

is a collaboration between e-flux Architecture and “Fertile Futures,” the Portuguese Pavilion at the 18th International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia curated by Andreia Garcia with Ana Neiva and Diogo Aguiar, featuring contributions by Emanuele Coccia, Álvaro Domingues, Ifor Duncan, Eglantina Monteiro, Ana Salgueiro, and Ameneh Solati.

“Water is Life.” As Standing Rock protestors declared, access to freshwater must be ensured for all and fought for at all costs. With the widescale privatization and belligerent contamination of this vital natural resource, the struggle for water has become more urgent than ever. However, the fight for water is not a new struggle. People have been collectively negotiating their relationship with water for as long as they have lived together. Water has also, at the same time, been a means for people to negotiate how they live together. This is just one of the many ways that water is reflexive. Struggles over water are also incredibly varied, as water is not only life; it is also territory. Every environment, every place is shaped by water: by the way it is situated and used; by how it is protected, managed, and distributed; by the conditions of its accessibility; by its quality, and by its quantity. Water can be both a protector and a threat, and the struggles over water can be both for and against it.

The 2023 Portuguese Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale focuses on the entanglements of water with local economies, politics, and cultures to imagine more fair, inclusive, equitable, diverse, generous, abundant, productive, and responsible futures in seven distinct hydrogeographies across Portuguese territory: the Tâmega Basin, located in the north of Portugal, which was once an agricultural base but is now home to one of the largest hydropower complexes in the world; Douro International, in the northeast, a natural park shared by Portugal and Spain whose high river banks are essential to soil and ecosystem conservation; Middle Tejo, located in the center of the country, where the mining industry has extensively contaminated the Zêzere River and groundwater; the Alqueva Reservoir in the southeast, which as the largest artificial lake in Europe attracts a growing number of tourists while contributing to the overproductivity of agribusiness; the Mira River in the southwest, which high yield farms not only contaminate, but also create unequal access to water and inadequate working and housing conditions; the Lagoa das Sete Cidades in the Azores, whose eutrophication is caused by romanticized livestock activity; and Madeira’s streams, whose regular flooding highlights the cost of the island’s rapid and unplanned urbanization.

Although each of these situations requires specific local solutions, they are all symptomatic of broader global trends, orientations, and practices. It thus becomes crucial to share knowledge and learn from the experience of others. Since we are all connected by water and all water is connected, developing new models and strategies for

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Editorial



pontoatelier, "Liquid Memory," triptych, 2023. © pontoatelier.

managing and conserving water resources is a crucial step towards creating a fairer, more sustainable, and more diverse future. This work certainly goes beyond the singular domain of architecture, but the architect is well suited to position themselves at the nexus of many different forms of knowledge, disciplines, temporalities, and scales. The act of developing, articulating, and realizing a common imagination lies at the core of what it means to be an architect. Doing so, however, might require finding other ways of performing architecture.

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e-flux Architecture is an archive and editorial project founded in 2016. e-flux Architecture describes strains of critical discourse surrounding contemporary architecture, culture, and theory internationally.