

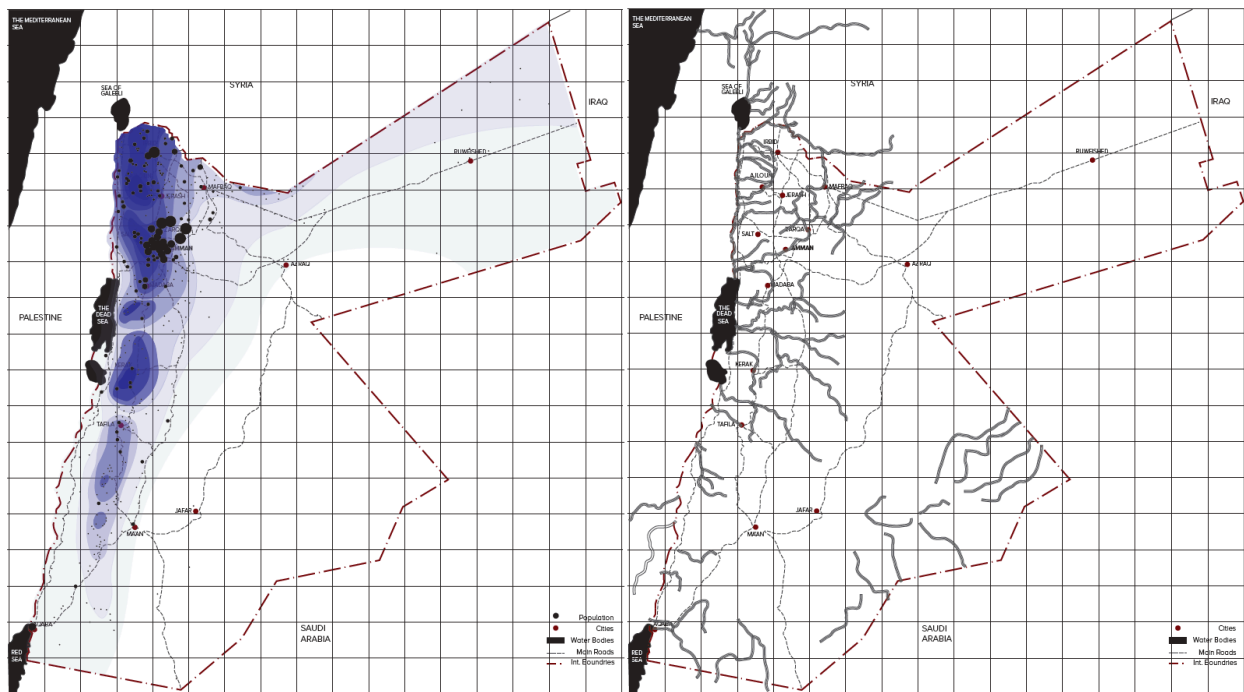
Title	<i>Water Bodies</i>
Supervisor(s)	Prof. Anuschka Kutz
Engagement	Urban Cultures / Exploring Urban Cultures
Campus (BXL/Ghent)	Campus Brussels & Remote. The studio will operate in hybrid mode, approximately alternating 50/50 between on-site and remote mode.
Language (EN/NL)	English
Studio or individual?	The Studio Projects will be carried out in groupwork of 2-4 students per group.

“The oceans have been used by humans mainly for energy, as a source of both protein and propulsion. Most obviously, winds, currents and tides have been harnessed for transport, while whales, walrus, seals, fish, crustaceans, molluscs and other shoreline flora and fauna – from seaweed to goose barnacles – were transformed into food, fertiliser and fuel. But the capitalist commodification of these ‘free gifts of nature’ has been far from straightforward, and in many instances much harder than on land.”

Campling Liam and Alejandro Colás. (2012). *Capitalism and the Sea*. Verso: London / New York, p. 12

## Studio Urban Field Lab

# Water Bodies



Map of Jordan. left: *Water Precipitation and Population Density*. right: *Water Bodies*. Drawings by Sabine Ariqat, Studio Urban Field Lab, KU Leuven, 2021.

