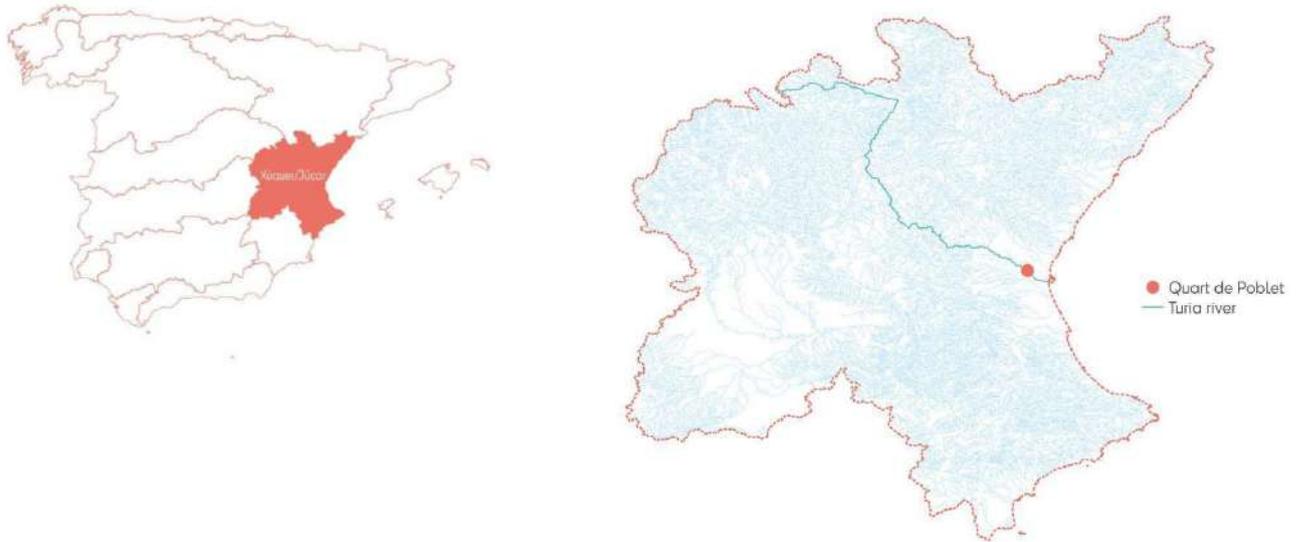
<sup>5</sup> Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and Council, of 23rd October, 2000, establishing a community framework for action in the field of water policy.

<sup>6</sup> The WFD expressly considers that “The success of this Directive depends on the close cooperation and coherent action of the Community, the Member States and local authorities, as well as on the information, consultation and participation of the public, including the users.” Consideration 14th.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/agua/temas/sistema-espaniol-gestion-agua/Libro-Verde-de-la-Gobernanza-del-Agua.aspx>



as achieving balance and harmonisation between regional and sectoral development, increasing the availability of the resource, protecting its quality, rationalising its use in harmony with the environment and other natural resources.



**Map 3.** Hydrographic basins in Spain and the hydrographic network of the Xúquer river basin, with the location of Quart de Poblet.

At a **Restoration of inland water ecosystems** level (Green-Blue Infrastructure) a multi-scale and multifunctional planning converges, providing an action and planning framework for the different local entities -Quart de Poblet in this case- which in turn follow the guidelines of both the Autonomous Community and the Spanish State, always in accordance with their legal and geographical competences.

Spain is carrying out the **National River Restoration Strategy (ENRR)**<sup>8</sup> in compliance with the European Union Water Framework Directive, and through the basin hydrological plans and the Directive for the evaluation and management of flood risks. The ENRR includes a set of actions aimed at preserving and restoring Spain's rivers to good condition, minimizing the risk of flooding, enhancing their cultural heritage, promoting the rational use of river spaces and encouraging the sustainable development of rural areas.

Additionally, the **river area in urban landscapes** such as Quart de Poblet is a legally complex space where different state and regional powers concur in varying intensities depending on the competence exercised (e.g. public domain hydraulic management<sup>9</sup>, spatial planning, environment, urbanism). Towns which fall within the state and regional regulation framework also have especially relevant powers in this territorial area, such as urban planning.

<sup>8</sup><https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/agua/temas/delimitacion-y-restauracion-del-dominio-publico-hidraulico/estrategia-nacional-restauracion-rios/>

<sup>9</sup>



Regarding the current water governance framework, parties with different competences over various aspects of the riverbed planning and management are mediating (see table): basin authority (Xúquer Hydrographic Confederation), local administration (Quart de Poblet Town Council, Diputació de Valencia), and regional (Generalitat Valenciana) as well as other applicants such as the Limne Foundation itself.

