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AQUA MOTION

CHALLENGES BOOKLET

CHALLENGES LIST


Challenges from
PORTUGAL

CHALLENGES LIST

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I

BEYOND THE HORIZON

INOVA+ | Viana do Castelo City Council | Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo - proMetheus and AditLab

Viana do Castelo, Portugal

KEYWORDS

+ Resources
+ Movement
+ Energy
+ Communities

SUMMARY

How can we visualize what the sea gives us and what challenges we are currently facing?
This artistic residency explores the role of marine resources in driving local economies, blending art, science, and community voices. It investigates how to represent what is extracted from the sea (fish, energy, salt, traditional knowledge) while translating the sea's vibrations into sensory and communicative artistic forms. Through immersive installations, visual metaphors, and interviews, the project gives face and voice to those who live from the ocean, reclaims the aesthetics of artisanal fishing, and reflects on the ocean's natural force, vulnerability, and resilience in the face of environmental change.

DESCRIPTION

Viana do Castelo's identity has long been shaped by the sea — as a source of sustenance, tradition, and economic development. From fishing and shipbuilding to seaweed harvesting and salt production, the region's maritime activities have sustained communities for generations. Today, new possibilities are emerging through blue biotechnology, algae-based materials, and sustainable marine industries. But alongside opportunity comes risk: climate change, pollution, and overexploitation threaten both biodiversity and cultural heritage.

This residency invites artists to explore the evolving relationship between marine resources and economic activity — not through distant observation, but through direct, embodied engagement with those who live and work by the sea. By merging artistic practice with local and scientific knowledge, artists are encouraged to collaborate with fishers, seaweed harvesters, and coastal communities, and to reflect on how the rhythms of the ocean shape daily life, identities, and futures.

Rather than merely depicting the sea, the residency seeks a more intimate and critical approach: to listen to it, to touch it, and to rethink it as a living, energetic, and political space. Ultimately, this challenge aims to contribute to broader conversations around the Blue Economy, environmental resilience, and the cultural significance of the ocean in shaping more sustainable and inclusive futures.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

This artistic residency is expected to result in a meaningful and interdisciplinary body of work that explores the entanglement of marine environments, coastal communities, and contemporary artistic practices. Artists are encouraged to draw from the material, sensory, and symbolic richness of the sea — incorporating local stories, ancestral knowledge, ecological fragility, and the rhythms of daily life shaped by marine economies.

Possible outcomes may include immersive or interactive experiences that invite audiences to listen to, feel, and reimagine the sea as a living system. Whether through visual, sonic, kinetic, or participatory forms, the work should foster new connections between art, science, and technology, amplifying the voices and realities of those who live and work by the ocean.
The final output should aim not only to provoke reflection, but to engage audiences in deeper conversations about extraction and sustainability, tradition and transition, and the future of our relationship with the ocean in a changing world.

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

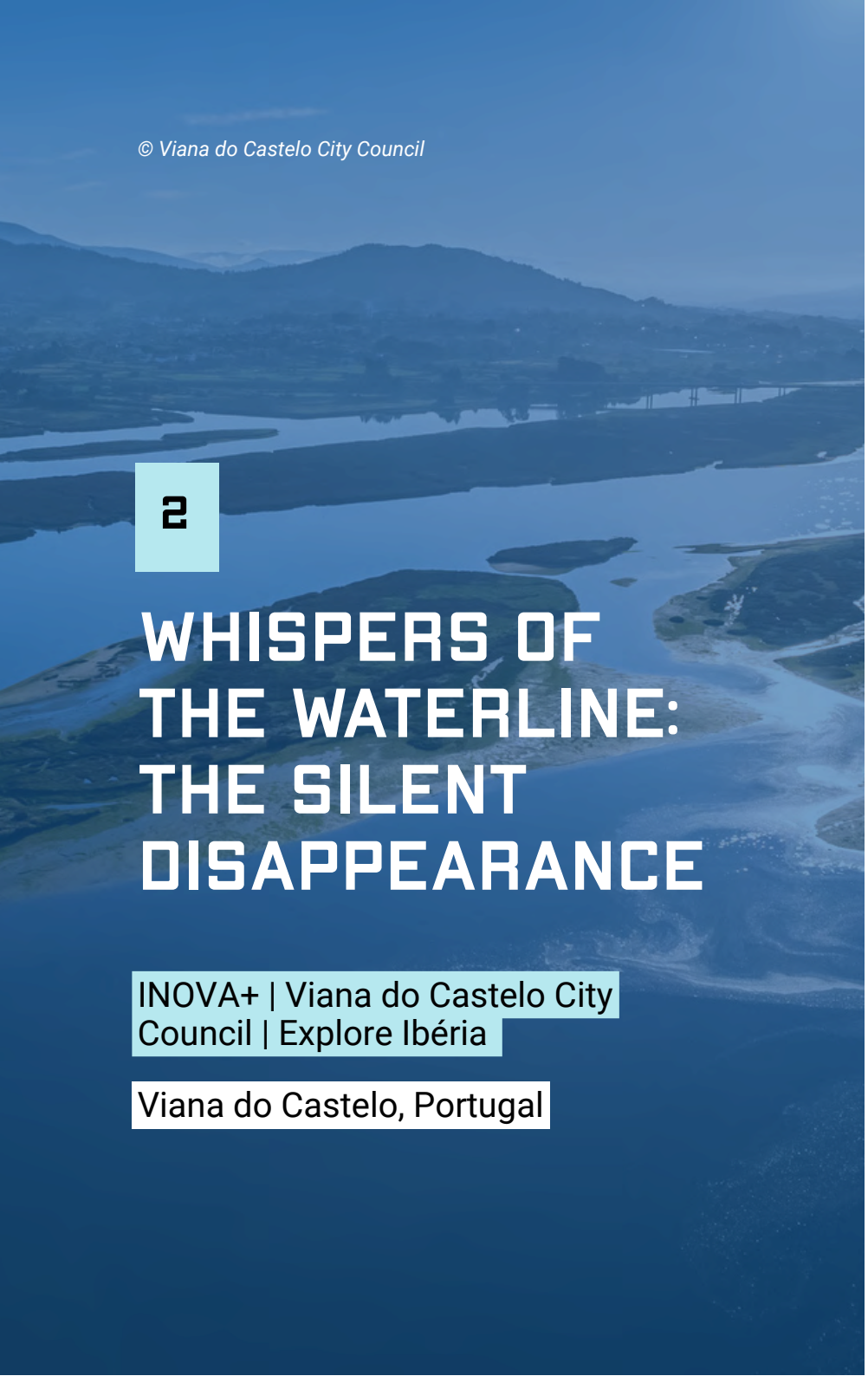
+ Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo
+ proMetheus
+ Viana do Castelo City Council

ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 7-9th, 2025.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

https://prometheus.ipvc.pt



2

WHISPERS OF THE WATERLINE: THE SILENT DISAPPEARANCE

INOVA+ | Viana do Castelo City Council | Explore Ibéria

Viana do Castelo, Portugal

KEYWORDS

+ Biodiversity
+ Aquatic Species
+ River
+ Mountain

SUMMARY

Understanding the diversity of life within aquatic ecosystems (sea, river, or even forests) is essential for interpreting the adaptations that organisms develop in response to various abiotic conditions (wind, salinity, etc.). This understanding allows us to grasp the crucial role healthy ecosystems play in supporting the quality and abundance of life. Assessing the different types of threats affecting these ecosystems is vital for studying their vulnerabilities and identifying potential sources of pollution—both direct and diffuse. Human activities and other practices that threaten these ecosystems must be carefully evaluated to protect their integrity and ensure long-term sustainability.

DESCRIPTION

The territory of Viana do Castelo is home to an extraordinary diversity of ecosystems — from rivers and estuaries to coastal and forest habitats — many of which are protected under Rede Natura 2000 due to their ecological richness and sensitivity. These environments are deeply shaped by water and support a wide range of species whose presence and abundance are indicators of ecological health.

In particular, riparian and intertidal ecosystems host species that act as "bioindicators," revealing the biological quality of freshwater systems. These same ecosystems are also threatened by human activities such as pollution, riverbank degradation, and interruptions to natural reproductive cycles. The estuary of the Lima River, for instance, plays a crucial role in filtering pollution and sustaining birdlife, while the rocky coastal zone reveals extraordinary examples of species adapting to extreme tidal conditions.

This residency invites artists to explore how biodiversity — visible or invisible — reflects the state of our waters. It calls for artistic interpretations that reveal the resilience of life in these ecosystems, but also confront what is disappearing. What stories do these species, rhythms, and fragile habitats tell us about our environment? How can art expose the silent loss of ecological quality and bring new meaning to the role of biodiversity in sustaining the health of water systems and the wider landscape?

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

This residency seeks artistic interventions that confront the absence — often unnoticed — of the ecological quality once provided by rich, water-dependent biodiversity. Through artistic expression, the selected artist(s) are invited to explore how the degradation or disappearance of key species, habitats, or natural processes affects the balance of ecosystems and the services they provide to both nature and humans.

The outcomes should provoke reflection on what is missing when biodiversity is compromised: the sounds that vanish, the colours that fade, the cycles that break. Whether through metaphor, sensory immersion, data-driven interpretation, or symbolic gestures, the work should bring visibility to the silent losses that occur in aquatic environments and their surrounding landscapes — particularly in the Neiva River basin and similar protected areas.

The final artistic output may take the form of an installation, experience, or participatory process, but above all, it should create a space for public awareness and emotional engagement with the consequences of ecological decline. By highlighting what water ecosystems give us — and what we risk losing — the residency aims to cultivate a deeper sense of ecological connection, urgency, and responsibility.

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ Explore Ibéria
+ Environmental Interpretation Centre of Viana do Castelo

ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 7-9th, 2025.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

https://ambiente.cm-viana-castelo.pt/bioregisto

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ECHOES OF THE MILL

INOVA+ | Viana do Castelo City Council | Environmental Interpretation Centre of Viana do Castelo

Viana do Castelo, Portugal

KEYWORDS

+ Tidal
+ Energy Transition
+ Mill

SUMMARY

The tidal mill of Viana do Castelo, embraced by the surrounding Urban Ecological Park, invites us to reflect on how we have used — and continue to use — natural forces like river flow, tides, waves, and maritime wind to generate energy. This challenge encourages artists to explore the evolution of these practices and their impact on the territory. How have (or will) energy needs shaped the landscape, our relationship with nature, and local biodiversity? Can artistic exploration help us interpret these transitions and imagine how to adapt to new energy paradigms with creativity, care, and ecological awareness?

DESCRIPTION

Exploring Connections Between Past and Future: The challenge is an opportunity for artists to critically engage with the complex relationship between humanity and nature, considering both the historical use of natural resources and the future possibilities for sustainable energy solutions.

The tide mill and this relationship with the water/tide/river is integrated into an Urban Ecological Park with a total area of 20 hectares and all its biodiversity intimately dependent on this dynamic around water. The integration of science and technology is crucial here, not only in providing a contextual backdrop but in actively shaping the artistic response. This challenge encourages artists to think beyond mere representation of natural forces and to explore how energy transitions can be reflected in artistic forms that activate public spaces and foster dialogue.

Incorporating Local and Global Perspectives: Rooted in place yet connected to global shifts, this challenge offers a unique opportunity to engage with local communities whose lived experiences with renewable energy, land use, and ecological change offer critical insights. By collaborating with residents, workers, and local experts, artists can tap into a grassroots perspective that grounds speculative futures in real-world challenges and hopes.

Workshops, conversations, or co-creative activities can become part of the process, allowing the artwork to not only reflect the region's energy story but also to carry forward its voices, memories and aspirations.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

This residency invites artists to create works that activate the Parque Ecológico and the CMIA as a space for reflection on how humans have historically harnessed — and continue to reimagine — the energy of water and wind. The goal is for visitors to engage with the site not only as a natural area, but as a layered place of innovation, adaptation, and environmental dialogue. Artists are encouraged to explore ways of integrating science, technology and arts - such as data, sensors, modelling, or immersive tools — to interpret environmental rhythms and energy flows. The final work should engage the public in discovering the layered identities of the site: from its origins as a tidal energy infrastructure to its contemporary role within ecological education and the transition to renewables.