Water is the new frontier. With water scarcity becoming more and more acute, ‘water is the new gold’. Water Bodies are a lifeline under threat. Transboundary, they are under pressure to accommodate competing needs, from infrastructure arteries for transport and trade, to energy, extraction and resource, to food, biodiversity and leisure. With water levels falling, many lakes and rivers have run dry. At the same time, extreme weather events push water levels to sudden swells, flooding land and livelihoods. Water Bodies are contested territories.

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*dry, wet, adventure, pollution, fiction, trade, leisure, enterprise, colonization, bathing, extraction, wealth, risk, speculation, stock, shock, fun, death, debts, coast, sea-level, discharge, risk, beauty, bounty, slavery, fish, vessels, oil riggs, kids, swimming rings, deprivation, rural, farewell, urban, offshore, island, fringe, privilege, labor, love, loathing, trader, merchant, commerce, market, craft, mystery, luxury, exoticism, escape, utopia, labor, convicts, quotas, wars, borders, dredging, shore, sand, mud, haulage, romance, military, outpost, beach, bar, flooding, ducks, swans, sewage, contaminants, defense, freshwater, hotel, algae, estuary, pesticides, oil, drips, disposal, cleanup, ice cream, sunshine, mining, radioactivity, yacht, survival, travel, transport, fresh, salty, foam, path, camping, floating, sinking, shrinking, singing, tale, male, power, protein, currents, tides, depth, shallowness, ...*

“Seabeds continue to be drilled for their fossil fuels and minerals, and coastlines developed for real estate and leisure. Container ports now act as global hubs for new complex networks of global commerce, transferring commodities and generating value across different maritime-dependent sectors of the world economy ranging from shipbuilding to insurance, freight transport to cruises. The legacies of, and continuities in, seaborne slavery and bondage – as well as the modes of resistance and internationalism they engendered – remain central to emancipatory politics across the globe. [...] Ocean winds, currents, tides and weather patterns have combined with biochemical and geophysical characteristics [...] or natural features such as sandbanks, reefs, lagoons, inlets and shallows to produce specific risks [...]. In turn, the expanded reproduction of capital has radically transformed the nature of the oceans, particularly since industrialization. It has reshaped coastlines and reconfigured marine ecosystems through dredging, dumping, depletion and discharging. [...] ...the Earth’s geographical separation into land and sea has significant consequences for capitalist development.”

(Campling and Colas 2021, 1 – 3).

“... And I imagine those murky layers undulating along the sea floor, bringing to our airy regions a convoy of this substance of night and impassive ashes ripened by the harshness of the north. Then the beach is whipped by a wind not felt on the body; it is a secret wind. High waves come in, lifting close to the shore, they form less than ten meters out, the green of *campêche* trees, and in this short distance they unleash their countless galaxies. Branches of manchineel and seagrape lie about in havoc, writing in the more peaceful sunlight a memoir of the night sea's work. Brown seaweed piled there by the invisible assault buries the line between sand and soil. Uprooted coconut palms have tumbled sideways like stricken bodies. Along their trail, all the way to the rocky mound marking the distant Morne Larcher, one can sense the power of a hurricane one knows will come.”

(Glissant 1997, 121).

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#### Thematic Point of departure

We have approached spatial questions mostly from a land-based perspective. In this studio, we will start our work from the water-based perspective. Land has featured largely as the ‘important’ figure, the ‘stable ground’ sitting in a sea of water. We have treated water as a reservoir and infrastructure to fulfill our need for food, energy, consumption, comfort, value and growth.

