Disputatio of Barcelona 2022

Ten years of Disputationes 2013–2022

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[Logos of the co-organising institutions]
In the scholastic system of education of the Middle Ages, the *Disputationes* offered a formalised method of debate designed to uncover and establish truths in theology and the sciences. Fixed rules governed the process, requiring a reference to traditional authorities and a thorough understanding of each argument by both sides. The famous *Disputatio of Barcelona*, convened in several sessions by king James I of Aragon, in the summer of 1263, was the most important and best known of the interfaith *Disputationes* that took place between Christian and Jewish theologians in the late Middle Ages. The *disputantes* were Friar Paulus Christianus (a Dominican and converted Jewish rabbi) and Rabbi Moses ben Nachman (also known as Nachmanides, or Benastruch Sa Porta) of Girona, the most important scholar of Judaism of his time. They discussed theological questions in front of the king, his court, and the most important men, both Christians and Jews, of the already prosperous and influential city of Barcelona. The Catalan medieval philosopher and writer Raimundus Lullus (1232–1315/16) probably attended the sessions.

Inspired by this original *Disputatio*, the Academia Europaea-Barcelona Knowledge Hub (AE-BKH) began organising the modern-day *Disputatio of Barcelona* series of annual debates starting in 2013. Bringing together two renowned experts (*disputantes*) holding different viewpoints on a common topic of social relevance, the series, now in its 10th edition, has covered a wide variety of topics in the exact, natural and social sciences and humanities. The debates follow a similar format consisting of a brief exposition by each of the two invited *disputantes*, a woman and a man, followed by questions by the audience, which is comprised of members of the local academic community.

**Ricard Guerrero**, MAE, Academic Director of AE-BKH, Professor Emeritus, UB  
**Alexander Fidora**, MAE, ICREA Research Professor, UAB

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**Cover photograph:** View of Plaça del Rei, in the Gothic Quarter of Barcelona. It is a monumental square, surrounded by Gothic and Renaissance buildings, most of which form part of the *Palau Reial Major*, the premises that were the residence of the Counts of Barcelona from the 13th century to the beginning of the 15th century, although its history dates back to the 11th century. At the *Palau Reial Major*, some of the sessions of the *Disputatio of Barcelona* of 1263 probably took place.
POST-Congress Activity: Disputatio of Barcelona 2022

The urban between history, ecology and the digital – Challenges for the future of Barcelona

MAGISTER DISPUTATIONIS and DISPUTANTES

Magister

Xavier Costa-Guix, MAE, professor of Architecture, College of Arts, Media and Design, Northeastern University, Boston

Disputantes

Kathrin Golda-Pongratz, MAE, professor of Architecture at the UIC and the UPC, Barcelona and

Georg Vrachliotis, MAE, professor of Theory of Architecture and Digital Culture, Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, TU Delft

15 November 2022 (18.00 h – 19.30 h)
Saló de Cròniques, Ajuntament de Barcelona
Pl. de Sant Jaume, 1. 08002 Barcelona
Since 2013, the Academia Europaea-Barcelona Knowledge Hub (AE-BKH) organises the *Disputatio of Barcelona*, an annual public debate between two experts of different gender and international recognition. The two *disputantes* present two different aspects of a topic of social relevance and with strong implications for contemporaneous society and citizenship. The session is coordinated by another expert, the *Magister disputationis*, responsible for the selection of the topic and the coordination of the discussion. The activity is characterised by the participation of the attendants, consisting of intellectuals and academics of different fields, but not necessarily related with the topic discussed.

**Urban Sustainability.** Growing urban populations and the increased environmental, social and economic impact of urban lifestyles have boosted major cities to the forefront of global sustainability actions. Transdisciplinary sustainability research and the involvement of scientists in the development of urban policies and regulations are growing in importance across city councils. The AE-BKH, located in Barcelona, one of the most urbanism-conscious cities of the Mediterranean, offers an excellent network for cooperation in urban sustainability studies, with many similarities and complementarities. Using cross-sectorial and multidisciplinary approaches, the aim of this debate is to identify historical drivers, ecological relationships and special opportunities and challenges of urban sustainability in the Mediterranean region, as well as to define the possible synergies and unavoidable trade-offs while entering the era of smart cities, digital transportation systems and clean energy.

