

European *Alternatives* Journal

Democracy & Culture
Equality & Beyond
the Nation State



TRANSEUROPA

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Imagine, Demand, Enact

Printed in Italy, 2024

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Chiara Buratti (1988) is an anthropologist and political activist. She's been living in Venice since 2011, where she is active in the front lines of several grassroots organizations. Among these are the Italian base trade unions Associazione per i Diritti dei Lavoratori (ADL Cobas) and Assemblea Sociale per la Casa (ASC). The latter campaigns for the right to housing in Venice by providing legal as well as material support to residential communities. Through ADL Cobas, she supports the organization of the struggles of women workers in the tourism sector.

Alessandra Chiricosta is a Philosopher, expert in Gender Studies, Historian of Religions specialized in continental Southeast Asian cultures, where she has carried out field research for many years. In the past, she has taught at Hanoi University, Vietnam, University of Rome 'La Sapienza', 'Urbaniana' University, Venice International University and in the degree course in Global Governance, Tor Vergata University and worked for international governmental and non-governmental organizations (Oxfam, MCNV, etc.). She has collaborated with the AT BECK Institute in Rome as a trainer and consultant.

Faith Yayra Dzanta is a BA graduate in Languages, Literature, and Cultural Communication and an MA graduate in Comparative International Relations. Passionate about the use of efficient communication to facilitate positive social change, she's covered different communication roles with international organizations, youth associations, CSOs, and international institutions. She's worked with EA to support communication activities.

Antonia "Fiore" Faustini is a PhD candidate in Moral Philosophy at La Sapienza University in Rome, her main research interests are moral theory and bioethics, mainly in the medical field. Since 2021 she is a member of the Associazione Luca Coscioni (ALC), for which she coordinated the collection of signatures in Calabria region during the campaign "Referendum Eutanasia Legale" and later worked as a copywriter and social media manager. Since 2022 she has been the coordinator of Cellula Coscioni Roma, a local section of ALC, and a member of the national General Council. Since 2022 she has been a member of the collective of CSOA La Strada in Rome, a historical social and cultural center active since 1994 in local and transnational projects of mutualism and solidarity, mainly aimed at youth. Her responsibilities at CSOA La Strada include cultural and artistic planning, event organization and project management.

Jacc Griffiths is from Wales and today lives in Paris. They are currently working on the Critical Change-Labs project. Their background is in linguistics & pedagogy, and they are specialized in discourse analysis, critical sociolinguistics and semiotics. They created and taught an English language course entitled Lost in Translation, which seeks to critically engage with the status of English as a lingua franca, through deconstructing the capitalist & colonialist notions of "proper English" and recognizing the evolution of World Englishes.

Joe Habben is a documentary photographer & communication designer from the UK. Joe is interested in reciprocated relationships between the natural and built environment. His latest projects have explored human intervention, public space, globalization, and the climate crisis. Through his commercial work, he's collaborated with a range of clients; from scientific organizations to grassroots initiatives, charities, and slow-fashion brands.

Ginevra Lamberti was born in 1985 and lives between Rome and Vittorio Veneto. After La domanda più che altro, published in 2015 by Nottetempo, she published with Marsilio Perché comincio dalla fine (2019, Mondello Prize 2020), Tutti dormono nella valle (2022), Il pozzo vale più del tempo (2024). Her novels and short stories have been translated in Germany, China, France, the United Kingdom, Holland, and Brazil. She is a columnist for the newspaper Domani.

Jenny Marketou is a Greek multidisciplinary artist, lecturer, and author who recently released her book "Futuring Waters", which was created after years of artistic, participative and workshop-based research on water rights with academics, lawyers and citizens. The following manifesto for the Water Rights of Elefsina was created in this process, included by the editorial team as a call to action and an example of how we can reimagine and protect our relations with water.

Raquel Martínez Buján is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Communication Sciences at the University of A Coruña, where she also directs the ESOMI team specialising in the analysis of social inequalities. Her research work focuses on exploring long-term care and its political resolution. Recently, she has specialised in studying the community as a space for care, evaluating community-based public initiatives and exploring the potentialities and tensions that arise from this sphere.

Izabela Anna Moren (Olesnica, 1990) is a writer, curator, and communication strategist. She works at the intersection of art and politics and holds a degree in Curating and Critical Writing from the Royal College of Art. Her book *Living in the Desert* was published by Phaidon in 2018. In 2019, she presented *Transhumance*, a series of exhibitions in the public sphere launched in collaboration with Transeuropa Festival and the Biennale Arcipelago Mediterraneo 2019. She has been the Digital Editor for MACRO Museum in Rome and Communication Director for NOMAD, the itinerant showcase of contemporary art and design. Within Fondazione Studio Rizoma, Izabela is curator and creative director.

Benedetta Panisson is an artist and researcher working with film photography, video installation, live performance and drawing. Her research focuses on extended relations among sea and insular territories, bodies, imaginaries, communities, and their margins, mainly in relation with sexual aesthetics, visual, gender and queer studies.

Pier Paolo Scelsi is an international art curator and the founder and director of CREA Cantieri del Contemporaneo in Venice. After studying Conservation of Cultural Heritage at Ca' Foscari University, in 2012 he conceived and hosted the television program *Frame, ut pictura poesis* for "3 Canale Veneto," focusing on the world of art. He is a regular contributor to the cultural web magazine *Dietrolequinteonline.it*, as well as the magazines *Kaleidos* and *Finnegans*, cultural itineraries. He has previously served as the Art Director for *Collectible Dry Magazine* and *The Collector Magazine*. Together with Elmar Zorn and Thomas Linsmeyer, he founded and directed the project *Fundamenta Venice Munchen*. He conceived the theatrical work *Quella volta... Peggy Guggenheim*, an official event of the Venice Carnival 2013, produced by the Peggy Guggenheim Collection and Venice Marketing and Events. His curatorial research focuses on the fields of Human Identity, the environment, sustainability, cultural policies, and Disability Arts. He is a member of the curatorial collective *Balcony*, a global network of independent curators.

Georgia Satchwell is an architectural researcher and designer from South Africa.

Siu Vásquez studied Fine Arts and Visual Arts at the National University of Colombia and the Javeriana University. She lives and works in Barichara, where she learned the textile trade and recently established relationships with peasant and indigenous communities for her artistic creation. Her research focuses on the materiality of painting, through the production of dyes and supports in weaving, understood as the formation of layers of color in the image. She finds her own pictorial language that combines pre-Hispanic references, her identity as a woman and the relationship between territory and community. Her work has been part of exhibitions in Colombia, Italy, Albania and the United Kingdom. In addition, her works are part of the collection of the Museum of Modern Art of Bucaramanga, the collection of the Museum of Art of the Bank of the Republic and several private collections.

David Yambio is a community advocate, spokesperson and President of Refugees in Libya. He became a refugee from birth and has lived in several refugee camps across Africa with the toughest being Libya where he was subjected to inhumane treatments and severe dehumanization for 4 years. In 2021, he co founded the movement Refugees in Libya which over the years has grown to be the only source of voice for refugees who are stuck in the North African regions.

We are happy to present this special Transeuropa Festival issue of the European Alternatives Journal.

Transeuropa is a transnational artistic, cultural and political festival organised by European Alternatives since 2007. In the past decade, it has attracted thousands of attendees and active participants through a decentralised event structure in over a dozen European cities.

The 2024 edition of Transeuropa takes place in Venice and presents a rich schedule of events prepared in cooperation with local partners in the city. The programme consists of workshops, exhibitions, open assemblies, meetings and music and will involve a large number of historical spaces of the city. The theme for this year's edition of Transeuropa Festival is 'Undercurrents'.

Despite flows of anxiety around the political, economic and environmental state of our societies and the backlash against progressive perceptions of the inter-humans and inter-species relationships, TRANSEUROPA Festival reveals and reinforces

the undercurrents of contestations, ideas and power that are finding – via meanders and affluents – ways to continue building change and renew these relationships in the long run. A labyrinth of canals, where the ebb and flow of tides are the pulse of the city, and where the delicate as well as conflictual relationship between urban and natural reminds us of our interconnectedness.

In this context, we launch a special festival edition of the EA journal with direct contributions from the artists, curators, activists, academics and professionals that have worked with us in putting together the festival programme. Many of the contributions are from people active in Venice, linking together efforts of transformation in the physical, cultural, intellectual and political space. Other contributions come from elsewhere, making attempts to make transnational connections more visible to the public and readers.

The first pieces *Reflections and Appetites* and *Venice Under Deconstruction*, present the ways in which European Alternatives has been active in the themes around water, nature, interspecies, currents, flows, ecofeminism and activism; we continue with articles and interviews of collectives, artists and experts that conceive water as the medium and content of their work and thinking: *Futuring Waters*; *The Hydrocene*; *3 Questions with Benedetta*; *Water Assembly for New Imaginaries*; and, *Living with water*; are pieces that talk about this relationship and possible futures and perspectives with water in its center. Finally, the last seven pieces, *Interview with David Yambio*; *A transnational Vision: Contracts and workers' rights of women working in the domestic & tourism sectors*; *My Voice, My Choice: Solidarity across borders for reproductive justice in Europe*; *Mourning Denied*; *Un altro genere di forza*; *La Laguna Resiste*;

and *Protest: People of the Lagoon*; are a mix of pieces signed by direct contributors and collaborators to the Festival programme but also testimonies, reflections and experiences of activists and social movements that are contributing to shape the world around us, thinking far into the future, about our future generations and about what the world will be like.

TRANSEUROPA 24 and its journal invites readers and participants to explore, imagine and create with joy the multiple and growing undercurrents of change of today and tomorrow. Building on Ecofeminist theory, our programme investigates and celebrates prospects of a world geared towards new relationships among humans, species and natural elements.

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TRANSEUROPA





6–10 NOV. 2024 VENICE, ITALY

FESTIVAL OF ARTS, POLITICS AND CULTURE

WEDNESDAY 6

18:00 - 20:00
ROMANIAN INSTITUTE

WORKSHOP
WHAT IS WORK?
led by Ovidiu Tichindeleanu

→ **EN**

20:30 - 23:00
MORION

TRANSEUROPA FESTIVAL LAUNCH
VOICES OF THE UNDERCURRENTS
Immersive performance with Ruth Kemna, Francesca Heart, Paula Fraschia. Curated by European Alternatives in partnership with FIERCE.

EN IT

THURSDAY 7

15:00 - 17:00
MORION

PANEL DEBATE
TO ACT FOR CHOICE: THE STRUGGLE FOR ABORTION, REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND PARENTHOOD IN THE FAR-RIGHT ERA

IT

with Caracol Olol Jackson (Vicenza), Non Una di Meno Padova, COVESAP Obiezione Respinta (Pisa), Consultoria Mi Cuerpo Es Mio (Catania), Comitato Partecipazione Consultori (Trieste), Poliambulatorio Popolare Labas (Bologna), Non una di Meno Torino

18:30 - 20:30
AULA TESA 1 ZATTERE CA' FOSCARI UNIVERSITY

PANEL DEBATE
EXTREME ELECTIONS? MAPPING THE GEOPOLITICAL AND DOMESTIC IMPACTS OF THE US ELECTIONS, A CONVERSATION
hosted by Luiza Bialasiewicz with Shalini Randeria, Lorenzo Marsili, Erik Jones

EN

FRIDAY 8

16:30 - 17:00
MORION

KEYNOTE SPEECH
DECOLONIZING FEMINISM: HOW TO FIGHT AT THE INTERSECTION OF STRUGGLES?
with Louisa Yousfi

IT FR

17:15-19:15
MORION

PANEL DEBATE
CARE ETHICS FOR RADICAL ECOLOGIES: ECOFEMINIST PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS A CARE-FULL FUTURE
with Alice Dal Gobbo, Paola Imperatore, Roberta da Soller, Myriam Bahaffou

19:30-02:00
MORION

TRANSEUROPA FESTIVAL PARTY
UNDERCURRENTS
with Fucksia (live), Nina kipiani (DJ)
House of serenissima (drag)
Donation after 21:00

SATURDAY 9

09:30 - 12:00

→ **EN €**

Meeting Point: Natural History Museum - more details upon registration

WALK & COLLABORATIVE WORKSHOP
A DECOLONIAL WALK IN VENICE
curated by Shaul Bassi & Georgia Satchwell
> *workshop fee corresponding to the venues entrance tickets*

10:00 - 18:00
PASE

→ **IT EN €**

WORKSHOP
CURRENTS OF MEMORIES
Workshop on Sound exploration +
Collective installation curated by PASE

10:00 - 11:30
ZENOBIA

→ **IT**

WORKSHOP FOR TEENAGERS
LIFE IN THE LAGUNA: IDENTIFYING WITH THE VENETIAN ECOSYSTEMS
curated by Critical Change Labs, European Alternatives

11:30 - 12:30
ZENOBIA

IT

BOOK PRESENTATION
THE MUDFLAT CREW
by We are here Venice with Pietro Leddi

11:30 - 14:30
ZENOBIA

→ **IT EN €**

WORKSHOP
EMBODYING MAPS FOR LIBERATING THE BODY-TERRITORY
led by Alessandra Chiricosta

15:00-17:00
MORION

EN

PANEL DEBATE
RADICAL STRATEGIES AGAINST EXPLOITATION AND DISCRIMINATION OF WOMEN'S WORK
with Adl Cobas, Territorio Domestico, Ozz Injciatywa Pracownicza

15:00 - 17:30
CARCERE FEMMINILE GIUDECCA

IT

READING AND DISCUSSION
IAS - QUESTIONING THE WRITING
with Ginevra Lamberti
in collaboration with Association Closer

18:00 - 20:00
TRE OCI

IT EN

PANEL DEBATE
THE WAY FORWARD: THE WORLD IN CITIES. HOW CITIES CREATE NEW FORMS OF SOLIDARITY AND PEACE AT TIMES OF MIGRATIONS
with Erion Veliaj (Mayor of Tirana), Clare Hart (Vice-President of Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole), Mimmo Lucano (Mayor of Riace and Member of the European Parliament), David Yambio (human rights defender) and Leoluca Orlando (Member of the European Parliament)
panel moderator: Letizia Tortello (Deputy foreign chief La Stampa)

21:00 - 23:00
PASE

SOUND INSTALLATIONS & PARTY
CURRENTS OF MEMORIES
Collective Sound Installation +
Amotion Installation by Silvia Rosani

SUNDAY 10

10:30 - 11:00
SPAZIO CREA

IT EN

“TOWARDS A PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY FOR EUROPE” DECLARATION
OFFICIAL WELCOMING OF THE DEMOCRATIC ODYSSEY BOAT
with Annalisa Corrado, Kalypso Nicolaidis, David Yambio

11:00 - 12:00
SPAZIO CREA

IT

PANEL DEBATE
THE SILENCED VOICES OF THE MERMAIDS: DEMOCRACY, PARTICIPATION, WOMEN’S RIGHTS
with Annalisa Corrado (Member of the European Parliament), Erika Capasso (Municipality of Bologna) and the Committee of elected representatives of the Venice Municipality

12:00 - 13:00
SPAZIO CREA

€

BRUNCH
HONEY BRUNCH BY TOCIA!