**Table 2. Scope of competencies in the improvement and conservation of riverbeds.**

	PROMOTOR	COMPETENCES	REGULATIONS	ACTIONS
<b>ACTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT AND CONSERVATION OF RIVERBEDS</b>	Basin Authorities	Riverbed actions in non-urban land or actions on non-ordinary riverbeds in urban sections subject to agreement or by initiative of the Basin Agency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consolidated Text of the Law of Waters.</li> <li>• Public Domain Hydraulic Regulations (art. 126 and 126bis).</li> <li>• Royal Decree 903/2010, of 9th July, on evaluation and flood risk management (section I.h) Annex I).</li> <li>• Royal Decree 984/1989, of 28th July, determining the organic structure depending on the Hydrographic Confederation Presidency (art. 4.k).</li> </ul>	Riverbed actions according to priorities, except for the removal of urban solid waste and vegetation treatments in riverbeds for fire prevention.
	Local and Regional Authorities	Actions in urban spaces. The removal of solid urban waste from the riverbed and vegetation treatment in riverbeds and areas under fire prevention control. Should they affect the vegetation in the riverbed, fire control zone or the morphology of the riverbed, authorisation from the River Basin Agency would be required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consolidated Text of the Law of Waters.</li> <li>• Royal Decree 984/1989, of 28th July, by which the organic structure depends upon the Presidency of the Hydrographic Confederations. Public Domain Hydraulic Regulations.</li> </ul>	Ordinary riverbed actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removal of assimilable urban waste (rubbish, rubble, furniture remains, etc.).</li> <li>• Maintenance of riparian vegetation, which due to its density can cause clogging, bad odours, puddles, etc.</li> <li>• Protective flood prevention works in urban spaces.</li> <li>• Treatments of vegetation in riverbeds to prevent the spread of fires, when required.</li> </ul>
	Other applicants (Physical, legal or administrative)	In any event, authorization from the basin Agency will be required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consolidated Text of the Law of Waters.</li> <li>• Royal Decree 984/1989, of 28th July, by which the organic structure depends upon the Presidency of the Hydrographic Confederations. Public Domain Hydraulic Regulations</li> </ul>	For any form of riverbed actions, be they within the urban area or not.

Source: Ministry for the ecological transition and the demographic challenge. 2019. *Good Practices in Actions for Conservation, Maintenance and Improvement of Riverbeds.*



## 2.2 Plans and programmes in Quart de Poblet

- **Green infrastructure in the town Plan for both territorial and urban planning.**

Quart de Poblet is only affected by two Territorial Action Plans or superior planning instruments of a supra-municipal nature, namely, the Sectoral Territorial Action Plan on Flood Risk Prevention in the Valencian Community (PATRICOVA) and the Valencian Metropolitan Territorial Action Plan (PATEVAL).

In this regard, the General Structural Plan (urban planning) provisionally approved by Quart de Poblet Town Council and as a review of its urban planning in 2002, **Quart de Poblet has integrated the green infrastructure defined in its planning cartography.** *“Green Infrastructure must be adopted as a basic planning criterion. Since the plan incorporates urban developments conditioned to the development of hydraulic infrastructures provided for by the Júcar Hydrographic Confederation, as regards flooding, the resulting green infrastructure has been adopted after the execution of said infrastructures, without prejudice to the fact that, until its execution, the existing flood zones should also be considered green infrastructures.”*

Likewise, this General Structural Plan indicates that, as a guide, and in no case exclusive, the constitutive elements of the Green Infrastructure are: non-motorized routes, vegetation, water, socialising spaces, urban furniture, systems to control environmental conditions and parameters, cultural and/or visual resources, spatial structures that define the character of the place and didactic mechanisms.

It also rules that, in order to ensure adequate connectivity of the different spaces that make up the town district, both with the outside and between themselves, the detailed design of the Green Infrastructure will guarantee the existence of corridors. The connections with the exterior green infrastructure outlined in the plans must be executed in a manner that can guarantee their functional continuity. **There will be at least two north-south corridors that facilitate the connection with the Parc Natural del Túria. These corridors will form part of the structural Green Infrastructure** (see map 2, above).

In this context of territorial connection, in addition to the river Túria and the Poio ravine, it is worth mentioning the *Animeta* peri-urban, located in the urban area and the only free space connecting the two river courses (see Map 2).

- **Flood management plan**

The Flood Risk Management Plans take into account aspects such as the analysis of the measures' cost-efficiency, the extent of the floods and their evacuation routes, and land use planning, among other aspects. They cover all points of flood risk management, focusing on prevention, protection and preparedness, and contemplate flood forecasting and early warning systems. In addition, they include hydrological-forest restoration measures, improvement of water retention and controlled flooding of certain areas.

