

RIPARIAN®
STRUGGLES

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DESIGNING WITH THE PLANET: RIPARIAN STRUGGLES

Riparian struggles is a network of activists, artists, practitioners, residents and researchers engaged in struggles over waters and the diverse riparian lives that inhabit their banks. Like rivers and bodies of water, our struggles are not locally contained. Instead, they flow across places and times, showing that local struggles are also always planetary. Since 2022, our network has brought together collectives active in Brazil (Salve Saracura, São Paulo), Indonesia (Labtek Apung, Jakarta) and Germany (Floating e.V., Berlin), through funding from the South Designs Initiative. In 2026, we have extended our collaboration further and begun inviting new sites to join the struggle, with support from the TD-Lab of the Berlin University Alliance. The main ambition of our project is to share knowledge, practices and tactics between our sites, making what we call a “self-organised infrastructure”.

A self-organised infrastructure is one that is designed and performed from the bottom up. Not an infrastructure of pipes and wires (although these materialities do matter) but a web of meetings, parades, picnics, working groups, online platforms, funding applications, references, flight paths, train rides, exhibitions, conferences, friendships, hangovers, rituals, alongside: masks, catapults, water bottles, plant matter, seeds, sediments, maps, embroidery... and so on. These socio-material events and artefacts compose the basic components and support the circulation of knowledge and the creation of new relations across the planet, watery site by watery site.

In our project, we aim to build solidarity and enhance mutual learning between collectives coalescing around urban waters running through, marking and making each site. Collectives consist of individuals and community groups engaged with urban water ecologies in

different ways and with different forms of knowledge according to the specific locations they hail from.

By circulating riparian matters, knowledges and tactics can be shared across the planet and become useful for riparian struggles in other places. As our artefacts travelled and events reproduced, tactics were translated and new versions emerged and continued to spread further afield. Through this publication, we share some of the tactics and strategies with you so that they may continue their journeys and transformations, and hopefully become useful in other riparian struggles and build new relations of solidarity across the planet.

PLANETARY STRATEGIES

With the Cameroonian political theorist, Achille Mbembe's provocation in mind, we came up with three "planetary strategies" aimed at steering our tactics to build better relations between human and between nonhuman life. These are: strategies of **CORRESPONDING**, of **EVIDENCING**, and of **CIRCULATING**.

CORRESPONDING suggests on the one hand opening up new channels of communications between humans, rivers, and their ecologies to be listened to and in this way become empowered through recognition and empathy. On the other hand, corresponding suggests finding likeness in unlikely places in order to build solidarities.

EVIDENCING is to build arguments against pollution, asphaltization or land speculation, to advocate in the name of those riparians who have become hidden or silenced, and to un-earth ecologies of resistance around water bodies towards a horizon of care, repair and healing.

CIRCULATING is to keep moving, to keep changing. To transform and be transformed. To mix without reducing difference. With the quilombola thinker Nego Bispo, circulations, like streams of water build strength as they confluence.

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Planetary Tactics are creative actions taken to meet our strategies and aims of fostering mutual learning and solidarity. Across our sites of struggle, we share and create new tactics together by circulating riparian artefacts, bodies and other materialities. We think that by spreading things comes new knowledge and action for new ways of living together in our planetary age. Through this ZINE we invite you to view examples of our tactics in action. Please visit our website to download our recipes so you can try them out and develop them further in your community.



PARADING



Parading is a tactic that works as a strategic tool in a time of climate crisis, increasing privatization of resources, and declining public awareness of ecological systems. It is a collective, physical way of bringing urgent environmental issues back into shared attention. More than a visual spectacle, parading offers a slow, deliberate method for introducing ideas into public space and everyday thinking. To parade in this way is to insist that water is not merely a resource to be extracted, but a vital element connecting people, places, and ecosystems.

GIFTING



Gifting is a tactic in which bodily, sensory, and affective materiality becomes a form of solidarity. Yet gifting is always risky: will they like it? When we first gathered in 2023, Labtek Apung arrived with mangrove food, syrup, and dried fish. These foods circulated among riparians, who found points of connection through shared tastes.

Food here is more than sustenance; it is a medium of translation, a sensorium through which affinities and divergences are tested. Later, gifting soils and seeds has become a way for us to share stories, and to enact ecological solidarity, and to share adaptive knowledge across watersheds. Yet the risks remain.