13:00 - 14:00
SPAZIO CREA

IT

BOOK PRESENTATION
THE BEES ARCHIPELAGO
with Chiara Spadaro and Wetlands Publishing House

14:00 - 15:00
SPAZIO CREA

→ **EN IT**

WORKSHOP
QUEER SEA MARRIAGE: TOWARDS A VENICE’S ECOFEMINIST MANIFESTO
by Rete Arcipelago and Benedetta Panisson

15:15 - 17:15
SPAZIO CREA

IT EN €

FLOATING CONCERT ON ROWING BOATS
LAGOON PROCESSION - UNKNOWN WATER
music by Dan Kinzelman
curated by Cinema Galleggiante in collaboration with Cosmogram

17:30 - 17:45
SPAZIO CREA

IT EN

FILM SCREENING
‘VELE CHIOGGIOTTE’ (1951) BY UBALDO MAGNAGHI
by Cinema Galleggiante
food by TOCIA!

18:00-20:00
SPAZIO CREA

VERNISSAGE PARTY
BODY OF WATER - FLUIDITY AND ANTHROPIC ELEMENT
curated by Pier Paolo Scelsi and Izabela Anna Moren

5—15 NOVEMBER

11:00 - 18:00
SPAZIO CREA

EXHIBITION
BODY OF WATER - FLUIDITY AND ANTHROPIC ELEMENT
curated by Pier Paolo Scelsi and Izabela Anna Moren
Artists of the exhibition: Replica Artist Books, Francesco Bellina, Eliza Collin, Giovanna Silva, Matteo De Mayda, Markus Heinsdorff, Roger Weiss, Valentina De' Matha', Roberto Ghezzi, Mauro Sambo, Luigi Viola, Beatrice Donda

VENUES

TRE OCI - FONDAMENTA ZITELLE, 43
CA' FOSCARI, ZATTERE - ZONE TESA1 - ZATTERE AL PONTELUNGO, DORSODURO 1392
CARCERE FEMMINILE GIUDECCA - CALLE DE LE CAPE, 194
SPAZIO CREA - GIUDECCA 211/A
MORION - CALLE DEL MORION, 2951
CINEMA GALLEGGIANTE - *meeting point for boat tour:*
CREA GIUDECCA 211/A
ZENOBIA - CAMPO JUNGHANS, 487/B
PASE - CANNAREGIO, 3561- PUNTA DELLA MISERICORDIA
ROMANIAN INSTITUTE - PALAZZO CORRER - CAMPO SANTA FOSCA, CANNAREGIO, 2214

LEGEND

IT Italian

EN English

FR French

→ Registration Only

€ Participation Fee
Check the details on the website: transeuropafestival.eu



VENUES

transeuropafestival.eu

FOR MORE INFO:



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FONDAMENTA ZITELLE, 43
CINEMA GALLEGGIANTE
meeting point for boat tour: CREA
GIUDECCA 211/A
- 2. CA' FOSCARI - ZATTERE
CFZ ZONE TESA1 - ZATTERE AL
PONTELUNGO, DORSODURO 1392
- 3. CARCERE FEMMINILE GIUDECCA
CALLE DE LE CAPE, 194, 30133
- 4. SPAZIO CREA
GIUDECCA 211/A
- 5. MORION
CALLE DEL MORION, 2951
- 7. TENOBIA
CAMPO JUNGHANS, 487/B
PASE
- 8. CANNAREGIO, 3561
PUNTA DELLA MISERICORDIA
ROMANIAN INSTITUTE
- 9. PALAZZO CORRER - CAMPO S.
FOSCA, CANNAREGIO, 2214
- 10. LAGUNA LIBRE
FONDAMENTA DI CANNAREGIO 969

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Reflections and Appetites

by Siu Vásquez



This article is a testimony on water and the body of Siu Vásquez, one of the artists participating in the Colombian residency of the Room to Bloom project, curated by European Alternatives, Fondazione Studio Rizoma (Palermo), AthensSYN (Berlin), Museum of World Cultures (Gothenburg), Autonomi Akadimia (Athens) and Organizmo (Bogotá).

Room to Bloom is a platform that gives a voice to emerging feminist artists working on the themes of ecofeminism and postcolonial feminism. Founded in 2021, its aim is to create a central space in an art world dominated by patriarchal and colonialist dynamics.

In these reflections, conceived after the artistic residency, Siu Vásquez takes us to the delicate surface of the water in the Colombian Mataven canal, presenting water as a living and mimetic element, an anthropological force capable of revealing intimate and political information about the body, power relations, identity, and privilege.

There exists a living water mirror in the Mataven stream, originating from calm black waters, it breathes, grows, diminishes, reflects everything, and protects what it holds in its depths.

Within the human eye lies a search for reflection that tames behavior, a mimetic condition to what we see, and thus, reflections determine our way of existing. The sophisticated biotechnology of the water mirror has remained elusive to us, there is no faster update. But from water to glass, from glass to mirror, from mirror to screen, from screen to reality, and so on.

Existence changed its order in the presence of such a powerful and different reflection in Mataven. I recognized my atrophied body in relation to the reality of nature. I didn't recognize my accustomed reflection, both in a literal and metaphorical sense.

Another order emerged, one where fish act as pollinators, tree trunks lie beneath the water, my untrained legs and arms, my body eaten by insects, my gut devoid of bacteria, and my knowledge in a constant and unsustainable tension that drew me closer and farther away from the humans around me. I try to remember what that different order referred to, but I cannot describe it since I am not in the presence of the water mirror.

“Indigenous identity is often idealized because it remains unattainable, existing only in our imagination.”

Indigenous identity is often idealized because it remains unattainable, existing only in our imagination. It has been idealized as something despicable, and in the chaotic turn of the Anthropocene, it is idealized as the solution. Both forms, as opposing as they may seem, arise from the unattainable, from the same spirit.

“Things call out to each other,
the similar to the similar;
a dragon bringing rain;
a fan dispersing heat;
the place where an army has been,
overgrown with thorns..
Things, beautiful or repulsive,

all have an origin.

If it is believed that they construct destiny, it is because no one knows where their origin lies. There is no event that does not depend on something preceding it,

to which it responds because it belongs to the same category,

and that is why it moves.”

Dong Zhongshu
(Western Han Dynasty, China)

With this, I speak of indigeneity as an unattainable idea and provide evidence of confirmation through experience. I don't want to be naive and fail to recognize my role in the predatory methods of the system. I am hungry and have appetites. Globalization and capitalism are deeply ingrained philosophical and emotional processes that generalize, impose, and consume knowledge.

There exists a predatory essence of diversity in the forms of existence, which includes technologies and biotechnologies of natural entities. It disguises itself as an attempt to understand them, to take bits and pieces from here and there to comprehend our own existence.

In other words, if a group of artists embark on an unusual and prolonged coexistence within an indigenous community, thanks to the work of organizers, budgets, and thoughts that make it possible, it represents, in a myriad of nuances, the same method that leads to the loss of cultural diversity and is a symptom of it. It is an ingenuously genuine attempt by capitalism in its predatory metastasis.

It should not be underestimated, and the evidence remains that an unknown reflection exists. I felt the order of existence dislocated, and a non-return to the cultural homogenization we impose from the depths of the system to which I belong. I am hungry, and with hunger, one becomes reckless, callous, and predatory.

It is impossible and naive to hack European public budgets for the benefit of cultural or environmental diversity because it is part of their very homogenizing strategy. However, being one of the cells of colonial capitalism's metastasis, there was an exchange, satisfying the appetite by becoming prey of the predator, at least for a moment. I do not want to diminish the effort, and the methods of predatory homogenization will continue to become increasingly

sophisticated. In the cannon fodder of these operations, something is returned and there is benefit for both parties in the exchange, but it is important to highlight the internal paradox of these processes—the insatiable devouring appetite is uncontrollable.

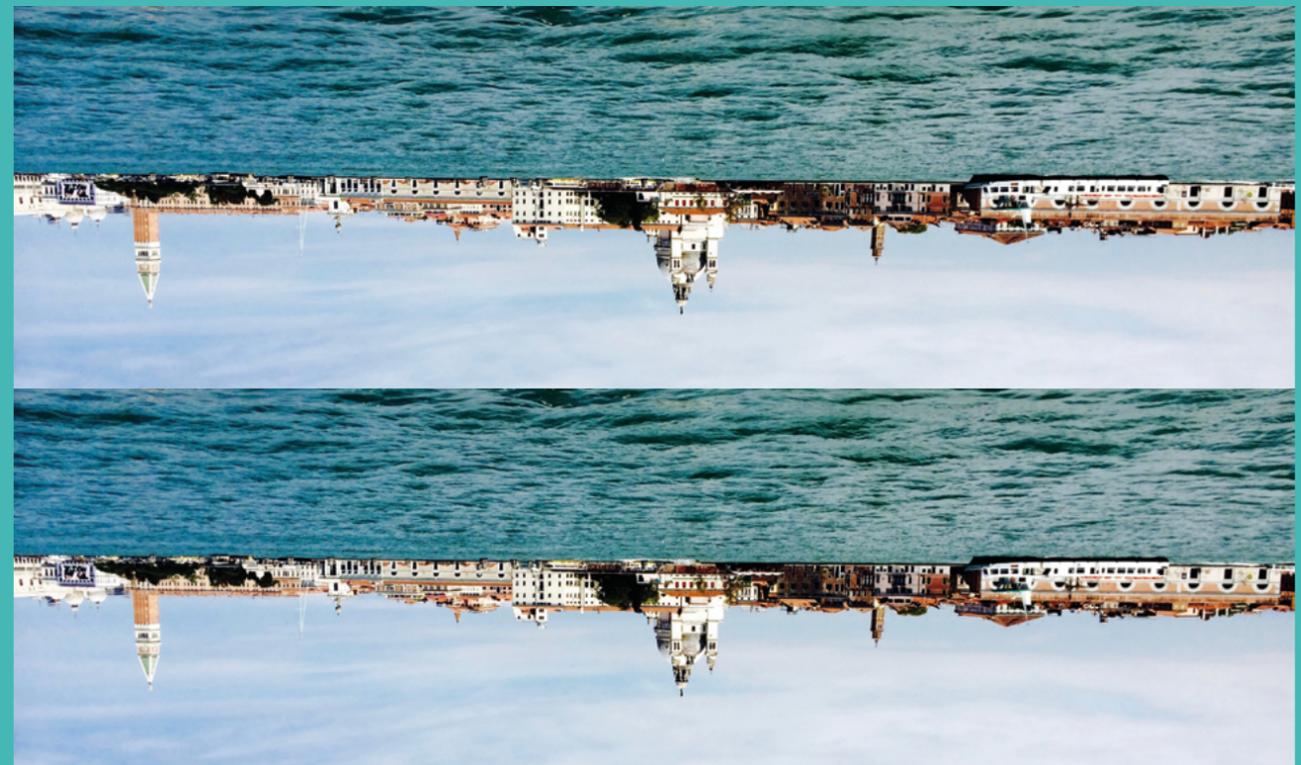
As a final and no less significant blow, the residency ended up in the UK, which was an equally unfamiliar and folkloric place. Even with appetite and hunger, inhabiting Mataven and London proved equally bewildering—another reflection, another river, the body equally devoid and unadapted in both cases.

Those who recognize themselves as predators learn not to hunt their own reflection, they are frightened by it, they hide and ignore it.

Venice Under Deconstruction

by Jace Griffiths

A Framework for Critical Change in Rights for Nature



Venice waterscape. Photo via Good Free Photos

The Venetian *laguna* is in a “continual state of instability” – as is the case of innumerable ecosystems across the globe – and its survival relies upon its communication with the sea, through its tidal exchange, which continues to form and deform the small Italian archipelago every day¹. The urban eco-organism that is the city of Venice, with its arterial canals and skeletal bridges, is thus plagued by eustatic anxiety, suffering continuous climate crises, whose symptoms notably broke out five years ago, when in November 2019 the *acqua altera* once again flooded The Floating City.

Perhaps that Venice is destined for the past – a relic – whose etymology (from Latin *relinquere*) denotes “that which remains” or “to leave behind, forsake”.

The “geomorphological landscape” of Venice and the *laguna* is a “living historical archive of interactions between humans and the geoenvironment”². In this archive, lest we forget, we (re)discover a significant centre of European colonialism and capitalist dominion, which wrought disparity and destruction still felt today. Perhaps **that Venice is** destined for the past – a relic – whose etymology (from Latin *relinquere*) denotes “that which remains” or “to leave behind, forsake”³. Forsaken, not quite, but condemned-it seems-to reap the fruits of destruction sown by its own capitalist-colonialist apparatus. High time, then, to reckon with the ailing symbiosis of city and *laguna* – “inseparable elements of a single system”, where “the health of Venice depends on the health of the lagoon system and vice versa”⁴.

In this article, we present the **Critical ChangeLab** project’s **Critical Literacies Framework** as a tool to analyse the intersecting ecologies of Venice and the *laguna*, both historically and presently. This approach is drawn from the **Critical ChangeLab** methodology, which seeks to engage youth participants in participatory action research labs, with the goal of fostering critical consciousness and working towards

change. Rooted in the seminal work of Paulo Freire (1970), critical consciousness, or *conscientização*, empowers individuals to identify and challenge prevailing power dynamics and systems of oppression within society. The dimensions of the **Critical Literacies Framework** are as follows:

- Understanding
- Identifying
- Deconstructing
- Activating change
- Processes of becoming

To apply the framework to the issue of ecological instability in Venice, we can map each dimension of the framework to different aspects of Venice’s environmental crisis, focusing on the intersection of ecologies (human, non-human, historical, future) in the region.

Understanding

At this initial stage, it is essential to develop a foundational understanding of the ecological, historical, and social systems that are found in Venice. This includes an examination of how anthropocentric thinking has shaped Venetian environmental policy, and how it relates to historical and present issues such as flooding and pollution. Furthermore, a discussion of how water rights, environmental laws, and urban development policies are shaped by democratic and legal institutions, investigating how and why they prioritise short-term economic gains (such as tourism) over long-term ecological stability or inclusive post-humanist practices. Providing a historical overview of Venice’s relationship with the *laguna* allows us to look at key moments where human intervention has altered the balance between the built environment and the natural ecosystem.

Identifying

Next, we can identify the key conflicts and contradictions that shape, and have shaped, Venice’s ecological instability. Firstly, the conflict between Venice’s position as a global tourist hub and its urgent need for ecological and socioeconomic preservation. Secondly, tracing how decisions made in the past,

1. We Are Here Venice

2. Anthropocene Curriculum

5. Etymonline

4. We are Here Venice

6. Anthropocene Curriculum

4. We are Here Venice

such as dredging canals and diverting rivers, have contributed to present-day Venice’s ecological difficulties, such as subsidence and water pollution. Lastly, recognizing the lived experience of Venetians, whose homes are increasingly threatened by flooding, as well as the embodied experience of non-human entities such as the *laguna* and local marine life, which also suffer greatly from ecosystem disruption.

“Embracing multiple perspectives is essential to moving beyond the dualism of human/nature, seeking a post-binary approach that recognizes the non-human actors that are integral to Venice’s identity.”