**Affiliations**

**AE-BKH:** Academia Europaea-Barcelona Knowledge Hub  
**ICREA:** Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies  
**IEC:** Institute for Catalan Studies  
**MAE:** Member of Academia Europaea  
**PRBB:** Barcelona Biomedical Research Park  
**UAB:** Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona  
**UB:** Universitat de Barcelona  
**UIC:** Universitat Internacional de Catalunya  
**UPC:** Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya  
**UPF:** Universitat Pompeu Fabra
Short Biographies

Magister

Xavier Costa-Guix. Member of Academia Europaea. Professor of Architecture at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts, where he has recently served as founding Dean of the College of Arts, Media and Design. He has served also as Dean of the ÑPompeu Fabra University’s School of Design, and as Director of the Metropolis Graduate Program at the Technical University of Catalonia (UPC). Costa-Guix has also held academic and research positions at Harvard University, Cornell University, Columbia University, and the Architectural Association. He served as curator for La Biennale in Venice, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona. He holds a PhD and MS degrees in architecture and conservation from the University of Pennsylvania and the UPC, and a BA in History of Art from the UB. Costa-Guix’s research and publications have worked on the interdisciplinary focus on modern architecture, urbanism and design, as well as on the critical conservation and curatorship of cities, particularly in the European context.
**Disputans**

**Kathrin Golda-Pongratz.** Member of Academia Europaea. She is an architect, urbanist and urban researcher with a PhD from Karlsruhe University, Germany. She is a professor at the Universitat Internacional de Catalunya (UIC), and at the Department of Urbanism at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC)-BarcelonaTech. She is a visiting professor and member of the academic evaluation board at the National University of Engineering and the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, in Lima (Perú). Golda-Pongratz publishes and lectures internationally, and her research focuses on urban memory, urban culture(s) and public space, Hispano-American urbanism, postcolonial urbanization, non-formal urbanism and place-making strategies. Her latest book (with J.L. Oyón and V. Zimmermann), is *John F C Turner. Autoconstrucción. Por una autonomia del habitar* (Logroño, 2018). She was distinguished with the “FAD Award on Thought and Criticism”, in Barcelona in 2019. Her documentary film *Ciudad Infinita–Voces de El Ermitaño*, portraying a self-built neighbourhood in Lima, was launched in October 2018. Golda-Pongratz’s experience expands into curating and cultural transmission. She has recently served as a consultant on urban memory policies for the cities of Barcelona and Sant Cugat. She is a spokeswoman of the “Ate-neu de Memòria Popular”, in Barcelona, a member of the “Institut dels Passats Presents” at the Barcelona City Council (IPP), of the German Association of Latin-American Research (ADLAF), and of the German Academy of Urban and Regional Planning (DASL).
Disputans

Georg Vrachliotis. Member of Academia Europaea. Full Professor and Head of Chair for Theory of Architecture and Digital Culture, Department of Architecture, TU Delft. From 2016 on he was Dean of the Karlsruher Institut für Technologie (KIT) Faculty of Architecture, and Chair for Architecture Theory (2014–2020). Previously, he conducted research at the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture at ETH Zürich. He studied architecture at the Berlin University of the Arts and did his PhD at the ETH Zürich. Besides that, he was a visiting researcher and lecturer at the UC Berkeley Dept. of Architecture, and at the TU Wien in Vienna. Vrachliotis is member of the advisory board of the magazine ARCH+, and external examiner at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL London. He is the author and co-editor of several books on the history and theory of digital culture in architecture, such as Complexity. Design Strategy and World View (2008), Simulation. Presentation Technique and Cognitive Tool (2008), and Patterns. Ornament, Structure and Behaviour Code. He recently published The New Technological Condition. Architecture and Design in the Age of Cybernetics (2022). Vrachliotis curated the exhibition “Fritz Haller. Architect and Researcher”, at the SAM Swiss Architecture Museum in 2014. He also coordinated the exhibition “Sleeping Beauty. Reinventing Frei Otto’s Multihalle”, at the Venice Biennale, in 2018. He recently curated the exhibition “Models, Media and Methods. Frei Otto’s Architectural Research”, at the School of Architecture at Yale University (2020).
Saló de Cròniques, Barcelona City Hall. Space enabled in 1929 and decorated with murals by Josep Maria Sert (Barcelona, 1874–1945). The paintings are made up of twelve scenes representing the expedition of the Companyia Catalana d’Orient, directed by almirall Roger de Flor, following the chronicles of Ramon Muntaner and Bernat Desclot. The paintings describe the meeting of Roger de Flor with emperor Andronicus II Paleologus, the payment of the Greeks with fake coins, the march to the Bosphorus, the defense of Gallipoli, the assassination of Roger de Flor, the Catalan Revenge, and the incorporation of the Duchies of Athens and Neopatria into the Aragonese-Catalan crown. The effect of the paintings is particularly emphasized by the black marble pavement. The paintings reflect Sert’s unique personal style, which stands out for its reduced chromatic range, limited to golden, ochre, gray and brown tones. (Image of a postcard from the Saló de Cròniques, Barcelona City Hall)
Ten years of Disputationes 2013–2022

