

The Watery Commoning Legal and Artistic Practices at the Limits of Representation

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Abstract This article traces Corpi Idrici, a transdisciplinary artistic research collective formed in Genoa in 2021, through situated practices around the city's hydrographic infrastructures. At the centre, the *Charter of the Rights of Hydro Bodies* is conceived as a performative, collective device continuously rewritten through use and situated activation. The Charter remains close to grammar of law while exposing how legal and artistic representation may stabilise, reduce, or betray relations they seek to support. 'Orthopedics of water' and lingua franca are 'fabulative' tools to question how hydro-social worlds are translated, governed, represented.

Keywords Charter of the Rights. Hydro bodies. Orthopedics of waters. Situated practice. Somatic listening. Place-based art research.

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To the cloudbursts that dwell within us. To those who
recede into the subterranean. To submerged waters
and ghostly infrastructures. To what hesitates before
taking the form of language. To all 'non-subjects' and
to the impossibility of capturing everything.

1 Introduction: Wet Practices Nearby Genoa's Hydro Bodies

If science fiction is the mythology of modern technology,
then its myth is tragic.
The 'hero' invents the weapon, the monster, the enemy;
the story ends in domination or extinction.
But there is another story to tell.
Not the story of the spear or the sword,
but of the container.
A story of gathering rather than killing,
of holding rather than conquering,
of carrying what is fragile, alive, unfinished.
(adapted from Ursula K. Le Guin,
"The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction")

This text aligns itself with that other story evoked by Le Guin: a story of gathering rather than conquering, of holding rather than mastering, and of carrying fragile, unfinished relations.

Before beginning to read, we ask you to listen, to immerse yourself into the murmurs, flows, frictions, and interruptions that compose the hydro-landscape of the city of Genoa.¹ These voices are more than documentation, illustration, or ancillary material. They constitute a method: a way of thinking with water and of writing from within a field of relations where human and more-than-human agencies continuously shape one another. Listening, here, precedes and unsettles language.

Between 2021 and 2025, Corpi Idrici developed a series of situated encounters with Genoa's hydrographic network: territorial traversals along accessible and obstructed waterways, listening exercises near

¹ Stretched between sea and mountains, Genoa has developed in length (with its approx. 35 km it is one of longest cities in Italy) and is crossed by over 70 streams, rivulets and brooks that for urban and industrial reasons have been 'tomed' since the Middle Ages. Recalling their names - at least the most 'important' ones - allows a reconnection with them, often activated only via toponymy or floods: Stura, Cerusa, Leira, Branega, San Pietro (o Foce), Varenna, Chiaravagna, Rexello, Marotto, Molinassi, Cantarena, Gandolfo, San Pietro, Polcevera, Verde, Burba, Trasta, Pianega o Fegino, Riccò, Secca, Goresina o Geminiano, Torbella, Maltempo, San Bartolomeo, San Lazzaro, San Teodoro, Lagaccio, Sant'Ugo, Carbonara, Sant'Anna, Torbido, Bisagno, Canate, Torbido, Geirato, Trensasco, Cicala, Veilino, Lentro, Fereggiano, Noce, Vernazza, Sturla, Priaruggia, Castagna, Bagnara, San Pietro, Nervi. Their voices blend with the sound of the sea in the soundtrack that accompanies the reading - Immerse - result of a possible alternative mapping of the territory made by Corpi Idrici and Zones Portuaires collective. The sound piece is accessible at: <https://medliq.art/immerse/>.

buried streams, public assemblies, experimental workshops, archival inquiries, and collaborative drafting sessions.²

This article emerges from that field.

Corpi Idrici (hydro bodies) is a collective of transdisciplinary research formed in Genoa in 2021 at the intersection of contemporary art, situated knowledge, and grassroots environmental struggles. We came together not as a pre-existing group with a defined programme, but thanks to the invitation by Forevergreen³ and as an ongoing process of investigation: through walking, listening, mapping, recording, and drafting alongside waterways, infrastructures, meetings with activists, residents, technicians, and ecologies that inhabit the urban watershed. Our collective identity is therefore less a stable structure than a porous assemblage – one that takes form through encounters and shared practices.⁴

The whole project began with a simple but urgent question: how might we think about water not only as a resource, landscape, or environmental issue, but as a political and relational subject capable of generating forms of collective imagination and action? In Genoa – a port city shaped by floods, industrial transformations, privatisations, and persistent conflicts over access, safety, and ecological justice – water is neither abstract nor metaphorical. It is material, infrastructural, and contested. Streams have been buried, diverted, or channelled underground; rivers have overflowed with devastating consequences; coastal areas have been reshaped by logistics and extraction. At the same time, numerous local associations and informal groups have long worked ‘from below’ to defend commons, resist speculative development, and reclaim waterways as shared spaces of care and knowledge.

Corpi Idrici developed in dialogue with these struggles, through fieldwork embedded in local networks of activism and everyday knowledge.

2 Authors are part of the Corpi Idrici: Anna Daneri, Nuvola Ravera, Lucia Bergamaschi, opting for a collective writing, modulating different voices following shared perspectives. The article is accompanied by a visual contribution by Nuvola Ravera, consisting of a drawing made with closed eyes and a graphic manipulation of the *Charter of the Rights of Water Bodies*, conceived not as illustrations but as another mode of inquiry. Through lines, densities, and interruptions, the drawings attempt to trace relations – between water and human bodies, infrastructures, flows, and struggles – that exceed linear narration or analytical description.

3 For more information, see the webpage at: <https://www.forevergreen.fm/>.

4 The composition of Corpi Idrici has been fluid since its foundation, due to the invitation by curator Anna Daneri and Alessandro Mazzone to a core group of artists researchers: Gaia Cambiaggi, Matteo Manzitti, Anna Positano, Nuvola Ravera and Nicolò Servi, extended to actual member Lucia Bergamaschi. Over the years, other members have joined the collective: Matteo Casari, Elisa Giuliano, Juan López Cano and Annalisa Gatto. See the Corpi Idrici webpage at: <https://corpiidrici.it/>.

The explorations allowed Corpi Idricito experience diverse forms of relation with Genoa's waters. One was subtractive: walking inside the Ferreggiano spillway as the first artistic research group temporarily inhabiting this hydraulic infrastructure. Another was embodied: witnessing the specific ecosystem created by the Molinassi stream, the last waterway that once flowed relatively freely into the harbour before being tombed by shipbuilder Fincantieri.