Deconstructing

The deconstruction phase examines Venice’s ecological crisis from multiple angles, challenging assumptions and analysing power relations. In order to disrupt the commonplace, questioning the traditional view of Venice as a “city of human heritage” allows us to reframe the discussion – seeing it instead as a complex ecological system where water, plants, animals, and humans are all interconnected, and *all* have intrinsic value. Through challenging the dominant discourse of progress and growth that has long driven development in Venice, we can question whether policies aimed at economic expansion are compatible with a long-term view of ecological survival.

Embracing multiple perspectives is essential to moving beyond the dualism of human/nature, seeking a post-binary approach that recognizes the non-human actors that are integral to Venice’s identity. Thinking about Venice not only as a human city but as its own ecological entity with multiple, co-existing, interrelated ecosystems will open further questions about a post-human Venice. Broadening the scope, we can reflect on how past interventions (within the remit of the

magistrato alle acque) continue to affect present-day Venice, as well as how our responses today could shape future approaches to managing impact in the *laguna*⁵.

Finally, the process of deconstructing should include intersectional analyses of how power dynamics (for example, between government officials, tourists and

“Engaging in speculative design, we could envisage solutions such as nature-based flood defences, reducing reliance on tourism, or promoting sustainable urbanism that puts ecological health at the centre of further development.”

residents) contribute to ecological instability. This approach highlights how anthropocentrism (notably eurocentrism) and capitalism underpin policy decisions that neglect the agency of non-human elements, such as water and biodiversity. To examine who benefits from Venice’s current approach to water rights (e.g., large-scale developers, cruise lines, the tourism-industrial complex) and who suffers from it (local communities, future generations, non-human entities) can reveal the historical and present power dynamics as well as the breadth of their influence..

Activating Change

This dimension focuses on applying the critical insights gained, from interaction into action. From this process we can propose alternative futures for Venice: an exercise in both rational, democratic decision-making as well as radical, creative reflection. For example, drawing inspiration from the work of indigenous activists in global cases such as the 2008 Constitution of Ecuador or the Whanganui River in New Zealand,

the people of Venice could grant legal personhood to the *laguna*. By encouraging legal recognition and protection, we could recognise its “right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes” and its “right to be restored”⁶. Engaging in speculative design, we could envisage solutions such as nature-based flood defences, reducing reliance on tourism, or promoting sustainable urbanism that puts ecological health at the centre of further development. Finally, we could seek—or create—local initiatives that have meaningful impact, such as community-led conservation efforts, ecotourism models respectful of environmental regulation, or educational campaigns that raise awareness about Venice’s fragility.

Processes of Becoming

The final stage of the **Critical Literacies Framework** encourages ongoing reflection and personal transformation. For example, through a process of self-examination, we are encouraged to reflect on how our understanding of ecology, agency, and power has evolved throughout the process. *Has our perception of Venice changed from a human-capital tourist destination to a living, breathing ecological system? What of this change?* To sustain critical reflection is to foster learning, questioning and engaging with sustainable futures, and to act upon this reflection is to advocate for change.

When put into practice, the **Critical ChangeLab Critical Literacies Framework** empowers participants to not only understand Venice’s ecological instability but also to actively challenge and reshape the socio-political structures that maintain it. Taking a posthumanist perspective shifts the focus from merely preserving Venice for human benefit to recognizing the inherent rights and agency of its ecosystem(s), envisioning sustainable futures where all entities can thrive – **human and non-human, city and laguna**.

For more information about the Critical ChangeLab project and the Critical Literacies Framework, check out criticalchangelab.eu or follow **#criticalchangelab** on social media. Critical ChangeLab is a Horizon Europe research project, funded by the European Union.

Sources & Further Reading

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Futuring Waters

by Jenny Marketou

A Speculative Manifesto for - and from - the water of Elefsina, Greece



Futuring Waters Cover. Courtesy of the artist, 2024

WE, citizens of Earth, call for and commit to working together to ensure that a binding international law is put in place for the immediate and universal protection of all Water, as the first vital step towards global cooperation for effective, worldwide social and ecological healing.

ELEUSIS: The ancient city of Mysteries, the birthplace of the goddess Demeter and her daughter Persephone, the land of Aeschylus, of travellers, of legends, the “soul place” of Henry Miller, Walt Whitman, Hegel, Franz Wright, Dimitris Pikionis, George Seferis, Nikos Gatsou... The city with “the long, calm and silent circular beach, surrounded by high mountains ... The clear ridges are erased against the bright sky and are reflected in the blue sea. Opposite, the yellowish rocks of Salamis drop steeply into the hill. To the right the slopes of Kithairon and the mount of Parnitha are limited to warm and bright gray strokes of land, and at their feet lies the sacred plain of Demeter bathed in sunlight, separated from the blue, still sea by a narrow beach of white and rose pebbles,” according to Eric Bell’s 19th-century eloquent description.

ELEUSINA: The modern coastal city, with its special and unique feature of 13 kilometres coast, has been occupied since the beginning of the 20th century by the largest *industrial zone* in Greece – which includes shipyards, refineries, cement factories, public and private port facilities, and other nuisance industries – leaving residents with only 50 meters of free access to the shore.

In recent years, due to the reduction of the pollution load after the modernisation of the industries, scientific studies – among others – have established a reduction of pollution and a significant improvement in the quality of the natural waters, which led to the reappearance of many marine species that had disappeared (oysters, sea urchins) and in the increase of fish. In spite of all this, the Waterbodies of Eleusina are *not under any protection status, nor has it been designated as a Nature Protection Area*.

WE ALL the residents of Eleusina have distinct and inherent rights, related to the Waterbodies of the city. Therefore, we maintain that mother Earth along with

forests, plants, rivers, lakes, oceans, seas, waterways, watersheds, all belong to themselves and have rights to their ecological identity and their inclusion in a protection regime.

- 1** WE ALL declare with this Manifesto that the city of Eleusina must ensure and grant the right for uncompromising protection and restoration to the Waterbodies surrounding and delimiting it – the river to the east, the bay in front, and the coves to the west, which were destroyed during the twenty years from 1970 to 1990 by the discharge into the sea and the currents of untreated waste from the industries, as well as of the sewage of the Central Sewerage Pipe of Athens.
- 2** WE ALL demand that the immense long-lasting pressures on the Gulf and on Eleusina’s Waterbodies in general, aiming to occupy every free square of the coastline and the sea space for all kinds of industrial activity –as a rule, nuisance and undesirable elsewhere– should cease, along with the unimpeded continuation of existing activities
- 3** WE ALL declare that the coastal front of Eleusina, from Sarandapotamos to Vlycha, has the self-evident right to be restored and transformed into a sustainable ecosystem through the removal of industrial activities, with the ultimate goal of restoring environmental balance and returning the front to the city and its residents.
- 4** WE ALL demand a new legislative approach in the city of Eleusina that ensures and grants the right of personhood status to all natural water resources, sea, rivers, lakes, wetlands, springs, streams and aquifers, to attain a sustainable management and ensure their good ecological status, for a healthy environment, which will be key in dealing with the ongoing pollution,

“WE ALL the residents of Eleusina have distinct and inherent rights, related to the Waterbodies of the city. Therefore, we maintain that mother Earth along with forests, plants, rivers, lakes,

oceans, seas, waterways, watersheds, all belong to themselves and have rights to their ecological identity and their inclusion in a protection regime.”

deforestation, desertification, biodiversity, loss and climate change crises.

- 5** WE ALL demand that the ongoing over-exploitation of the entire coastal front should stop. It has already led to the destruction of the long-suffering Vlycha Bay with the complete disappearance of the natural estuary of the Soures stream and the wetlands, as well as the planned embankments of the picturesque dockside of the fishermen and the sea area at Kalypaki.
- 6** WE ALL declare the need for special management and maintenance of all streams and the preservation of their deltas, which have been concreted in large parts with the risk of overflowing.
- 7** WE ALL demand the relocation of the current commercial port to the industrial area located on the embankments of Halyvourgiki, where there are port infrastructures outside the city and they allow direct connection to all transport networks, while at the same time securing in full all the positions of the workers.
- 8** WE ALL demand that the legal framework for water use and exploitation of water resources be tightened, especially regarding the Thriasian Field, and support the establishment of a center for environmental and ecological research, information and negotiation between the Waterbodies and the city of Elefsina.
- 9** WE ALL are working towards a world where people will transform themselves into caretakers and healers of the Waterbodies, abolishing its violent exploitation and, above all, ensuring future of society – or else water will take revenge on us.

- 10** WE ALL believe that through art it is possible for people to change their perceptions, to reflect and design a future in harmony with nature and the Waterbodies of Eleusina, who, according to the traditions of the Arvanites, still keep in their memory the riverbeds with the fairies and the fey who took away their scarf; those water elements that still provide shelter to birds and always claim their unhindered union with the sea, a living and life-giving sea.

The Hydrocene as disruptive, embodied, conceptual epoch

by Dr Bronwyn Bailey-Charteris



Kati Roover, still from film *Flowing Place*, 2017.
Courtesy of the artist.

This extract comes from my first book, The Hydrocene: Eco-Aesthetics in the Age of Water (Routledge, Environmental Humanities Series, published 2024). In the context of Undercurrents we share here some ways of relating to water as an embodied agent and part of the circulating hydrosocial cycle. Starting with the idea of the planetary as research context and the centrality of water within the climate crisis, in this extract the theory of the Hydrocene as disruptive epoch emerges. With thanks to Routledge, UNSW, and the Australian Government RTP Research Scholarship support. The Hydrocene: Eco-Aesthetics in the Age of Water is available for purchase, and the e-book is fully open access.

1. A Neimanis & J Hamilton, 'Hacking the anthropocene IV: DIT', project website, 2019.

2. K Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or none*, Forerunners: Ideas First, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2018

3. See S Mentz, *An introduction to the blue humanities*, New York: London, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2025 and S Oppermann, *Blue Humanities: Storied Waterscapes in the Anthropocene*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2025.

4. SI Dobrin, *Blue Ecocriticism and the Oceanic Imperative*, Abingdon, Oxon: New York, Routledge, 2021.

Soaking in the Hydrocene

Welcome to the leaky, circulatory, aqueous Hydrocene; the Age of Water. A conceptual and embodied epoch among many, this is the wet season. Disruptive, porous and unruly, the Age of Water circulates in the pipes of late capitalism, redistributing aquatic memories of ancient water through contemporary showers of thought and contested states of watery becoming.

Starting with the idea of the planetary as research context and the centrality of water within the climate crisis, in this chapter I propose and survey the theory of the Hydrocene as disruptive, conceptual and embodied epoch. Drawing on the work of cultural theorist Amitav Ghosh and multispecies feminist theorist Donna J. Haraway, I propose the lens of the 'natural-cultural water crisis' and then elaborate on the central pillars of the natural-cultural water crisis and the social-cultural foundations of colonial-capital logics of seeing water as resource, drawing on the work of feminist cultural theorists Cecilia Chen, Janine MacLeod and Astrida Neimanis in their co-edited collected anthology *Thinking with Water*. I debunk the anthropocentric logics that delegate 'water as modern', 'water as resource' and 'water as (only) weather.' With this understanding of the natural-cultural water crisis, I propose the Hydrocene as a disruption to the terrestrial dominance of the Anthropocene. Following the academic and artistic call to arms for dismantling the hegemony of the Anthropocene, in this chapter

I recognise the pre-existing research on creating alternatives to the Anthropocene; for example, the feminist collective initiative to 'Hack the Anthropocene'¹ or geographer and geo-philosopher Kathryn Yusoff's *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*². I share why this is a curatorial undertaking, a process of naming that which is hidden – a curatorial task of naming and defining natural-cultural turns. Finally, I introduce the aims of the Hydrocene as conceptual epoch, which range from highlighting the centrality of water within the climate crisis and correspondingly within eco-aesthetics, as well as how artists are cultural leaders within the water crisis. The Hydrocene expands on existing critical water theory from the blue humanities³ and blue eco-criticism⁴ and connects these theories to practice in the lens of contemporary art.

My work in proposing the Hydrocene as a conceptual epoch is part of an artistic and academic impetus for cultural makers to redefine the language of this current age. It is my imperative to clearly state that I propose the Hydrocene as a conceptual epoch, not a geologic epoch. The framing of a geologic epoch and the extensive work of scientists to prove the existence of the Anthropocene is based on the findings of stratigraphic evidence. With respect for the geological methods of epoch defining, the Hydrocene is foremost a conceptual framework for aligning the natural-cultural water crisis in an embodied and affective register with the turn of contemporary art and critical thinkers.

5. G Spivak, 'Planetary' in *Death of a Discipline*, The Wellek Library Lectures in Critical Theory, New York, Columbia University Press, 2005, pp. 71-102.

6. UN-Water, 'Water and Climate Change'.

7. For a detailed account of the connection between water and climate change, see UN Water Agency reports.

Planetary as research context

The planetary, as opposed to the idea of 'global' or 'international', is a term from literary theorist and feminist critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who writes, 'The planetary is the difference, distance, and duration with, within, and against which it might be possible to think differently about being human and becoming collective.'⁵ It is the possibility of thinking of environmental relation in terms of difference and scale that is important in using the planetary as the context in which to elaborate the Hydrocene. In seeing this state of planetary as the research parameters for this book, I choose to focus not on art and the curatorial in a void, but instead to link art and the curatorial as part of a planetary concern. As a curatorial theorist, I propose this theory of the Hydrocene as a bridge building exercise between the planetary and the curatorial. I draw on my experience of the curatorial to garner attention towards radical artistic practices that consider the planetary as their research context.

Using the planetary as a framework, I focus on one essential 'figure' of the planetary: water. Water is one of the most pressing and urgent aspects of continuing life on earth, and yet water systems are in trouble. According to the United Nations Water Agency, the earth is already in a water crisis that will continue to increase in scale and severity⁶. Not only is water the primary medium through which the effects of climate change are felt, but access to water is also becoming increasingly unstable and unequal. More frequent, extreme water-based events such as flooding, hurricanes and melting glaciers are all part of the ecological 'feedback loops' of the rapidly advancing climate crisis.

For decades the link between water and the encroaching climate crisis has been documented and reported upon⁷. In 2008 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported on the crucial link between the climate crisis and water, stating there was evidence of a global water crisis, 'Changes in water quantity and quality due to climate change are expected to affect food availability, stability, access and utilisation.'⁸ Further, the report states, 'Observational records and climate projections provide abundant evidence that freshwater resources are vulnerable and have the potential to be strongly impacted by climate change, with wide-ranging consequences for human societies and ecosystems.'⁹ This unflinching scientific language describes how the water crisis threatens the

8. *Climate change and water*, B Bates, ZW Kundzewicz, & Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (eds), IPCC Technical Paper.

9. Ibid.

10. IPCC, *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change*, IPCC, 2022.

11. See 'Tuvalu seeks to retain statehood if it sinks completely as sea levels rise', *The Guardian*, 11 November 2021.

12. See J Lee, 'Sweden approves controversial iron mine on Indigenous Sámi land', *Grist*, 2022.

13. A Ghosh, *The great derangement: climate change and the unthinkable*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2017. p. 9.