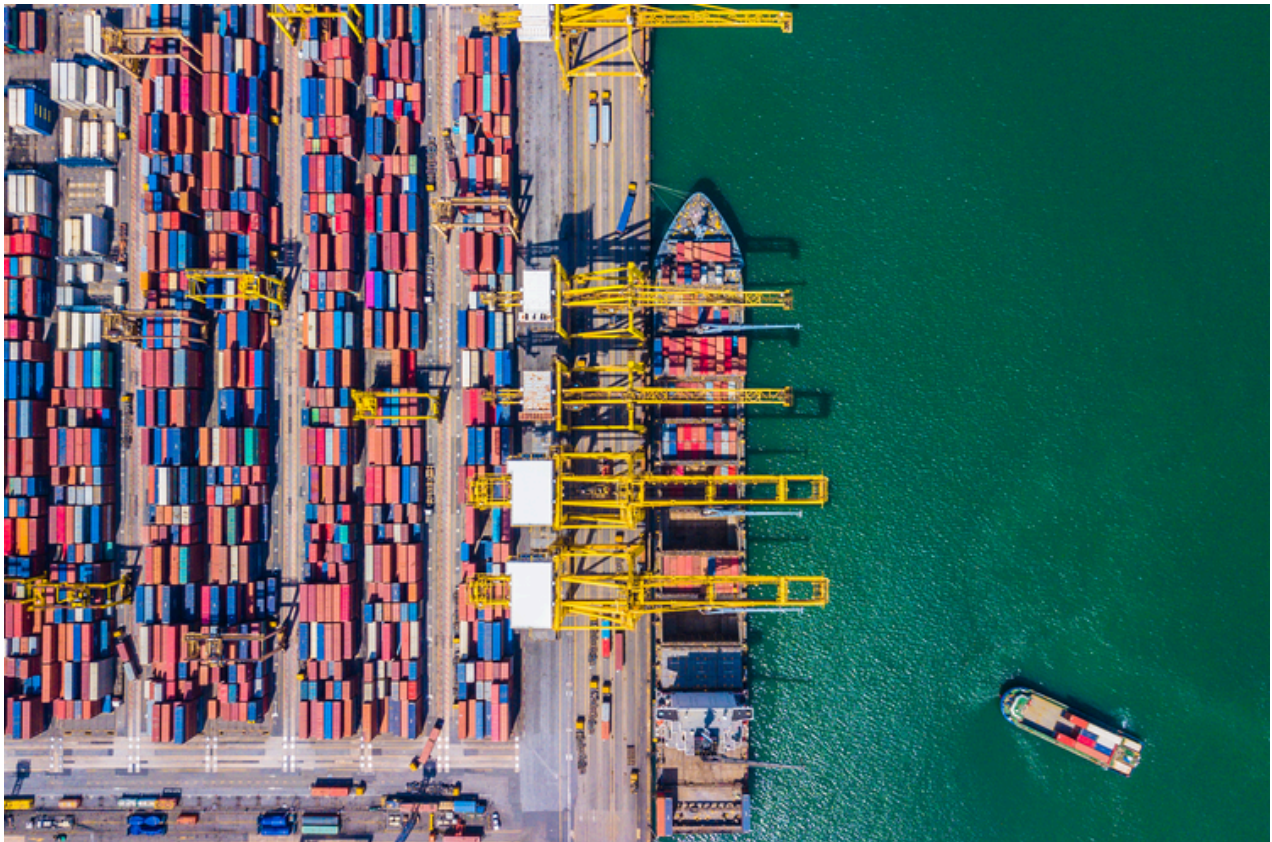
“Why this insistent focus on the dry, when in fact, the wet world with which land lives is itself matter, and the boundaries between the two are dynamic and evolving?”

(Pierre Bélanger in conversation with Jennifer Sigler. In: Sigler, Jennifer, 2014. “Who is afraid of the Ocean?” *Harvard Design Magazine*, Vol 39, p. 2).

We have rendered water bodies, the seas and oceans into service infrastructures that we extract from and which we increasingly seek to mold to fit our largely land-based needs and desires. This has largely been a westernized perspective, serving western interests. Arguably, the binary between land and water has caused architecture and urban planning to focus disproportionately on land-based contexts. We will question the established binaries between land and water. 71% of the earth’s surface is water-covered. Global infrastructures and their continuing logistical and material networks and transactions transgress binary land-sea divisions.

“The management, maintenance and expansion of modern transportation infrastructure demand extraordinary amounts of land, fresh water and natural resources. [...] We must recognize that the progressive impulse to reorganize landscapes to provide “services” like water conveyance and flood control may have political and redistributive consequences.”