We called these 'wet practices': modes of research shaped by water's ways of leaking, staining, sheltering, remembering, and obstructing. In Genoa, *wet* meant also sweaty walks along buried rivers; small lakes inhabited by the Ecuadorian community as Summer bathing places and open-air gardens, where the group relearned a proximity to freshwater often eclipsed by the city's tourist and maritime imaginary; childhood memories of playing in water; and water perspiring through the walls of ground-floor *bassi*. Through these encounters, wet practices followed affective traces, entangling infrastructures, bodies, memories, sounds, legal categories, and conflicts.

Through this slow, situated process, we began to understand the complex hydro bodies system in Genoa as a living archive – one that holds sedimented personal memories, histories of labour, migration, extraction, floodings and resistance.⁵

It is within this context that the *Charter of Rights for Hydro Bodies* emerged.⁶ The Charter did not begin as a fixed document to be drafted and signed. It started as a series of conversations around the possibility of granting legal, political, and symbolic recognition to waterways as subjects rather than objects of governance. In dialogue with debates on the rights of nature, commons-based movements, and feminist and decolonial methodologies of situated knowledge, we approached the Charter as an open framework – a tool for collective thinking rather than a normative declaration. Writing the Charter meant drafting with water: allowing the text to be shaped by encounters in the field, by testimonies, by conflicting positions, and by the unpredictable rhythms of environmental processes themselves. Each article emerged from specific situations – flood memories, maintenance disputes, struggles for public access, negotiations with municipal infrastructures. In this sense, the Charter functions as a living score: a provisional composition that records relationships and renders them actionable.

Importantly, the Charter has never remained only on the page. As the collective process expanded, it progressively shifted from a written declaration into a performative and situated practice

⁵ For a more detailed recollection of this process see Daneri, Ravera 2021.

⁶ Corpi Idrici (2021). *Charter of Rights*. <https://corpiidrici.it/charter-of-rights>.

of commoning. Performance here is understood not primarily as theatrical presentation, but as a mode of doing: a way of activating rights through collective gestures, workshops, assemblies, walks, and shared rituals. This occurred, for instance, at Fondazione Feltrinelli in Milan, where the Charter was collectively read through a symphonic activation with embodied references to Lygia Pape's *Divisor* (1968) and material traces from explored waterways. Other contexts, such as Spazio Hydro/Fondazione Pistoletto in Biella, extended this activation through listening, drawing, photography, and situated embodied practices.

Each time the Charter is shared, collectively read, translated, debated, or adapted to new contexts, it generates new situated forms of engagement. This approach has recently taken shape through *Transgeographical Hydro Bodies*, a transnational artistic and research initiative connecting different European watersheds through situated practices and public formats, including broadcasts *Hydro Bodies Assembly Podcast*,⁷ performances, and collective assemblies developed with local communities across Europe.

One outcome of this process is the *Transgeographical Hydro Bodies/Hydro Bodies Assembly*, operating as an aural assembly space where the different presences gathered through the process can resonate, interfere, and become mutually audible. Sound became a relational and political medium: as a non-visual form of representation, it rendered perceptible inaccessible streams, buried flows, drainage rhythms, and forms of attention usually excluded from legal and activist language.⁸

Earlier phases of Corpi Idrici were intertwined with local grassroots movements such as Gli Amici del Ponte Carrega⁹ and Con i piedi per terra,¹⁰ whose struggles around environmental justice and public infrastructures shaped the Charter as an open and revisable tool.

Our roles within Corpi Idrici as curators, artists, scholars, researchers, activists have similarly shifted through this process. During the collective process curation became a form of maintenance: holding space for relationships to unfold, mediating between heterogeneous temporalities, and supporting with alternating results the not always easy path of a shared authorship. The boundaries between curating, researching, organising, and writing blur.

7 For more information, see the webpage at: <https://cashmereradio.com/episode/cashmere-specials-hydro-bodies-assembly-podcast/>.

8 Corpi Idrici (2025). *Transgeographical Hydro Bodies*. <https://performeurope.eu/project/transgeographical-hydro-bodies/>.

9 See the webpage at: <https://www.amicidipontecarrega.it/>.

10 See the webpage at: <https://www.facebook.com/Conipiediperterra.Genova/>.

From the outset, representation posed a problem, together with the possibility that every attempt to speak for hydro bodies might also entail a form of betrayal: a reduction, displacement, or stabilisation of relations that remain processual, contested, and partially inaccessible. How could we avoid speaking for others while still creating shared platforms of articulation? How could artistic and curatorial work contribute to collective processes without appropriating them? These questions prompted a shift from representation as depiction toward representation as practice: something enacted, negotiated, and continuously revised through participation.

This text is written from within that circulation. Authorship remains shared and layered, shaped by distinct voices, encounters, and shifting responsibilities. The ‘we’ that speaks here is multiple, situated and not unified.

By foregrounding fieldwork and charter-writing as intertwined practices, this article reflects on the politics of representation in socially engaged art and research: how knowledge is produced with a territory, how writing becomes collective negotiation, and how legal or quasi-legal forms can be reappropriated as artistic and political tools.

Following the lesson of Algerian feminist writer and filmmaker Assia Djébar and her *Femmes d’Alger dans leur Appartement* (1980), we are “not claiming to ‘speak on behalf of’ or worse, ‘speak about’, but committing to ‘speak nearby’”.¹¹

We invite the reader to approach this text as one might approach a river: entering at different points, following currents, allowing for detours and confluences. Because water bodies do not simply flow through/under the city. They draft it. And, in drafting with it, we attempt to trace other possible forms of living, organising, and representing together.

2 Guardians, Ventriloquists, and Other Interfaces

This commitment to ‘speaking nearby’ gradually revealed that issues of perception and participation were inseparable from broader social and political questions concerning access, responsibility, and collective forms of relation. These questions, in turn, became articulated through juridical categories of representation, property, and protection. Can rivers have a private interest in owning themselves? Who is entitled to mediate these legal interests, and what kinds of interests can water bodies be said to have? Who or what remains outside the act of protection? Should legal frameworks

¹¹ Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the Authors.

instead recognise their agency – capacity to act – and see them as (legal) persons?

Within this process, the Corpi Idrici can also be understood as an exercise of speculative jurisprudence: a form of legal imagination that does not seek immediate inscription within positive law, but rather interrogates the techniques, fictions, and dispositifs through which law produces, recognises, or excludes subjects. Here, speculation – understood as the possibility of imagining future scenarios – did not emerge from an abstract theoretical position, but as a situated and an artistic research practice developed – as said – along the hydrographic infrastructures of Genoa: rivers, buried streams, canals, flood-control systems, pipelines, and water management architectures that structure the city while remaining largely invisible or taken for granted.