14. Ibid. p. 8.

15. UK Le Guin, 'Ursula K Le Guin's speech at National Book Awards: "Books aren't just commodities"', *The Guardian*, 21 November 2014.

capacity for all ecosystems on this planet to function and thrive. In April 2022, the IPCC released another damning report on the state of water as it accelerates towards further instability¹⁰. The feedback loops of the crisis make water systems vulnerable and unstable. Warming and acidifying oceans are intensifying the effects of drought; subsequently, drought intensifies the effects of algae blooms, which deoxygenate oceans, leading to further warming of the oceans.

“Using the planetary as a framework, I focus on one essential ‘figure’ of the planetary: water. Water is one of the most pressing and urgent aspects of continuing life on earth, and yet water systems are in trouble.”

Further to this, the accumulated effects of the climate crisis are uneven, with water insecurity a burden distributed along lines of gender, race and power. For example, the rising sea waters inundating the Pacific Island of Tuvalu¹¹ and the expansion of the Kallak mine on Indigenous Sámi land in Northern Sweden¹² are both examples of the climate crisis intersecting with colonialism. The findings of the IPCC resonate with science-fiction writer William Gibson's statement The future is already here – it's just not evenly distributed, which curator Stephanie Rosenthal used as the title of the 20th Biennale of Sydney in 2017. This uneven distribution of water and water scarcity is paramount when considering the implications of the water crisis.

Natural-cultural water crisis

In Amitav Ghosh's book *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, he stipulates that the climate crisis is not only a crisis of ecologies but also a cultural climate crisis: 'the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture, and thus of the imagination.'¹³ This crisis of the collective imagination is what Ghosh

16. For more on Neimanis' ecological, poetic, and political understandings of bodies of water, see A Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.

17. Ibid., p. 1.

18. See A Neimanis, 'Hydrofeminism: Or, On Becoming a Body of Water' in *Undutiful Daughters: Mobilizing Future Concepts, Bodies and Subjectivities in Feminist Thought and Practice*, H Gunkel, C Nigianni & F Söderbäck (eds), New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 96-115.

posits to be one of the greatest challenges ever to haunt human culture in the broadest sense. He says that the cultural climate crisis is a failure of the existing narratives to navigate the wild impossibilities of the world as it now stands, in the midst of ecological destruction. He sees these failures of existing artistic methods and forms to adequately and competently negotiate the climate crisis as context and subject, as a failure not of the artists themselves, but as part of a broader 'imaginative and cultural failure that lies at the heart of the climate crisis.'¹⁴ This crisis of imagination is part of the limiting narratives of late capitalism and the economic myth of 'eternal growth'. In the words of fiction writer Ursula K. Le Guin, 'We live in capitalism, its power seems inescapable – but then, so did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings. Resistance and change often begin in art. Very often in our art, the art of words.'¹⁵ As Ghosh and Le Guin suggest, the power to expand the collective imagination is a chance to imagine truly sustainable and liveable world-making in multiple temporalities and ecosystems.

Throughout the book I draw on the substantial theoretical and practical offerings of feminist phenomenologist and gender theorist Astrida Neimanis. Neimanis' work is hugely influential to this research, and to the broader community of water theorists and artists.¹⁶ Her work as a cultural theorist is at the cutting edge of water, intersectional feminism and environmental change and she is a key theoretical thinker in this book and for my theory of Hydrocene. In her influential book *Bodies of Water* Neimanis reimagines embodiment along feminist and post-human trajectories: 'We live at the site of exponential material meaning where embodiment meets water. Given the various interconnected and anthropogenically exacerbated water crises that our planet currently faces – from drought and freshwater shortage to wild weather, floods, and chronic contamination – this meaningful mattering of our bodies is also an urgent question of worldly survival.'¹⁷ Her expansive and generative theory and practice spans notions of water and gender, power and embodiment, and includes her formation of the generative term 'hydrofeminism'¹⁸, which can be broadly understood as a form of intersectional feminism enacted with and through waters. Drawing together hydrofeminism and the planetary, the Nordic-based curatorial collective Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology, which published the Danish translation of Neimanis' original hydrofeminist text, explain it in this way: 'Hydrofeminism

19. Quoted from M Bordorff, 'Hydrofeminism Is Solidarity Across Watery Bodies', in *Kunstkrittikk*, 2018.

20. For more on the planetary circulations of water and an expanded hydrological cycle, see Neimanis as well as cultural theorist Christina Sharpe and geographer Jamie Linton.

21. See DJ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2016. p. 100.

is about solidarity across watery selves, across bodies of water... Water flows through bodies, species and materialities, connecting them for better or worse. Today, planetary thinking is feminist thinking.'¹⁹

Naming the Hydrocene as disruptive theory in the Blue Humanities

As we face a planetary crisis there needs to be a planetary response. To put it another way, the scale of the water crisis is vast and thus the theory must also operate in vast terms. The planetary water crisis deserves a planetary approach. Any attempt to think with water, as separate to the planetary circulations to which all water operates, only siphons and limits understanding of the hydrological as embodied and relational.²⁰

This invitation for culture makers to contribute alternative titles to the Anthropocene is part of what distinguished feminist scholar Donna J. Haraway describes when she writes, 'our job is to make the Anthropocene as short/thin as possible and to cultivate with each other in every way imaginable epochs to come that can replenish refuge. Right now, the earth is full of refugees, human and not, without refuge.'²¹ The Hydrocene is a way of building a small post-human refuge towards counteracting the dominant anthropocentric understandings of water, which I have laid out as foundational to the natural-cultural water crisis.

Based on my findings as a curator, I hypothesise this neologism as a curatorial act of establishing an alternative name and definition to the current epoch, most commonly known as the Anthropocene. Rather than a strict geological era or linear time-based matter, the Hydrocene is proposed a conceptual tool and as one of many alternative names for the current epoch and aims to disrupt the supremacy and land-based logic of the Anthropocene. As is commonly understood, the Anthropocene as a term is made from the combination of two Greek words for human ('anthropo') and new ('cene'), it was first coined in the 1980s, and popularised in 2000 by atmospheric chemist Paul J Crutzen and researcher Eugene F Stoermer. The term has been a controversial title for the current epoch and aims to highlight the disastrous impact of humans on all systems of the earth.²²



Bronwyn Bailey-Charteris, still from film, *Penelope and Lucinda*, 2016. Photo- Vanja Sandell Billström and Lucia Pagano

The Hydrocene employs the curatorial as an act of ‘disturbance’²³ or ‘disruption,’ bringing multiplicity and agitation to the naming of the current epoch. This disruption to the Anthropocene is a curatorial

“The feminist project of Hacking the Anthropocene specifically calls on ‘artists, writers, activists, scientists and beings of all kinds to decompose, reform, infiltrate, eject, co-opt or differently (re)configure the notion of Homo destroyer such that our shared-but-different futures might be configured’.”

act of changing the language and by extension the dominant narratives of the climate crisis. In naming the Hydrocene I follow theorists who critique the

Anthropocene as a limiting paradigm including Kathryn Yusoff’s *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*.²⁴ I respond to the call from visual anthropologist TJ Demos in his book *Against the Anthropocene* where he appeals for an expansion of the names of this planetary age: ‘we need many names to account for the sheer complexity and multiple dimensions of this geo-politico-economic formation, as well as to identify effective sources of resistance and inspire emergent cultures of survival.’²⁵ Demos’ instructive book outlines the alternatives to the Anthropocene proposed by other theorists, including the Capitalocene, the Chthulucene, the Pyrocene, the Plantationocene and the Plasticene. Demos argues that these terms are urgently needed, they are ‘conceptual tools to think, rethink, and theoretically challenge the Anthropocene thesis.’²⁶ The Hydrocene aims to be one of the many slippery names proposed for this current age, and to act as a conceptual tool and strategy for understanding and elevating water, art and culture in the current times.

I also respond to the call to ‘hack’ the Anthropocene, from above mentioned Neimanis and her collaborators in the feminist, anti-racist and queer project *Hacking the Anthropocene*,²⁷ founded in 2016. The project describes the Anthropocene as a term for the emerging geological era in which humans are ‘centralised as the dominant planetary force’. The authors outline how the Anthropocene draws on settler colonial discourse while also ‘problematically homogenises all humans as

25. See the JP Martinon and Irit Rogoff call for the curatorial to be understood as ‘disturbance’ among other terms; for more, see J-P Martinon, *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.

24. Yusoff.

25. TJ Demos, *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today*, Berlin, Sternberg Press, 2017, p. 87.

26. Ibid., p. 95.

27. A Neimanis & J Hamilton.

28. Ibid.

29. DJ Haraway.

30. The term more-than-human understands non-humans, such as flora and fauna, as important social actors, moving beyond anthropocentric understandings of non-humans. For more on this term see food and ecology scholar Sarah Elton, who describes more-than-human as ‘contexts in which multiple species and processes come together to produce a result’ in her essay in the collection *Showing Theory to Know Theory*, P Ballamingie & D Szanto (eds), Showing Theory Press, Canada, 2022, pp. 285-289.

planet destroyers and implies that we are locked into these petrifying ways of being’. Naming the Hydrocene as a watery alternative to the awkward Anthropocene is one version of ‘hacking the Anthropocene’ – where hacking implies to manipulate or reformulate. At the 2016 Australian conference for *Hacking the Anthropocene* Swedish post-humanist and gender theorist Cecilia Åsberg delivered the keynote address and implored for a destabilising of the Anthropocene; she suggested that what is necessary is to ‘hack a thousand tiny Anthropocenes; and even so, we have to live with the fact that we might not get out of this geological or biotic or climatological situation alive’.²⁸ The feminist project of *Hacking the Anthropocene* specifically calls on ‘artists, writers, activists, scientists and beings of all kinds to decompose, reform, infiltrate, eject, co-opt or differently (re)configure the notion of

“This water-based conceptual epoch aims to develop a collective understanding of the centrality of water as matter and metaphor in the current climate crisis.”

Homo destroyer such that our shared-but-different futures might be configured.’ This is a call to action to expand the possibilities of the Anthropocene towards thinking with the curatorial on the planetary scale.

The neologism of the Hydrocene is necessary at this time as water is central to our lived experiences of the climate crisis – materially and metaphorically. As Haraway, Demos, Neimanis, Yusoff and others insist,

the naming of this current age is a powerful act that builds collective understanding and meaning making. This water-based conceptual epoch aims to develop a collective understanding of the centrality of water as matter and metaphor in the current climate crisis. In naming and acknowledging the Hydrocene as a slippery, conceptual tool, I offer an alternative to the terminology of the Anthropocene and contribute to the collective understandings of the naming of our current age.

With these incitements to rethink the Anthropocene as a term, I utilise the curatorial as a bridge-building and way-finding device within art and academia to propose the Hydrocene as a conceptual epoch. The act of naming and defining the Hydrocene is a curatorial act of caretaking, returning to the origins of the curating as caretaking.

As a curator, I look to artists who actively ‘stay with the trouble’²⁹ as Haraway insists and are not simply presenting work ‘about’, for example, melting glaciers or plastics in the ocean, but instead these artists are thinking and making ‘with’ water, in embodied and critical manners. These artists are diving in deeply and working actively towards an intersectional approach to human–water relations. Part of the call to ‘stay with the trouble’ is the centrality of the idea that those seeking to act on the climate crisis are not doing so with a utopian attitude or idealisation of the problems of the climate crisis. With the sixth mass extinction underway, the impact of the climate crisis is being felt and the call to ‘stay with the trouble’ from Haraway is a way to continue to build meaningful relations with the ‘more-than-human’³⁰ world, while actively acknowledging the grief and other difficult emotions of the losses from the crisis. In this book, the artists presented ‘stay with the trouble’ as a counterargument to ignoring the crisis or wishing it away with utopian idealism. As a curator, I look to research and support artists that are doing the same.

51. This paragraph is adapted from my journal article, B Bailey-Charteris, 'Revealing the Hydrocene: Reflections on watery research', *Arts and Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 2, 2021, pp. 451-445.

52. H Blum, 'Introduction: oceanic studies', *Atlantic Studies*, 10, No. 2, 2015, pp. 151-155.

53. P Horden & N Purcell, 'The Mediterranean and "the New Thalassology"', *The American Historical Review*, 111, No. 5, 2006, pp. 722-740.

54. Mentz, S. *An introduction to the blue humanities*. New York: London, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2024, p. 2 and 'Blue Humanities' in *Posthuman Glossary*. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, pp. 69-72.

55. S Oppermann, *Blue Humanities: Storied Waterscapes in the Anthropocene*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2025

56. For a detailed understanding of the emergence of the Blue Humanities, see JR Gillis, 'Blue Humanities', *Humanities*, vol. 54, 2015, *Serpil Oppermann Blue Humanities: Stories Waterscapes in the Anthropocene*, Cambridge UP, 2025, and Steve Mentz, *An Introduction to the Blue Humanities*, 2025.

Here curating – both as curatorial practice and curatorial theory – allows for the lifting of individual artistic practices to be seen in constellation with one another and their differing socio-political contexts. The curatorial, which is defined in more detail in Chapter 2, is a way to understand the power and beauty of these practices in context, both locally and on a planetary level. The curatorial is a way to digest art for audience, to build bridges of connection between audience and art, highlighting difference, context and intent. In this way, naming the Hydrocene is an act of curatorial agency that utilises the ability of the curatorial to name and define, to build conceptual bridges and ultimately to position artists as vital leaders in the natural-cultural water crisis.³¹

In defining the Hydrocene as a conceptual framework, I place the term within the blue humanities, a field which continues to enriches the conceptual work of critical ocean studies. The blue humanities highlights the emergence of 'oceanic studies' as defined by Hester Blum,³² 'new Thalassology'³³ defined by Purcell and Horden, and has been defined by Steve Mentz as, 'the blue humanities combines water with human ideas.'³⁴ Environmental humanities scholar Serpil Oppermann also defines the blue humanities as a field which 'critically examines the planet's troubled seas and distressed freshwaters from various socio-cultural, literary, historical, aesthetic, ethical, and theoretical perspectives.'³⁵ The Hydrocene works to contribute to this expansive field of blue humanities.³⁶

In defining the Hydrocene, I recognise that the Hydrocene theory has many possible applications. Other applications include considering the Hydrocene in governance, where a water-centred approach has the potential to affect policy makers' understanding of the water crisis. Similarly, the Hydrocene can be understood in the frame of activism, especially regarding First Nations-led claims for water rights and the important work of water defenders who aim

“The curatorial theory of the Hydrocene is concerned with deciphering, mapping, connecting, sharing and critiquing the hydro-artistic methods of embodiment and radical imagination with water that the artists of the Hydrocene present.”

to transform destructive colonial water practices. Within the humanities the Hydrocene has the potential to engage affect theory and to be performed as action-research. Within fields such as architecture and design, the Hydrocene offers practitioners a new framework and lens to recognise and connect critical water practices in the field.

While the Hydrocene has diverse applications, the book applies the theory of the Hydrocene as conceptual and embodied epoch into eco-aesthetics as curatorial theory. The curatorial theory of the Hydrocene is concerned with deciphering, mapping, connecting, sharing and critiquing the hydro-artistic methods of embodiment and radical imagination with water that the artists of the Hydrocene present. In the next chapter I share the theoretical framework for the Hydrocene in application, as curatorial theory within eco-aesthetics.