STORY TELLING

Storytelling is used as a tactic to give voice to the river and the challenges its waters are facing. Through the presence of a storyteller, the river's tales unfold, carrying with them the intertwined lives of all beings connected to the water.

Through circulating water bottles, herbs, voice recordings and drawings, the first “water mixes”, collaborative works created by pupils from a school in Berlin in collaboration with Floating e.V., crafted for children in Brazil and Indonesia. In this shared space of attention, the stories of the rivers merged with those of the listeners, creating unexpected connections, moments of insight, and a deeper sense of belonging to the larger ecological web.



WATER TESTING

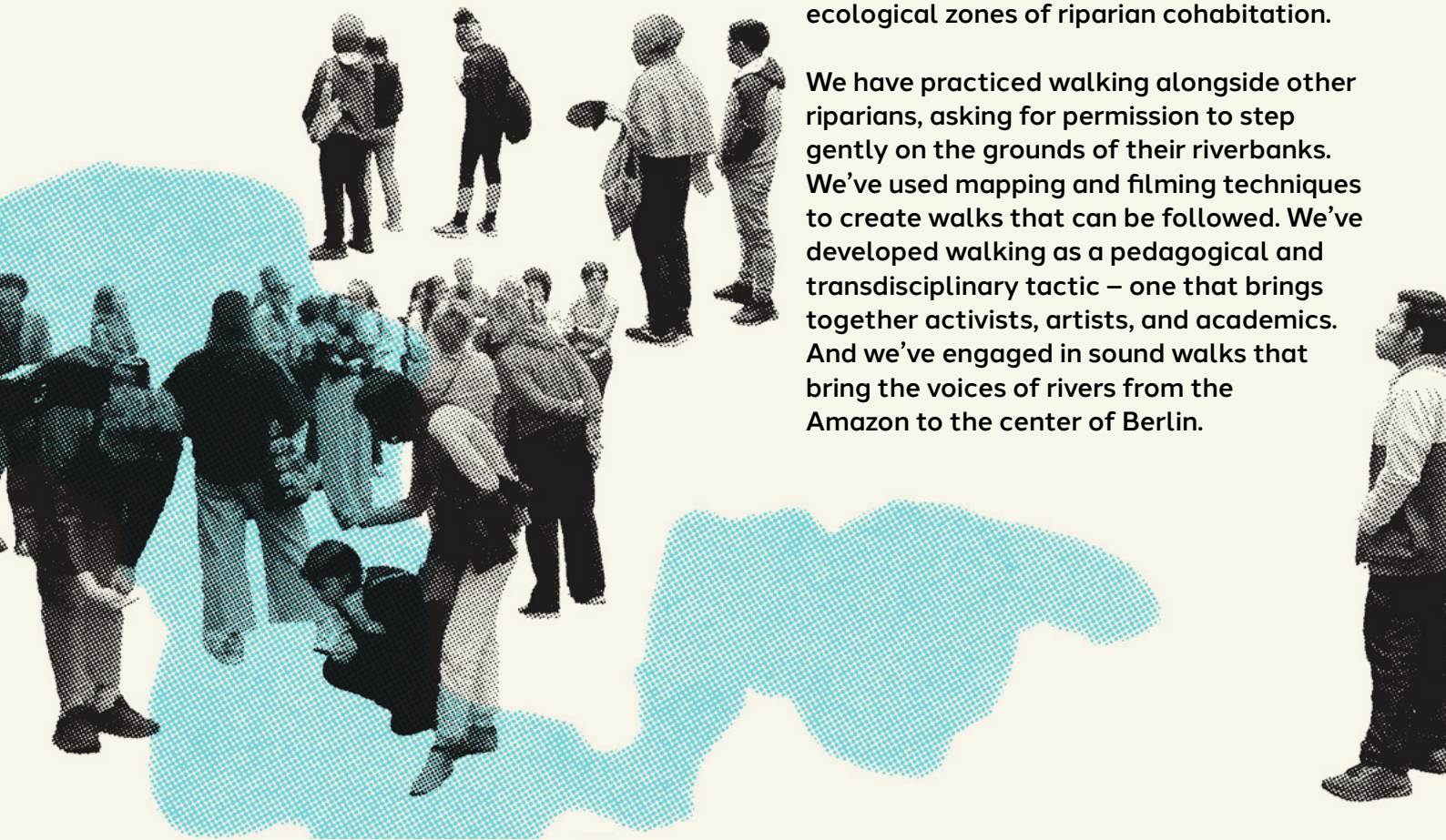
The tactic of water testing reveals signs of change – but never all at once. A reading of salinity, pH, or heavy metals is only a fragment of a larger puzzle. Often framed as a sterile diagnostic, testing becomes a shared method of sensing when it includes the bodies, memories, and knowledge of those who live with water. Testing is not just for experts; it invites participation. It asks: What has changed? Who feels it first? What do the numbers miss? Incomplete yet urgent, the puzzle resists simple answers – asking us instead to assemble, interpret, and act collectively.