As mobilized here, speculative jurisprudence does not aim to replace existing legal frameworks nor to propose a ready-made alternative legal order. Instead, it functions as a critical and exploratory space in which law is understood as a performative technique: a set of operations that qualify natural processes as social facts and, in doing so, reproduce – *prima facie* – the separation between subject and object, person and thing, nature and culture. This understanding resonates with scholarship that reads law not primarily as a normative system, but as a technology of qualification, capable of transforming phenomena into juridically intelligible entities and sites of imputation (Spanò 2020).

2.1 Charter of the Rights of Hydro Bodies

The *Charter of the Rights of Hydro Bodies* originated in 2021 from an invitation by artist Nuvola Ravera to draft a legal document that could accompany and sustain the practice of the newly formed Corpi Idrici. A smaller working group – composed by Nuvola Ravera, explorer Nicolò Servi, and Lucia Bergamaschi – engaged in a year-long process of research, field exploration, and continuous rewriting.

One of the first questions concerned juridical form itself: what kind of legal document could register the intentions of a collective working in relation with hydro bodies, while remaining open to speculation, artistic and situated practices? Early references included *La Nazione delle Piante* by Stefano Mancuso, which opens with a constitutional charter grounded in the sovereignty of all living beings. While this text offered an important point of departure, it also revealed certain limitations. Centering protection exclusively on ‘living beings’ risked reproducing new exclusions: what juridical space remains for rivers, stones, sediments, minerals, or atmospheric formations whose existence exceeds the category of life while still participating in it?

Rather than conceiving the Charter as a constitutional instrument, or a proposal aimed at institutional recognition, it was approached as a declarative form: a declaration of intent, a legal-poetic manifesto attentive to juridical language and structure while remaining open to revision, collective use, and interpretations [fig. 1].



Figure 1 Corpi Idrici, *Bodies of Water. Charter of Rights / Carta dei Diritti dei Corpi Idrici*. 2021-ongoing. Digital print with superimposed digital drawing intervention, variable dimensions. Graphic version intentionally rendered partially illegible through a digital drawing intervention, foregrounding opacity and resisting full juridical readability. Image courtesy of the artists

The declarative form allowed us to remain within the grammar of law without assuming its authority or finality, and at the same time to work *within* the declaration itself – returning to it, rewalking it, redoing it, recoding it, and transgressing it.

This decision emerged from a concrete confrontation with existing legal frameworks governing landscape protection, biodiversity, public infrastructure, and water management, alongside the failure to recognize water as a commons within Italian legislative discourse. Because legal language continues to shape use, ownership and protection, remaining within juridical forms also meant opening a space in which residents, activists, artists, and researchers could engage with the performativity of legal institutions, renegotiate their shared meanings and explore law as a set of techniques that produce concrete effects while expanding the horizons of legal imagination. In this sense, juridical concepts functioned as legal figurations: provisional forms that make relations visible and thinkable without necessarily coinciding with normative solutions.

As with the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the *Charter of Hydro Bodies* functioned as a way to affirm, in legal form, an urgency in a precise historical moment and to follow its developments over time. Rights that today appear self-evident – such as the child's right to education – were not obvious a century ago, and their legal recognition has not eliminated violence or asymmetries of power. Similarly, the Charter does not resolve extractive relations to ecosystems, nor the power dynamics and inequalities through which they are reproduced; rather, it renders these relations legible and contestable. Its symbolic status, far from being a weakness, became a methodological stance: focusing on processuality rather than enforcement; testing the limits of legal representation; and working within a familiar and widely shared form – the 'charter of rights' – in order to draw listeners closer and make urgency appear. The work unfolded at the intersection of empirical research and juridical imagination. Every member of the collective engaged in field research along Genoa's rivers and waterways, collecting observations, archival materials, and testimonies, while also studying juridical precedents and other techniques of legal documentation. These explorations revealed how access to water is materially constrained by urban infrastructure, private property, and safety regulations. Riverbanks are often inaccessible, concretized, or enclosed, making any form of relation – human or non-human – difficult or impossible. These encounters directly informed the drafting of specific articles of the Charter, such as Article 6: "Access and the Right to Relation". The article acknowledges that water bodies formally belong to the public domain while remaining materially subtracted from collective use and encounters. It therefore recognizes riverbanks, beds, and fluvial margins as spaces of passage and coexistence between species. As

stated in the Charter: “The possibility of having direct contact with them must be guaranteed for obvious reasons of environmental, cultural and social well-being”. The emphasis on social relation became particularly important during the drafting process, since protection often privileged historical values, landscape preservation, or biodiversity, while remaining largely silent on people’s (present) relationships to place (relegating collective, affective, and social dimensions to secondary or progressively enforceable forms of recognition).

Parallel to this situated research, the collective engaged with international and transnational cases in which nature or ecosystems have been recognized as legal persons or subjects of rights. These include the recognition of *Pachamama* in the Ecuadorian Constitution (2008), as well as the widely publicized case of the Whanganui River in Aotearoa New Zealand. Long considered a living entity by Māori communities, in 2017 the river was granted legal personhood, with two guardians – one appointed by the Crown and one by the Iwi – acting as its legal representatives. More recent developments in Europe, such as the recognition of the Mar Menor lagoon in Spain (2023), further attest to the diffusion of rights of nature frameworks in response to environmental degradation.¹²

These cases provided juridical and imaginative references, while simultaneously raising unresolved questions about how water bodies could be represented and governed through juridical forms, and whether protection can be articulated beyond legal subjectivity alone. One concerns the translation of Indigenous cosmologies and legalities into state law. This process risks re-encoding relational and cosmological principles within a liberal, Western legal model – an operation that is always partial and potentially extractive. A second, more strictly juridical question concerns legal subjectivity itself. Although often presented as a pragmatic solution, legal personhood remains closely tied to individuality, representation, and patrimonial logic.

For this reason, Michele Spanò has proposed alternatives that displace the subject-centred paradigm – for instance *trans-subjective rights*, or legal operations that invert the hierarchy between rights and interests: shifting protection from individual entitlement to collective concern. The legal subject, however, is an entirely different technique: a centre of attribution designed to allocate positions, debts, and patrimonies – rather than a device capable, on its own, of producing a shared and stable form of ecological repair (Chiaramonte, forthcoming).

12 For more cases see: GARN Academic Hub (2023). *Eco-jurisprudence Monitor*. <https://ecojurisprudence.org/?map-style=political>.