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

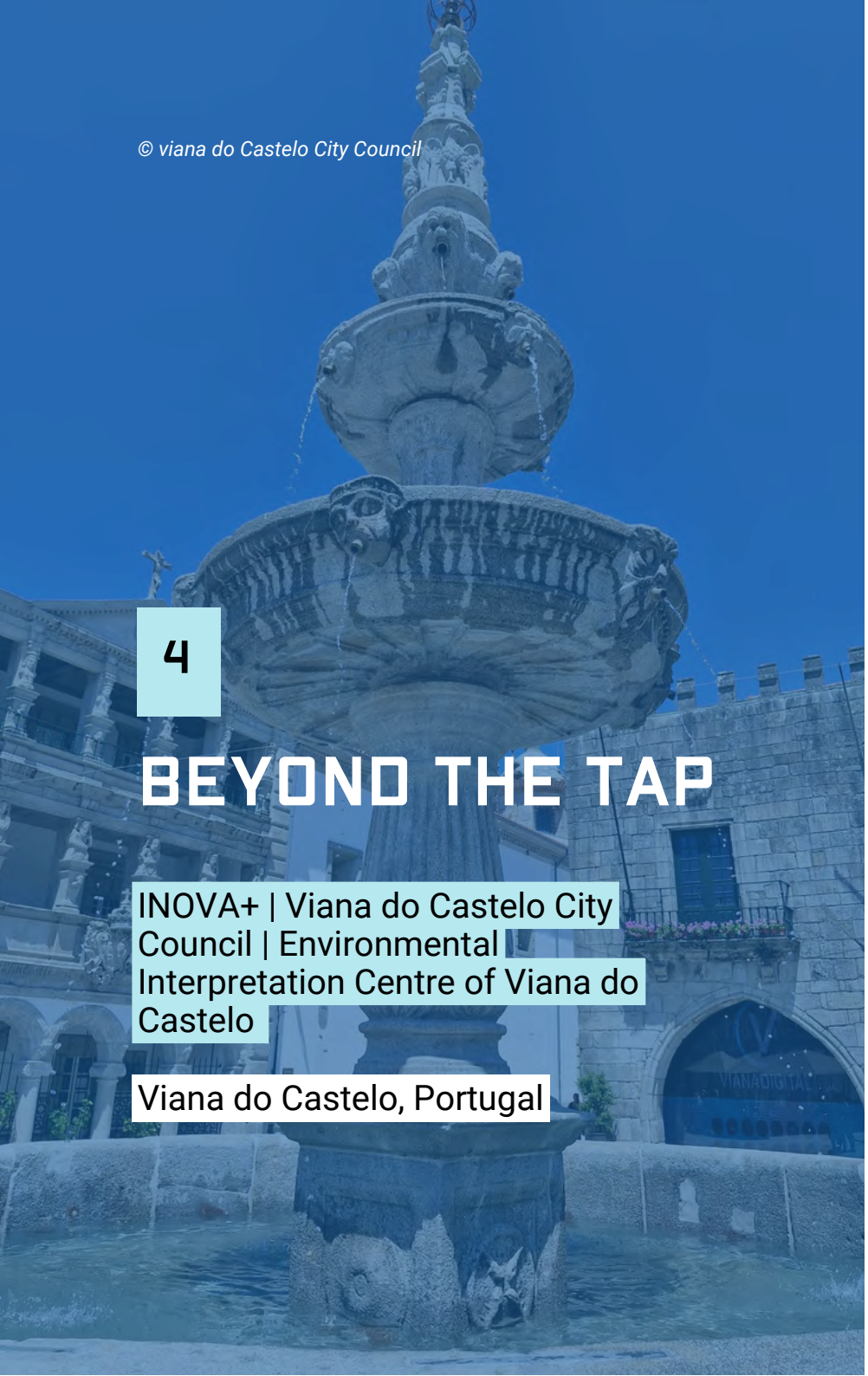
+ Explore Ibéria
+ Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo

ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 7-9th, 2025.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

https://ambiente.cm-viana-castelo.pt/instalacoes/centro-de-monitorizacao-e-interpretacao-ambiental/sala-do-moinho-de-mare



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BEYOND THE TAP

INOVA+ | Viana do Castelo City Council | Environmental Interpretation Centre of Viana do Castelo

Viana do Castelo, Portugal

KEYWORDS

+ Urban Water Cycle
+ Resource
+ Pollution
+ Knowledge
+ Emerging Pollutants

SUMMARY

Water is often seen as abundant — but how well do we truly understand it? This challenge invites artistic exploration of water as a finite and fragile resource, focusing on the disconnect between daily use and ecological awareness. Where does our water come from? What paths does it take? How do pollution, infrastructure, and behaviour shape its quality? Artists are encouraged to investigate the concept of water literacy across geographies and generations, shedding light on hidden systems, citizen science, and overlooked knowledge. Can art help us see water not just as a utility, but as a living, shared responsibility?

DESCRIPTION

Knowledge of the urban water cycle is as unknown to the local population as its importance. In Northern Portugal, water is perceived as an "abundant" resource, which is why it is not generally considered a problematic or pressing issue. Most people are unaware of the origin of the water that arrives in their homes, the treatments it undergoes, and the paths it travels before becoming safe for human consumption.

The use of water in urban versus rural contexts differs significantly and demands communication strategies that are adapted to each reality. Rural areas, for example, often assume that water from wells or boreholes is of higher quality than the water distributed by official entities. Potential sources of water contamination — whether direct or diffuse — are also unfamiliar concepts to many citizens, even though they may unwittingly contribute to this pollution in their daily lives.

While more and more people are willing to participate in beach cleanups, they are often unaware that much of the waste found there originates in their own homes — flushed down toilets, poured into street drains, or simply carried away by wind and rain when disposed of improperly. Likewise, the ecology of watercourses — whether rivers or the sea — remains largely unknown and, as a result, undervalued. Even local authorities may be unaware of the vital role that riverine flora and fauna play in maintaining ecological balance.

This residency aims to reconnect people with the invisible paths of water and the ecosystems it sustains, using artistic practice to spark curiosity, dialogue, and greater water literacy.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

This residency invites the development of artistic works that foster water literacy and deepen public understanding of the human relationship with water. The outcomes should provoke reflection, stimulate curiosity, and create opportunities for learning through artistic means. Artists are encouraged to explore sensory, conceptual, and participatory approaches that make the invisible visible. The final work may take many forms — from installations and performances to interactive or multimedia experiences — but should aim to be publicly accessible and capable of engaging diverse audiences

Potential outcomes could include:

+ Interactive installations that trace the journey of water from source to tap and back into the environment, inviting audiences to engage with the water cycle

+ Immersive experiences that explore the human-water relationship — past, present, and speculative future — combining artistic interpretation with ecological awareness.

+ Sculptures or kinetic objects that materialize key concepts such as contamination, purification, flow, scarcity, or abundance, using materials that evoke both the natural and the artificial aspects of water systems.

At the core of all outcomes is the ambition to increase public understanding of water as a finite, shared, and deeply interconnected resource, and to do so in a way that is inclusive, imaginative, and grounded in local realities.

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ Environmental Education and Awareness Division of Municipality Environmental Services
+ Águas do Norte (Public Company responsible for water supply and sanitation in Northern Portugal)
+ Viana do Castelo Schools Cluster
+ Municipality Environmental Council

ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 7-9th, 2025.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

https://ambiente.cm-viana-castelo.pt/como-agir/linhas-de-agua

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THE SHAPES OF THE SEA - REMEMBERED, REUSED, REIMAGINED

INOVA+ | Viana do Castelo City Council | Escola Superior de Educação - Bachelor of Fine Arts and Artistic Technologies

Viana do Castelo, Portugal

KEYWORDS

+ Urban Water Cycle
+ Resource
+ Pollution
+ Knowledge
+ Emerging Pollutants

SUMMARY

In Viana do Castelo, the sea is more than a backdrop – it is the city's main character. It shapes identities, crafts traditions, and breathes life into stories, myths and legends. It is a sculptor of the landscape and its transformations, and a source of knowledge and flavors (crafts, gastronomy, literature, dances, music and popular songs).

How can art engage with the sea as a keeper of memory of people, practices, materials and myths, and help carry that memory into forms that speak to today's ecological and cultural urgencies? How can this ever-present element, do deeply woven into the memory of Viana do Castelo, continue to drive change and cultural innovation for the creative construction of a sustainable future?

DESCRIPTION

In Viana do Castelo, the sea is a keeper of memory. It holds the voices of those who fished, sang, harvested, and lived by its changing tides. From seaweed used in agriculture to dances, crafts, and songs shaped by salt air and wind, it has long served as both sustainer and storyteller.

This residency invites artists to work with the coastal memory of the territory to listen, uncover, and reinterpret what the sea has carried forward: its materials, rhythms, and knowledge. Special attention is given to sargassum, once vital, now dormant, as a symbol of both loss and latent possibility.

How can artistic practice activate this cultural memory? What new futures might emerge by engaging with the past that still lingers in the landscape, in the hands of the people, and in the waters themselves?

Through collaborative research, sensory engagement, and creative experimentation, artists are asked to reimagine the sea not just as a force of nature but as an archive, an agent and a living collaborator in cultural renewal.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

This residency seeks to generate outcomes that bridge artistic creation with local engagement, cultural heritage, and environmental awareness. The selected artist(s) are expected to:

+ **Map Local Knowledge:** Identify and document traditional knowledge, practices, and stories related to water and the sea in Viana do Castelo. This mapping may include interviews, archival research, community workshops, or fieldwork, resulting in a rich repository of local wisdom that can inform and inspire both the residency and future initiatives.
+ **Develop Participatory Interventions**: Create artistic interventions that are either temporary or participatory in nature, encouraging active involvement of the local community. These interventions should aim to foster a renewed perception of local bodies of water — such as the sea, rivers, and estuaries — highlighting their cultural, ecological, and symbolic value.
+ **Stimulate Dialogue and Awareness:** Through public engagement activities, artistic outputs should stimulate reflection on the relationship between people and water, raising awareness of sustainability issues and encouraging more conscious, respectful, and innovative interactions with aquatic ecosystems.
+ **Propose New Narratives for the Future:** The residency should contribute to the collective imagination of more sustainable futures, drawing on the sea's potential as a source of knowledge, creativity, and resilience.

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo

ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 7-9th, 2025.

The school offers the following facilities:
+ A workshop for printing techniques, including engraving and screen printing; a sculpture room equipped for work with metal and wood; a separate sculpture room dedicated to clay and plaster; an analog photography laboratory; a ceramics workshop; and, a painting workshop.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

https://www.ao-norte.com/argaco.php

6

ENVISIONING COASTAL RESILIENCE THROUGH IMMERSIVE ART

CoLAB +ATLANTIC

Estuarine and Coastal Environments in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, Portugal

KEYWORDS

+ Coastal and Ecosystem Management
+ Climate Change
+ Virtual and Augmented reality

SUMMARY

Coastal ecosystems such as beaches, dunes, saltmarshes, and seagrass meadows are increasingly threatened by climate change and urban development. Urban expansion towards shorelines often restricts the natural inland migration of these habitats in response to rising sea levels, leading to a phenomenon known as "coastal squeeze." We invite artists to collaborate with scientists and stakeholders in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area to create immersive virtual and/or augmented reality experiences. These works will simulate future scenarios of coastal and estuarine environments, aiming to enhance public understanding, inform sustainable decision-making, and inspire action to preserve these vital landscapes.

DESCRIPTION

Coastal and estuarine ecosystems play a crucial role in supporting biodiversity, storing carbon, and protecting communities from sea-level rise and extreme weather. In the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, the Tejo and Sado estuaries are two of the region's most vital natural systems, but they face increasing pressure from population growth, urban expansion, tourism, agriculture, and port operations.

Despite this, they remain key ecological hotspots, supporting migratory birds, filtering water, regulating sediment, and serving as buffers against flooding and erosion. Yet the combined impacts of sea-level rise, shoreline erosion, and urban development are causing coastal squeeze, trapping natural habitats between rising seas and fixed infrastructure, leaving no space to shift and adapt. The result is accelerated habitat degradation, biodiversity loss, declining ecosystem services, and greater vulnerability.

Artists are invited to collaborate with scientists and local communities to explore these liminal zones, not just as sites of loss, but as spaces for imagining future ecologies. Artists are encouraged to develop immersive virtual or augmented reality works that open portals to possible futures: simulations, sensory journeys, speculative landscapes. These experiences will draw on scientific insight while offering new emotional and perceptual entry points for the public to see, feel, and understand what is at stake along the changing shore.

From tidal rhythms to sediment flows, from migratory birds to submerged seagrass beds, these ecosystems are living, breathing systems of memory and possibility. Artists are invited to imagine new ways of sensing and seeing the coast—to inspire connection, empathy, and more imaginative stewardship.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

This residency offers an opportunity to explore immersive and interactive storytelling using virtual and/or augmented reality, grounded in scientific insights and inspired by the coastal and estuarine landscapes of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area.

Artists will be invited to develop creative scenarios that reflect future possibilities for these environments, bringing to life the complex challenges they face in ways that are visually engaging, emotionally resonant, and accessible to a wide audience.

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

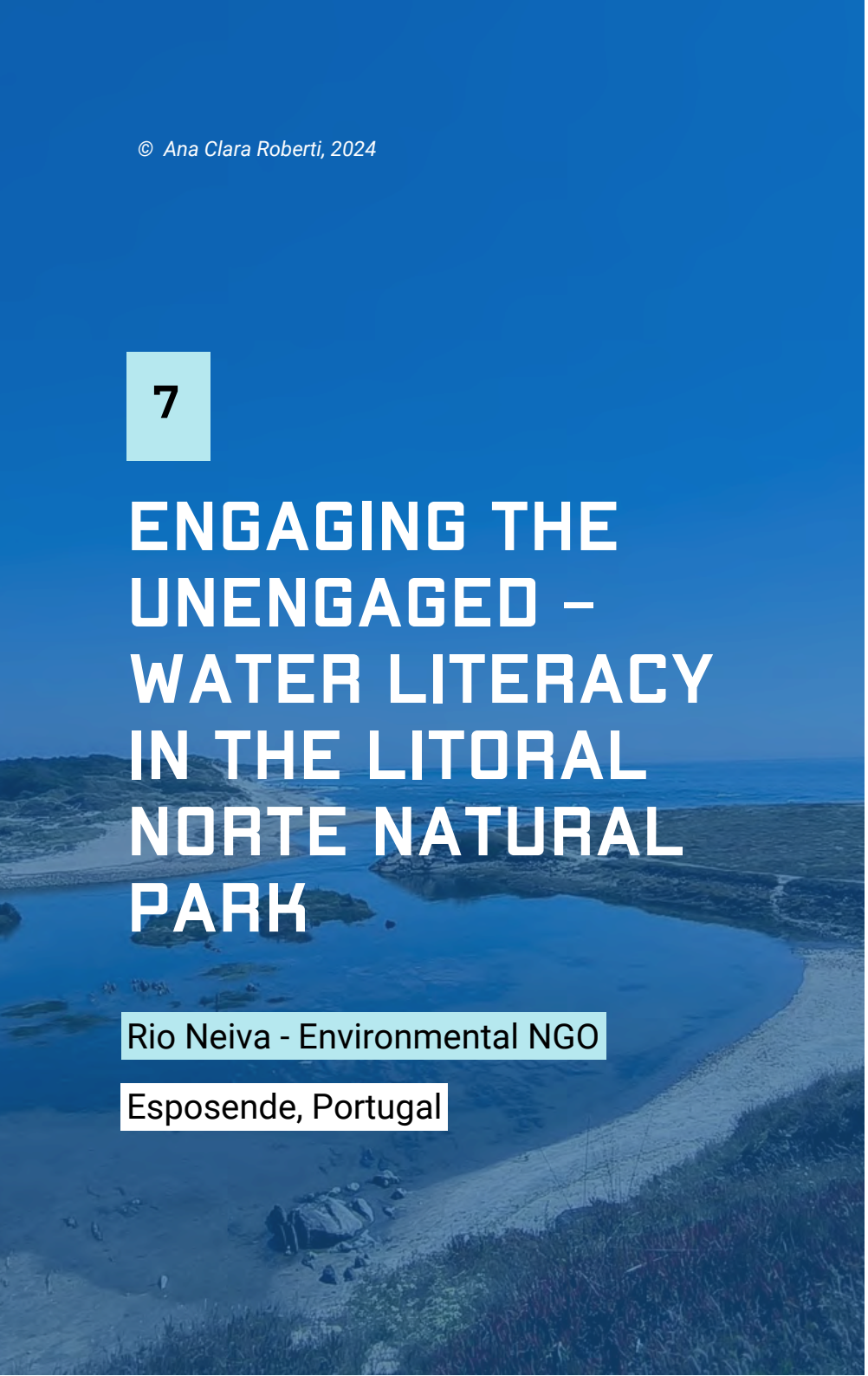
+ Portuguese Environment Agency
+ HAEDES Portugal
+ ZERO - Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável
+ MarDive
+ UNESCO - Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe

ADDITIONAL INFO

We welcome artists with expertise in virtual and augmented reality, ideally with an interest in coastal management. Selected artists will work with local communities in Lisbon's estuarine and coastal zones, using participatory and creative approaches to promote literacy and raise awareness of key issues.
The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place on July 9th.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ Coastal Zone Diagnosis | Tagus Estuary | Sado Estuary | Estuarine Morphology | Coastal Squeeze | Defining Coastal Squeeze



7

ENGAGING THE UNENGAGED – WATER LITERACY IN THE LITORAL NORTE NATURAL PARK

Rio Neiva - Environmental NGO

Esposende, Portugal

KEYWORDS

+ Water literacy
+ Water care
+ Civic engagement
+ Everyday ecologies
+ Environmental awareness

SUMMARY

Despite its ecological significance, the Litoral Norte Natural Park remains distant from much of the local population, even though it's embedded in their living area. Why do many citizens disengage from water-related issues, and what could trigger a shift in perception and participation?