(Ashley Carse, 2014. “Moving ships over mountains: from the conquest of nature to political ecology at the Panama Canal. *Harvard Design Magazine*, Vol 39, p. 69.)



Container Port Shanghai. Image credits: © apiguide





Children collect plastic from polluted river in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Photo© Kazi Salahuddin Razu/Nur

”As a space for human production, the ocean is both a sewer, a sink, a void for movement, a mine for resources and all highly managed yet overpowering at the same time.”

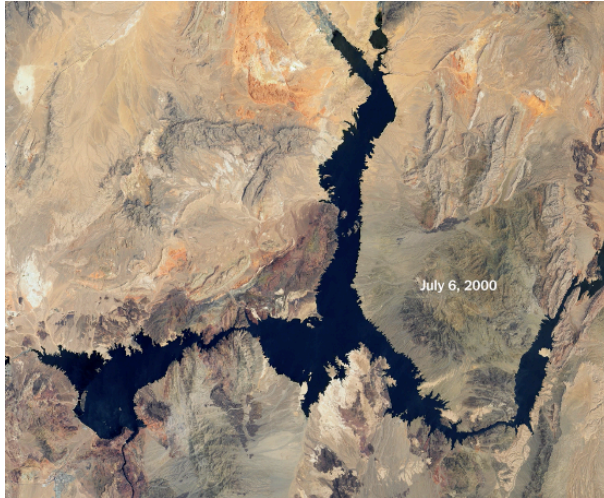
(Liam Mouritz. 2019. “Mapping the Ocean. Investigating Portolan Charts to Dislodge the Binary between Territorial Land and Mobile Ocean”. In *Landscape as Territory*, edited by Clara Olóriz Sanjuán. New York / Barcelona: Actar, 115–121).

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### Our Work / Methodology

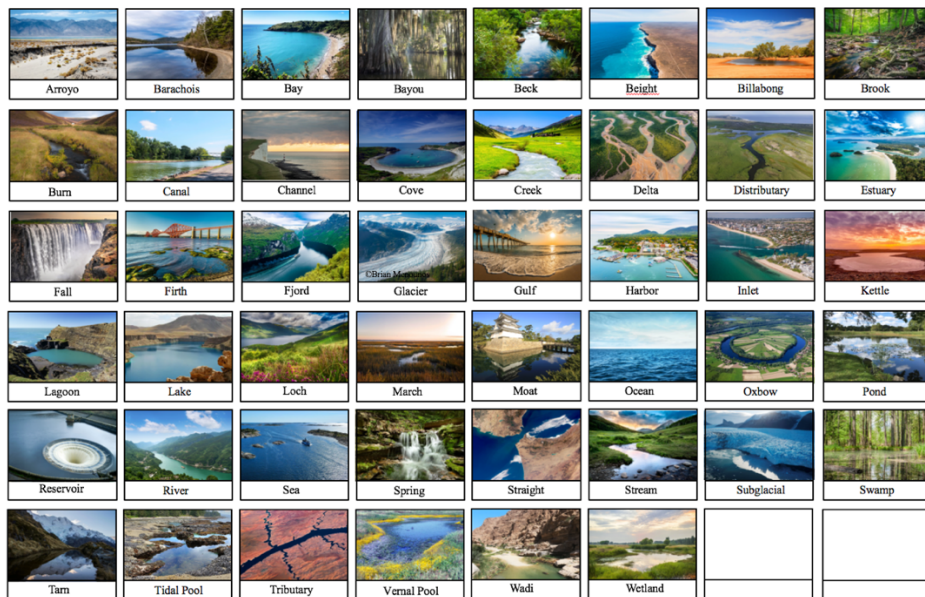
In studio Urban Field Lab, we will unpick and investigate the undeniable interrelationship between water bodies, livelihoods, ecologies, land, productivity, leisure, tourism, agriculture.... We will interrogate matter and time dependencies. These dependencies are far from static, but much like the sea and land, they are in constant and dynamic transformation, whether these are climate driven, seasonal, weather-dependent or human-based factors.