Within the *Charter of the Rights of Hydro Bodies*, these tensions are addressed not by rejecting legal personhood, but by questioning its adequacy. As stated by Maria Rosaria Marella, Professor of Law at Roma Tre University, during the event *Fluviale. River as a Common* (2022), personhood is situated within the broader, longstanding dilemma between protections oriented toward “things” and those oriented toward “subjects”. Modern law – largely anthropocentric – protects through the subject-and-rights couplet, and this mediation immediately raises the classic problem of representation. When the right-holder cannot act, someone must act on its behalf, and that representative may not coincide with the collective interests that gather around a resource. The Whanganui case is an example of legal personhood used to counter dispossession and translate Māori relationality into a form the state could recognize, yet it also relied on guardians and procedures of voice. Marella thus asks under what juridical forms a river can be protected as a commons – in ways that articulate and sustain the stratified collective interests that depend on it.

For this reason, the *Charter of the Rights of Hydro Bodies* deliberately refrains from identifying a single river or hydro body as its subject. Instead, it addresses the entire complex of surface and subterranean hydro bodies, composed of rivers, streams, underground water bodies, and their surrounding habitats, as well as the infrastructural systems – pipes, channels, networks – that co-exist with and inhabit Genoa’s urban space. This can be read as a form of reappropriation of space, countering the fragmentation inherent in legal recognition, where protection is often granted to isolated entities or ‘untouched’ reserves while excluding the broader ecological networks that, in Genoa’s case, include the city itself as a living assemblage. By foregrounding relations rather than entities, the Charter seeks to avoid reproducing the exclusivity often embedded in rights-based frameworks.

The drafting process itself became a form of inquiry. Starting from existing legal texts – such as the Italian Constitution – we selectively extracted articles related to environment, landscape, water, and natural resources in order to identify absences and blind spots. This work made visible a recurring pattern: ‘nature’ tends to appear as landscape, environment, biodiversity, or ecosystems – an object to be protected as if it were separate – while the social dimension is either absent or indirectly framed through public health and psycho-physical wellbeing.

This instrumental logic echoes what Emily Jones identifies as a structural limitation of rights regimes and their enforcement. In “Can the Rights of Nature Transform the Way Rights Are Conceptualized in International Law?” (2024), Jones argues that environmental law – much like international law more broadly – remains profoundly

anthropocentric: it tends to frame protection as humans' right to a healthy environment, rather than protecting nonhuman beings' conditions of life or the environment's own health. This limitation is reinforced by the historical architecture of International Human Rights Law (IHRL), where civil and political rights have often been treated as primary, while economic, social, and cultural rights have been relegated to progressive realization and weaker enforceability – a hierarchy Jones links to the Cold War context of treaty-making. As pointed, Rights of Nature can be read as a potential challenge of this model, shifting rights from an individualistic frame toward a collective and relational one (often articulated through community rights) and, in doing so, fostering IHRL to a wider range of relationships between human and nonhuman beings and their shared environments.

2.2 Registers Beyond Personhood

A central tension throughout the project concerns the problem of representation, emerging directly from the Charter's attempt to work within juridical language while simultaneously questioning its adequacy. The issue therefore shifts from juridical representation alone toward a broader epistemic problem: how relations become translated, mediated, and rendered intelligible through legal, artistic, and political forms. To speak for a river, an ecosystem, or even for the collective itself is to occupy a position that is always partial – and potentially violent. Even when motivated by care, representation risks reproducing the exclusions it seeks to remedy. Stone's proposal of guardianship offers a procedural response to this dilemma, yet it does not resolve the epistemic gap between representation and lived ecological processes (Stone 1972). The point becomes concrete in *Sierra Club v. Morton*, where standing depended on a human injury: even when "nature" is at stake, law still requires proxies (Stone 1972).¹³

This is where Astrida Neimanis' essay "No Representation without Colonisation? (Or, Nature Represents Itself)" (2015) becomes crucial. Neimanis argues that representation is never innocent: speaking for more-than-human worlds may enable political claims, yet it also risks colonising, extracting, and silencing whenever it detaches "representation" from the agencies and material processes it claims to speak for (Neimanis 2015). A posthuman politics of representation therefore shifts the question from who may speak for a river to how

¹³ For further discussion, see: <https://iseethics.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/stone-christopher-d-should-trees-have-standing.pdf>.

speaking-with can be practiced without reinstating mastery – through accountable mediation that acknowledges distributed agency and material co-implication, and remains answerable to place and to the harms that traverse it.

The collective's work remains deliberately situated within this unresolved tension. Rather than claiming to give voice to hydro bodies, the Charter foregrounds the problem of representation itself, acknowledging the risk of betrayal inherent in any act of advocacy. By betrayal we mean the small violence of mediation: the passage through which an unstable relation becomes a legal article, an image, a recording, a sentence. The term marks the cuts that make relations shareable, and at the same time governable. At the same time the Charter serves as a familiar tool – as said – to politically engage people with the ontologies and epistemologies of Genoa waters and the law.

In this sense, the project also takes into account Michel Serres' idea of a *Natural Contract*: a reciprocal, symbiotic pact that treats the Earth as a partner in law, framing environmental relations through reciprocity and co-dependence rather than ownership and extraction (Serres 1995). A similar question emerged through references to activist practices centred on territorial occupation and commoning. The recurring refrain “we are nature defending itself”, circulating in some activist and artistic contexts – including gatherings of European river representatives at the Confluence of European Water Bodies – shifts the question from representation understood as spokespersonship toward situated forms of inhabitation and collective responsibility. representation understood as spokespersonship toward situated forms of inhabitation and collective responsibility. From this perspective, practices of territorial occupation and commoning – such as the *Zone à Défendre* (ZAD) (Fremaux 2021) mobilizations against large-scale infrastructural projects – matter not because activists position themselves as spokespersons for “nature”, but because they enact alternative ecologies grounded in commons rather than property. By embedding themselves in place – materially, legally, and politically – participants become part of the ecological assemblage they defend through presence, inhabitation, and territorial attachment.

Taken together, these examples bring the discussion back to the question that animates this article: whether environmental protection must pass through legal subjectivity and representation, or whether it can also be practised through interdependence, collective use, territorial bounding, and shared vulnerability.

Drawing on Spanò's work, the Charter resonates with approaches that shift attention from subjects to relations, from ownership to use, and from individual rights to shared responsibilities. Ecosystems can be understood as sites where relations converge without requiring

full juridical subjectivity, opening space for ‘trans-subjective’ forms of protection oriented toward collective interests rather than individual entitlements. In this sense, hydro bodies are approached not as autonomous entities seeking recognition, but as assemblages in which human and non-human actors, temporalities, and vulnerabilities intersect. A river divided into sections produces effects upstream and downstream; ecological damage cannot be confined to individual interests without obscuring its systemic nature. This relational understanding challenges legal compartmentalization and invites alternative modes of governance grounded in care, responsibility, and long-term coexistence.