This challenge asks: How might we awaken overlooked relationships with water and invite new publics into acts of care, imagination, and everyday ritual?

DESCRIPTION

The Litoral Norte Natural Park holds layers of water—visible and invisible, emotional and ecological. Yet despite its richness, participation and awareness on its multiple layers remains limited, predictable, and often fragmented, echoing through a small, recurring circle of voices.

Instead of asking why people do not participate, we ask what would make someone want to engage with and get to better know the Natural Park? Could a puddle become a portal, or a dried canal a canvas for storytelling? We seek playful, unexpected, and symbolic formats that help people reimagine their entanglements with local water systems and the life they hold —not through information alone, but through sensory experience, performance, and emotion.

This challenge embraces public space as a site of possibility: to stage rituals of reconnection, map personal or collective memories, or host disruptions that question who and how gets to care for water. We welcome proposals that activate the imagination and open new paths to belonging.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

-+ Creative formats that surface invisible relationships with water, through stories, rituals, performances, or installations
+ Experiential prototypes that invite emotional or embodied engagement with water layers and the life they support within the Park
+ Public activations or poetic disruptions that challenge who might be or is empowered to care
+ Co-created narratives or symbolic acts that reclaim local water as part of daily life
+ Visual, performative, or participatory maps of care, memory, and imagination around water and the life it holds

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ João Pedro Rosa, 4is Association
+ Luís Fernandes, Theatro Circo
+ Marina Dolbeth, CIIMAR
+ Rodrigo Carvalho, Visiophone
+ Vasco Ferreira, Municipality of Esposende
+ Anabela Almeida, Municipality of Esposende

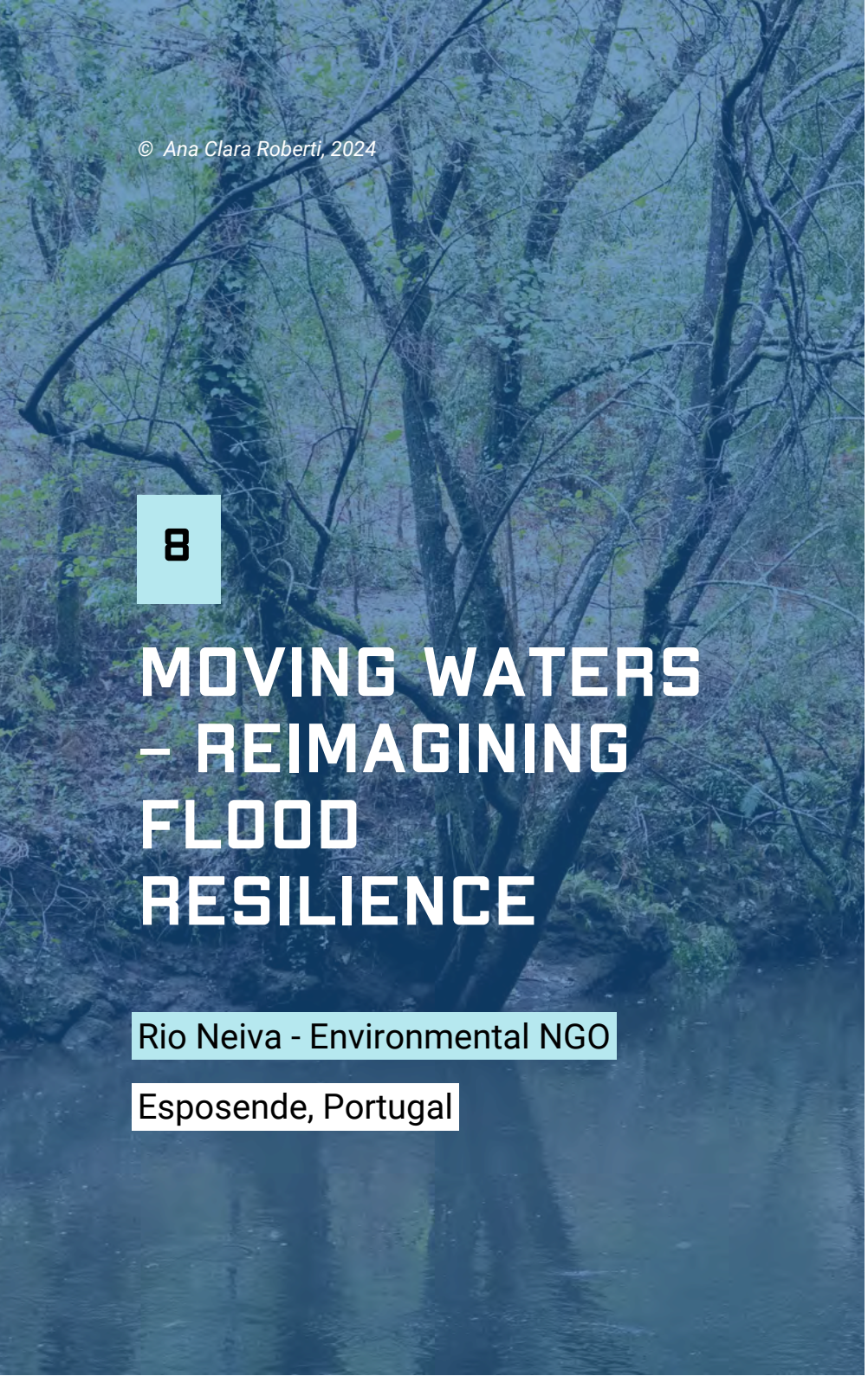
+ Municipality of Esposende
+ Litoral Norte Natural Park

ADDITIONAL INFO

For those who may wish to extend their stay beyond the required period, Rio Neiva – Environmental NGO – is happy to offer optional free accommodation in its premises. This includes: a shared bedroom with bunk beds, access to shared bathroom and shower facilities, and to a shared kitchen.
The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 7-11th.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ Litorial Norte Natural Park | Marine Observatory of Esposende | Complementary scientific work related to the Natural Park and Esposende



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MOVING WATERS – REIMAGINING FLOOD RESILIENCE

Rio Neiva - Environmental NGO

Esposende, Portugal

KEYWORDS

+ Water Imagination
+ Flooding
+ Resilience
+ Urban Nature
+ Sensory Design
+ Public Perception

SUMMARY

What does water feel like as it moves through our lives—slipping under sidewalks, flooding our fields, shaping our stories? In Esposende, flooding is not just a technical problem, but a narrative one.

This challenge asks: How might we make hidden systems visible and transform perceptions through sensory experiences?

DESCRIPTION

Esposende's Interceptor Channel and surrounding hydrological network are lifelines for a shifting city. But they are often hidden, misunderstood, or framed as merely technical infrastructure. What if, instead, we saw them as storytelling grounds—places of memory, imagination, and messy beauty?

This challenge invites to explore the sensory, aesthetic, and emotional dimensions of urban water. How do people experience flooding not just as risk, but as disruption, uncertainty, or transformation? How can we bring visibility to these systems not with facts alone, but with feeling?

Rather than pushing for "acceptance" of nature-based solutions, we invite co-creation: speculative rituals, temporary monuments, or playful explorations that reclaim flooded or overlooked spaces as part of a living, water-sensitive city.

We're not just imagining flood control—we're dreaming of flood conversation.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

+ Artistic responses that make the invisible visible, exploring grey and green water infrastructure and architecture, as emotional, aesthetic, or cultural terrain
+ Public art, spatial interventions or other explorations that reshape perceptions of flood-prone spaces
+ Speculative or poetic reinterpretations of nature-based solutions (e.g., turning a flood channel into a narrative space)
+ Experiments in community rituals, walks, or games that reclaim water as a shared urban experience
+ Contributions to a living archive of visual, sensory, or social practices for resilient city-making and city-living.

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ João Pedro Rosa, 4is Association
+ Luís Fernandes, Theatro Circo
+ Marina Dolbeth, CIIMAR
+ Rodrigo Carvalho, Visiophone
+ Vasco Ferreira, Municipality of Esposende
+ Anabela Almeida, Municipality of Esposende

+ Municipality of Esposende
+ Litoral Norte Natural Park


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ADDITIONAL INFO

For those who may wish to extend their stay beyond the required period, Rio Neiva – Environmental NGO – is happy to offer optional free accommodation in its premises. This includes: a shared bedroom with bunk beds, access to shared bathroom and shower facilities, and to a shared kitchen.
The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 7-11th.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ Interceptor Channel | Litorial Norte Natural Park | Marine Observatory of Esposende | Complementary scientific work related to the Natural Park and Esposende

9

NEW WATERS, OLD STORIES – REGENERATING WATER-BASED CULTURAL HERITAGE

Rio Neiva - Environmental NGO

Esposende, Portugal

KEYWORDS

+ Water Memory
+ Cultural Rituals
+ Speculative Storytelling
+ Collective Futures
+ Heritage

SUMMARY

Esposende is steeped in watery memories—of sargassum harvests, shipbuilding songs, river mills, and junco crafts. But these are not just echoes of the past.

This challenge asks: What future stories might rise from ancestral waters, and how can memory become a material for regeneration?

DESCRIPTION

The waters of Esposende have carried livelihoods, rituals, and resistance across generations—from the tides that once brought seaweed (sargassum) for fields, to the rhythms of riverine mills, to the silent erosion of our coastline. These memories linger in stories, tools, ruins, and gestures. But what futures can they inspire?

This challenge seeks artists, researchers, and community weavers to awaken these latent narratives—not as heritage to preserve, but as seeds for speculative futures. We're less interested in archiving for nostalgia, and more in activating memory as a source of resilience, sustainability, creativity, and new meaning.

How can these stories become catalysts for imagining alternative futures? What if a future ritual reimagined the practice of collecting seaweed? What new materials, performances, or speculative fictions could help us inhabit past knowledge as living guidance?

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

+ Explorations of artistic mappings or creative archives of local water knowledge and cultural memory
+ Participatory storytelling formats that revive disappearing water rituals or practices
+ Temporary monuments, soundscapes, or performances that honor ancestral water wisdom
+ Site-specific works that connect water memory with future imaginaries
+ Public moments of collective remembrance or speculative re-invention

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ João Pedro Rosa, 4is Association
+ Luís Fernandes, Theatro Circo
+ Marina Dolbeth, CIIMAR
+ Rodrigo Carvalho, Visiophone
+ Vasco Ferreira, Municipality of Esposende
+ Anabela Almeida, Municipality of Esposende

+ Municipality of Esposende
+ Litoral Norte Natural Park

ADDITIONAL INFO

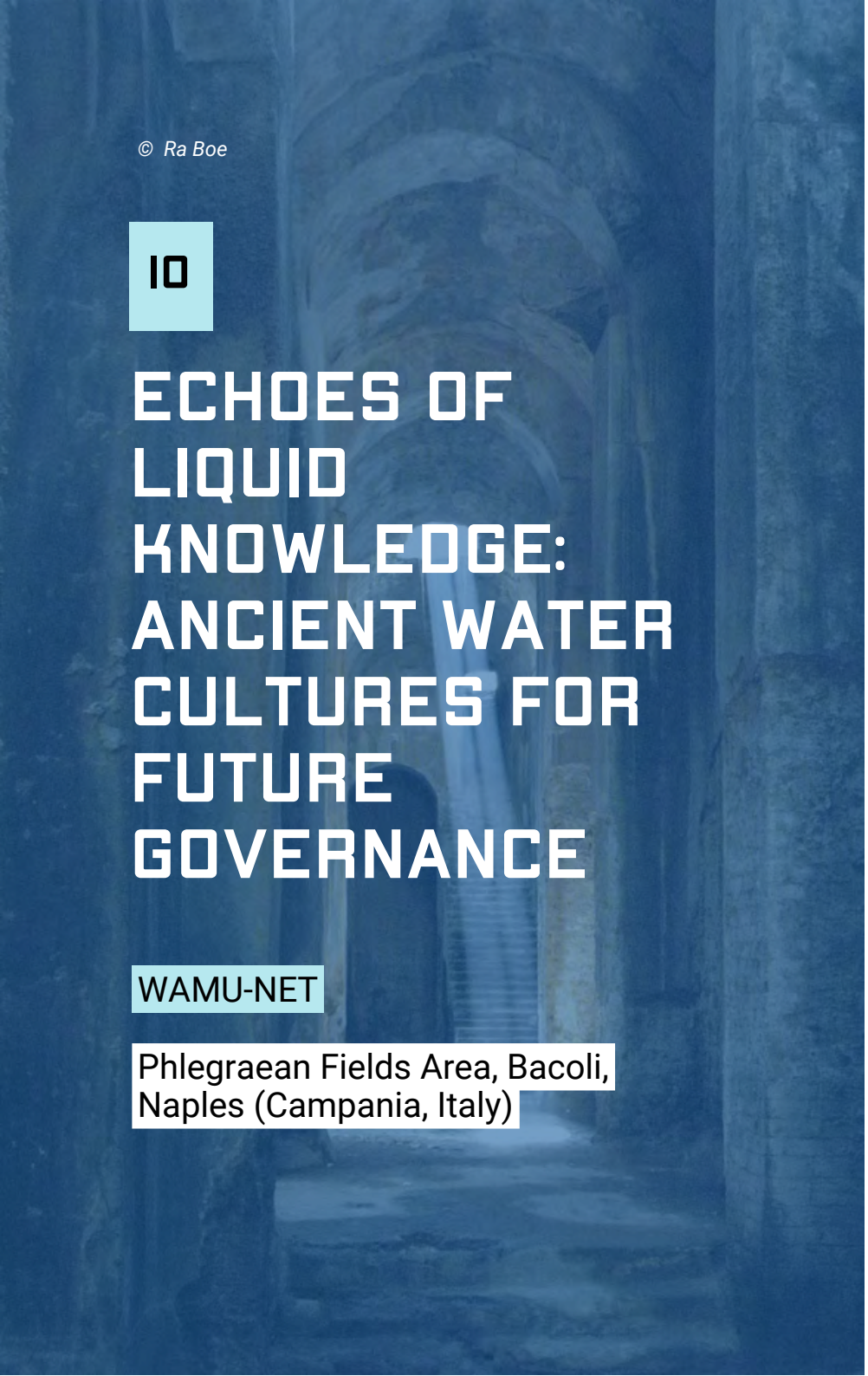
For those who may wish to extend their stay beyond the required period, Rio Neiva – Environmental NGO – is happy to offer optional free accommodation in its premises. This includes: a shared bedroom with bunk beds, access to shared bathroom and shower facilities, and to a shared kitchen.
The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 7-11th.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ Interceptor Channel | Litorial Norte Natural Park | Marine Observatory of Esposende | Complementary scientific work related to the Natural Park and Esposende