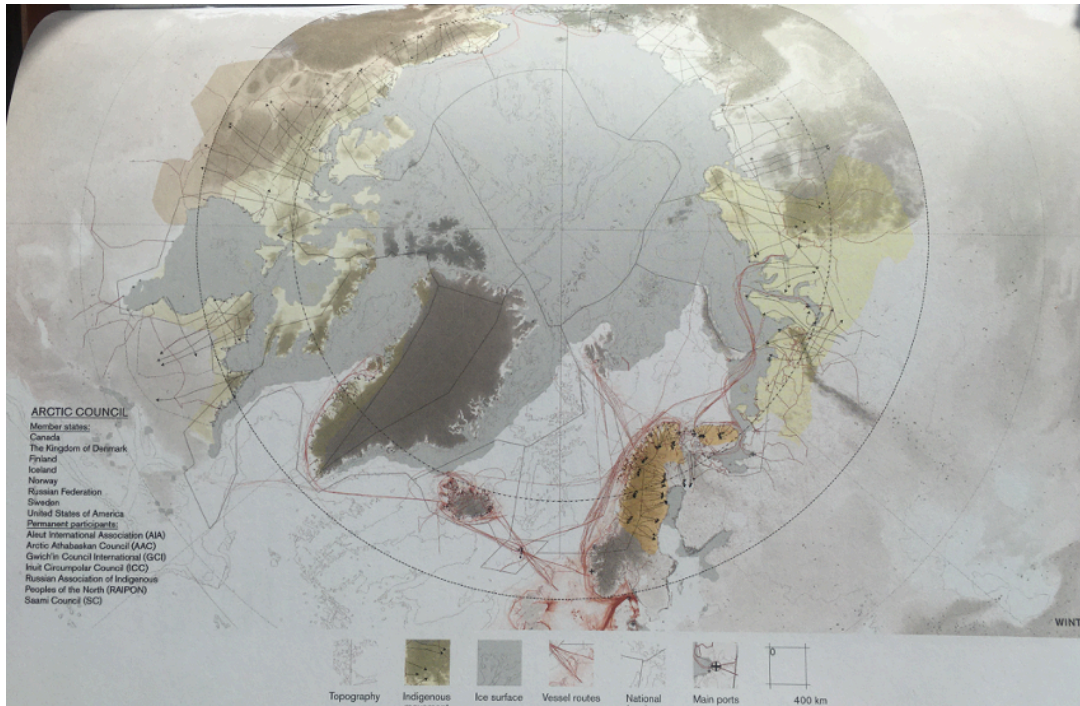


A comparison of satellite images from NASA's Landsat 7 and 8 show Lake Mead's water levels on a 22-year course of shrinking. Images by Lauren Dauphin/NASA Earth Observatory. Lake Mead is a reservoir formed by Hoover Dam on the Colorado River in the Southwestern United States. It is located in the states of Nevada and Arizona, 24 mi east of Las Vegas. It is the largest reservoir in the US in terms of water capacity.

Our work will be investigative and reflective. We will centre our work on water bodies and the relationships between water and land, interrogating how actions in one location affect other locations. Work will be carried out in groups of 2 – 4 students. At the beginning of the semester, each group will nominate one water body on which they will then concentrate their work. This permits us to include your experience, context, expertise and interest into the studio context. The water bodies can be located anywhere in the global context, so long as at least one student in the group is familiar with the context, has expertise, experience or another kind of connection to it. Your water bodies could be coasts, deltas, rivers, lakes, seas, canals, streams, lagoons.... They can be in urban, remote, rural, industrial, pagan, touristic or wild locations.



You will need to go beyond the actual location of the water body and investigate spaces of impact and consequence that are connected to the water body.



Seasonal North Pole atlas projection showing clashing interests between indigenous communities, resource extraction, shipping routes and states' borders. © In *Landscape as Territory*, edited by Clara Olóriz Sanjuán. New York / Barcelona: Actar, 176–177.