WALKING

Walking is a tactic which allows us to move through the city together – to follow a river – cutting through both human and ecological zones of riparian cohabitation.

We have practiced walking alongside other riparians, asking for permission to step gently on the grounds of their riverbanks. We've used mapping and filming techniques to create walks that can be followed. We've developed walking as a pedagogical and transdisciplinary tactic – one that brings together activists, artists, and academics. And we've engaged in sound walks that bring the voices of rivers from the Amazon to the center of Berlin.



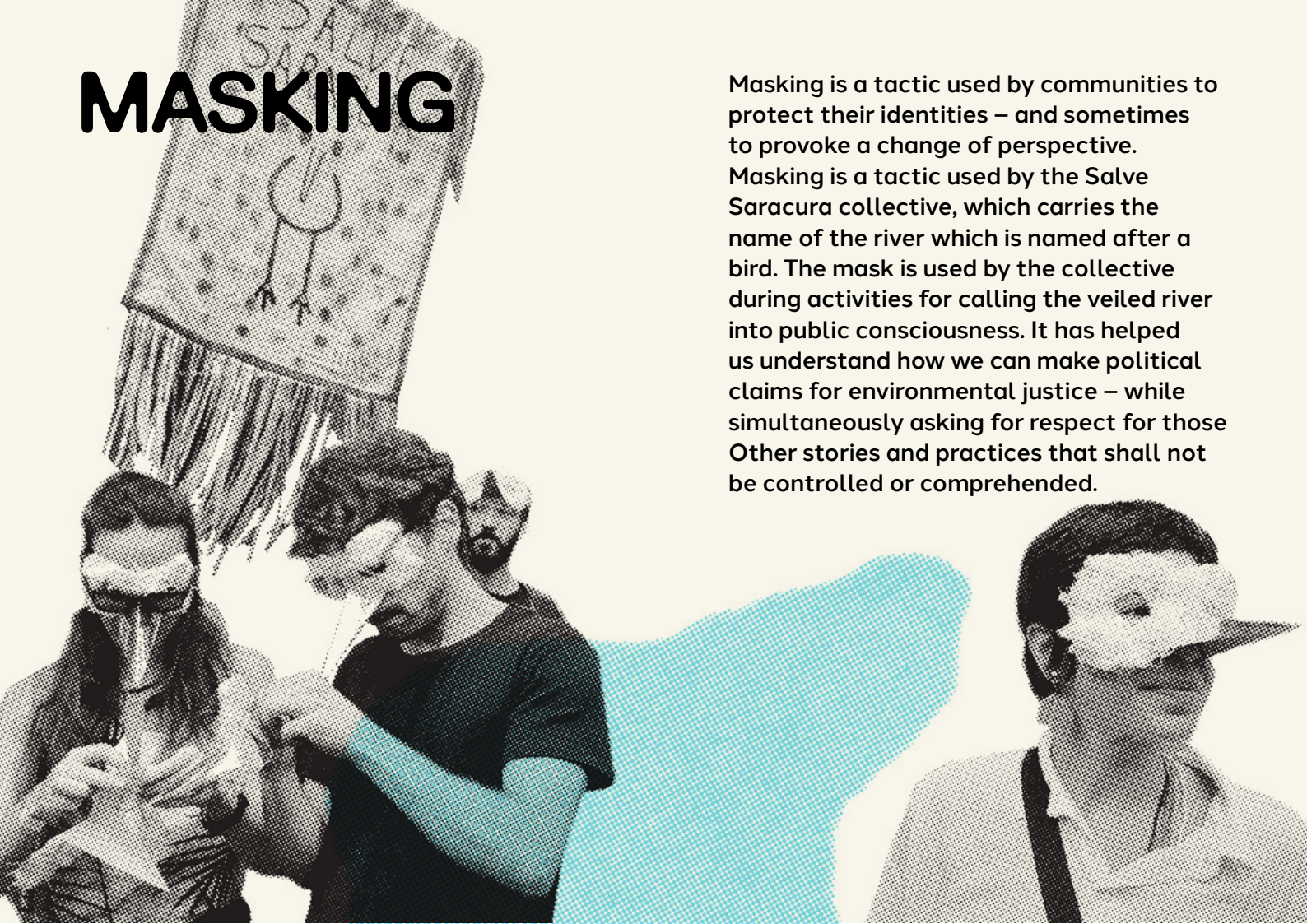
STITCHING

Embroidering is a tactic that exceeds the individual stitch. How might this craft bear witness to the presence of the river and its vegetation? And how might it also record political demands? In thread-based practices like weaving, quilting, or embroidery, lies a potential for coming together as a community and sharing stories while keeping your hands busy. The resulting textiles carry interwoven intimate and collective stories, entities, and desires – grounded in shared tactics of riparian resistance. In this way, stitching becomes a collective healing practice.



MASKING

Masking is a tactic used by communities to protect their identities – and sometimes to provoke a change of perspective. Masking is a tactic used by the Salve Saracura collective, which carries the name of the river which is named after a bird. The mask is used by the collective during activities for calling the veiled river into public consciousness. It has helped us understand how we can make political claims for environmental justice – while simultaneously asking for respect for those Other stories and practices that shall not be controlled or comprehended.



SEED BALLING

Seed balling is a tactic used by communities to respond to environmental degradation. They mix seeds, soil and water in close correspondence with the environments they come from and travel to. The following story unfolds between three riparian communities and their spontaneous encounters between Berlin, Jakarta and São Paulo.

“Muvuca de nascentes”, an activity of collective seeding by the river springs, became a tactic for making seed balls to heal the deforested banks of the Saracura river. Muvuca is an Indigenous word for a restoration method that involves planting seeds that can be mixed without eradicating the others. When the Saracura children threw the seed balls at the river banks, it started to rain. A few days later, the street that covers the river in downtown São Paulo was flooded.



TRACING