Challenges from ITALY

CHALLENGES LIST



© Ra Boe

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ECHOES OF LIQUID KNOWLEDGE: ANCIENT WATER CULTURES FOR FUTURE GOVERNANCE

WAMU-NET

Phlegraean Fields Area, Bacoli, Naples (Campania, Italy)

KEYWORDS

+ Marine and Freshwater Pollution
+ Untreated Sewage
+ Water Scarcity
+ Aquifer preservation
+ Farsighted water and land management drawing from past examples

SUMMARY

How can the wisdom embedded in ancient Roman hydraulic systems and water-related culture inspire new ways of thinking about sustainable water governance and face the increasing pollution of coastal waters and aquifers? This challenge explores the scientific, technical, cultural, and emotional dimensions of water history in the Phlegraean Fields in a trans-disciplinary perspective: from the Roman monumental engineering feats to contemporary challenges that address the pressing issues of reducing water pollution and fighting cultural indifference toward water that characterizes consumerist societies.

Considering the prominent archaeological heritage of this area, that is strongly linked to water management and conservation, ancient Roman water practices and related values can provide inspiration to preserve the quality of water and foster sustainable and integrated water governance.

DESCRIPTION

TThe challenge focuses on the Phlegraean Fields, a volcanic area in the metropolitan city of Naples where seismic activity occurs almost daily. The area is home to a National Archaeological Park which includes the final part of the Serino Aqueduct (one of the largest aqueduct systems of the Roman empire that served eight ancient cities near Naples). The aqueduct is connected to the 'piscina mirabilis' (marvellous pool): a monumental cistern which once provided fresh water to the Roman navy.

Recently, this area experienced unprecedented degradation due to unregulated dumping, accumulation of plastic and all kinds of waste in the shores and coastal aquifers. The National Park and other institutions are active in promoting a new culture of respect toward water to improve this critical situation.
By investigating the water history of this area, including ancient hydraulic infrastructures, management practices, and water-related values - and exploring them through artistic experimentation and cutting-edge technologies - new insights can emerge into how ancient Romans interacted sustainably with this vital resource. These insights could contribute to addressing today's environmental challenges, such as water scarcity and pollution affecting local ecosystems.

The dialogue between innovative technologies and ancient water cultures will be central to artistic research, exploring solutions that merge science, technology and Roman hydraulic cultures. This approach fosters a broader perception of water as a living substance and reservoir of biodiversity and opens reflection on the balance between public and private water management, emphasizing water as a common good ('res publica').

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

+ An art project / artwork that reimagines our connection to water, blending artistic experimentation with ideas of reuse, healing, and future ecologies.

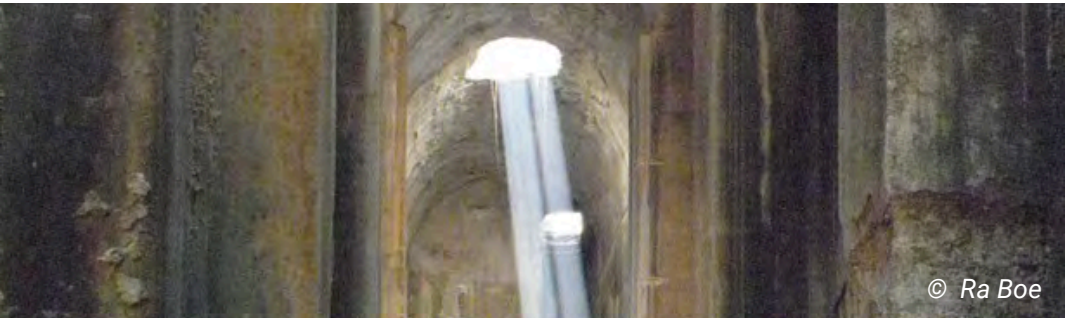
+ Development of workshops or encounters that invite local communities, students, or museum visitors to reflect, move, make, and share alongside your process.

Educational activities are welcome and are conceived as a key tool for intergenerational transmission of polysemic water cultures; as such, they are aimed at involving schools, visitors and local communities to share and promote a 'new culture of water' that unites past and present practices, attitudes and behaviors toward water

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ National Archaeological Museum of Campi Flegrei
+ TE.AM Research and Study Centre
+ Associazione Pluriverso

+ Marco Merola
+ Pia Parolin
+ Anna Brusarosco
+ Raffaella Pergamo
+ Francesco Munari



ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 1-4th, 2025.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ Parco Archeologico Campi Flegrei

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II

RE-IMAGINING WATER. FROM SACRED LIVING HERITAGE OF THERMAL WATER TO CONTEMPORARY RE-USE

WAMU-NET

Montegrotto Terme, Padua (Veneto, Italy)

KEYWORDS

+ Blue economy
+ Sustainable re-uses of water
+ Circular-neutral water uses
+ Aquifers' and rivers' preservation and regeneration
+ History of thermal waters

SUMMARY

Today, water is treated as a resource to be used and discarded. This project challenges artists to rethink this paradox of consumer societies: How might we reconsider water not only as a material resource, but also for its intrinsic value - starting with thermal waters? How can artists help rethink the boundaries between wellness, health, ecology, and the current cultural paradigm of water as an unlimited resource and a mere commodity?

This challenge explores strategies for the sustainable reuse of thermal waters as a model to prevent wastage and promote water reuse. Starting from the ancient use of Montegrotto's spa waters, which were considered sacred since Roman times – artists will explore the intimate and emotional relationship between water and the human body. The challenge seeks to reconnect people with water as a shared heritage and living substance. Reframing water as relational, rather than simply utilitarian, is crucial for our future.

DESCRIPTION

The residency aims to foster new perceptions toward water by focusing on the historical uses of thermal waters and their potential reuse through integrated water management. It is based on collaboration between the Municipality of Montegrotto (Padua) and Federalberghi Terme (the Italian Federation of Spa Hotels).

Montegrotto Terme, located in Northern Italy's Veneto region, is renowned for its thermal baths since Roman times. It hosts an archaeological area of national relevance that testifies to the historical management of thermal waters and values toward water. Today, thanks to an innovative project managed by the Municipality, thermal water is reused for heating buildings after serving therapeutic purposes, reducing reliance on additional energy sources. The project reconnects historical water management with contemporary sustainable practices.

Artists are invited to draw inspiration from Montegrotto's historical spas to explore and emphasize the symbolic and emotional meanings of thermal waters, encouraging individuals and communities to rediscover their intimate connection to this vital resource through the physical relation with their body. Additional Italian spas affiliated with Federalberghi Terme have expressed interest in creating an itinerant exhibition of the artistic output.

By creating a visual narrative among Montegrotto and other spa towns, artists will develop a shared story on water's role in physical and spiritual regeneration, integrating local heritage with contemporary innovation. They are encouraged to reflect on the beneficial uses of therapeutic waters across time and promote new behaviors and attitudes toward water in today's global water crisis.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

+ Artists may propose an art project / artwork that reimagines our connection to water, blending artistic experimentation with ideas of reuse, healing, and future ecologies.

+ Artists may also develop workshops or encounters that invite local communities, students, or museum visitors to reflect, move, make, and share alongside your process.

Educational activities are conceived as a key tool for intergenerational transmission of polysemic water cultures; as such, they are aimed at involving schools, visitors and local communities to share and promote a 'new culture of water' that unites past and present practices, attitudes and behaviors toward water

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+Municipality of Montegrotto Terme (Padua)
+ Italian Federation of SPA Hotel
+ Civiltà dell'Acqua International Centre

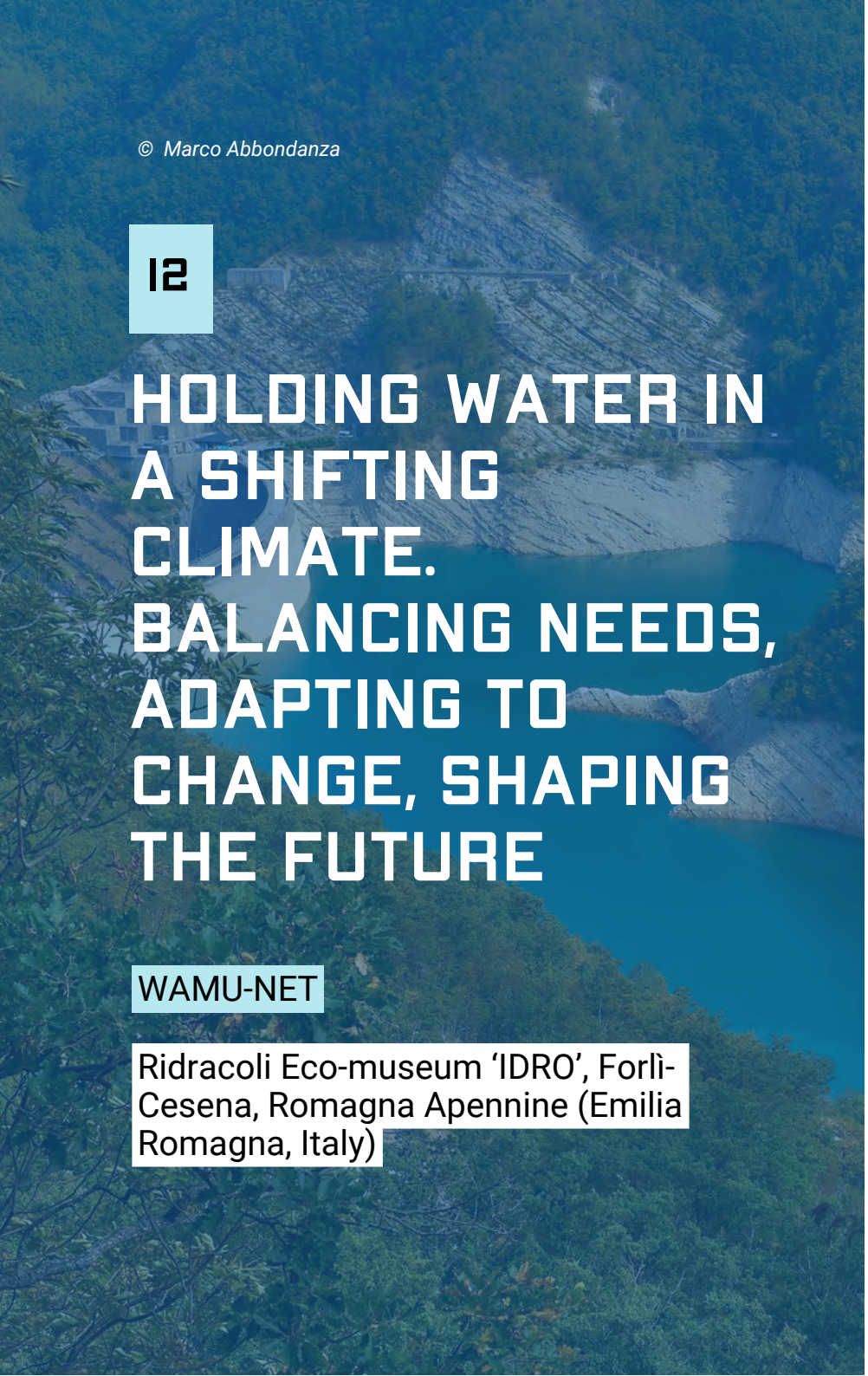
+ Marco Merola
+ Pia Parolin
+ Anna Brusarosco
+ Raffaella Pergamo
+ Francesco Munari

ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 1-4th, 2025.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ Abano - Montegrotto Terme



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12

HOLDING WATER IN A SHIFTING CLIMATE. BALANCING NEEDS, ADAPTING TO CHANGE, SHAPING THE FUTURE

WAMU-NET

Ridracoli Eco-museum 'IDRO', Forlì-Cesena, Romagna Apennine (Emilia Romagna, Italy)

KEYWORDS

+ Climate change adaptation
+ Water scarcity
+ Retention basis
+ Hydro-geological risks
+ Protection of ecological corridors
+ Biodiversity restoration

SUMMARY

In the Apennine region of Emilia Romagna, large dam infrastructures like Ridracoli capture water to ensure availability, control floods, and also support ecosystems through Nature-Based Solutions (NBSs). Yet beneath engineering patterns, a turbulent landscape of climate uncertainty, competing needs, and ecological pressures lies.