By situating legal imagination within embodied practices, affective cartographies, and collective explorations, Corpi Idrici foregrounds a fundamental question: not only whether water bodies should become legal subjects, but how legal techniques might be reconfigured to respond to ecological entanglements without reproducing the exclusions they seek to overcome. The *Charter of the Rights of Hydro Bodies* thus remains intentionally open-ended, inhabiting the tension between law and care, representation and relation, protection and reduction – as a site of ongoing inquiry rather than resolution.

3 Epistemic Shift: From Commons to Commoning

Within Corpi Idrici’s artistic research with Genoa’s hydro bodies, the juridical tensions outlined in the previous section also become questions of perception, attention, and posture. Water enters the work through situated encounters shaped by urban infrastructures, prohibitions, distances, and uneven conditions of access. Representation therefore emerges as a practical condition of the research: a matter of *how* bodies, practices, and languages place themselves in relation to a material field that is processual, reactive, and resistant to full capture. Questions of definition, protection, and recognition remain present; the discussion follows the unstable conditions through which relations with water are made, interrupted, and renegotiated. The passage from water understood as a commons, an object to be preserved or safeguarded, towards processes of commoning foregrounds relations rather than entities, practices rather than properties, and conflict rather than harmony.

From this perspective, the question at stake is how relations with water are practically enacted and thus what water became, how it is defined, recognised, and finally protected and what is interrupted and denied within this framework.

Commons cannot be reduced to ideals of reciprocity or shared ownership. They are not natural states, nor expressions of an original or unified community. Commons are historical, situated, and

contested processes, shaped through concrete struggles, exclusions, negotiations, and material constraints. They emerge and persist only insofar as they are actively practiced, defended, and reworked in relation to broader regimes of governance, economy, and law.

Seen in this light, legal and artistic representation operate as forms of governance. They are not neutral tools that merely reflect or translate existing relations, but active interventions that participate in shaping how commons are produced, stabilised, or neutralised. To represent water legally or artistically is already to prioritise certain uses, voices, temporalities, and scales over others; to render some forms of relation legible while obscuring or marginalising others.

Naming water as a commons can make a relation legible, and sometimes politically usable; it can also smooth over the conflicts, exclusions, and forms of maintenance through which that relation is kept open. Following curator Massimiliano Mollona, commoning comes into view through uneven practices of use, access, refusal, care, and negotiation (Mollona 2021). Friction belongs to its texture. Struggles over access, governance, value, and material support continually shape whether commoning endures, is constrained, or is absorbed elsewhere. Without these frictions, water-as-commons risks becoming a moral vocabulary, detached from the conditions that make it possible.

In this sense, this work aligns with critical approaches to the commons that foreground use, relation, and situated conflict over ownership or abstraction. In *Art/Commons: Anthropology beyond Capitalism* (2021), Mollona does not treat commons as ethical ideals or harmonious forms of shared belonging, but as historically embedded processes traversed by labour, extraction, and governance. His analysis situates commoning within a broader field of political ecology and infrastructural struggle, where material flows – such as water, electricity, housing, and urban space – become sites of enclosure, privatisation, and control.

Mollona traces how commons are continuously produced and eroded through flows of matter, movement, and animacy. These flows are never neutral: they are channelled, interrupted, and re-coded by institutions, markets, and cultural dispositifs. Commons thus function as what Mollona describes as “enclosures that remain open”: formations sustained through use, struggle, and care, yet permanently exposed to capture, institutionalisation, and re-valorisation.

This framework has concrete implications for artistic research operating within situated and infrastructural fields. When commoning is rendered visible, narratable, or fundable, it can be converted into symbolic value, alienated labour, or urban rent – particularly within cultural economies that reward legibility and circulation. Read through Mollona, representation acts on the very conditions under which commoning persists, stabilises, or is neutralised. With water,

this discussion becomes especially acute: enclosure and governance operate through the direction, interruption, and valorisation of material flows, making movement itself a site of capture.

4 **Situated Practices Before Representation**

The passage from commons to commoning returned representation to a more fragile terrain: the perceptual conditions through which relations with water become perceptible before they enter legal language or artistic form. In Corpi Idrici's research, questions of damage, access, and care first appeared through the body's orientation in space. They emerged in front of blocked paths, in the presence of sounds coming from behind walls, and in the repeated difficulty of reaching waters that were formally public yet materially withdrawn. Legal and artistic forms entered a field already organised by perception, where water could appear sometimes as risk, sometimes as companion, and often as infrastructural absence that still demanded attention.

Seen from this position, representation becomes part of the conditions through which commoning is sustained, interrupted, or redirected. It shapes what can be carried forward into evidentiary, legal, visual, sonic, or performative form. This complicates both juridical and place-based artistic practices, shifting attention toward the ways perception itself prepares what later becomes representable.

The juridical risk identified in the discussion also operates at an epistemic level, where relational and cosmological principles are recoded within liberal legal frameworks. Before water is named in law, it has already been sensed, missed, feared, approached, or kept at a distance. What can be recognised as a relation to water is therefore shaped prior to juridical recognition. David Abram's vision offers a phenomenological frame for this methodological posture. In *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996), perception is understood as a participatory relation between bodies and environments. His reflections on *animacy* also help describe a field of responsiveness without attributing intention or voice to water. For Corpi Idrici, this became relevant in practices where listening, walking, drawing, and carrying water reorganised attention before interpretation.

4.1 Sensing, Handling, Withholding

Slow collective walks – often reduced to an almost impractical pace – were used to recalibrate attention toward interruptions and thresholds in the urban waterscape. In some activities, participants walked with eyes closed while carrying a vessel filled with water, relying on others for orientation and care.

Listening practices in wooded areas above buried waterways further developed this approach.¹⁴ Participants attended to muffled sound, resonance, and small atmospheric shifts, often with eyes closed. In some sessions, this auditory field was extended through the playback of soundscapes and recorded fragments from the collective's hydro bodies archive. Drawing with closed eyes while listening to these sonic traces became a way of registering movement and interruption before visual form. The drawings register sensorial residues of an encounter: marks produced by the body while following sound, rhythm, and discontinuity [fig. 2].