You will interrogate the land / water relationships, zooming in on specific interdependencies. We will chart, observe, decode, collect, map and remap water bodies and their adjacent spaces, using divergent scales, from the remote to the macroscopic, producing a series of detailed super-sized drawings. We will examine global, trans-national, regional and local trade, transport, production and leisure realms, settlements, environments and other entities and territories located at the rim of the water body or further afield but connected to the water body, zooming in on particular locations. We will look at changes, threats, pollutants, depth, opportunities, fun and enjoyment. Timelines will serve as prognostic tools. Data, stories, facts and on-site observations – where possible - will provide multi-faceted insights. We will gather stories of those nestling on the edges of the water body or those who can no longer be there. We will include unheard voices or 'voices in decline' as well as voices in power, human or other. We will examine ownership and use patterns, lines of responsibilities, as well as shifts and transformations. Who makes decisions? Who and what is on the receiving end of these decisions? Who or what loses out? Which are the interdependencies between land and water? What are the pressures and opportunities?

We will spend considerable time creating oversized maps in starkly contrasting scales from macro to micro, charting our water bodies and their adjacent spaces in diverse ways, exhausting many lines of enquiry. We will compare and reflect on differences and similarities between the water bodies we examine within the studio. On the basis of these insights, each group will then speculate on how to edit, adjust or nudge, formulating strategic adjustments in diverse scales (from Micro to macro). The precise scales each group will be using to investigate and articulate their projects will depend on the work and context of each group.

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## Phasing

*Phase 1. Week 1 – 6 Water Bodies. Explorations.*

Output: An Atlas in extreme Scales. / A field of Explorations to tell the Story. Our focus will lie on uncovering relationships. This will in turn formulate the groups approach. Critical Cartography, Super-size drawings, scales between 1:100,000 to 0:10 / Field of Maps, Films, Models, Photographs, Probes, Probes, Charts, ...

*Phase 2. Week 6 – 8 Water Bodies. Reflections. Similarities and Differences.*

Output: A comparative chart /story.

*Phase 3. Week 8 – 14 Water Bodies. A Speculative Adjustment.*

Output: Productions of active spatial drawings / models in 3 selected scales. Focus scales will be nominated by each group from scales between 1:100,000 to 0:10. Projects will emerge from the construction of knowledge made in phase 1 and 2. Each group's work will hook into particular relationships to which concrete spaces are attached. The articulation of your proposals

The remainder of the time is to consolidate the project ready for the Final Presentation and Submission.

Week 7: Master Studio Project Week. In this week you can undertake applied field work and site visits in your groups. There will also be a critical mapping input / workshop together with the Master Thesis Students of the studio *Fragilities*.

*Detailed timing, including dates for reviews and peer reviews, will be communicated in the course of the semester.*

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## Deliverables

The deliverables will be further refined as the studio proceeds, responding to the project stance and selected context of each individual group. You will need to work beyond 'final outputs', committing to in-depth, rigorous and critical, ongoing research-driven work throughout. Stradling into other disciplines is actively encouraged.

As a minimum *each group* should deliver the following outputs:

- One short video (1-2 min)
- One project booklet
- Minimum of 3 large-scale critical maps in very contrasting scales, size 118 x 118 cm
- Physical probes / artefacts
- Field of findings presented in a format of your choice.
- At least 3 large-scale drawings / models outlining your strategies, points of actions, proposals, size 118 x 118 cm (for drawings). Each piece of work addresses a contrasting scale. Scales to address: a) global / trans-national / trans-regional, b) located, c) close-up or magnified (exact scales to be defined according to each group's project)
- Models and other media of your choice
- Digital Presentation

Together, all studio members

- Cross-group compilation and comparison of water bodies
- Collate group booklets into an all-studio booklet

All outputs to be delivered / presented in both digital as well as physical format.

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### Mode

The studio will work in a *hybrid mode*. We will work remotely as well as on site at the Brussels campus, meeting on campus roughly every fortnight and working remotely the remaining time. You will have a space on campus every week. This dual mode will permit us to integrate diverse online tools, such as Miro which we will use to generate an on-going digital archive of your developing work and it will facilitate field work for each group as and when needed and wanted. We will use on-site sessions to engage in person and to produce hands-on work in situ. The studio language is English. You will need to undertake your own independent travels to locations.