Tracing can be mobilised as a tactic for re-vealing and un-covering hidden rivers and their stories, as well as the human and more-than-human relations entangled with them. A trace is like a footprint left in the ground, what made the mark is no longer there, but its passage disturbs the visible order of space. Reading traces becomes a way of narrating the invisible, a sensitive and situated practice that moves between evidencing and speculative gesture. Rather than seeking definitive interpretation, this tactic invites us to hold and feel the trace, to activate non-linear forms of knowing. In this sense, tracing emerges as a critical tactic for urban eco-political movements: capable of unsettling the concealment of urban elements alongside human histories.

LETTER WRITING

1984年 10月 10日 星期一

I will have said my address, you will find

The above information was obtained from the records of the [redacted] Department of the [redacted] State of [redacted].

[illegible]

이들은 1945년 8월 15일 일본이 패배한 후부터 1948년 8월 15일 대한민국이 건국될 때까지의 기간을 '조선민주주의인민공화국의 건국 초기'로 규정하고, 이 시기에 대한 연구가 '조선민주주의인민공화국의 건국 초기 연구'라고 하였다.

[illegible]

For the last several months, I have been working on a project that I have been very interested in. I have been working on a project that I have been very interested in. I have been working on a project that I have been very interested in.

[illegible][illegible]

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 2. 1950年 1月 1日 出生
 3. 1950年 1月 1日 出生
 4. 1950年 1月 1日 出生



SECRET

10-10-1964

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WCA 202
 2020-2021
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Writing a letter is a way of sharing about your struggle. Our website features a series of letters from the sites of struggle that are part of our network. And we continue to receive letters from watery sites across the planet, which tell us stories about hidden, polluted, flying, contained, contested and overflowing rivers and bodies of water and the collectivities of humans, plants, sediments and species that inhabit them. With our friends from the Ground Atlas, we have written letters to the Saracura River, as an act of critical fabulation that foregrounds the voices of Indigenous and Black riparians, of river memories and plant resistances against erasure and displacement. Later, we exchanged letters between students in Berlin and São Paulo, to provoke changes in perspective and mutual learning across the ocean, and we read out some of these letters during the Planetary Confluence festival at Floating University to perform solidarity under the slogan “your struggle is my struggle”. If you were to write a postcard to us, what would be your story?

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