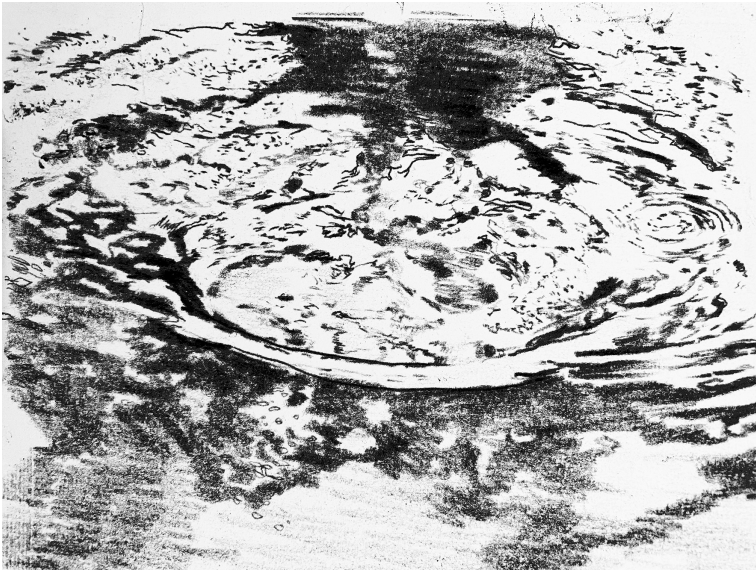


Figure 2 Nuvola Ravera, *Blind Automatic Drawing While Listening to Watercourses*. 2021.
Carbon paper on found paper, A4 (21 × 29.7 cm). Genoa, Italy.
Image courtesy of the artist.

14 In the sense of Pauline Oliveros' deep listening as an expanded practice of attention and Brandon LaBelle's sonic agency as a situated relational force (Oliveros 2005; LaBelle 2018).

During several sessions, participants worked with clay while discussing inaccessible or buried waterways in Genoa. The clay offered a tactile situation rather than an image of the river: distance, damage, and possible care could be handled through pressure, support, compression, or hesitation. Some attendees touched the clay cautiously; others tried to hold, seal, represent, straighten, or repair it. The material registered these differences before they could be fully named. Care appeared with its double edge: attention and intervention, support and correction, repair and containment.¹⁵

Across these perceptual and material experiments, questions of translation and betrayal took on a performative force. The practices attempted to carry these conceptual problems beyond the need for advance resolution, allowing them to be recited, embodied, displaced, or held in suspension. This methodological use of hesitation resonates with Abram's insistence that participatory perception entails responsibility: an attentiveness to how perception, action, and language shape relations.

"Staying with waters" involved cultivating different forms of perception open to response without forcing articulation: a mode of being-with in which humans participate in the sensing field of the world, rather than observing it from outside.

For Corpi Idrici, this had practical consequences. Engaging water required more than conceptual clarity; it demanded a re-situation of language within perceptual experience, while remaining attentive to the risk of projection or myth.

This epistemic shift was also informed by processual and materialist perspectives that challenge mechanistic visions of nature. Matter entered the research as an active condition of encounter: vibrations travelling through concrete, electrical interference, sediment, and acoustic distortion shaped how bodies moved, listened, recorded, and hesitated. These were material responses, not symbolic effects. They selected what could be perceived, amplified, or lost. This resonates with Karen Barad's account of matter as active in the production of intelligibility and with Stacy Alaimo's notion of trans-corporeality, where material processes traverse bodies and environments, unsettling clear divisions between subject and world (Barad 2007; Alaimo 2010).

So, representation emerged as a necessary yet unstable operation. Legal, artistic, and documentary forms make hydro-social relations communicable by interrupting ongoing processes and giving them a legible shape. A recording, a drawing, a legal clause, or a score

15 On care as a situated and ambivalent practice, see Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care* (2017). In this article, this ambivalence also anticipates the later discussion of 'orthopedics of water', where care and correction become difficult to separate.

assignment carries something forward while filtering, framing, and redirecting the relation it claims to transmit. This is where the notion of betrayal gains force. In this article, betrayal names the transformation produced whenever relation becomes shareable: the passage through which a situated encounter enters circulation, becomes perceptible, and becomes exposed to interpretation, stabilisation, and capture.

The displacement of representation into bodies appears clearly in activist and artistic contexts where ecosystems are embodied under slogans such as “we are nature defending itself”. In such cases, representation moves through presence, cohabitation, exposure, and collective responsibility. This displacement opens possibilities and ambiguities at once. Commons-based ecologies, grounded in use, co-presence, and conflict rather than property, offer one horizon for thinking about this displacement without resolving it. They foreground responsibility as a practice rather than a claim.

This matters for the problem of betrayal as it unfolds in Corpi Idrici. If perception is already mediated, if matter is processual and reactive, and if language works through abstraction, then better intentions or more inclusive vocabularies only relocate the problem. To speak about water, for water, or with water is to perform a translation that changes what it touches. This did not lead to silence. It asked for another form of attentiveness: one able to remain accountable to what representation stabilises, excludes, and makes governable.

4.2 Infrastructural Frictions: Low Frequencies and Waterways as ‘Companions’

What on certain maps appeared as a continuous watercourse, on the ground was encountered as a fragmented sequence of absences, detours, and technical barriers. In Genoa, as in other similarly anthropised and densely urbanised contexts, water is not encountered primarily as an entity, a landscape, or a commons, but as infrastructure: pipes, drains, containment systems, flood-control devices – hidden, noisy, omnipresent.

Walking along the presumed trajectories of buried rivers produced misalignment and discontinuity with an imagined intact nature.

Sound emerged before visibility; vibration preceded orientation. The body followed traces that did not coincide with official routes or cartographies. In several sites, this fluvial-lymphatic system could only be perceived through shifts in temperature, echoes beneath asphalt, the persistent humidity of shaded spaces, or the involuntary concerts of taps, drains, and flows. These encounters did not reveal water as an ‘entity’; they exposed the conditions through which water has been rendered inaccessible, managed, corrected.

Within this field, sensory attention exceeded the register of care as metaphor. Listening and placing the body near water opened a problem at once affective, technical, and political. Microphones placed near drainage systems amplified mechanical rhythms while flattening others. Low frequencies travelled through concrete; higher ones dissipated. What was recorded was never neutral. Each act of listening foregrounded certain relations while cancelling others. One question, among many, emerged insistently: not how to make water speak, but how listening, seeing, sensing, and directing attention toward hydro bodies already participate in processes of relational selection and exclusion.

Practices of exploration, *dérive*, and attention unfolded in parallel with the drafting of the Charter, not as preparatory phases nor as their synthesis, but as parallel and often dissonant processes. Reading aloud a juridical language that was itself contested, collectively rewriting articles, lingering on terms such as *access*, *relation*, and *integrity*, repeatedly activated the same uncertainty: what does it mean to stabilise relations that are materially unstable?

Several assemblies, titled *Hydro Bodies Assembly* and centred on the collective reading and revision of the Charter, produced moments of disagreement and hesitation around terms such as access, integrity, care, and relation. One of these situations emerged during the performative assembly organised in Genoa in 2025 involving students from the Accademia Ligustica di Belle Arti, members of the activist collective *Con i piedi per terra*, and artists and researchers working on water-related practices.