This challenge invites artists to focus on Ridracoli's dam in Romagna central Italy and reflect on how water is held, shared, and contested in a time of growing scarcity and risk. The dam is not only a tool of regulation but also a symbol of struggle, division, adaptation, and hope. Can containment be reimagined as care and negotiation for increased ecological awareness rather than mere control? Artists are encouraged to explore the interdependencies and contradictions between human needs, resilience of non-humans, historical uses, and future vulnerability across Mediterranean landscapes.

DESCRIPTION

The challenge centers on the interconnected themes of freshwater availability, flood risks, and the need to preserve enough water for nature and biodiversity regeneration, using the Apennines region of Romagna as a representative Mediterranean context. Over the past decades, dams and retention basins were built to manage water resources for drinking, energy, and irrigation. When designed and maintained properly, they can benefit biodiversity, create wetlands, and reduce soil erosion. However, they also present challenges: excessive sediment accumulation, stagnant water fostering mosquitoes and odors, and potential flooding risks in densely populated areas. If mismanaged, they can exacerbate inequalities in water access and threaten freshwater ecosystems.

How can we imagine sustainability not only as policy goals but as new narratives for shared responsibilities? Artists are invited to explore how water moves, upstream and downstream, physically and symbolically, and to consider what it means to hold and distribute water amid a climate crisis. Innovative thinking on water harvesting and regenerated traditional waterscapes may focus from ancient local practices to innovative techniques and strategies for water capture, including NBSs.

The Ridracoli basin is a compelling case study embodying the paradox of 'too much / too little' water. This challenge invites artists to reimagine large infrastructures and dams across the Mediterranean not merely as retention basins but as contexts where cultural memory, competing needs, and environmental and biodiversity restoration converge. In a landscape marked by growing droughts and floods, the dam becomes a lens to explore adaptation, resilience, and new policies for integrated water management.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

+ Artists may propose an art project / artwork that reimagines our connection to water, blending artistic experimentation with ideas of reuse, healing, and future ecologies.

+ Artists may also develop workshops or encounters that invite local communities, students, or museum visitors to reflect, move, make, and share alongside your process.

Educational activities are conceived as a key tool for intergenerational transmission of polysemic water cultures; as such, they are aimed at involving schools, visitors and local communities to share and promote a ‘new culture of water’ that unites past and present practices, attitudes and behaviors toward water

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ Romagna Acque - Società delle Fonti Spa
+ Ecomuseo di Ridracoli

+ Marco Merola
+ Pia Parolin
+ Anna Brusarosco
+ Raffaella Pergamo
+ Francesco Munari


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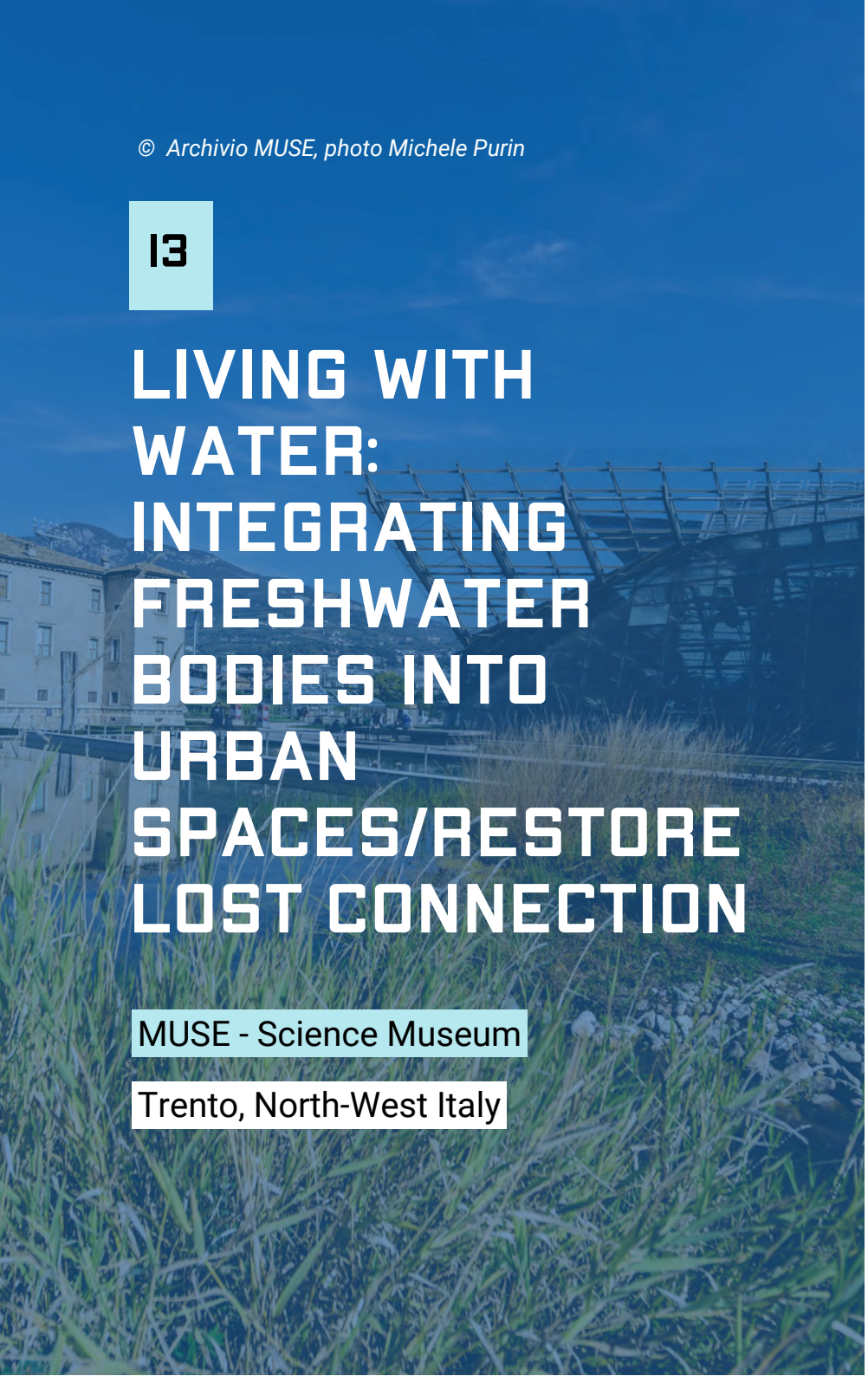
ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 1-4th, 2025.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ Ridracoli Eco-museum 'IDRO'



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13

LIVING WITH WATER: INTEGRATING FRESHWATER BODIES INTO URBAN SPACES/RESTORE LOST CONNECTION

MUSE - Science Museum

Trento, North-West Italy

KEYWORDS

+ Urban growth
+ Water vital resource
+ Healthy communities
+ Coexistence
+ Urban planning
+ Restoring lost connection

SUMMARY

Water is often perceived as a threat rather than a vital resource that can be seamlessly integrated into our urban environments. When reimagined as a source of well-being, water can transform cities into more harmonious and common spaces.

In many urban areas, human daily interactions with water have diminished, and its vital role is frequently overlooked. This neglect has far-reaching biological consequences that must be addressed. What we need is a widespread education that brings water into the spotlight—making visible the often-invisible processes, cycles, infrastructures, and inequalities that shape our access to this precious resource.

How might we re-learn to live with water, not around it? How can we restore our emotional and sensory relationships with water in urban environments?

DESCRIPTION

The goal is to reintegrate water into cities as an element of well-being, using more conscious and holistic approaches to water management. Artists are invited to explore how freshwater can be reintegrated into urban life as a vital, visible, and shared resource — materially, ecologically, and symbolically. The city of Trento, where the Adige River has been diverted and relegated to the periphery, offers a powerful case study of how urban development has distanced people from water. Like many cities, Trento reflects a broader disconnection: daily interactions with water have been reduced, and its essential role in public health, ecology, and culture is often overlooked.

Artists are encouraged to explore the biological impacts of water marginalization — such as disrupted ecosystems and biodiversity loss — and to engage with the living communities, human and non-human, affected by these changes. The residency also invites reflection on water's symbolic and historical resonance, recognizing its deep roots in human myths, rituals, and identities. Through collaboration with MUSE – Science Museum of Trento - artists are invited to reimagine the relationship between people, urban spaces, and freshwater systems.

In many urban areas, daily interactions with water are reduced, and its crucial role in society is often ignored. However, it is also important to address the biological impacts on the local living communities. Furthermore, art and science can play a key role in promoting a healthier and more conscious relationship with water. Furthermore, it is important to underline that water has always been a central element in the history of humans, with a deep connection to human myths and societies. In this challenge, we work with water not just as a physical substance, but as a symbol with cultural and social significance.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

+ The artist in residence is expected to produce an innovative and creative output that merges science, technology, and art, specifically addressing the theme of water coexistence in urban environments. The site of residence research will be MUSE – Science Museum of Trento. The work outcome should involve the city of Trento in first place.

Their contribution will be instrumental in exploring, designing, and implementing alternative approaches for integration of freshwater bodies into urban spaces.

Their practice will play a vital role in reimagining how freshwater can be meaningfully woven back into the fabric of city life. Their contribution opens space for new ways of thinking and feeling about water in the urban landscape. Through their work, they will help prototype alternative futures for how cities relate to and care for freshwater.

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ Curator of Hydrobiology and Scientific Coordinator of the MUSE Research Unit "Climate and Ecology"
+ Acque Bresciane Srl
+ Waterjade Srl
+ Servizio Bacini Montani PAT
+ La Foresta, Accademia di Comunità


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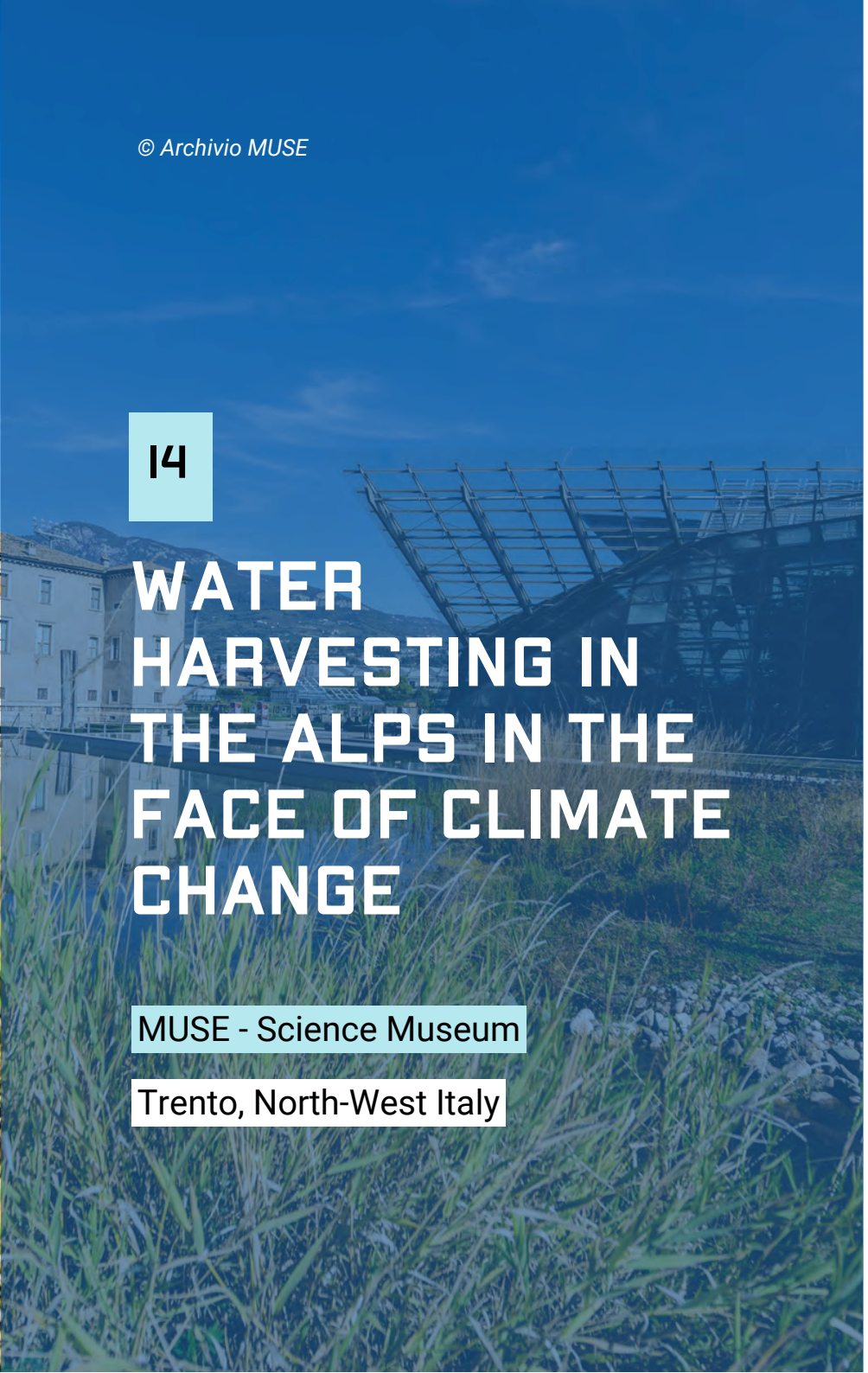
ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 4 or 7th, 2025.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ Acque Bresciane
+ Water Jade
+ La Foresta | Accademia di comunità
+ Provincia autonoma di Trento
+ Clima ed ecologia



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14

WATER HARVESTING IN THE ALPS IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

MUSE - Science Museum

Trento, North-West Italy

KEYWORDS

+ Natural basins
+ Sustainable water
+ Scarcity
+ Water monitoring
+ Digital twin
+ Consumption of water

SUMMARY

In the Alps and around the Trentino province, managing water requires a delicate balance of resource usage among e.g. agriculture, tourism, local needs, etc. Climate change is altering precipitation patterns, affecting rivers flows, water cycles. For that reason, is it important to consider a new variety of management techniques and water collection.

This challenge invites artists to explore the poetics and politics of water harvesting in mountainous terrain, looking both backward and forward: from ancestral knowledge and forgotten infrastructure to sensor networks, digital twins, and future-leaning ecological imaginaries.