According to the Xúquer Hydrographic Confederation Flood Risk Management Plan, Quart de Poblet is located in an area defined as an Area with Significant Potential Risk of Flooding (ASPRF), affecting a population of some 45,000 inhabitants. The ASPRF highlights the problem of anthropic pressure and the occupation of the fluvial space for which the Xúquer Hydrological Plan suggests actions aimed at improving the impacts and risks at morphological and hydrological levels, which can affect the bed, the margins, the occupation of the fluvial space or the presence of invasive species.

In this sense, and within the framework of the LIMNE - City Council collaboration, a proposal has been submitted to seek assistance in the conservation and rehabilitation of riparian ecosystems in the Túria River



affected by periodic flooding. Through the application of **Solutions based on Nature** (e.g. control and management of Invasive Alien Species, restoration of riverbanks, stabilization of margins, bioengineering, removal of infrastructure, etc.) it is intended to **favour the resilience** of these ecosystems **against episodes of flooding**.

- **Local Urban Agenda 2030.**

Within the framework of the UN strategy and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals SDG, the Local Urban Agenda 2030 places the management of green infrastructure in urban and peri-urban areas, highlighting SDG 6 (Clean water and basic sanitation), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), 13 (Climate action) and 15 (life of terrestrial ecosystems).

Quart de Poblet Council's Department of Sustainable Urban Development is currently carrying out the participatory process with workshops, conferences and sectoral meetings as well as with citizens to address the challenges of the SDGs. The objective is to create a mission statement and a plan of action to execute the Agenda, prioritizing "a proposal for the future, through which a desirable scenario is to be established after the implementation of the Urban Agenda, addressing full inclusion in the town design."

### 3 CITIZENS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC-SOCIAL ALLIANCES.

Given the seriousness of the social and environmental problems which society is facing, all parties involved (companies and other organizations in the productive sector, citizens, non-profit entities) are urged to create alliances so that, alongside public powers, they can achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets so as to restore biological diversity and enhance the public benefits it provides.

Long-term management, restoration and conservation of sensitive ecosystems such as rivers and wetlands involve a wide range of actors, including public administrations, private parties, as well as local NGOs and environmental groups. For this reason, **adequate policies, regulations and governance structures are required for the correct management and conservation of the elements which comprise the green infrastructure**. Given the purpose of this Exchange (*peer review*), we will focus on the relationship between the local administration of Quart de Poblet and organised civil society (Third Environmental Sector), without undermining the important role which other actors also have in relation to this exchange (see Table below).

In Spain, the concept of collaborations, alliances or "partnerships" between the public sector and civil society is of a diffuse nature. The concept of public-private collaboration has a very broad meaning which arose from company collaboration in the construction of public infrastructures. However, the dynamism of society and public administrations has gone beyond the ambit of infrastructures to embrace collaboration in other areas (educational, environmental, cultural, etc.) between the public sector and others, non-public who, therefore, are included in the broad category of "private".

**Table 3. Main parties involved in the Quart de Poblet exchange-peer review.**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Regional and Provincial Administration</li> <li>● Basin Agency (Xúquer CH)</li> <li>● Public service agencies (Electricity network)</li> <li>● Local administration (towns in the region)</li> </ul>
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- NGOs and river stewardship
- Landscaping and ecological restoration companies.
- Research and development centres
- Companies with CSR

The wealth of civil society actors means that the name “public-private partnerships” obscures the potential of other parties’ collaboration whose interests do not stem from an economic/commercial aspect. This is what we believe happens when Third Sector entities (which are neither Administrative nor commercial) carry out joint initiatives with public authorities to cover social needs. To identify, when necessary, the features of the intervention of non-profit and social purpose entities in this document, we will call them “**public-social partnerships**” (PSP). This will highlight the fact that the counterpart of the Administration is a non-profit entity and is not developing an economic activity nor is working for the economic benefit of the Administration.

#### **Digression: Public-social collaboration, co-governance, co-management and co-production**

The practice of public-social collaboration has also had a theoretical and practical development linked to what has been defined in the literature as co-construction or co-planning of policies, closely linked to governance or “co-governance” (Brandsen and Pestoff, 2006). An added level to co-governance is the execution and management of such decisions, “**co-management**”, which occurs when **Administrations cooperate with private actors in the provision of public services**, which means that non-governmental actors have a voice in the process, service design, or spend time or other resources (e.g. money, skills, experience) on public service delivery (Verschuere et al, 2012).

In this context, the interest of **community co-production** can be highlighted, where users, volunteers and community groups each play a key role. Thanks to regular and stable relationships between professionalised service providers (in any sector) and service users or other members of the community, all parties have the capacity to make substantial contributions (Bovaird, 2007) and generate a form of production public service with great citizen involvement (Bovaird, 2007; Pestoff, 2012)<sup>10</sup>.

Bovaird, T. (2007). Beyond engagement and participation: User and community coproduction of public services. *Public administration review*, 67(5), 846-860.