During the assembly, participants collectively read and discussed selected articles of the Charter. Different understandings of the document immediately surfaced. Some activists approached the Charter primarily as a possible juridical instrument connected to ongoing territorial struggles around the Lagaccio area, where large infrastructural projects continue to reshape the neighbourhood and affect densely inhabited urban zones. At the same time, several participants remarked that they had rarely considered water itself as a juridical or political subject. Water had mainly appeared as a danger, hydraulic emergency, or infrastructural problem.

The discussion around the articles of the Charter became particularly significant. Participants connected the notion of relation not only to environmental care, but also to the possibility of recognising buried waterways as ‘companions’ within broader struggles around territory, infrastructure, and urban transformation. The assembly did not produce consensus. It exposed different expectations regarding law, activism, artistic practice, and environmental responsibility, while turning the Charter into a site of negotiation rather than affirmation. In this context, the Charter operated less as a stable

declaration than as a device capable of shifting how infrastructural waters could be collectively perceived and politically addressed.

The process also encountered limits linked to resources, time, and uneven forms of involvement.¹⁶ Some members could sustain long-term fieldwork and organisational labour more than others; others entered through specific workshops, performances, or writing sessions. Activist priorities, artistic timelines, institutional deadlines, and personal thresholds of endurance did not always coincide. These frictions shaped what could be researched, recorded, shared, or left aside.

Considering the long-term process, the research did not primarily confront contamination in a chemical or toxic sense, although the city itself is also affected in this way. The frictions encountered were philosophical, ethical, internal, and structural: the limits of collective resistance, the difficulty of sustaining long-term research without stable resources, uncertainty around the very object of inquiry – or, more precisely, of encounter – and the risk of transforming a place into a site of symbolic, cultural, or aesthetic extraction. Working with urban waters revealed how easily attention itself can become extractive: looking, listening, and documenting may appropriate what they intend to care for.

Languages of porosity, transcorporeality, and shared vulnerability became useful only when held against asymmetry. In practice, continuity repeatedly collided with restricted access, infrastructural harm, and uneven exposure. A fluid relation between bodies and waters could open responsibility; it could also dissolve conflict into metaphor. The question returned through the work itself: when does relational language make responsibility possible, and when does it smooth over the conditions that make relation unequal?

This critical point emerged whenever images, drawings, field recordings, or descriptions of inaccessible waters began to circulate as ‘good material’, detached from the constraints that shaped their production. The more such violence became legible as aesthetic material, the easier it became to absorb without confronting its persistence.

Certain practices were therefore renegotiated in order to mark limits. Assemblies incorporated silences, interruptions, and disagreement; some recordings remained unedited or partially unusable; certain visual materials were withdrawn from circulation.

16 This unevenness concerned different positions within and around the project, as well as divergent expectations about what the process should enable, produce, or make visible. Unequal access to time, mobility, funding, technical skills, and organisational responsibility shaped the duration of fieldwork, the distribution of labour, the possibility of speaking in assemblies, and decisions around which materials could circulate, remain partial, or be withheld.

These gestures did not solve the problem of aestheticisation, but they interrupted the smooth conversion of infrastructural violence into cultural material. What mattered, within this research with hydro bodies, was not to avoid form, but to keep form accountable to the conditions that continued to produce and determine it.

Through these practices, questions accumulated without resolution: Where does a hydro body begin when it is fragmented into pipes, channels, and juridical zones? What is translated when water enters legal language, and what is lost in that passage? When does care become correction? How can responsibility be sustained without claiming a voice? These questions shaped decisions, hesitations, and withdrawals throughout the process: when to publish a recording, when to leave a drawing unreadable, when to suspend a claim, when to keep an article of the Charter open to revision.

5 Orthopedics of Water: Correction, Care, and Hydro-Infrastructural Bodies

The notion of *orthopedics* of water first emerged through a poetic and performative text developed within Corpi Idrici and later activated during assemblies, performances, and exchanges with groups working in other hydro-social territories. The expression came to name the material and symbolic violence exercised on waterways through infrastructures of correction, containment, and safety.

Orthopedics, in the medical sense, promises care through alignment. It works by stabilising a body that is perceived as vulnerable or dangerous, for itself, for others. The parallel with hydraulic management is not metaphorical. Flood-control systems, canalizations, diversions, culverts, buried streams, reinforced banks, and emergency bypasses are corrective infrastructures: they aim to make water legible within a regime of predictability. They operationalise a promise: security, order, prevention, while reconfiguring hydro bodies into governable channels.

These interventions reshape not only environments, but also subjectivities. They reorganise the social (access, property, zoning, institutional responsibility) and the mental (fear, anticipation, habituation to control, prevision). The ‘problem’ water is expected to solve, safety, produces new problems: restricted relation, invisibilised flows, a landscape where water is always present and yet structurally out of reach.

Orthopedics are enacted through language as much as through concrete. Terms like *risk*, *safety*, *resilience*, *functionality*, *maintenance* carry an affective charge: they justify correction as care. They also pre-empt alternative relations by defining what counts as legitimate interaction with a riverbank, a canal, a mouth, a tunnel. In this sense,

orthopedics operate as governance: they distribute permissions and prohibitions, they shape whose bodies can approach water and under what conditions, they naturalise distance as necessity.

The Corpi Idrici earlier practices of walking, listening, and tracing made these orthopedics sensible. Not in the sense of ‘revealing a hidden truth’, but in the sense of exposing how correction becomes the default interface. What is encountered is often water as a managed remainder: a sound behind a wall, a humidity in shadowed space, a flow that can be heard without being reached. The hydro body appears as a lymphatic system of the city – capillary, venous, subterranean – whose circulation is governed by constraints that are simultaneously physical and legal.

At this point, the question is not whether orthopedics are ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Infrastructural correction responds to real catastrophes, to historic floods, to material vulnerabilities. The problem is what orthopedics make impossible to imagine: forms of relation that do not begin from containment, a sensibility that does not reduce the world to hazard management, a politics that does not treat water as an object of perpetual intervention.

To remember oneself as part of a universe of cascades, cataclysms, earthquakes, and tidal forces is not an aesthetic sentiment, it is an epistemic repositioning. It attempts to unsettle the fantasy that stability is the natural baseline and that correction is always care. It also reframes the question of “being nature” (Staid 2022) away from identity and toward process: not only “we are water”, but in particular “we are already within the same unstable field”.

If matter transmits signals, intensities, and reactions beyond our intention, as materialist and processual perspectives insist, then orthopedics are never simply imposed on passive substrates.

They trigger responses, unintended consequences, upstream/downstream effects, new vulnerabilities. In this sense, the hydro body is not an object corrected once, but a field continually reconfigured through interventions, sediments, weather patterns, political decisions, and economies of extraction.