What if water could once again be felt as a commons, not a commodity? What if its presence, or absence, was seen not only as a technical problem, but as an emotional, cultural, and aesthetic condition?

DESCRIPTION

Monte Bondone, located in the Trentino province, is a mountain range known for its natural beauty and importance as a water source for the surrounding communities. The area is characterized by its pristine landscapes and alpine lakes, making it a vital ecosystem for biodiversity and a critical water reservoir for the region. However, the challenges facing the area are growing increasingly due to climate change.

The MUSE freshwater research and citizen science activities highlighted a correlation between water pollution and droughts periods in local glacier basins.
It is necessary to strengthen integrated monitoring systems, adopt innovative treatment and reuse technologies, and promote adaptive management practices based on up-to-date data. Innovation must go hand in hand with governance: flexible institutional structures are needed to integrate scientific, traditional, and local approaches to respond swiftly to rapidly evolving scenarios.

Water harvesting in this context is not just about collecting water. It is about shaping the future mountain landscape, ecologically, aesthetically, and socially. This challenge invites an artistic response that brings visibility to water's many roles: as life source, connector, memory-holder and shared commons.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

+ The selected artist is expected to develop a creative output that engages with the theme of water harvesting in the Alps through a cross-disciplinary lens. The work should explore connections between science, community, and environment, helping reimagine how we live with and care for water in alpine contexts.

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ Curator of Hydrobiology and Scientific Coordinator of the MUSE Research Unit "Climate and Ecology"
+ Acque Bresciane Srl
+ Waterjade Srl
+ Servizio Bacini Montani PAT
+ La Foresta, Accademia di Comunità


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ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 4 or 7th, 2025.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ Water Jade | Digital Twin
+ MUSE | How are the waters in Trentino?
+ Provincia Autonoma di Trento

15

SENSING WATER QUALITY: A ONE HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

MUSE - Science Museum

Trento, North-West Italy

KEYWORDS

+ One-health
+ Quality as a holistic approach
+ Cycle of water
+ Active participation
+ Awareness water quality
+ Observation

SUMMARY

Water quality is not just a scientific concern, it is a lived experience that flows through ecosystems, bodies, and communities. From chemical and physical markers to microbial and ecological shifts, water quality reflects the health of everything it touches.

This challenge invites artists to approach water quality not only as a set of measurable parameters but as a holistic, interconnected value, one that links environmental integrity with human well-being. Rooted in the One Health perspective, the goal is to make visible how water, people, and ecosystems are entangled in shared cycles of care and vulnerability.

Artists are encouraged to trace the journey of water, from mountain springs to valley canals, and to uncover stories, signals, and systemic insights along the way. The role of the community is central here: their participation in monitoring, storytelling and shared learning is key to building awareness and care around water quality.

DESCRIPTION

Water quality in mountain ecosystems is a critical challenge that directly impacts both human health and the environment. In mountainous regions water sources like rivers, lakes and wetlands play a role in the well-being of living communities both human and non human.

From a One Health perspective, water quality is not just an environmental concern but also a public health issue. The One Health approach recognizes the interconnectedness of human health, animal health, and the health of the environment.

This challenge is thought for artists interested in the complexity of multispecies welfare. Visual arts, in this sense, represent a valuable tool to show, make visible the invisible, and change the consideration of less conspicuous forms of life and non-human charisma.

This challenge fits also with artists interested in working with inequalities in water quality availability to ensure that everyone has fair and secure access to water resources in the long term.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

+ The artist in residence is expected to produce an innovative and creative output that merges science, technology, and art, specifically addressing the theme of water harvesting in the Alps in the face of climate change. The site of residence research will be MUSE – Science Museum of Trento.

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ Curator of Hydrobiology and Scientific Coordinator of the MUSE Research Unit "Climate and Ecology"
+ Acque Bresciane Srl
+ Waterjade Srl
+ Servizio Bacini Montani PAT
+ La Foresta, Accademia di Comunità


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ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 4 or 7th, 2025.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ One Health | Istituto Superiore di Sanità
+ MUSE | Collezione Antropocene
+ MUSE | Citizen Science
+ MUSE | Water Observers


Challenges from
NETHERLANDS

CHALLENGES LIST

© Edwin Paree. Location: Zuidgors, Zeeland

16

BODIES OF WATER: REIMAGINING CO-HABITATION IN TIMES OF FLUID CONFLICT

Waag Futurelab

The Netherlands Zeeland Delta
Focused on lowlands and coastal territories

KEYWORDS

+ Land-water interface
+ Water-land transitions
+ Ecological precarity
+ Multispecies cohabitation
+ Nature-based solutions
+ Hydro-politics

SUMMARY

This challenge invites artists to confront the tensions between engineered control and ecological care and to reimagine alternative relationships with water. One built on reciprocity, co-existence, and justice. From wisselpolders* to speculative ocean, from flood-resilient deltas to multispecies preservation, the Netherlands is already a testing ground for hybrid futures.

Can we rethink water to be more than H2O, how does reframing agency and entity help us build equitable ecological representation, and co-habitation?

DESCRIPTION

The Netherlands, a nation historically praised for its water mastery, is now standing at a threshold where control gives way to vulnerability. With coastlines fortified, rivers rerouted, and wetlands drained, this landscape of human ingenuity is increasingly strained by ecological collapse, climate volatility, and spatial conflict, impairing our physical, social and cultural cohabitation with waters. Deltas and Dutch waters encapsulate the rich heritage of fresh and salt water cultures: in the land and sea around Zeeland. Salty cultures live with the sea—vast, shifting, beyond control. They demand sensing, agility, and response. Sweet cultures value control and stability—steering with care and intention. How can we carry these dynamics into our cohabitated futures, where both are valued equally and enter into dialogue with one another?

Water is simultaneously an entity of its own right, a public space, a commons, a living system. Yet the way we interact with it is increasingly shaped by conflict, central governance, commodification, and extraction. Rivers are diverted into shipping lanes; coastlines fortified to protect property; wetlands drained for productivity. These shifts carry deep ecological, social and cultural consequences. The ambition for 'neither too little nor too much water' became the mandate for engineered water management, giving way to human-made landscapes disconnected from certain natural processes fundamental to its historical origination, fertility and biodiversity. We have started a chain reaction of loss and change exacerbating climate transitions towards the least desired. This challenge invites artists to confront these tensions and imagine alternative relationships with water, ones grounded in care, reciprocity, and co-existence. From wisselpolders to speculative ocean energy systems, from flood/drought resilient deltas and landscapes to preservation of multispecies ecologies, which are threatened by excessive industrial activity, the Netherlands is already a testing ground for hybrid futures. But whose futures? And whose waters? This residency is about unsettling dominant narratives, disrupting extractive worldviews, and reclaiming space for care, reciprocity and co-habitation.

(*)transitional polders

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

+ Artistic works or interventions that propose new metaphors or realities for cohabitation with water

+ Creative research and novel approaches that aid in rethinking ownership, access, and rights within water systems

+ Sensory or performative explorations of nature-based solutions and ecological resilience

+ Visual, narrative, or spatial works that make visible the overlapping claims on land and sea

+ Alternative scenarios for stalled or overlooked land-water interface technologies (e.g. flood resilience landscapes wisselpolders in the hinterland, intertidal mudflats, tidal flats, and [artificial] estuarine islands)

+ Multispecies storytelling or kinship-building practices rooted in care, memory and ecological ethics

+ Contributions to public discourse around cross-border water responsibility and ocean commons

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ HZ University Applied Sciences / Delta Climate Center
+Witteveen & Bos

Expert Network:
+ Embassy of The North Sea
+ STIR Foundation
+ Into the Great Wide Open
+ Citizen network

© Edwin Paree. Location: Zuidgors, Zeeland

ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 14-15th, 2025.
It is highly recommended that the artist follow relevant seminars and similar level courses to be arranged and offered by HZ Applied Sciences. These opportunities will be planned and arranged based on needs, relevance and mutual complementarity between research themes of the artist and the co-host organisations.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ HZ University of Applied Sciences
+ Core Values of the Delta Program - Solidarity, Flexibility, Sustainability
+ Witteveen&bos - Deltas

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17

CONTAMINATION PARADOX: REFRAMING CONTAMINATION AS KNOWLEDGE, LIMIT AND RESOURCE

Waag Futurelab

Leeuwarden, The Netherlands, Friesland

KEYWORDS

+ Water purification
+ Source separated sanitation
+ Microbial life/non-human agency
+ Multispecies habitats
+ Embodied sensing
+ Sludge futures

SUMMARY

This challenge invites artists to work with a new type of water purification site with the so-called source separates sanitation technology, to explore contamination not only as a threat, but as a resource, a signal, a site of inquiry, and an opportunity to redefine the connection between human, water, and the land. Here, the residues, bacteria, chemicals, and micropollutants, are not waste alone. They are evidence. They are resources and maybe even habitats for organisms other than human. They are matter for inquiry.

Can contamination be understood not only as threat but as a site of knowledge and even a resource? Can artists reframe contamination as a signal of systemic imbalance and as a medium for response, speculation, and co-creation?

DESCRIPTION

When water flows through households, factories, parks, and lands, it connects people and their cultural identities with nature. Despite our passion, fascination and dependence on water, contamination seems to be a fearful taboo. In fact, water holds traces of everything it touches: agriculture, industry, climate, carelessness, history. From nitrogen runoff to PFAS in drinking water, our waterways have become saturated with chemical memories. We are surrounded by contaminants we cannot see or name. Without shared ways of measuring or understanding contamination, and transformation in waters, public engagement becomes fragmented or reactive. Therefore, developing accessible tools, conceptual, technological, cultural, to sense, name, and respond to these transformations are crucial for the restoration of our proud heritage and connection with water. Furthermore, such transformations require rethinking entire social structures to be reconstructed around decentralized water management, e.g. Source-Separated Sanitation (SSS), ideally with active engagement of communities.

Yet the very substances we seek to eliminate may hold clues: to how we've lived, to what's been lost, to what needs attention. This challenge sees contamination as paradox, disruption and data, warning and material, waste and potential resource. Artistic practices can help surface these contradictions, transform them into form, story, or action, solution, and bridge gaps between data, lived experience, and ecological justice.

In the Netherlands and globally, our wastewaters are burdened by a complex cocktail of pollutants: PFAS, plastic particles, agricultural nitrates and phosphates, oil residues, and more. While the wastewater purification systems clean the water, many contaminants remained in sludge, a by-product that is both hazardous and costly to process. Often invisibly. A new paradigm of water purification is emerging, one that collects wastewater in separate streams, allowing contaminants to be transformed into valuable resources. But this decentralized approach demands much more than technical innovation. It requires citizen participation, policy reform, and rethinking entire social structures around water infrastructures. Yet, wastewater treatment, especially when it comes to human waste, remains largely out of public view and out of cultural language. What if art could bring these processes into visibility, making contamination both sensible, resourceful, and discussable? Working on-site at a pilot source separated sanitation facility and a community where a new pilot facility is planned to be built offers the opportunity to engage directly with the physical systems that build circular water management technologies, the processes such as filtering, separating, and re-circulating our water, nutrients, energy, the community that has or has not experience the engagement, and to question who is protected, what is preserved, and at what cost.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

+ New artistic or speculative prototypes that engage with contamination as material or metaphor
+ Public-facing artworks or actions that make water purification processes visible and relatable
+ Creative methods to measure, sense, or narrate pollution in embodied, emotional, or alternative ways
+ Interventions that bridge scientific data, environmental systems, and public understanding
+ Stories or installations built from the materials or residues of filtration processes
+ Expanded imaginaries around circular water systems and post-contamination futures

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ Wetsus, European Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Water Technology
+ Municipality of Leeuwarden
+ WaterCampus Leeuwarden

ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 14-15th, 2025.
Artists are expected to reside/ have on-site presence for a minimum of 3 weeks, which can be planned throughout the residency. This period is for research phase only and does not include site specific production work.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ Source Separated Water Sanitation
+ Closing the Loop; advancing natural water circularity
+ Water circularity and close resource loops
+ NECSUS - #Cycles: On circularity and recursivity in media culture

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18

A WORLD IN A WELL-PLATE: EXPLORE NEW TOOLS TO OBSERVE MICROSCOPIC MARINE LIFE AND THEIR INTERDEPENDENCIES THROUGH THE LENS OF MINISCULE SEAWEED SEEDLINGS

Hortimare

Heerhugowaard, North Holland, Netherlands

KEYWORDS

+ Microbial symbiosis
+ Seedling health
+ Bioimaging
+ Marine Microbiology
+ Speculative instrumentation
+ Invisible ecologies

SUMMARY

Microscopy reveals life at a scale we rarely notice—fragile, complex, essential. At Hortimare, thousands of hours are spent observing seaweed seedlings at this scale. Yet many invisible processes remain beyond reach. This challenge invites artists to rethink how we observe, interpret, and co-exist with the microbial world.

Can an artistic view transform how we interpret and correlate large amounts of microscopic imaging data? Or can we develop creative ways to sense and visualize the hidden processes essential to the health and growth of microscopic marine life?

DESCRIPTION

Microscopic life shapes Macroscopic worlds, with seaweed just being one of the many examples. Gigantic seaweeds, such as *Macrocystis pyrifera*, which can grow up to 50 meters long, start their life so small they are unobservable with the naked eye. If those same tiny *Macrocystis* seedlings are kept in sterile lab conditions, they often stop growing, deform, halt essential cellular processes, or even die. Almost all marine creatures are shaped and guided by the microscopic worlds living alongside them, of which many are not understood yet.

The artist is invited to reimagine the ways in which we observe the microscopic marine environment. We welcome creative ways of data interpretation, processing and correlation. What happens when we blur the boundaries between art and science, observation and imagination?

This challenge also presents opportunities to rethink the processes of microscopic observation and culturing of tiny marine organisms. Can we develop creative ways to measure and interpret the many invisible processes that are essential for the health and growth of marine life? Can the combination of art and technology create prototypes, workflows or techniques that aid us towards better care for microscopic marine life?

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

Possible directions include:

+ Direction 1: Revealing invisible processes: We welcome projects that creatively interpret, process, or correlate large volumes of microscopic imaging data. How might artistic methods change the way we look at our data—patterns, absences, or correlations?