3 questions with Benedetta Panisson

People Do Water, 2013-2024, printed in 2024, photographic print on lambda from negative film, edition of 3, Courtesy of OPR Galley.



This text-based interview explores Benedetta Panisson’s research and thoughts on the intersection between ocean, queer theory, activism and arts.

Tracing a history of how cultural norms and identities have shaped and been shaped by nature, Benedetta opens new possibilities for activism, where hydrosexuality and marine life can serve as powerful tools for reimagining and reshaping our world.

This year’s Transeuropa Festival will feature the workshop “Queer Sea Marriage”, curated by Rete Arcipelago and Benedetta Panisson. Different voices of Venice (artists, activists, researchers) who have a long-standing relationship with the lagoon will be involved in the process of reimagining the ritual of the “Sensa”, where the Venetian authority marries the Adriatic Sea, working towards a new performative dimension of the ‘Queer Marriage of the Sea’

Currently, we can see a rising practice of exploring ecology, blue space & our relations with it through a lens of queer theory. What is your idea of this connection?

It’s a small marvel amidst a general gloom. The ecological relationship between queer theory and blue spaces is not only increasing but also the slow emergence of a long history: for centuries, cultural and moral devices have defined a notion of “nature” that oscillated between viewing it as a subordinate, promiscuous, controllable being, and as a pure, powerful entity. In short, nature was always placed on the extreme margins. The same power device defined the concept of “woman” with the same attributes and the same oscillation: either a pure being, or extremely impure. Patriarchal frameworks were compounded by colonialism, globalizing a hierarchy that invented marginalized subjects to define central ones. But it is in aquatic spaces and among insular peoples that the attribution of femininity reached its peak. “Feminized,” in past centuries, meant something different from the dominant sexual norm. Today, we’d say queer. Think, for example, of 19th-century sexologists seeking different sexual models among island peoples, or the erotic exoticism for the oceans. For me, it’s important to view this current meeting between queer studies and performativity with blue spaces not as a trendy affectation, but as the fruit of a long history that can make it feel less hostile and more intimate to us. We could talk about the queer reappropriation of an

aquatic space that has long been considered already queer. All this effort to reinvent “nature” makes it clear that nature has always been understood as conveying a message. And now is the moment for a queer message.

Linnaeus’ example is always explicit: in the 18th century, he saw Christian sexual order in plants, in their stamens and pistils. He argued that the heteronormative, marital model of Christianity was shown by nature itself. We like to convince ourselves that nature tells the truth, various truths: it’s an anthropomorphic illusion that works. Today, sexual and gender cultures are expanding, and the variability of gender expressions, hermaphroditism, sexual techniques, and courtship behaviors exhibited by oceanic and abyssal creatures align closely with what queer studies have needed—just as Linnaeus used stamens and pistils. In short, queer culture has fallen in love with blue spaces. As Stephen Gould, one of the greatest evolutionary biologists of the 20th century, said: “We cannot win this battle to save species and environments without forging an emotional bond between ourselves and nature as well – for we will not fight to save what we do not love.”¹ In a contemporary world fed by hate, this is a courageous erotic act.

In your work you have explored and presented queer sea creatures and interspecies sexualities, what is your idea

1. Gould, Stephen Jay, 1995, *Eight Little Piggies: Reflections in Natural History*, W W Norton & Co Inc.

2. <https://www.benedettapanisson.com/queer-sea-marriage-2024>

3. Materiality at the Intersection of Ecology and Religious Studies”, organized by Fondazione Giorgio Cini (the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations and Spiritualities), Harvard Divinity School (Center for the Study of World Religions), Ca’ Foscari University of Venice

(THE NEW INSTITUTE Centre for Environmental Humanities - NICHE), the Center for the Study of Lived Religion, and the Department of Asian and North African Studies), University College Dublin (Irish Research Council Government of Ireland). <https://www.cini.it/en/events/conference-materiality-at-the-intersection-of-ecology-and-religious-studies>

4. <https://www.benedettapanisson.com/queer-sea-marriage-2024>

5. <https://sprinklestephens.ucsc.edu/2009/08/28/wedding-to-the-sea-2/>

6. <https://justynagorowska.com/cyber-wedding-to-the-brine-shrimp#:~:text=Inspired%20by%20the%20ecosexual%20weddings,the%2014th%20of%20September%202021.>

7. https://www.antennae.org.uk/?fbclid=IwY2xjaWFljetpleHRuA2FlbQ1xMAABHeznkatVXfbh5uTgm8AYYATV1xWk1J-g7575sHHMb7uC4Vmts1lg0xARRA_aem_tta4fh22cp67W60y_IQ5g

in using hydrosexuality in your art research? How can this be a tool for activism?

After many years spent studying the structuring of human culture and sexual practices—limited by belonging to a single species— and working on artistic projects about this, I felt it was essential to observe animal sexuality. As an islander, it seemed spontaneous to be attracted by the sexuality of marine creatures. I would add that in my deep dive into the nexus between waterscapes, bodies, and queer studies, both as a visual artist and as an academic researcher, I consider it fundamental to create an interconnection between oceanic cultures scattered across every corner of the planet, particularly regarding knowledge and relationships with marine creatures. The structures of sexual knowledge we apply to humans are often the same ones we apply to animal sexuality. At that point, about thirty years ago, animal critical studies emerged, rooted in feminist theory, with the mission of uncovering the cultural and moral biases we impose on animals. Thanks to my collaboration with WHOI, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, I worked on a 1993 video footage of two abyssal octopuses performing a sexual act. They were two males, from two different species. The video is stunning, and that’s why my current project is focused on bringing these visuals out of the archives as if they were works of art, often forgotten. Every time this material resurfaced, it generated shock: cataloged as an anomaly, promiscuity, something

“Every time I encounter animal sexuality, it feels like a maritime storm, but this storm exists only in our eyes. That’s why, although I’m working on queer animal sexualities as an artist and academic, in truth, I’m working on that storm.”

so strange it couldn’t even be named. What excites me, however, isn’t just the hypothesis that abyssal octopuses of two different species might engage in homosexual acts at 2,500 meters deep, in total

darkness, but that such acts might change how we think about animals, that it means as functional organs acting in accordance with a natural plan. I’m biased, but I believe that feminist and queer studies, along with the artistic practices related to them, can help us rethink, in collaboration with other knowledges, not just which sexual practices belong to animals or humans, but to recreate the very notion of nature. When I started working on another abyssal creature, where the male is nothing but a small parasite attached to the larger body of the female, dependent on her, I thought that if Linnaeus had established this as the example provided by nature—not stamens and pistils united in a heterosexual marriage for reproduction—the course of history would have taken an entirely different shape. And by history, I mean all of history, not just that of sex and gender. Every time I encounter animal sexuality, it feels like a maritime storm, but this storm exists only in our eyes. That’s why, although I’m working on queer animal sexualities as an artist and academic, in truth, I’m working on that storm.

An act of ceremony with water can also be seen by others in the hydrofeminist movement, for example the cyber nymphs marriage to the brine shrimp, or the ecosexual blue wedding to the sea, why do you think this is the case? What is the importance of tying human ritualistic practices to water bodies?

From childhood, we Venetians are taught—often in an exoticized way—the ritual of marriage to the sea: since the year 1000, the Doge, Venice’s highest authority, and today the mayor, marry the Adriatic Sea. They do this by casting a gold ring into the waves. It’s done as a symbol of dominion, as declared in the words of the ritual, which define the sea as feminine: through the wedding act, the sea-female-bride is subdued so that explorations and trade are not disrupted by storms. I believe there are three key points to address, with the long-term aim of transforming this research into a collective performance in Venetian waters. First, the understanding of the sea as female, and thus tamable, can instead become a fluid relationship, one outside of gender binaries, because the sea has no gender. Second, the use of a heteronormative wedding form as a hierarchical structure of domination could become a horizontal relationship—intense and physical, or perhaps light and immaterial—but I don’t believe a marriage is necessary. Finally, the evident political and economic value of marriage to the sea declares



Sexual Display from the Abyss, 2022, still from 1993 footage 4885, courtesy of WHOI © Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

an intention to exploit it, whereas this could instead become an ecological action—one of respect and love. *This is Queer Sea Marriage*².

When the project was presented at the *Materiality at the Intersection of Ecology and Religious Studies*^{3,4} conference, it already had a dual form: an academic inquiry into the relationships between sea peoples' cultures and aquatic spaces, analyzed through the lens of gender and queer studies, and a work-in-progress of a collective performance with my Venetian community. I consider the upcoming step at Transeuropa Festival, at the invitation of the Arcipelago Association, to be crucial for beginning to think collectively about how an artistic project can become a collective action, an intimate collective action.

I'd like to deconstruct it, minimize it, make it quiet yet powerful, inclusive, physical, and ironic. The Venetian marriage to the sea has all the elements to be playfully turned upside down.

In the research I've conducted over time on this kind of performativity, I came across *Wedding to the Sea*⁵ by Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens—coming from porn studies, I consider them mythological figures—and I found it marvelous that the two artists performed this in Venice without knowing that the marriage to the sea existed here. When they found out, it took on even more significance. I also learned about the project by Ewelina Jarosz and Justyna Gorowska⁶, which

intersects with an interspecies marriage as a form of protection for a tiny aquatic creature, because we were published together in *Antennae Journal*, "Queering Nature", issue 63⁷. It's crucial to create an extended archipelago of cultures and performative arts related to the sea, because the sea is what connects them—a queer archipelago.

As for how I currently imagine my *Queer Sea Marriage*, I admit that I'm already inside an aesthetic and performative dynamic that feels very personal to me: a process of stripping away, lightening, making it minimal, almost infinitesimal. And if the performance works even when reduced to its bare essentials, then we're there. We can do without the boat adorned with statues of the Doge, without the gold ring, the religious formulas, the exposed grandeur, the distance between the man of power at the bow and the waves below. I imagine it as a silent, collective immersion in the sea, standing there, eyes toward the horizon, all the Venetians together, listening for an answer that will never come: Does the sea want any of this?

Water assembly for new imaginaries

by Simon Auperpin

Brussels, like many European capitals, was a water city. How can we acknowledge and reinvent this heritage?



Fluctuations Stands. Photo by Olivier Costier

At the intersection of architecture, arts, and, social-political activism, in this text Simon introduces us to taktyk's project, water imaginaries, displayed during Fluctuations Festival.

Fluctuations Festival is a project ran by European Alternatives in collaboration with SMMMILE (Paris), VibeLabs (Amsterdam), Subjective Values Foundation (Budapest) and Besign (Nice). A transnational activist festival promoting ecological and social activism, and cultural space through multi-city festivals taking place on a river boat.

The collaborative water imaginaries creation will be visible during TRANSEUROPA Festival, and participants will be invited to continue its ever-ongoing capturing.

Taktyk acts as a design platform to promote contemporary water culture in Brussels. We aim in particular to stress and strengthen fragile water landscapes in the European Capital. In our projects and during our exchanges we find water is a link between past and future. An element to explore the geographical bases, soils, topography, historical landscapes and practices, and an element to talk about future landscapes, urban transition, deconstruction and renaturation of the city.

The invitation of European Alternatives to join the first edition of the festival entitled "Fluctuations" has been an opportunity to explore water imaginaries, water rights and water politics in Brussels. Our proposition to use a simple device, a series of painted fabrics floating in the wind, calls out to festival-goers and serves as a medium for encounters & discussion, while a large blank fabric to be painted collectively materialises, makes tangible and assembles everyone's imaginaries.

Watercarriers

The watercarriers are a reinterpretation of a well known Art Nouveau figure. We proposed to reinterpret it through the creation of four scenes. Each one addresses poetically current sociospatial concerns.

- a. LOVE: Source of love:**
'The invisible is the visible that's not seen yet'
M. Duchamps.

In the heart of a Brussels park, the arrival of a natural water spring unfolds its legends. Lovers who drink water from this spring are guaranteed eternal love. The appearance of a usually invisible underground water becomes a source of inspiration for artists and of wonder for kids and adults.

This waterspring is a considerable ally in explaining the main principles of the valley's soils. Water, infiltrated within the sandy geological layers (water carriers) magically resurface once it meets the impermeable clay layers.

- b. SYMBOL: Marsh landscape:**
A symbolic, sensitive landscape, well known in Brussels (Bruocsella, the house on the marsh in German). A water carrier landscape that has been the focus of public and ecological resistance in the past few years to preserve and restore this landscape in the heart of our urban fabric. This fragile landscape has a very important role in the ecological and climatic adaptation of the city, it is a richly biodiverse biome, a powerful carbon sequestration, and a refreshing environment with a cultural and educational impact.

Simon Auperpin, Fluctuations Festival Brussels, 2024



- c. FLOOD: nothing natural but a human disaster**
Water is frequently seen as a dual component, both a force for life and a destructive power. Lack of water worries us, too much water terrifies us. In 2021, Belgium experienced deadly floods that left a lasting mark in our memories and imaginaries. These floods raised a number of questions, among them: what is the space given for the water? How do we collectively accept to live "at risk" of what we ourselves generated?

- d. PLANET: Interstellar water carriers:**
This fabric has two dimensions, the first one poetic, as hydrologist Emma Haziza says¹, the water cycle is not closed, it is in equilibrium. Our planet leaks water from its atmosphere, compensated for by the water brought down by comets.

The second one is more dramatic, it provides an opportunity to appreciate the scale of our staggering impact on this planet. Since 2022, we have exceeded the 6th planetary limit, that of the freshwater cycle, and we now know that the over-exploitation of groundwater and its non-renewal has changed the Earth's axis of rotation by almost 80cm.

Watercarriers as a cultural act

The two days of the Fluctuations festival gave us an opportunity to share and explore our relationship with water. Throughout the workshop, a large fabric has been painted collectively by the festival participants. Starting as a blank canvas for the participants' imaginaries it materialised the people's stories, interweaving and superimposing them. The water and ink used are mixed, diffused like a fluid, an interconnected multicellular organism. Fabrics in the wind join the bodies in movement of people, music, canal, and its inhabitants.

As the festival unfolds, multicultural, cross-generational and sometimes contradictory narratives are revealed. The metaphysical and geological imaginaries, the political wins and hopes (*Mar Menor, a Spanish lagoon which, following a popular initiative, obtained the status of a legal entity*), the worries (*la dernière goutte*) the shared dimension of this vital element (*a common good must be public, free from capital*). It also has the capacity to bring people together (*un trait d'union*), it could be a rebellious, agitating force (*la goutte d'eau qui fait déborder...*).

The sharing of these imaginaries also offers us hidden gems related to childhood and learning (the word "water" is written in Persian آب (ĀB), the first word learned to write in school and its shape seems to convey the watercycle).



Simon Auperpin, Fluctuations Festival Brussels, 2024

1. Emma Haziza : Comment nous avons brisé le cycle de l'eau, Déclat-Le Tournant, La Première RTBF, émission du 30/08/2023

2. Seo, K.-W., Ryu, D., Eom, J., Jeon, T., Kim, J.-S., Youm, K., et al. (2025). Drift of Earth's pole confirms groundwater depletion as a significant contributor to global sea level rise 1993-2010. *Geophysical Research Letters*, 50, e20256L105509.