2013  November 27, 2013  
Debate on: “Social and state-of-the-art Medicine”  
*Disputantes:* Mara Dierssen (Centre for Genomic Regulation, UPF) and Thomas Pogge (Yale University; leader of the Health Impact Fund).  
At the Saló de Cent, Ajuntament de Barcelona

2014  November 27, 2014  
Debate on: “The Mediterranean, bridge of cultures”  
*Disputantes:* Maria Paradiso (Geography and Planning, University of Sannio, Italy), and Enric Banda (director of Science and Environment, “la Caixa” Foundation)  
At the Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site

2015  December 9, 2015  
Debate on: “Natural vs. Artificial intelligence”  
*Disputantes:* Núria Sebastian (former vicepresident of the European Research Council), and Ulises Cortés (Barcelona Supercomputing Center)  
At the The Royal Chapel of Saint Agatha, in the Gothic Quarter

2016  November 21, 2016  
Debate on: “Natural life vs. Synthetic life”  
*Disputantes:* Anna Veiga (Centre for Regenerative Medicine, Barcelona) and Ricard Solé (Complex Systems Lab, PRBB, Barcelona)  
At the Palau de la Generalitat
2017  November 23, 2017
Debate on: “Supercomputers: An instrument for science, technology and the progress of society”
Disputantes: Alison Kennedy (director of the STFC Hartree Centre, Daresbury, Warrington, UK) and Mateo Valero (director of the Supercomputing Center of Barcelona)
At the Institute for Catalan Studies

2018  November 28, 2018
Debate on: “Competition vs. cooperation: Two economists’ points of view”
Magister: Salvador Barberà (Professor Emeritus of Economics, UAB)
Disputantes: Gabrielle Demange (director of Studies at the School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences, EHESS, in Paris) and Hervé Moulin (University of Glasgow)
At the Institute for Catalan Studies

2019  November 13, 2019
Magister: Alexander Fidora (ICREA Research Professor, UAB)
Disputantes: Silvia De Bianchi (Ramón y Cajal Fellow, Department of Philosophy and Centre for the History of Science, UAB) and Maciej Lewenstein (ICREA Research Professor and Quantum Optics Theory Group Leader, Institute of Photonic Sciences).
At the Institute for Catalan Studies
2020  Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the session took place on January 19, 2021  
Debate on: “Cities, climate and pandemics: Reflections from urban studies and environmental economics”  
Magister: Alexander Fidora (ICREA Research Professor, UAB)  
Disputantes: Kathrin Golda-Pongratz (professor of Architecture at the UIC and the UPC, Barcelona) and Jeroen van den Bergh (ICREA Research Professor, ICTA-UAB)  
At the IEC, following a hybrid model of (limited) in-person attendance, as well as access via live streaming on Zoom.

2021  December 1, 2021  
Debate on: “Mental health and pandemics: Burden and resilience”  
Disputantes: Eider Arenaza-Urquijo (Research βTeam Leader at the Barcelonaβeta Brain Research Center, Barcelona) and Arcadi Navarro (ICREA Research Professor, UPF, and Director of the Pasqual Maragall Foundation, Barcelona)  
At the Institute for Catalan Studies

2022  November 15, 2022  
Debate on: “The urban between history, ecology and the digital -- Challenges for the future of Barcelona”  
Magister: Xavier Costa-Guix (Northeastern University, Boston)  
Disputantes: Kathrin Golda-Pongratz (professor of Architecture at the UIC and the UPC, Barcelona) and Georg Vrachliotis (TU Delft)  
At the Saló de Cròniques, Ajuntament de Barcelona
Logotype based on Raimundus Lullus’ *Tree of Sciences*, representing the unity and diversity of all sciences, as proclaimed by the AE-BKH. This transversal panoptic vision of science and humanities reflected in the *Disputationes*, try to follow the mind of Catalan medieval philosopher and writer Raimundus Lullus (1232-1315/1316), author, among ca. 300 books, of the seminal work *Tree of Sciences*. (Design and Production by R. Guerrero & M. Berlanga).

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