+ Direction 2: Rethinking observation and measurement: We invite prototypes, tools, or experimental/fictional workflows that open up new ways to observe, sense and hypothesize. Can we develop creative ways to uncover the many invisible processes that are essential for the health and growth of microscopic marine life?

+ Direction 3: Embedding the work in your art practice: This direction supports artists who wish to embed the research within their existing projects. Artists with experience in microbiology may work independently with Hortimare seedlings, cultivating and observing outside the shared lab. We encourage integrating this material into artworks shaped by your own inspirations and methods.

Across all directions, we aim to deepen our understanding of marine microbial life, offer new tools or perspectives to our research team, and contribute to wider cultural conversations through public exhibitions, visual narratives, or even scientific collaboration.

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ Raquel Ledo Doval – Utrecht University, PhD candidate researching the potential of marine fungi to break down seaweed cell walls and extract proteins using their enzymes


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ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 1-11th, 2025.
Artists working independently may need their own basic microscopy or culturing setup. Hortimare can provide seedling material, but access to the shared lab may be limited during peak periods of September and January.
Artists proposing intensive collaboration (e.g. technology development) are encouraged to consider longer-term at-site presence.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ Enormous research project on the holomicrobiome | Microbehunter Microscopy | European Molecular Biology Laboratory | BioRender

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PLASTIC ATTACHMENT: REIMAGINE NEW SUBSTRATES AND MARINE INFRASTRUCTURES THAT ALIGN WITH THE ETHICS OF REGENERATIVE OCEAN FARMING AND AFFORESTATION

Hortimare

Heerhugowaard, North Holland, Netherlands

KEYWORDS

+ Multispecies cohabitation
+ Regenerative farming
+ Designing with nature
+ Marine afforestation
+ Zero input farming
+ Seaweed

SUMMARY

As seaweed farming expands, its foundations—ropes, nets, anchors—are still built from polluting, extractive materials. This challenge invites artists to reimagine the hidden infrastructure of ocean cultivation, to design or marine structures that do more than grow seaweed. We welcome proposals that explore alternative materials, forms, and functions that not only grow seaweed, but nourish ecosystems, incorporate aesthetics, and shift our relationship to the sea.

DESCRIPTION

Seaweed farming and afforestation is gradually expanding. Outside of Asia, farming of seaweed is promoted as a win-win for both the economy and ecology—providing food, habitat, and biomaterials without using land, fresh water, fertilizers, or pesticides. Yet the substrates used to grow seaweed—plastic ropes, nets, buoys, and anchors—are still largely based on outdated, extractive models.

Typically made from synthetic, non-biodegradable plastics, these substrates do not break down and can release microplastics into the environment. While substrates are reusable, cleaning them for reuse requires significant manual labour and can result in inconsistencies in the harvest. Many new ropes and nets are manufactured using toxic spinning oils and are often imported from countries with untraceable supply chains. If a factory switches from natural to toxic spinning oils, seeded seedlings may be killed immediately, resulting in a failed harvest. As a result, each substrate batch must be tested.

For seaweed afforestation, providing the right substrate in the wild often does not lead to spontaneous growth of the wanted seaweed species. Preliminary trials to seed local rocks are promising but might be hard to scale up. Finally, the substrate in combination with a biodegradable glue is not sufficient to hold onto all seedlings in both seaweed afforestation and regenerative farming. This requires 4000 seedlings to be seeded per meter, whereas only 400 mature plants already give a good coverage.

As the urgency grows to transition toward more sustainable and regenerative ocean practices, the design of seaweed farming infrastructure and its substrates must evolve. This challenge invites artists, designers, and interdisciplinary researchers to explore and prototype alternative seaweed substrates. This challenge builds on prior design sessions held with scientists and technologists, emphasizing co-creation across disciplines.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

Proposals are encouraged to take inspiration from at least one of the following proposed directions:

+ Direction 1: We welcome artistic work, speculative design or interventions that propose alternative ways of farming and underwater afforestation. Exploring how aesthetics and substrate material might contribute to other aims than production rate or survival rate, such as education, culture, water management, community engagement or ocean health. How might aesthetics and substrate material contribute to political, cultural, and ecological harmony in the underwater landscape?

+ Direction 2: We welcome artistic research, novel approaches and living artworks that rethink the seaweed substrate and cultivation techniques. Think about proposing alternative materials to use for regenerative seaweed farming, and afforestation. What would it mean to design for dissolvability rather than permanence?

+ Direction 3: We welcome works that reflect on ownership, access, and intervention in marine environments. Seaweed farms are not neutral—they enter living worlds. What else than seaweed grows on them? What organisms interact with them? How do the visible structures alter the marine view and experience? This direction seeks to bring awareness of how we are entering and altering the marine world.

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ Farm site 1: VOF 't Veerse Wier - Joost Adriaanse
+ Farm site 2: Seaweedland - Sven Rusticus
+ Substrate partner: Langman ropes
+ Ecosystem restoration and biodegradeable substrate partner: BESE

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ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 1-11th, 2025.
If desired by the artist, an additional period of on-site presence for prolonged experimentation, production work and collaboration with the research team can be organised. In the case of intense collaboration with the research team and usage of the facility for a prolonged period, it is advisable to think about how the artistic research could contribute to increased seaweed attachment or survival, or in other ways have shared benefits with Hortimare's research team.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ Substrate materials for ecological restoration
+ https://www.materialdriven.com/
+ https://www.greenwave.org/

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SEEDING FUTURES: REIMAGINING THE SEAWEED ECONOMY

Hortimare

Heerhugowaard, North Holland, Netherlands

KEYWORDS

+ Seaweed
+ Value chain
+ Biobased Innovation
+ Systems Thinking
+ Community Engagement
+ Speculative Economies

SUMMARY

Seaweed is everywhere—and yet its potential is barely visible.
It cleans our seas, nurtures marine life, and holds promise across industries—from food to fashion, from soil to skincare. But how do we make seaweed part of everyday life?

This challenge invites artists to reimagine seaweed's value chain—working with scientists, farmers, and innovators to prototype new applications, systems, or stories. Can seaweed help us rethink daily habits, materials, and the way we relate to the planet?

DESCRIPTION

Seaweed has gained global attention for its remarkable potential as a regenerative marine crop. While needing minimal land space and resources, the seaweed filters its environment of excess nutrients as it grows and simultaneously provides a nursery for marine life. As the supply of seaweed farmed in the North Sea has increased faster than the demand in the last ten years, there is a growing need to diversify, communicate, and elevate the way the seaweed is processed and used. From bioplastics to biostimulants, from food innovations to cosmetics, and from nutraceuticals to carbon-negative textiles, seaweed's possible applications spans industries. Seaweed can also be combined with other sustainable materials to combine the strengths of both. Yet, many of these potential applications remain underdeveloped or undervalued.

Guiding Questions:
+ What can a full value chain of seaweed—from seedling to application—look and feel like?
+ How could we reimagine value creation with seaweed in order to avoid replicating exploitative or extractive logics?
+ What role can sensorial, visual, or performative media play in enhancing seaweed's role in…..?
+ How can speculative art contribute to imagining future seaweed applications?

It's an opportunity to do artistic research, experimentation and prototyping at the heart of the emerging seaweed economy. We value a high level of independence from the artist, being a project manager of their own work, and asking for help on time.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

Proposals are encouraged to take inspiration from at least one of the following proposed directions:

+ Direction 1: System exploration
Artists are welcomed to explore and systematically inquire (such as mapping, modelling, layering, visuo-textual analysis…) the multiplicities: the hidden infrastructures, cultural lineages, ecological interdependencies and speculative economies that surround seaweed. How can we envision the current and future ecosystems of seaweed, not only as a value chain, but as a living system shaped by culture, biodiversity, circular thinking, and shared responsibility?

+ Direction 2: Community engagement:
This is also an invitation to build communities around shared interest and concern. By working collaboratively and engaging with local groups, the artist may help uncover new ways of thinking about seaweed and its role and function in our daily lives. Whether through workshops, storytelling, hands-on projects, or public displays, participants are encouraged to explore how seaweed can hold different kinds of value, social, cultural, and environmental.

+ Direction 3: Reimagining the value chain
The artist will have the opportunity to collaborate with Hortimare and sector partners, tracing the journey of seaweed from microscopic seedling to global commodity. But this is also an invitation to reimagine the systems through which seaweed is cultivated, transformed and consumed. What forms of value, meaning, or relations to the marine environment might seaweed unlock?

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ **Seaweedland** – Sven Rusticus
+ **Wageningen University** – Loekie Zaat
+ **Food Innovation Center Amsterdam (FICA)** – Hans Huibers


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ADDITIONAL INFO

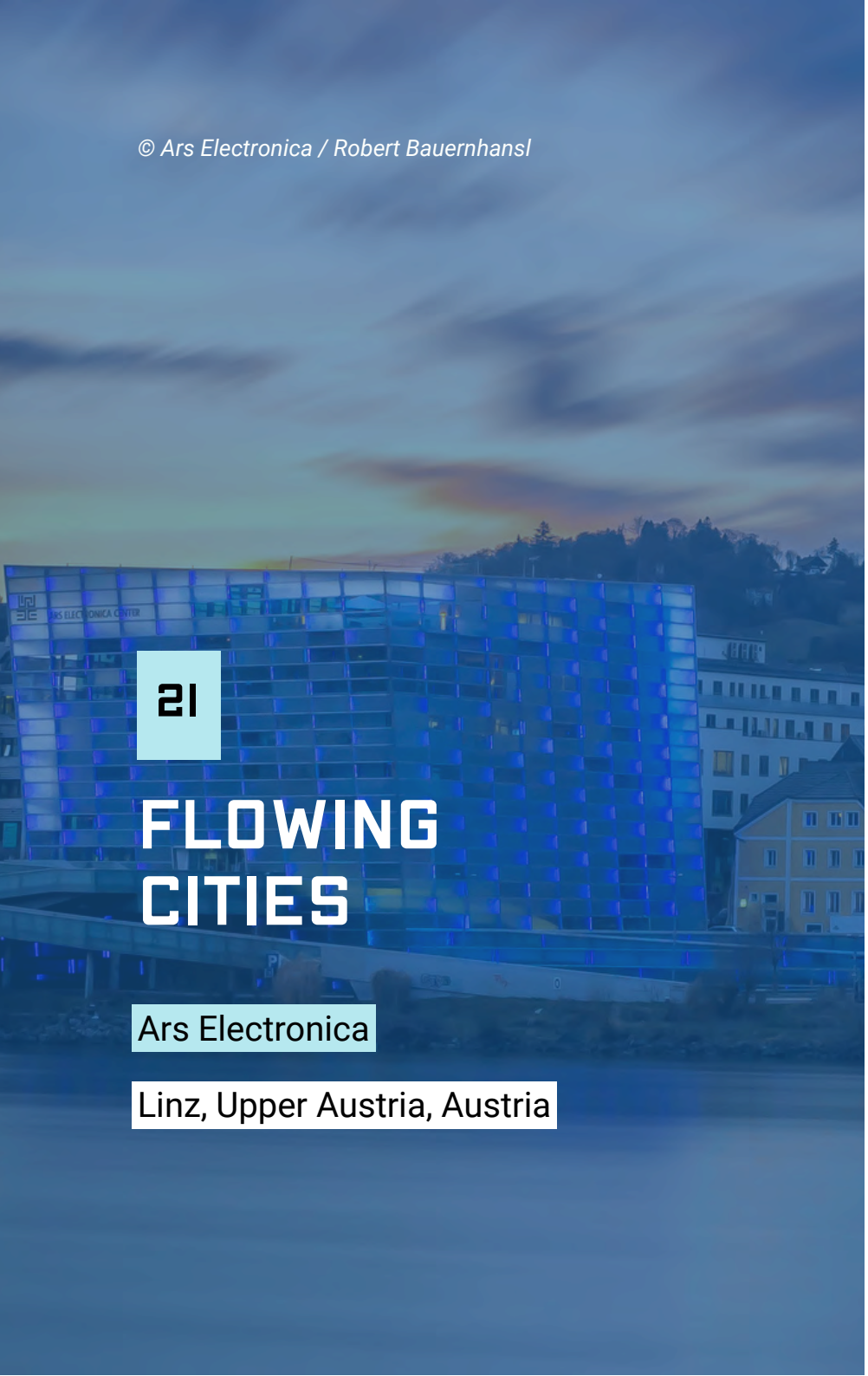
The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place between July 1-11th, 2025.
We welcome profiles with expertise in regenerative value chain research and design, as well as applications prototyping. Additionally, it would be beneficial to have some general knowledge about seaweed's potential in a certain sector, such as food, health or biomaterials. Access to processing equipment, or experience with simple processing techniques will be considered an advantage.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ Prospective seaweed systems for North-West European waters
+ Seaweed in Health and Disease Prevention

Challenges from AUSTRIA

CHALLENGES LIST



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FLOWING CITIES

Ars Electronica

Linz, Upper Austria, Austria

KEYWORDS

+ Linz, Danube
+ Climate adaptation
+ Water sensitive urban design
+ Urban planning
+ Heat resilience
+ Nature-based solutions

SUMMARY

Climate change is already reshaping Linz. From increasing heat waves to falling groundwater levels and flood threats, the city must adapt. This challenge invites artists to explore how Linz might look, feel, and function in a climate-altered future – particularly in relation to the Danube.

How can we use Linz's water resources for the community in the future? How can we preserve its ecological status, live in harmony with the river again, and use it sustainably? How can artists engage with water-sensitive urban design to foster climate adaptivity and living quality in Linz? How do we design city spaces to cool, connect, socialize over water? And how do we engage politics and civil society to play an active role in this change process?

DESCRIPTION

This challenge focuses on adaptation – not as a distant future scenario, but as an urgent necessity. Cities are increasingly facing extreme heat, unpredictable weather, and water-related risks. Historically, Linz owes its relevance to the Danube, and it might become even more essential in the future. As climate change accelerates, causing higher temperatures, more intense rainfall, flooding, and increasing groundwater fluctuations, its role will become more central – both as a cooling force in hot urban summers and as a potential threat. At the same time, usage conflicts are emerging between agricultural, industrial, and domestic needs - creating “thirsty cities.”