3. 'Each generation doubtless feels called upon to reform the world. Mine knows that it will not reform it, but its task is perhaps even greater. It consists in preventing the world from destroying itself.'

“At a time of struggle and popular uprising, when the democratic stakes of conflict and debate happen, and when cultural hegemony needs to be regained, we see our role as landscape architects not just as architects of open spaces or technicians, but as facilitators and mediators of new ways of co-existing with the living.”

time connection with water is an opportunity to refill the flesh, a way to recover materiality, sensitivity, to fill seasonality in a disconnected and unmaterial world. Michel Corajoud said, 'landscape is where the sky and the land meet', water is where sky, land and inhabitants interweave.

*'Chaque génération, sans doute, se croit vouée à refaire le monde. La mienne sait pourtant qu'elle ne le refera pas. Mais sa tâche est peut-être plus grande. Elle consiste à empêcher que le monde ne se défasse.'*³

Albert Camus,
Nobel Prize speech, 1957

Each of these moments confirms that transmission and sharing are essential tools in our practices, preventing the trivialisation of imaginaries and recreating links. At such a special time, at the crossroads of an economic, ecological and socio-political crisis with the rise of the extreme right, conservative forces helped by the support of a liberal and capitalist world desperate to keep control, we need to fight and find a collective sustainable fairground. At a time of struggle and popular uprising, when the democratic stakes of conflict and debate happen, and when cultural hegemony needs to be regained, we see our role as landscape architects not just as architects of open spaces or technicians, but as facilitators and mediators of new ways of co-existing with the living.

Water is a part of this democratic challenge, a common good to be regained in the urban space through its place in play, culture, and drinkability. At the same

Living with water

by Pier Paolo Scelsi and Izabela Anna Moren

Artists of the exhibition:

Replica Artist Books
Francesco Bellina
Eliza Collin
Giovanna Silva
Matteo De Mayda
Markus Heinsdorff
Roger Weiss
Valentina De' Matha'
Roberto Ghezzi
Mauro Sambo
Luigi Viola
Beatrice Donda



Giovanna Silva, Cantiere Crea, 2024

Pier Paolo Scelsi and Izabela Anna Moren are the curators of Body of Water, an exhibition on liquidity as an anthropic element.

In this conversation, they explore the connection between body, water, culture, and Venice, while paying attention to the impacts of tourism and liquid capitalism.

Body of Water will run throughout and after this year's TRANSEUROPA Festival.

Pier Paolo Scelsi: Water is a universal element, transversal to cultures and religions, a place of transit and arrival, and has been a theme addressed by many throughout history. If you could have chosen any artist present or past to be involved in this exhibition, who would you have chosen? And why?

Izabela Anna Moren: As much as water can be a universal and existential element, I believe that there is a profound difference between those who grow up near seas, lakes and rivers and those who belong to continental lands. Or perhaps it is not related to birth but to feeling the sea inside.

An artist I would have liked to involve is the American writer and photographer Allan Sekula who published Fish Story in 1995. It is his attempt to give form to the feeling that the sea would disappear in the collective and popular imagination of the modern world. Instead, he discovers that the sea has been 'terrestrialised' and is part of a liquid capitalist system, moving goods and earnings in search of new frontiers. I believe it is a unique work, equally a work of art and research, a form of critical realism that combines the theoretical, empirical and aesthetic across the board.

How do you think Venice and Venetians are still connected to the world through water, and how much or how has this relationship changed and will it change again?

PPS: The relationship with water is at the basis of the very birth of the city, first an element of defence and refuge for the first inhabitants of the islands of the lagoon from the barbarian invasions, then throughout history a way and route of communication and trade for the flourishing Serenissima republic. In contemporary times, water for the Venetians is an element of daily coexistence that places the city always on the edge

and in the forefront of issues such as climate change, soil consumption and erosion, the limit that the anthropic element must set in the political construction of a city that cannot and must not become accustomed to and surrender to being a mere destination for mass tourism.

Working in Venice, imagining an exhibition as part of a festival, what are the challenges and difficulties you have to face and solve?

IAM: You know this much better than I do given CREA's many years of experience. I believe that every exhibition has its difficulties, the most obvious ones being the time and the budget to be respected. In my work, the final form does not change the thought process much, for me an exhibition, a publication, a festival, a public programme... must respond to a lack, and offer a research process that can be enhanced over time, and that necessarily goes beyond an aesthetic and ephemeral pleasure. In a cultural economy that is now based almost exclusively on events, this aspect often falls by the wayside.

As a working environment and value system, how does having the space together with craftsmen and people closely linked to the lagoon condition you?

PPS: More than a conditioning, sharing this ecosystem with artisans leads to the creation of a deep bond between tradition and innovation.

This union flows into a district where past and present intertwine. Working close contact with artisans and thus people deeply connected to the lagoon allows us to deepen our understanding of the local culture and its traditions. Having a shared space and collaborating with them greatly enriches and differentiates our reality, as craftsmen they bring with them ancestral skills and knowledge related to local materials and techniques,

reminding us of the importance of the natural resources of the lagoon.

What is the objective you would like to achieve through this exhibition? And how does it fit into the context of Transeuropa Festival?

IAM: As I told you when we met, doing an exhibition on water in Venice, especially as a non-Venetian, doesn't seem like a great idea to me. Also because I think that then there is a stigmatisation whereby in Sicily we talk about the sea as in Venice about the lagoon, forgetting that these particular aspects and conditions are part of a wider network of territorial causes and effects such as the relationship between coast and hinterland, urbanism, mobility, tourism, agriculture and others. So for me it was important to focus on the relationship between human and water that brings this multidimensionality into the exhibition. The other aspect is definitely that hyperlocal phenomena are also hyperlocal in other places in the world, if these localisms talk to each other an exchange of traditions, conditions and innovations happens that is much more fruitful than the one-size-fits-all globalised world narrative. I believe this is the mission of the Transeuropa Festival, which is hosted in a different place for each edition.

But let us return to Venice. It is a dense, beautiful, precarious city, rich and perhaps destined to die faster than other cities. What does CREA allow you to do and what would you like it to do again in the future for you, the city and artists?

PPS: Reflected in the canals of Venice, we can look at the ancient and the contemporary as two currents that meet and merge. By experiencing the city with true attention and respect, one can still experience

the processes that led to the writing of history and the history of art. A city that, like some others, is not destined to die, because it is a heritage of a cultural identity that leads from the past to the present but needs a precise direction, a commitment, to put the role of citizens, of residents, back at the center. Should this approach to the role and concept of the city fail, Venice would remain just a brand, a flag to be put on one's list, a blurred selfie that could be taken in one of the other 97 cities in the world called Venice.

CREA, like many other realities, entered Venice above all to bring authenticity back to contemporary art in an everyday context, to imagine art as an element of everyone's life, not as a frill, a decoration, but as an impulse, a trigger of doubts and reasoning around living in common.

The context in which we develop our projects allows creativity and stimulates a synergy between artists and the community, rediscovering the values of raw materials such as wood, fabric, clay and the brackish water of the lagoon. Future projects are many, but I hope to pursue artistic initiatives that raise awareness of the distortions and changes needed in our society.

“I aim to shift the narrative from criminalizing migration to protecting human rights”

A conversation with David Yambio



European Alternatives speak with David Yambio, a community advocate, spokesperson and President of Refugees in Libya.

David became displaced at birth and lived in refugee camps across multiple countries in Africa, including Libya where he faced severe dehumanization and inhumane treatment.

In 2021, he co-founded the movement *Refugees in Libya* which over the years has grown to be the only voice for refugees who are stuck in the North African regions. David Yambio is an advocate for the Pact for Equality campaign and will be speaking during this year's TRANSEUROPA Festival.

1 As a migrant's human rights advocate what type of discrimination have you faced and that you wish the EU would change? How is the work you are doing with Pact 4 Equality advocates helping to improve the situation?

As a refugee and human rights advocate, I have had innumerable experiences of discrimination in Libya where I was tortured, commodified and dehumanized. Presently in Europe I face racial profiling, exclusion from governmental institutions and all forms of racism. I have been rejected and attacked at European internal borders, I have been attacked by law enforcement without any access to legal protection. I wish fundamentally for the EU to change its approach to migration policies and humanize the human beings who are behind this word **migration**. I wish that they will end their cooperation with Libya and Tunisia's repressive regimes where migrants and refugees are constantly detained under brutal and inhumane conditions as part of the EU externalization strategies. I am also an advocate for greater accountability within the EU for violations against migrants in Libya and Tunisia. We have cases at the ICC and the European Court of Justice against Frontex, for example.

My work with Pact for Equality aims to address these injustices by pushing for policies that recognize the dignity of all migrants. The Pact for Equality advocates for the recognition of migration as a human right and challenges discriminatory structures that limit migrants' legal protections. Through this advocacy, I aim to shift the narrative

from criminalizing migration to protecting human rights and ensuring that migrants and refugees have equitable access to justice, services, and employment across Europe.

2 How is climate change affecting your home country? Are you aware of EU policies or other policies that are being put in place?

My country, South Sudan, is severely affected by climate change. In 2019 alone there were devastating floods that swallowed and submerged great regions which led to the displacement of millions of people who were already experiencing the 2013 civil wars. My country has been experiencing droughts, desertification, land degradation, heatwaves and increasing temperatures. As a refugee from South Sudan I felt and lived the direct consequences of forced migration, although I initially left due to wars I have and still witness hundreds of thousands who are forced to migrate due to climate change. The EU policies and its approach may have a few initiatives in my country aimed at addressing climate change but it is proven to be insufficient since it fails to create a framework that supports climate adaptation and to recognize the impact it brings. I am aware of this not only in my country but several countries across Africa.

3 The EU claims to be the defender of democracy. How can democracies be more inclusive for migrants and refugees?

Yes, the EU claims to be a defender of democracy but lets ask the simplest question: Are they inclusive of migrants and refugees? Do they see us as humans rather than commodities to own and negotiate about? For me a true democracy is about being involved in my community's affairs regardless of my being South Sudanese or other, simply because I actually live in the EU on a daily basis and that I interact and evolve within the EU and that won't change. We, migrants and refugees, are excluded entirely from political participation, there are no mechanisms which grant us the right to vote and participate in local decision-making processes. Should there be these few mechanisms in place, we will truly have a taste of democracy in European societies.

4 Migrants and refugees have very non-existing voting rights: how do you think this can be changed?

As I just explained above, we need the EU to introduce equal mechanisms which grant us the right to vote. We need legal reforms at the EU level to ensure long-term residency permits which would allow most of us who are not citizens to engage in voting and local decision-making processes. Why do I ask for long-term residency? Well, most migrants across Europe have resident permits of 6 months to 2 years maximum which therefore renders their voting rights null.

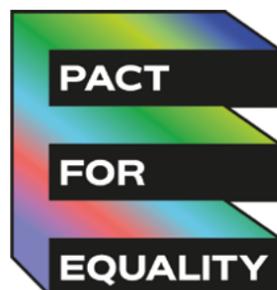
“We, migrants and refugees, are excluded entirely from political participation, there are no mechanisms which grant us the right to vote and participate in local decision-making processes.”

5 Do you think popular assemblies can be an alternative to voting for migrants and refugees?

Definitely, popular assemblies are of the people and for the people, I come from the streets and it is from popular assemblies that I believe we can build trust and hope. Most of us who are crippled by these policies and the hypocrites of democracies often find ourselves at home with assemblies as such. It gives us the space to participate in decision-making even when we do not have formal voting rights. In these spaces our perspectives are considered in policy discussions and beyond.

6 In the context of the Transeuropa festival, you are a panelist in a debate with mayors and EU representatives. What kind of policies or practices are being done at the city level that can help to have spaces more inclusive for migrants and refugees?

At the city level, there are promising initiatives that help create inclusive spaces. For example, many European cities in 2015 or 2016 declared their intentions to act as the “Cities of Welcome” which then saw thousands of Syrian and Afghan refugees arrive and get welcomed in Europe. This was the power of the cities which transcended beyond the power of the politicians, the cities too introduced programs that supported migrant's integration through language training, housing assistance, and legal aid. These cities started to ebb with time and I would like to see these initiatives revitalized once again. That's why earlier this year we launched our Human Rights Defenders Evacuation Campaign from Libya in Bologna. During the Transeuropa festival, I would amplify and highlight the importance of city-level collaboration in this time of crisis.



A transnational Vision: Contracts and workers' rights of women working in the domestic & tourism sectors

Interview with Raquel Martínez Buján and Chiara Buratti, questions by Faith Dzanta

How do migration, women and labor rights intersect in Venice and across Europe? In a conversation with two figures engaged in labor activism, we explore the key challenges tourism and domestic workers face and the evolving future of labor movements.

Raquel Martínez Buján, a professor and expert on domestic labor in Spain, and Chiara Buratti, a representative of the grassroots union ADL Cobas in Venice, share their insights into the struggles and strategies of workers in these sectors.

Professor Buján, what strategies have emerged in Spain to combat exploitation in domestic work? And considering that domestic labor is often undervalued and migrant women face significant discrimination in both domestic and tourism sectors, what radical strategies can improve their conditions?

In Spain, the struggle for domestic labor rights, which is closely tied to care work, has unfolded through two key avenues. First, feminist movements, especially associations of migrant domestic workers from Latin America, have been instrumental. They've organized cooperatives, non-profit worker-run collectives, to push for fairer conditions. These cooperatives have gained significant ground, particularly in cities like Barcelona and in the Basque Country, where programs have been developed to support care workers.

Secondly, legislation has been shaped by the strength of these movements. Thanks to the self-organization and the ability of migrant women to mobilize within feminist and labor networks, visibility has been brought to their working conditions. Without their efforts, much of the progress we've seen, like the legal recognition of their rights, would not have happened.

Chiara, moving to Venice, given the city's reliance on seasonal migrant labor, are traditional union strategies enough to combat exploitation, or do we need more radical approaches? How can workers and activists collaborate to address both labor exploitation and environmental destruction?

The tourism industry in Venice is a tough battleground. The majority of the workforce is women and migrants, and they are subjected

to seasonal contracts and low wages. Unions, especially grassroots ones like ADL Cobas, have worked to unite these workers across different hotels and service sectors. The issue isn't just the traditional struggles of labor rights, it's that workers are deliberately isolated. Employers create schedules that ensure workers never meet, making it hard to organize or even discuss their rights.

One of our successful strategies has been organizing workers from different hotels but under the same subcontractor, giving us a collective strength. When workers go on strike together, it forces employers to negotiate, especially in sectors like cleaning services, where disruption is immediately felt.

We've also used public denunciations to draw attention to exploitative practices. Venice's luxury hotels project an image of opulence, but behind that facade, workers are paid per room cleaned rather than per hour. Publicly exposing these practices has forced negotiations. It's clear that while traditional union strategies still play a role, we need radical actions like coordinated strikes and alliances with activist groups to push back against corporate exploitation.