### Links

The studio is situated in the Engagement Urban Cultures. The studio *Water Bodies* will have overlaps with the Master Thesis Studio *Fragilities*. There will be moments between both studios to provide opportunities for exchange and discussion beyond your studio.

### Studio Culture

The studio will unfold in interaction with your projects. The studio will act as a supportive debate platform and workshop. Collective activities and peer debates will be as important as more tailored project discussions with your studio tutor. You will, of course, be supported, but you should also work on your project in a self-directed manner, supported by studio discussions.

### Ethos

Studio Urban Field Lab deals with real-world societal, political, economic and cultural transformations for which alternative spatial responses are sought. The studio sees itself as an advocate of our obligations towards the environment, the lifeworld, humanity and society. We need to step up to developing creative ways beyond technical solutions, to redistribute, to harness dormant opportunities, to edit, alter and shift, without conceding quality. We need to widen our role and practice field as architects, engaging in interdisciplinary work modes to tackle isolationist disciplinary responses, whilst at the same time using our inert expertise. Your projects will need to integrate a clear stance and commitment towards these issues by acting with conscience and care. We investigate and develop through *critical practice*.

### Methodology

We will work in an investigative and multi-scaler manner, relating diverse scales from global, national, regional, localized, to close-up and at times magnified scales, interrogating interdependencies and linkages. You will need to challenge known ways of working and embrace diverse and unfamiliar methodologies and knowledge fields across disciplines, such as, politics, conflict studies, ethnography, economy, urban geography, circularity, health, environmental studies, sociology and art. The studio is research driven *throughout*, including the design process



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## Learning Results

Used for the evaluation of the design studio

### LR1

The student has insight into different aspects of the architectural process such as context analysis, conceptualization, problem awareness and engagement, ethics and personal imagination.

### LR2

The student is able to develop a relevant design project out of various spatial scale levels and the dimension of time. The student is able to act methodologically throughout the designing process in a creative manner.

### LR3

The student is able to communicate his/her research from an artistic-architectural perspective in a visual and verbal way. The student is able to communicate his/her research to a wide range of stakeholders (international, cross-disciplinary, ...).

### LR4

The student is able to develop a relevant design project out of a conceptual-programmatic logic.

### LR5

The student is able to develop a relevant design, based on a complex cultural / societal context analysis.

### LR6

The student is able to integrate visual and graphical competencies in the research process.

### LR7

The student is able to gather and compare cultural-theoretical information from a wide range of international sources, focusing on their practical application. The student is able to develop alternatives from an (out of) multidisciplinary and intercultural perspective.

### LR8

The student is able to expand his/her knowledge continuously and creatively.  
Please email me should you have further questions, at: [anuschka.kutz@kuleuven.be](mailto:anuschka.kutz@kuleuven.be)

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### Initial suggested Reading

*Please Note:*

*Each group will need to create their own reading list / data and knowledge field according to selected body of water.*

Campling, Liam and Aljandro Colas, 2021. *Capitalism and the Sea*. London / New York: Verso.

Cosgrove, David, 2006. Cart-city. In: J. Abrams & P. Hall, eds. *The History of Cartography, Volume 1*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, pp. 371–465.

Corner, James, 199. The agency of mapping: Speculation, critique, and invention. In: D. Cosgrove, ed. *Mappings*. London: Reaktion, pp. 213-52.

Deloughrey, Elizabeth, 2010. 'Heavy Waters: Waste and Atlantic Modernity'. *PLMA*, Vol. 251, no. 3.

Elden, Stuart, 2010. Land, terrain, territory. *Progress in Human Geography*, 6(34), pp. 799-817.

Gillis, John R., 2012. *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Glissant, Édouard, 1997. *Poetics and Relations*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, chapters: The Open Boat, The Black Beach, The Burning Beach.

Paine, Lincoln, 2014. *Sea and Civilization: A Maritime History of the World*. London: Atlantic Books.

Sanjuan, Clara Oloriz, ed., 2019. *Landscape as Territory*. New York / Barcelona: Actar.