The challenge invites artists to speculate: What could Linz look like in the near future if we take water seriously as a central design element? Can we at the same time redesign ourselves to contribute to a more equitable, “cool” future? Can we improve the city for ourselves, while also enhancing the quality of life for the river and its more-than-human inhabitants?

What new infrastructures, cultures, or changes in the systems might emerge to govern access, distribution, and storage of water in the city? How can artistic interventions reimagine and enhance water sources to improve the quality of life, whilst keeping the ecology of the river in mind? Can the Danube become a connector – ecologically, socially, emotionally? How can the interplay between Linz’s green spaces and its riverbanks spark new ideas for sustainable, connected, and safe urban living? Perhaps we can learn from the ways people lived with the Danube in the past? By imagining future scenarios and visualizing climate adaptation strategies and solutions, artists are asked to contribute to a creative civic dialogue: one that reimagines Linz as a resilient, equitable, and water-wise city.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

This challenge intersects with urban planning, water sector, ecology, and cultural identity. It encourages artists to draw on community experiences, scientific projections, and interdisciplinary knowledge to create visions for living with river landscapes or water environments in urban structures. It's about adaptation – spatially, socially, and emotionally – and building a culture that is responsive to the climate shifts.

This residency is ideal for artists interested in public space, policy, and speculative design. Artistic research or participatory formats are welcome.

Collaborations with city departments, policymakers, planners, and communities are encouraged to research existing initiatives and connect art-driven solutions with real-world innovation and governance.

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ This residency is co-hosted by the City of Linz, Department for Economy, Innovation, Climate and EU Affairs as well as the Department for Planning, Technology and Environment.

Their objectives include advising, mediating and supporting individuals and groups, as well as linking them to supporting networks and the City of Linz. The promotion of innovative ideas and projects through cooperation, the provision of infrastructure, support services and public relations is also central. This also includes participation in European networks such as the New European Bauhaus Festival or the UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts.

Through the City of Linz, artists will gain access to Digital Twins of city areas for simulations, support from experts in urban climatology, city planning, and infrastructure, help establish cooperation with companies and use public spaces.

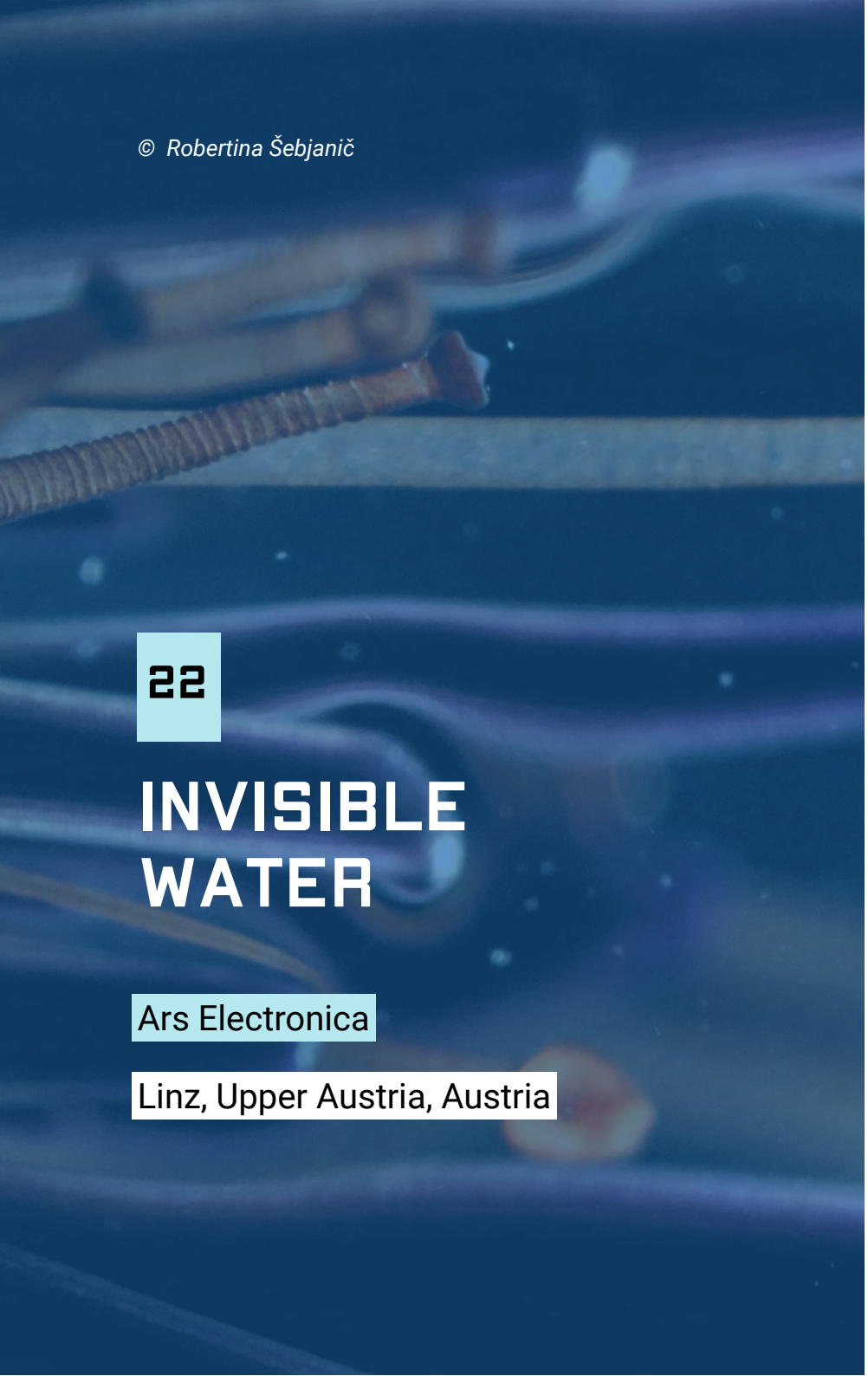
Ars Electronica's labs and expert networks are also available.

ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place on July 7th, 2025.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ City of Linz | AE Fablab | Water Management & Climate Change | Innovationshauptplatz



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INVISIBLE WATER

Ars Electronica

Linz, Upper Austria, Austria

KEYWORDS

+ Linz, Danube
+ Industrial pollution
+ Invisible water
+ Invisble
+ Microplastics
+ Artistic translation
+ (global in)justice
+ Virtual waters

SUMMARY

Much of what the water around us contains remains invisible – whether hidden deep underground, embedded in products we use daily, or flowing through industrial processes that leave no visible trace. In Linz, a city built on and around the Danube and its potent groundwater systems, this hidden water carries a heavy burden of contamination – from the legacy of historic textile industries to the impacts of present-day chemical and steel production.

This challenge invites artists to investigate the invisible aspects and downstream effects of water contamination and "virtual water" – the hidden water used in production and industry, and even in private households – and bring awareness to the hidden water processes that silently shape ecosystems, bodies, and daily life.

DESCRIPTION

Linz is a city deeply shaped by industry. With a legacy of textile production, steel manufacturing, and chemical processing, the Danube and its connected groundwater basins have long served as silent carriers of both life and contamination. Today, mainly human-made pollutants like microplastics, PFAS, and agricultural runoff continue to enter the water cycle. While we increasingly measure and analyse substances in our water, public awareness, actionable understanding, and knowledge of their long-term effects on humans and nature remain low.

At the same time, the concept of virtual water – the huge hidden amount of water used in the production of everyday goods – raises questions around responsibility, transparency, and global water justice.

This challenge invites artists to investigate, expose, and reinterpret the hidden water flows of the Danube. From mapping historical industrial contamination to exploring how everyday consumption links Linz to global water systems, from analysing wastewater to imagining speculative futures – how can we make the invisible visible? How can citizens be engaged in understanding and reshaping the hidden water flows that impact their daily lives? What is the true footprint of human activity on our water cycle?

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

We are looking for groundbreaking and ambitious ideas that address the challenge in innovative and thought-provoking ways. The call is open to all artists from all backgrounds.

Artists are free to propose any project as part of their proposal. Works can range from immersive data installations, speculative design or AI-generated narratives, to mappings, multimedia experimental storytelling, or experiential interventions - and beyond.

Collaborations with local scientists, water authorities, and communities are encouraged and explicitly supported. We are looking for creatives eager to exchange with local expertise, experiment with new tools and mediums, and expand the boundaries of how we engage with water and technology.

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ This residency is co-hosted by the IT:U Interdisciplinary Transformation University Austria.

The artist will be able to use the cutting-edge labs of the Intelligent User Interfaces Research Group as well as the University labs that allow access to the VR/AR/MR, multi-human body motion capture, prototyping with 3D printers, laser cutters, robotics, heavy data processing, and analysis labs.

Workspace and mentoring will be provided, especially at the intersection of humans, AI, and art – for example, using Generative Models and novel AI tools.

Additional exchange with researchers in Human-Computer Interaction, Geosocial AI, Machine Learning in Earth Sciences, Explainable AI, or Geo-Spatial AI is possible.

Ars Electronica's BioLab and expert network are also available. Specific support will be provided by the Water Innovation Lab members to identify and gain access to relevant data sources.

ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place on July 7th, 2025.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ Intelligent User Interfaces | History of the City - Linz | Water Workshop - Virtual Water | Swimming the length of the Danube Documentary | AE Fablab | Joint Danube Surveys

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KEEP THE DANUBE DIVERSE

TU Wien

Vienna, Austria, Danube River Basin

KEYWORDS

+ River biodiversity
+ Freshwater ecosystems
+ Fish migration
+ Species loss
+ Danube River
+ Ecological storytelling

SUMMARY

Freshwater biodiversity is declining faster than in any other ecosystem on Earth—and the Danube River, flowing through Vienna, is no exception. Barriers like hydropower dams, poaching, and pollution have disrupted delicate ecological balances. Sturgeons, once a key species, now symbolize what's at stake.

What does biodiversity loss look like—underwater? This challenge invites artists to explore the invisible collapse of river life in the Danube. Can we reimagine our relationship with rivers through the stories of vanishing species, shifting flows, and silent migrations?

How can art and technology reveal, interpret, and help protect riverine biodiversity in the Danube—using sturgeons and other key species as messengers of broader ecological change?

DESCRIPTION

Biodiversity in freshwater systems is declining at alarming rates, yet this loss often remains invisible to the public. Along the Danube, species like the sturgeon—once common—are now endangered due to disrupted migration routes, poaching, and ecological imbalance. But the sturgeon is just one part of a larger story. This challenge invites artists to engage with the complex dynamics of river ecosystems under stress. Rather than focusing solely on decline, the goal is to explore how artistic approaches might reveal, interpret, or reimagine the connections between species, water, and human intervention. Collaborations with researchers, access to ecological data, and site-specific work in or around Vienna are all possible starting points.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

+ Artworks (installations, soundscapes, data visualizations) exploring river life and biodiversity loss

+ New metaphors for migration, hybridization, and ecosystem resilience

+ Engagement with youth or local communities around river conservation

+ Optional: integration of sonar, water sensors, or public data tools

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ BOKU Vienna (Thomas Friedrich)

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ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place on July 1-2nd, 2025.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ LIFE-Boat 4 Sturgeon project

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THINGS GO BETTER WITH FRESH AND PURE DRINKING WATER

TU Wien

Vienna, Austria

KEYWORDS

+ Drinking water
+ Climate change
+ PFAS
+ Microplastics
+ Water taste
+ Vienna

SUMMARY

Vienna's water still tastes like Alpine spring—but for how long? Rising temperatures and urban sprawl are creeping into the system. This challenge invites artists to surface what's hidden in the pipes: the future of taste, trust, and purity.

How can art and technology help people sense, understand, and respond to invisible changes in urban drinking water caused by climate change, pollution, and infrastructure stress?

DESCRIPTION

Vienna's water infrastructure is admired for its purity and engineering—but the realities of climate change and urban growth are beginning to leave their mark. Rising groundwater temperatures, emerging contaminants, and sealed green spaces are reshaping how the city sources and treats its water. This challenge focuses on what remains largely unnoticed: changes in water quality, perception, and public trust. Artists are encouraged to explore how these shifts might be felt, visualized, or experienced through material, digital, or participatory work. The aim is not to dramatize the crisis, but to open new ways of understanding water as both a physical and cultural resource.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

+ Multisensory installations, public interventions, or digital artworks

+ Community engagement tools for water conservation and awareness

+ Artistic exploration of taste, memory, and trust in public infrastructure

+ Cross-sector collaboration between artists, engineers, and scientists

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ Vienna Water (MA 31)

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ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place on July 1-2nd, 2025.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ Vienna's Water Supply - The Journey of Vienna's Drinking Water

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FLOODS OR DROUGHTS - TIME TO RETHINK WATER

TU Wien

Vienna, Austria

KEYWORDS

+ Floods
+ Droughts
+ Climate adaptation
+ Snowmelt
+ Hydrological change
+ Resilience

SUMMARY

From overflowing streets to cracked earth, Austria's water story is one of extremes. This challenge invites artists to interpret floods and droughts not just as weather events—but as emotional, ecological, and political disruptions. What remains when the water goes?

How can artists visualize, sonify, or interpret Austria's growing water extremes—floods and droughts—in ways that connect hydrological data to public emotion, memory, and future resilience?

DESCRIPTION

Austria is increasingly caught between two extremes: floods that overwhelm, and droughts that linger. These shifts are not isolated events but part of a growing pattern linked to climate change, altered snowmelt, and shifting land use. This challenge invites artists to engage with the temporal, emotional, and spatial dimensions of water instability. How do floods and droughts shape landscapes, memories, or infrastructure? What does resilience look like when the water doesn't behave as expected? Artists may draw from hydrological data, personal narratives, or historical records to develop responses that are critical, poetic, or speculative in nature.

EXPECTED RESULTS & OUTCOMES

+ Artworks making water extremes visible and memorable

+ Community storytelling or participatory workshops

+ Public installations in flood-prone or drought-affected areas

+ Cross-disciplinary conversations around resilience

EXPERT GROUPS, PARTNERS INVOLVED

+ BOKU Vienna (Hydrology experts : Karsten Schulz)

ADDITIONAL INFO

The Jury Day (online-pitch) will take place on July 1-2nd, 2025.

REFERENCES USEFUL LINKS

+ 'Our plan worked': How Vienna prepared itself for a 5,000-year flood

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