In the context of rising inequalities and increased precarity for women and migrants, what role should academia and trade unions play in resisting the systems of exploitation in both tourism and domestic labor? What strategies are proving effective in defending vulnerable workers in today's climate?

RMB: In Spain, traditional unions have been closely associated with industrial and service work, but they've failed to represent women in domestic



Photo of Territorio Domestico when Convention 189 was ratified in Congress.

labor, particularly migrant women. These unions remain rooted in outdated structures, not reflecting the changing dynamics of labor under capitalism. The real force has come from social movements, especially migrant women themselves, who have organized outside of these traditional frameworks.

Academia, however, must not remain distant from these struggles. The role of researchers and academics is to work directly with these movements, incorporating their needs and experiences into research. For too long, academia has been a conservative institution, often complicit in the very exploitation we study. Change will only come if we recognize these workers as partners in the research process, not just subjects to be studied.

CB: I agree with Professor Buján, there is a disconnect between academia and the real struggles on the ground. Here in Venice, the university itself has become part of the corporate tourism complex. Academic programs now cater to the hospitality industry, training students to fit into exploitative systems rather than challenging them. Unions, workers, and academics need to work together to challenge the power structures behind these industries.

At ADL Cobas, we've worked closely with grassroots movements and local activists to link labor and environmental struggles. In Venice, we partnered with climate activists from the No Grandi Navi movement, bringing together workers and environmentalists in a shared fight. These collaborations are essential for pushing back against corporate exploitation in all its forms.

To close, what message would you like to share with workers in these sectors about their rights and power?

CB: The most important thing is to organize. Workers must find spaces to support each other, demand that unions and social movements provide the tools to collectively resist. Individual efforts can't lead to the radical change we need, only through solidarity and collective action can we challenge the power of employers and institutions.

RMB: Indeed, self-organization and cooperation are essential. Without these, change is impossible. In Spain, the progress we've seen in domestic labor has come from the self-managed efforts of migrant women. It's their ability to unite, along with political will, that has made change possible. Their capacity to unite, coupled with political will, has been instrumental in driving change.

My Voice, My Choice: Solidarity across borders for reproductive justice in Europe.

by Antonia Fiore Faustini



Photo by a volunteer from Cellula Coscioni Roma, Largo Argentina, 27 September 2024.

In the heart of Europe, where the ideals of freedom and equality have for centuries inspired social struggles and the law of states, a harsh reality is unfolding that demands our collective attention and reflection, a reality in which the autonomy of persons with uteruses is restricted daily by the very systems that should protect their rights.

Today, across the European Union, 20 million women and people with uteruses find themselves trapped in a web of restrictive laws and inadequate healthcare systems. In Malta and Poland, where abortion is banned, people are often forced to have abortions underground, putting their health and lives at risk,

“Today, across the European Union, 20 million women and people with uteruses find themselves trapped in a web of restrictive laws and inadequate healthcare systems.”

or to travel abroad at their own expense. This is a dramatic phenomenon that reminds us of a great truth already highlighted by the feminist movement of the last century: abortion cannot be banned in its entirety, only legal abortion can be banned, thereby relegating people who - for numerous and unjudgeable reasons - choose to seek it, to a state of clandestinity and criminalization. In other countries, for example, Romania and Austria, the situation is equally disastrous: here, abortion, although legally permitted, is not recognised as a medical procedure paid for by the state. This, consequently, forces citizens of these countries to bear the cost of the procedure themselves, thus effectively restricting access and the implementation of one of their rights. This inequality or impossibility of access is not just a statistic, these are not just numbers among the many that make up the Union's reports: this data is the representation of a profound violation of the human rights to health and self-determination of more than 20 million European citizens.

In this context, the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) “My Voice, My Choice” is proposed as a rallying call, a collective appeal to the European institutions for the establishment of a solidarity mechanism to guarantee access to safe, legal and free abortion for all European citizens who need it. The aim of this ECI is for the European Union to set up an economic fund to guarantee access to the right to abortion for all European citizens, offering economic support both to citizens who live in countries where abortion is privately paid, and to citizens who live in countries where abortion is forbidden, who must therefore travel abroad.

“The proposal for a European solidarity mechanism is a step that is as courageous as it is necessary to ensure that reproductive healthcare is indeed a fundamental right and not a privilege reserved for a few.”

Within a political entity such as the European Union, which proudly presents itself as a community that carries forward hopes and promises of human rights and dignity, this ECI challenges us to confront uncomfortable truths about reproductive justice and accessibility of rights, as well as the stratification of struggles and processes of marginalisation. ‘My Voice, My Choice’ seeks to overcome these barriers through an initiative that embodies a feminist and intersectional vision from the grassroots, which recognises and highlights both that the struggle for reproductive rights cannot be separated from the broader struggle against inequality in terms of accessibility and also that the right to choose is not only about individual autonomy, but also about dismantling systemic injustices of a political nature that particularly affect marginalised groups, who already face challenges in terms of race, social class and gender.

The proposal for a European solidarity mechanism is a step that is as courageous as it is necessary

to ensure that reproductive healthcare is indeed a fundamental right and not a privilege reserved for a few. It challenges the European Union to live up to its fundamental principles, safeguarding the rights of all its citizens regardless of the country in which they reside, in a broader and more substantial perspective of European citizenship. It also urges politicians to recognise that access to safe and legal abortion is not just a matter of individual rights but a political issue of public health, which affects free subjectivities as much as families, communities, and societies at large. By framing abortion as part of the right to health we can begin to shift the narrative away from stigma and shame

“‘My Voice, My Choice’ is an invitation to reclaim our power as women and citizens, allies and activists, to articulate our needs and to build together a Europe in which reproductive rights are a universal guarantee.”

towards understanding and support, this however requires a collective and transnational effort to create policies that not only protect, but empower people with wombs, granting them the autonomy to make choices about their own bodies without geographical, political or economic limits.

In imagining a future in which ‘My Voice, My Choice’ becomes a reality, we must engage in deep collective introspection and ask ourselves: How can we build a Europe that truly reflects the ideals of solidarity and justice? By what means can we ensure that every individual, regardless of their particular living conditions, has the right and practical opportunity to make decisions about their own body? The answers lie in our willingness to address the systemic conditions that perpetuate inequality and to advocate for transnational and inclusive policies that prioritise the collective claiming of certain rights over the de facto accessibility of their enforcement.

‘My Voice, My Choice’ is an invitation to reclaim our power as women and citizens, allies and activists, to articulate our needs and to build together a Europe in which reproductive rights are a universal guarantee. In doing so, it is necessary to recognise that the struggle for reproductive justice is only one of many facets and intersections that characterise a broader struggle for equity and social justice. Through collective commitment it is possible to forge a Europe that not only recognises people's rights, but also celebrates their autonomous and self-determined choices as building blocks for the fabric of our social and political communities. ‘My Voice, My Choice’ in this, from my perspective, is not just an initiative: it is a step in the direction of a future where all and everyone through public participation can assert their values and their right to choose without fear, without having to face stigma or be limited by economic hardship.

Mourning Denied

by Ginevra Lamberti



René Magritte, Perspective II. Manet's Balcony, ca. 1950

Ginevra has worked with CLOSER, a cultural association founded in Venice in 2016 to promote cultural activities where it is most difficult, wherever the welfare state shows its limits, with a focus on the prison environment.

In this text she speaks of the inaccessibility of mourning from prison, and the effects this can have on a person and their social integration.

CLOSER will collaborate with TRANSEUROPA Festival in organising a reading and discussion with Ginevra Lamberti at the Giudecca Female prison.

Every morning we wake up and know that our day will be marked by a series of unavoidable commitments and small rituals. We don't think about it because we are not allowed to think about it, but living in a prison, together with the natural passage of time, blurs the concepts of past, present, future and, with them, that of ritual. It is therefore appropriate to ask ourselves what it means to inhabit an eternal present that is devalued and emptied of the contents that make up a society. What happens, in particular, when death and mourning break into this eternal present.

Even those who have never been through prison have seen it to a minimal extent. With the pandemic and the lockdown we have experienced the loss of loved ones and relatives together with the forced stay within the walls of our homes and the abrupt interruption of the ritual. People found themselves separated first from the sick and then from their bodies. The funeral rite, among the many activities too risky to be carried out as usual, was first prohibited and then severely limited.

Safeguarding has prevented the closeness of loved ones in dying and death, undermined the ceremonies that mark the timeline and define living in society. Only time will tell what the psychological consequences will be in the individual, family and collective dimension. The certainty remains that in the public debate the great absentee continues to be the prison population, subjected to the same traumas inserted in a more complex context, forgotten in its right to mourning since well before the Coronavirus reminded us of the importance of the funeral rite.

In an economic West where – despite the pandemic years and the advance of wars and bloody conflicts – the general denial of mortality still rages, it is almost not surprising that the topic of mourning experienced from within the prison institution is marginalized. However, the almost total absence of research and scientific literature on the subject should be surprising. With

the exception of a few reports, it seems that no one has so far explored the topic of what happens when an inmate loses an external loved one due to a death. Since this research base is lacking – or rather non-existent – we will have to proceed with a sort of reverse path, that is, consider why the processing of mourning through closeness, presence, exchange and ritual is of enormous importance for an individual deprived of their freedom, and inserted into a path that is supposed to be one of recovery and/or reintegration.

“People who live in prison often endure for who is outside, who is waiting for a meeting during visits, or the return.”

An experiment that can be attempted in everyday life is to ask the question: for whom do we do what we do in moments of crisis? For whom do we endure the harshness of life?

The most contemporary answer will be that we do it only and exclusively for ourselves, for individual development and well-being. A more careful examination, however, will lead us to conclude that beyond the self there is also the other. Often our margin for improvement will also be based on the actions we take to be present, useful, functional and – why not? – worthy of admiration for our loved ones.

People who live in prison often endure for who is outside, who is waiting for a meeting during visits, or the return. Whether they are biological or elected family members, partners or close friends, it does not matter;

these can embody goals to strive for and motivations to rely on to face everyday life.

Mourning is the path through which we process a loss. Its importance lies in the fact that it allows us to start living again despite the pain. It allows us to react in a way that does not crystallize in traumatic, pathological or disabling forms. This does not mean denying the suffering or erasing the memory, but rather facing one and giving a place to the other. It can be a long and difficult path during which a wide range of feelings will be experienced. In alternating phases, one will

“The death of a loved one corresponds to a tear in the external social network and its failure to process it can cause wounds that are difficult to repair.”

experience anger, emptiness, denial, depression, difficulty concentrating, detachment from reality, desire to cover everything up with forms of hyper-productivity.

Let us now imagine living this experience from a prison. Our loved one has passed away, a piece of that constellation that represents the outside world, towards which we tend and which keeps us going, no longer exists. In the best of cases we saw them and greeted them, perhaps expressing our affection, during a visit in relatively recent times. Also in the best of cases, communications with the outside and with the other loved ones involved were adequate, the bureaucratic times coincided with those of the death and, finally, we managed to attend the funeral ceremony. In the worst of cases, none of this happened and the picture will be very different: communications may have been difficult, the timing of the bureaucracy obstructive, permission to attend the rite may have been denied or arrived too late. In the period following these events, one may then desire solitude. One may want to hear often, or at specific and sudden moments, the voices of the mourners who share the same loss. You might want to participate with other loved ones in sorting through the deceased's belongings, and perhaps have

something of theirs with you. You might find yourself in a state of profound numbness. You might need targeted psychotherapy. All of this, inside a prison, will prove complex or impossible.

Now consider that there is also the so-called anticipatory mourning, which is experienced when you receive notice that a loved one is irreversibly ill. An illness can be longer or shorter. At the end of it, there are the last days and hours of the dying person's life. Those moments are of crucial importance and, in the best of cases, see the dying person in contact with their closest loved ones. In this context, it is clear how being close to a seriously ill relative can help define the individual also in terms of their usefulness within the social network.

The concept of anticipatory mourning experienced by the prisoner contains at least three key issues:

- If experienced without the possibility of both visits outside and frequent communication, it will generate frustration, anguish, guilt and a sense of inadequacy.

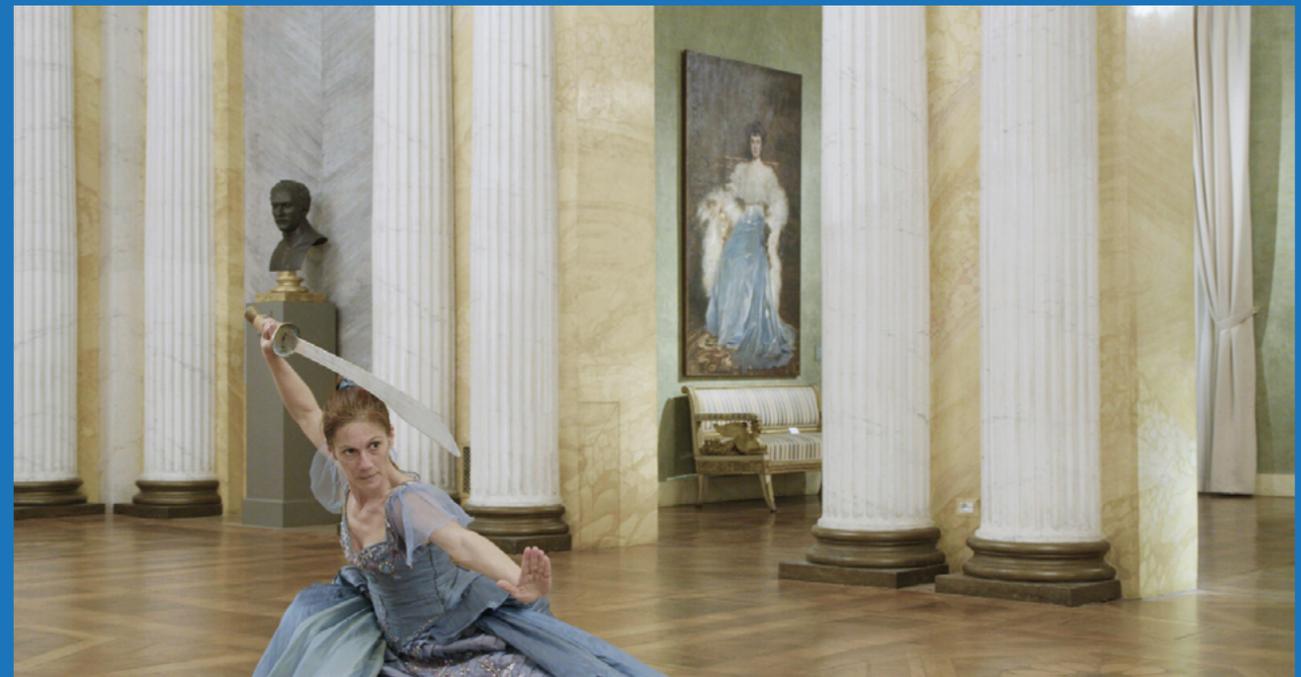
- Closeness in dying is important because it allows the imprisoned person to reclaim a family role and therefore social position.

- Closeness in dying is important because it allows those who are imprisoned and those who are dying to have human contact that reassures the dying person, lays the foundation for the correct process of processing by those who remain and, ultimately, should be considered a fundamental right.