Pestoff, V. (2012). Co-production and third sector social services in Europe: Some concepts and evidence. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 23(4), 1102-1118.

Verschuere, B., Brandsen, T., & Pestoff, V. (2012). Co-production: The state of the art in research and the future agenda. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 23(4), 1083-1101.

Brandsen, T., & Pestoff, V. (2006). Co-production, the third sector and the delivery of public services: An introduction. *Public management review*, 8(4), 493-501.

<sup>10</sup> Co-production must be differentiated from other more market-oriented concepts, such as outsourcing, privatisation or private concession for profit. And also, of the concept of governance, in which there is implicit a certain role of leadership and/or predominance of governments over the other parties (of the market or civil society) who, on the other hand, also take part in the elaboration of public policies.



The very concept of “*co-production*” implies a change in the role of the public authorities. It is assumed that the Public Administrations cease to be “the” mechanism that has the exclusivity to solve collective problems and become part of a network of actors that co-produce public policies under conditions of equality. **An especially relevant example of such public-social alliances in nature conservation and restoration is found in the land stewardship of rivers.**

In Spain, the **Land Stewardship** figure is protected under the Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Law 42/2007, which seeks the conservation and proper use of natural, cultural and landscape values and resources by users of the territory, encouraging public administrations to enter into agreements with land stewardship entities for the conservation of biodiversity. In Spain, this figure was developed and expanded from the beginning of the 21st century as an adaptation and evolution of the existing *land and river trust* systems in other countries with different cultures and legislative frameworks. The Land Stewardship Platform (public) and the Forum of Networks and Land Stewardship Entities (society) are two such support structures that exist on a national level.

In Spain, land/river stewardship initiatives are based on agreements between land ownership, private or public, and the so-called land stewardship entities, associations and foundations being the most common. These initiatives can take the form of management agreements, concessions, conservation authorisations, service contracts, verbal agreements, leases, sales, donations, legacies, exchanges, usufruct, etc. In the fluvial field, river contracts (Green Paper, 2020) are also framed under stewardship models.

The LPNB defines a “stewardship entity” as the “*public or private, non-profit organisation which carries out initiatives that include making land stewardship agreements for the conservation of natural heritage and biodiversity*” (art. 3.37 LPNB).

Law 42/2007 empowers public organizations to act as stewardship entities of the territory and sign agreements between owners and users. This possibility, although legally permitted, would require further reflection on whether the term “land stewardship” relates to making the dynamism in conservation of organised civil society based on ethical values visible, rather than in highlighting the use of voluntary instruments in conservation.

One feature that has kept many land stewardship initiatives running is their drive for “land stewardship entities,” which, in almost all cases, has been the catalyst for a stewardship initiative and also its maintenance, beyond the short term.

**River stewardship** is a type of land stewardship whose purpose is to promote agreements that allow for the improvement, restoration and conservation of the rivers, aquifers and wetlands’ ecological status (Green Paper, 2020). This participation strategy promotes co-responsibility and cooperation on the part of the owners and managers of the territory and the users of the water in the protection of its good state and biodiversity, allowing the integration of water-territory-society<sup>11</sup>.

In this sense, it is worth highlighting the collaboration agreement between the Júcar Hydrographic Confederation and the **LIMNE Foundation** to carry out **river stewardship** actions for the maintenance, conservation, recovery, restoration and improvement of the Public Hydraulic Domain, which also includes the Túria area in Quart de Poblet.

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<sup>11</sup> Water governance Green Paper, page 122.



## **4 CHALLENGES FOR THE ANALYSIS OF RIVER GOVERNANCE IN QUART DE POBLET**

Quart de Poblet Town Council, in collaboration with the LIMNE Foundation, wishes to improve the governance structure of the river courses and their surroundings, as part of the town's Green Infrastructure. The application addresses biodiversity restoration and conservation of rivers, wetlands and their surrounding landscapes. The long-term management, restoration and conservation of these sensitive ecosystems involves a wide range of parties (see Table) and involves exploring the governance of the river environment taking into account its technical, legal and public policy aspects.

The expected result of the exchange-Peer Review is to share knowledge and experiences in order to modify and improve existing policies for the fluvial landscape and wetlands, and in relation to the Green Infrastructure and Landscape Plan of the Valencian Community. All the aforementioned by understanding the Green Infrastructure as a result of a governance of public-private action in these places.

### **Question 1**

- What mechanisms can be used to make the long-term collaboration between the town council, the Limne Foundation and other NGOs more effective in the question of river management and restoration? How do the regional and Basin administrations fit into this collaboration? What actions and needs can be identified in the collaboration between LIMNE / town council and what instruments can give them stability and transparency?

### **Question 2**

- How can a Town Council become involved in the broader policies of the district for the governance of green infrastructure, the 2030 agenda and in collaboration with other administrations with more specific competence in the matter? What means, obligations and actions are necessary for this?