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Circular Water Stories #2

Inge Bobbink [1], **Fransje Hooimeijer** [1], **Suzanne Loen** [2]

[1] *Delft University of Technology*
Delft, the Netherlands

[2] *Lila Living Landscapes*
Schiedam, the Netherlands

Circular Water Stories focusses on the changing circumstances of the water system and water chain, and the consequential spatial transformation. The approach highlights the vulnerable interdependency between traditional, marginalized water communities and their environments. The papers of this second Spool issue on Circular Water Stories in the Landscape Metropolis #8 investigate traditional water systems as a source of inspiration for today's water, characterised by the concepts of too much, too little, and too dirty from two main perspectives: the people-orientated cultural perspective and the systemic spatial perspective.

Historically, the presence and accessibility of water was the most critical spatial condition required by humans to settle. However, during time the central water management position in settlements and communities got lost, spatially and in its cultural importance. The livelihoods and identity of traditional water communities have been under increasing pressure since the Industrial Revolution, marking the ultimate shift to a world that can be engineered. Specialised water managers have taken over the authority of the living water systems (circular water systems). Today, water systems are separated into categories of drinking water, drainage, irrigation, sewage systems, and water safety systems, no longer managed as one system. Thus, the self-evident exchange between the natural system and the (human) water chain is not approached as such. Authorities manage the water, guided by waterworks which are controlled automatically from a distance. Water flows are no longer visible, but run invisibly through pipes. This industrialisation has caused a change from communities of water workers - aware and knowledgeable about the importance of water as the source of life and their cultivated landscape - to passive users.

Timmer & Rosbergen and Patchineelam focus on the transformation and displacement of the riverine communities and river-related spatial and cultural identities. Patchineelam's paper centres on women of marginalised traditional communities, a group often overlooked by planners and historians. The paper investigates the changed relationships between riverine women and their living spaces, both environmental and social, after forced resettlement in the wake of the Belo Monte Hydropower Dam in Brazil. This relocation disconnected the women physically from the river and totally changed their way of living. Timmer and Rosbergen investigate the potential of a participatory planning method for revitalising riverine culture and settlements in the city of Banjarmasin in Borneo, Indonesia. Known as the 'city of a thousand rivers,' modern road-oriented urbanisation, overpopulation, and illegal building activities have had a devastating impact on the once impressive river-related identity of the city.

The article by Watson, Abukhodair, Ali, and Robertson is like many in the first issue of CWS about understanding existing living water systems and learning from them. The plea for funding, rethinking, rebuilding, and scaling climate solutions supports the resilience of both communities and cities, while addressing the inequalities and distance from nature that our current systems and climate solutions support. In the article by Surajaras and Rey Hernandez, two existing water-based crops systems, the Xinghua Duotian in China and the Chinampas in Mexico, are compared, with a focus on their site-specificity and how this understanding has shaped the landscape and made circularity possible.

Considering the impact of the climate crisis and the increasing erratic patterns of drought, rain, and heat in the region of Aragón, it is quite a courageous attempt to revitalise an abandoned orchard in the eroded hills of the Barranco de Tremps, Spain. In the visual essay, Hillege, a landscape architect and photographer, documents the attempt to revive and enrich the landscape with a combination of contemporary and traditional (vernacular) irrigation techniques. This is done by experiencing the many forms in which water manifests itself through the seasons and uses such observations to further develop the project.

The contributions showcase the growing recognition among researchers and planning professionals of the knowledge, values, skills, and the ways of life of the few remaining communities of water workers. Finally, as is shown in the case of Hillege and her project in Barranco de Tremps, some people use this knowledge actively and start acting. We are hopeful that there is an increased interest in learning from the knowledge hidden in living water systems.

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