The death of a loved one corresponds to a tear in the external social network and its failure to process it can cause wounds that are difficult to repair. In addition to the disconnection from the usual passage of time, it represents not only a risk for the acceptance of the loss, but also for the successful re-entry into a society that provides social structures defined by rules and boundaries that one must know how to manage. Remembering how the processing of death and dying also concerns the prison population, always hidden from the eyes of the world, is a question of civic value that we should no longer allow ourselves to ignore.

Un altro genere di forza

by Alessandra Chiricosta



Courtesy by Alessandra Chiricosta.

A strong body is naturally inclined to the exercise of violence if there are no external limits to inhibit this type of expression. A weak body is naturally inclined to peace and gentleness. A strong body is rough and brute, a weak body is sensitive and limp.

The consensus enjoyed by this paradigm is shared by many, across divisions and positions. It represents, to date, a starting point for reflections, analyses and solutions, shared by virtue of its naturalness and objectivity. The difference between positions is almost always found downstream of this paradigm and opens debates and conflicts regarding the strategies to be used to limit the exercise of force-violence - whether this should pass through the recognition of the status of “victim” of a woman or, on the contrary, aim at a strengthening of her “power”, for example - or, in different contexts, whether this biological asymmetry should simply be accepted, leaving individuals the duty to take charge of it on a personal level.

The link between gender and strength appears to be linear and simple, evident in reference to a biological destiny that cannot be configured differently. So what is the need to investigate it further?

My answer, personal and therefore political, is that the clarity of the statements reported above is much more murky than one might think, that it is our eyes, accustomed to seeing through distorting lenses, that are no longer able to observe in how many ways and at how many levels the nexus that articulates the relationship between force and gender is intricate, culturally determined, based on tautologies and self-fulfilling prophecies. How it takes on the function of a biopower device aimed at articulating and confirming a hierarchy based on gender and is therefore one of the cornerstones of patriarchal and sexist ideologies.

Not only that: the close connection that strength, this kind of strength, has assumed in the construction of

the concept and practices of virility has overshadowed, to the point of making them almost invisible, other paths, other forms in which strength can be conceived, expressed, and become embodied. The absolutization of one of the possible configurations of the gender-strength nexus as a natural element has blocked other experiences and ignored other theoretical frameworks in which the two elements interact differently, conditioning not only the vision of the relationship between genders and strength, but also, in a related way, severely limiting the exploration of how the concept of strength can be otherwise interpreted and embodied.

There are many, many devices put in place to transform the ideology that absolutizes the strength of a single kind in nature. First of all, a completely partial definition of what is defined as natural and what is called cultural and the clear divide that separates the two terms. Conceived in an oppositional relationship, of domination, in which, depending on the circumstances, greater value is assigned to one or the other, the two concepts have come to trace rigid boundaries, absolute categories that prevent us from thinking of anthropic body-realities as the outcome, always in progress, of particular configurations and disciplining pressures in which the two terms of the apparent dichotomy constantly interact and redefine each other.

The opposition nature/culture intersects with the dichotomy that establishes a binary division of genders, in which behaviors, attitudes, potentials are ascribed to one gender or another on the basis of conformity to one's nature, thought, precisely, as an absolute and self-evident category. Defining what belongs to a body-reality on the basis of one's sexuality and what does not, with the exception of very few aspects, is already a biopolitical device, which imprisons bodies in predefined and rarely further investigated binaries, a mythos that becomes disciplined bodies and prevents from experimenting with other possibilities of self-expression.

In particular, the definition of strength, understood as fighting strength and attributed to an anthropomorphic body, is inextricably intertwined with that of virility, leaving, in a perspective that does not allow third spaces, little room for thinking and, above all, experimenting with the potential that bodies that do not respond to the characteristics of strength expressed by virility can express. If strength characterizes virility – and strength is always interpreted as subjugating, blind, aggressive, destined to transform into violence if not controlled by culture – feminine nature will have to place itself outside of this order, showing itself as a propensity for care and availability.

The reasoning that is allowed in this scenario is only one: force defines a gender, ergo there can only be one gender of force. This double bind has sealed a potentially fluid relationship in a diktat that has effectively precluded the possibility of posing the question in other terms, of opening up to other questions: is there only one gender of force or is there also another, or many? Can force be expressed and embodied only in these modalities? Is it possible to articulate other discourses on force, conceive it in another way, see it acting in other bodies and in other forms?

My reflection on the fighting force of another kind, in the double sense in which the concept can be interpreted, has been articulated in a very long path, unraveled in a spiral motion in time and space, and has involved every fiber of my carnal and mental tissue, modifying it, or rather, making it aware of the continuous transformation that constitutes it. It arises from the concrete experience of many years dedicated to the practice of martial arts of East Asia and Southeast Asia, of the life spent in those countries and of the study of local societies, cultures, languages and philosophies. An experience that has intertwined with philosophical, anthropological and gender research conducted following approaches more in line with

our scientific tradition. An intercultural dialogue that has taken place inside my epidermis: I have tried to summarize some aspects of it in the pages of this book.

Excerpt from the introduction to the book by Alessandra Chiricosta, *Un altro genere di forza*, Iacobelli, 2019. Courtesy of the author and the publisher.

La Laguna Resiste

Interview with photographer Joe Habben,
questions by Georgia Satchwell



La Laguna Resiste installation exhibited at the Fabrice Research Centre as part of the Kinship Exhibition, 2024.
Photo by Silvia Longhi.

La Laguna Resiste documents communities resisting social and natural erosion in the Venetian lagoon.

Annually, 30,000,000 visitors submerge the dwindling population of 50,000 inhabitants. Without a local population to safeguard this environment, it is likely to deteriorate.

The project explores three key interrelated issues: environmental breakdown, de-population and mass tourism by highlighting local inhabitants who are creating solutions and changes through various acts of community resistance. The photographic research amplifies the presence of Venice's human and more-than-human inhabitants through a series of image-based interventions.

The project aims to engage and inform tourists, local decision-makers, and the wider public about these initiatives. It challenges the city's postcard perspective and emphasises that Venice and the lagoon are interdependent elements of a single ecosystem.

Venezia è Laguna

How did your interest in documenting Venice and its community-lead associations develop?

In 2019, during the final year of my BA in Communication Design at the Glasgow School of Art, Scotland, I developed a profound interest in public space, particularly the intersecting and conflicting dynamics that shape it. These environments, in their fluid and contested nature, serve as reflections of the ephemeral social, economic, political, and cultural shifts that surround us.

While writing my dissertation, I explored various case studies examining the intense interactions between natural and built environments. It was during this research that I encountered the phenomenon of *Acqua Alta* in Venice, a natural tidal event that occurs annually, influenced by variables such as tidal changes, weather conditions, sea-level rise, land subsidence, and storm surges. During peak high

tides, the streets and squares of Venice are filled with the brackish waters of the lagoon. Yet, Venice's historical coexistence with its lagoon has led to architectural adaptations designed to mitigate these tidal fluctuations, with raised doorsteps, elevated counters, barriers on doorways, syphons, sandbags, and raised walkways.

In November 2019, I travelled to Venice to document these phenomena, but I arrived during what was to be the most extreme *Acqua Alta* since 1966. The tide peaked at 187 cm, submerging 85% of the city and leaving a trail of devastation for its inhabitants. Confronted with these circumstances, I realised the naivety of my initial intent. What began as an objective endeavour to capture human adaptations in response to fluctuating natural conditions quickly revealed a complex web of environmental, social, and political issues. I found myself grappling with a series of moral dilemmas, questioning my role as an

observer and photographer. My aim was not to document trauma, but to study human resilience in urban landscapes shaped by nature.

Venice's acqua alta is merely a symptom of the deeper, interconnected challenges the city faces, such as mass tourism, climate change, depopulation, urban expansion, accelerated by extraction and privatisation. However through this, I discovered the resilience of Venice, exemplified by the multitude of local community groups, initiatives, and organisations dedicated to tackling these complex problems. The power, influence, and perseverance of these groups have profoundly inspired me, demonstrating their potential to mobilise others facing similar challenges. In 2023, this inspiration led to the creation of the 'La Laguna Resiste' project, which aims to amplify the visibility of these groups and inspire, educate, and inform others through image-based interventions in the public spaces of Venice.

How do you think your work may influence public perception to view human and more-than-human life entanglements anew?

When we imagine Venice, we often picture the iconic imagery of the 'floating city', gondolas, canals, opulent palazzos suspended above water. Yet, this romanticised view is a reflection of an anthropocentric mindset, focusing solely on the city as a cultural spectacle while disregarding its complex ecological context. The main island, occupying a mere 7.6km², is just a fragment of the vast 550km² lagoon. Two interdependent elements of a single system. Despite its proximity, the lagoon is overlooked, reduced to a scenic backdrop rather than a living, dynamic environment. Due to environmental exploitation and industrial expansion, the lagoon is critically threatened. The Barene (salt marshes) are pivotal indicators of the lagoon's health, serving as habitats for diverse flora and fauna while functioning as natural flood barriers. Yet, these marshlands are rapidly eroding due to human intervention and rising sea levels.

La Laguna Resiste is both a wordplay and a call to action. As the Barene resist the rising tides and escalating environmental threats, so do the lagoon's human communities. The project captures the shared

resilience and struggle of both human and more-than-human inhabitants, aligning our experiences, whilst reinforcing our interconnectedness within this fragile ecosystem.

So far, the project has facilitated a dialogue with various groups resisting social, cultural and natural erosion, these include Associazione Poveglia per Tutti, Comitato No Grandi Navi, Assemblea Sociale per la Casa, We Are Here Venice, TOCIA! Cucina e Comunità, Microclima, and Estuar 1. Although each of these groups has their own intentions and values, they all share the common values of protecting the lagoon. Documenting their actions, the project frames the communities within the context of the Lagoon rather than Venice, highlighting their true habitat. La Laguna Resiste intentionally avoids imagery of the built environment, instead focusing on the natural. This shift in perspective aims to foster new insights, dialogues and considerations. Recognizing the lagoon as more than just a backdrop to the city, but as a vital, dynamic living system is essential if we are to preserve Venice's unique environment. Challenging the tourist gaze of the city by revealing alternative realities or 'truths', we can shift public perception and perhaps influence its future trajectory.

These approaches don't solely apply to Venice but could be applied as a broader model. By positioning the lagoon as the protagonist over the city, La Laguna Resiste aims to celebrate the power of community, shift public perception of the landscape and our responsibility for its protection. This perspective promotes holistic environmental stewardship. Ultimately, engaging with the lagoon deepens our understanding of Venice's ecology and underlines our reciprocal relationship with nature.

Has your project La Laguna Resiste & your practice as a photographer given you a new perspective/ understanding on community?

La Laguna Resiste has transformed my understanding of community and its power. We need to view both human and more-than-human inhabitants as part of our community. Venice is a dynamic entity that not only endures but actively resists threats to its identity and existence.

Engagement has been a core principle of this project.



We Are Here Venice (WahV) doing conservation work on an artificial barena as part of the EU WaterLANDS project, 2023. Photo by Joe Habben.

Using participatory action research, I've been conscious in actively engaging in the actions of Venice, the lagoon, and its community.

Photography is a tool of engagement, but I'm acutely aware of the common trends where photographers extract images without understanding the communities they depict. I feel a deep responsibility to authentically reflect the sentiments, actions, and struggles of Venice's inhabitants. Over the past year, I've built a strong network of comrades and friends who have been incredibly collaborative and welcoming. I'm committed to contributing to these communities and participating in their mobilisations. Often, I leave my camera behind during events and workshops to be more present and active. Interestingly, I've started taking fewer photos, only when it truly feels justified. The priority is showing up.

The community and the environment are so deeply entangled that without a strong local presence to

advocate for the lagoon's preservation, both the environment and the cultural fabric of Venice are at risk. Through the lens of this project, I've witnessed how community members are not just passive victims of these challenges. To exist in Venice is to resist. Every inhabitant is an activist in some shape or form, and I wanted to highlight that through this project. Resistance comes in many forms: blocking cruise ships in Fusina, conducting scientific surveys of salt marsh health, rewilding uninhabited islands in the lagoon or occupying privatised space.

What fascinates me about Venice is the sheer diversity of its communities, each tackling localised issues, environmental safeguarding, or decentralising power in unique ways. These groups also collaborate and support each other through solidarity. While "community" is often misused and tokenised by governments and organisations, these activists consistently show up in numbers to create positive change and in many cases, it works... An example being

Protest: People of the Lagoon

globalproject.info



Toto, 2024. Photo by Joe Habben.

in 2021, cruise ships were banned from the Giudecca Canal thanks to years of collective action and campaigning from Comitato No Grandi Navi and its comrades.

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La Laguna Resiste aims to celebrate community and engage tourists and decision-makers, challenging superficial perceptions of Venice and urging a deeper recognition of its residents and their efforts. This project reinforces that community is key. A resilient, proactive force of change. Through local collective action we can foster ecological and social sustainability. The Lagoon and its people are intertwined. In these current circumstances, one can't live without the other. As the tides rise, so do we.





On Saturday 25 May in Venice, the ‘people of the lagoon’ of the ‘No Large Ships’ Committee returned to mobilization with a garrison and a water parade to Fusina.

The Draghi Decree of last July 2021 banned the passage of cruises from the Giudecca Canal, identifying as a temporary solution the moorings spread along the industrial coast of Porto Marghera. Over the past year, citizen mobilisation has brought to public attention the devastating consequences that the cruise expansion of Marghera’s commercial port could have: the increase in cruise traffic can only take place through colossal and irreversible excavations, projects that would lead to the definitive death of the lagoon ecosystem. There is talk of the excavation of 7 million cubic meters of highly contaminated sludge in the industrial area and the reactivation of the Marittima Terminal in the city centre for a traffic of over 1 million

cruise tourists, a cost of over 500 million euro to invest in a form of tourism that is harmful, polluting, and of little benefit to the local population.

The day began with a protest at the Zattere, a place historically symbolic of the No Grandi Navi struggle to defend the city of stone from mass tourism and environmental destruction.

The protesters then moved by boat and started a lively water procession, which aimed to reach the second presidium on land at Punta Fusina and contest the passage of the Costa Deliziosa ship along the Canale dei Petrolo.

The water procession was led by a giant aquatic creature called ‘Bisigola’, created with the materials and masks of the ‘people of the lagoon’. The protesters wore these masks throughout the water parade,

symbolising the inter-species alliance between human and non-human animals that together defend the lagoon from the threat of new excavations and environmental devastation.

All art materials were created in collaboration between PowerNotte (a Venetian artists’ collective) and Taring Padi (an art collective from Jakarta, Indonesia) during the Gathering Into the Maelstrom initiative, promoted by S.a.L.E. Docks and the Institute for Radical Imagination in the Museum of the Commons framework, which took place from 14 to 19 April during the opening of the Venice Art Biennale.

At the end of the procession, police forces tried to stop the boats at the intersection with the commercial canal but were met with opposition from protesters armed with masks and water pistols.

Saturday was a first fundamental step in the re-appropriation of the lagoon by its people, who continue to live and resist in a city and a territory continually threatened by the speculation of overtourism and environmental devastation.



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