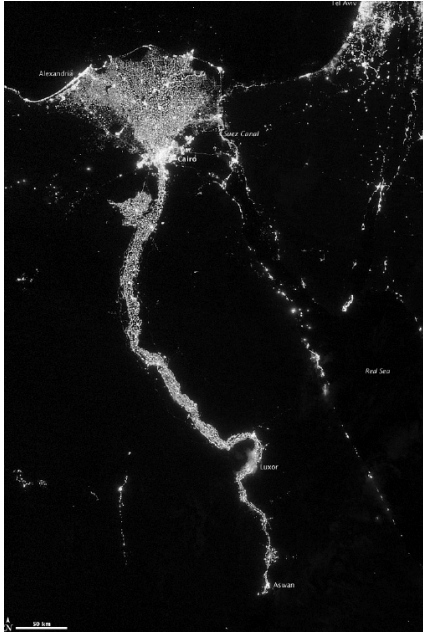
Steinberg, P. E., 1999. Navigating to multiple horizons: Toward a geography of ocean-space. *The Professional Geographer*, 51(3), pp. 366–75.

Swyngedouw E., 2004. *Social Power and the Urbanization of Water*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

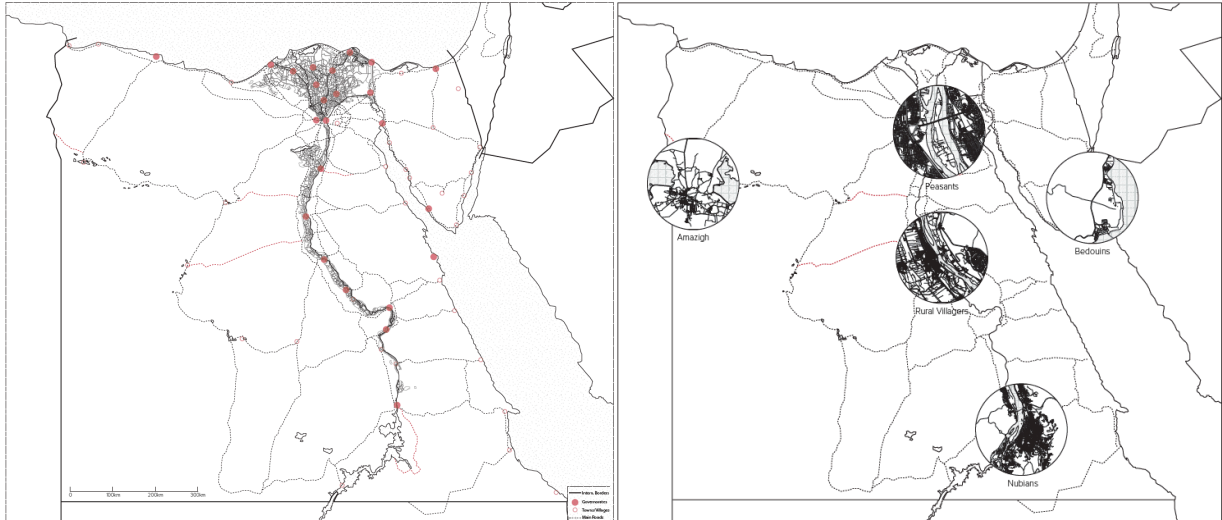
\_\_\_\_\_. Wet Matter. 2015. *Harvard Design Magazine*, Vol 39.

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Please see Blog for slides of the studio presentation.  
Any questions, please email me: [anuschka.kutz@kuleuven.be](mailto:anuschka.kutz@kuleuven.be)  
Thank you.



City Lights Illuminate the Nile, NASA Earth Observatory.  
 © Image by Jesse Allen and Robert Simmon, 2012.



Left: Map of Egypt with governorates. Right: Locating forgotten communities. From Master Thesis Ingy Saad. Studio Urban Field Lab, KU Leuven, 2020.



An Egyptian farmer squats down on cracked soil to show the dryness of the land due to drought in a farm formerly irrigated by the river Nile, in Al-Dakahlyya.

Photograph: Mohamed Abd el Ghany/Mohamed Abd el Ghany/ Reuters/Corbis