Orthopedics therefore become a key site where betrayal, as previously discussed, gains concrete form. The betrayal is not only representational, it is infrastructural: the conversion of an ecological relation into a technical function, the translation of a living assemblage into a controllable channel, the reduction of a commons-in-the-making into a managed risk. The work of Corpi Idrici does not claim to escape this regime. It tries to make it legible while remaining accountable to the fact that legibility itself can reproduce governance.

From here, the project’s methodological question re-emerges: what kinds of practices, juridical, artistic, curatorial, can accompany hydro bodies without reinforcing orthopedic logics as the only available

language of care? What grammars of relation can be rehearsed in the cracks between safety, access, and the right to relation?

6 A Lingua Franca of Hesitation

It is not about understanding.
It is not about making speak.
It is about being there, in the surrounding,
attentive to what traces itself without intention.
There are gestures that mean nothing,
and yet they are there,
like a map of a world
that does not pass through speech.
That world is not mute.
It simply has no need for our language.
(Fernand Deligny)¹⁷

After the juridical, embodied, and infrastructural passages traced in the previous sections, representation can no longer be treated as a stable ground from which to engage hydro bodies. To speak for water, to write its relations into law, or to make it perceptible through artistic and documentary forms always involves a cut. Translation carries something across, but never intact: it filters, displaces, and reshapes the relation it claims to transmit. Legal language, artistic formats, documentation, and testimony make hydro-social relations available to collective attention; at the same time, they expose them to stabilisation, substitution, and capture.

Lingua franca begins from this fracture.¹⁸ Historically, the term referred to a mixed contact language used across Mediterranean ports among speakers without a shared tongue. Here, it emerges as a fabulative name for a missing grammar: a way of holding open the interval between response and meaning, signal and statement, process and form. Both as a methodological notion and posture for the difficulty of remaining in relation when translation itself becomes risky. This difficulty appeared throughout the research in what preceded communication: pauses in assemblies, failed recordings, blind drawings, delayed responses, moments of silence, gestures of withholding, and the repeated hesitation around terms such as access, care, relation, and integrity. For Corpi Idrici, these gestures altered the conditions of attention: they made perceptible that the

17 The epigraph is the Author's adaptation from Deligny's reflections on *lignes d'erre*, the refusal to "faire parler", and the practice of "voir" rather than understanding. See Deligny 2007; 2013.

18 For a related reflection on watery glossolalia, opacity, and more-than-human forms of address, see Ravera 2026.

question was not simply whether water can speak, but how relations become addressable before they are stabilised as speech.

The question “can water speak?” gradually gives way to another concern: how variations circulate through hydro bodies and infrastructures. Across the research, water registered through rhythm, vibration, conductivity, resistance, humidity, obstruction, and drift. These registrations marked thresholds and transformations within a field of material exchange that exceeds intentional communication. The task became the cultivation of forms of attention able to register response while resisting immediate appropriation.

Translation therefore remained bound to risk. Isabelle Stengers’ insistence on slowing down, and on resisting forced translation, clarifies this difficulty (Stengers 2015). Slowness, in this context, became a practical condition: a way of delaying the conversion of encounters into outputs or artworks, of allowing vibration, silence, opacity, and interruption to retain their force before being organised as data, evidence, or meaning. Practices of partial documentation, withdrawal, suspended translation, and silence emerged throughout the process as methodological necessities.

At the same time, translation also appeared as an already active institutional operation. Water is continuously translated into risk, data, heritage, image, policy object, cultural asset, or infrastructural problem. Anselm Franke’s work on animism helps describe this dynamic by showing how institutional formats operate as machines of translation, converting mute or resistant presences into authorised narratives. In this sense, a dominant lingua franca already structures the field: a grammar through which water becomes legible, manageable, fundable, protected, exhibited, and governed. The interesting critical task and challenge for an artistic group working inside this interstice concerns the interruption of this existing grammar and the invention of procedures that slow down its automatic effects.

What remains is a set of provisional practices able to work with partial intelligibility and uneven addressability. Maria Lind’s.¹⁹ Understanding of the curatorial helps articulate this shift because it moves curation away from the production of discrete works and toward the arrangement of conditions: temporal, spatial, social, editorial, and infrastructural. In this sense, the curatorial operates

19 Lind’s long-term project *Tensta Museum: Reports from New Sweden* offers a useful precedent. Rather than treating Tensta as a subject to be represented from the outside, the project assembled a framework in which local histories, memories, residents, artists, associations, and institutional resources could enter into relation over time. The curatorial task lay in sustaining the conditions for these relations: gathering materials, hosting encounters, producing publications, enabling collaborations, and allowing the project to remain porous to the place from which it emerged.

as a form of conduction. It does not simply present relations after they have taken shape; it holds open the circumstances through which relations can pass, hesitate, conflict, and become shareable.

For Corpi Idrici, curation has operated in a comparable but hydro-social register. It has meant arranging the conditions through which hydro bodies, activists, residents, students, researchers, sounds, documents, and legal fictions could encounter one another without being immediately resolved into a single output. Assemblies, listening sessions, collective readings of the Charter, unfinished archives, shared silences, and careful forms of circulation became a curatorial position: ways of conducting relations while slowing down its conversion into artwork, evidence, policy language, or institutional format.

For these *placed-based art research* betrayal becomes an ethical condition of communication. It names the inevitable transformation produced whenever a relation is made shareable. Proximity requires attention to difference; relation requires care for asymmetry; responsiveness requires vigilance toward the pressures of forced intelligibility. More-than-human dialogue appears here as partial, unstable, and situated. The work therefore turns toward practices capable of remaining accountable to the costs of articulation.

The Charter returns within this discussion as a device through which these costs become perceptible. Its legal-poetic form exposes the betrayal of representation by staging it as a collective problem open to revision. Each reading, rewriting, assembly, workshop, listening session, or act of translation shows how legal, artistic, and documentary forms shape hydro-social relations while transforming them. The Charter becomes an unfinished interface through which the limits of environmental representation can be negotiated.

A lingua franca of hesitation names this practice of negotiation. It concerns forms of attention, translation, and response capable of remaining accountable to what exceeds stabilisation, capture, and complete intelligibility. It asks how we might remain reachable by a field that does not depend on us in order to act, while refusing the languages that render that field governable the moment it becomes legible.

The underground commoning traced through this article emerges through the patient construction of conditions in which different bodies – human, infrastructural, legal, aqueous – remain in relation while retaining their differences of language, agency, and force. To write with water teaches staying close to the cut that writing opens: making that cut public, revisable, and collectively accountable.

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