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How to Eat a Polluted River? Curatorial Practice, Metabolic Literacies, and Cultures of Care

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Zusammenfassung
The climate change crisis has become part of aesthetic discourse and critical research in culture and the arts. Future-oriented, ecologically conceived possibilities for action are being explored by artists, curators, and scholars alike. Eco-operations addresses these emerging aesthetic ecologies and new technologies of cooperation that both challenge and shape a sustainable future, foregrounding interruptions, ruptures, disconnections, dissonances, exclusions, and allochronism. Moving beyond the concepts of “flow” and “network” as a single, coherent (ecological or technological) system, Eco-operations instead emphasizes the frictions within asynchronously running systems. The infrastructures and formats of artistic production and exhibition play a central role here, as they themselves constitute ecosystems that invite and regulate processes of sharing and exchange. Artists and activists are embedded in these ecosystems, in which they simultaneously intervene when searching for alternative ways of creating collaborative practice. Bringing together scholars, artists, writers, and curators, and working across a range of disciplines, Eco-operations explores this field of tension between global and local ecologies, and aims to speculate on where dissonances imply both creative potential and political challenges.

With contributions by Dalida María Benfield, Ursula Biemann, Lisa Blackmore, T. J. Demos, Laura Flórez & Lorena García Cely, Sandra - Frimmel, Alexandra Gelis, Liliana Gómez, Fabienne Liptay, Ana María Lozano, Uriel Orlow, Dorota Sajewska.

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How to Eat a Polluted River?

Curatorial Practice, Metabolic Literacies, and Cultures of Care

> Eating comes first. Eating is movement. Eating is a prenatal impulse and an action that inaugurates and implicates the body. Eating is reaching and retaining temperature. Eating is ingesting solar energy scattered through the cosmos and transformed by plants into living bodies, into nourishment. Eating is tracing our evolutionary process and transmuting from single-cell organisms into animals, in a single bite. Eating is incorporating within us other forms of life. Eating is knowing a territory. Eating is entering into communion.[1]
>
> In the gurgles of our guts [...] entire worlds reside.[2]

Living Metabolically

In her recent book, *Hospicing Modernity*, scholar and activist Vanessa Machado de Oliveira proposes that practices of "metabolic literacies" are crucial to learning to live otherwise amid the modern project's ecological catastrophes and the demise of its narratives and imaginaries.[3] She recounts her experience with a community in the Peruvian Andes that resists the installation of

1 Carlos Alfonso and Cristina Consuegra, *Mundos mutuos: la cocina como taller* (Bogotá: Cajón de Sastre, 2020), p. 8. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

2 Astrida Neimanis, "We are all bodies of water," in *Water*, Alphabet City Magazine 14, ed. John Knechtel (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009), pp. 82–91, here p. 84.

3 Vanessa Machado de Oliveira, *Hospicing Modernity: Facing Humanity's Wrongs and the Implications for Social Activism* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2021).

"modern," flushable toilets in favor of dry toilets. She interprets their commitment to "composting their shit" as a form of metabolic literacy: their understanding of the self as a membrane of interrelation for their immediate environment and the broader planetary context forges bonds of *accountability* and *reciprocity*. Through these bonds, the community feels responsible for *practicing care* for land body ecologies.[4] Dealing with what our bodies ingest, digest, and expel by living with its consequences (rather than flushing them away) is, Machado argues, thus a way of rejecting the forms of separation and human exceptionalism that enframe the lithosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere and atmosphere as resources and infrastructures at the service of human comfort.[5]

Talk of composting raises timely questions about the politics and ethics of cycles of ingestion, discharge, and pollution. Because their "complex chains of food production, distribution, consumption, recirculation, and trade" shape land body ecologies, food networks are a generative context in which to ponder and practice metabolic literacy work.[6] This transpires from an emerging body of scholarship and curatorial practice related to food and ecology that asks how eating can encourage critical reflection on the forces shaping our environments and stimulate more equitable modes of coexistence, care, and multispecies community.[7] Recent art practice-research involv-

4 These practices of metabolic literacy are articulated over nested scales: an individual body contains a multitude of bacteria; bodies live in social relation; we coexist with the planetary body; our lives stretch beyond to encompass ancestral bonds. In Machado's case study, this fourth level connects humans to high Andean earth beings.

5 See Elizabeth Emma Ferry and Mandana E. Limbert, eds., *Timely Assets: The Politics of Resources and Their Temporalities* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2008).

6 Kyle Powys Whyte, "Food Sovereignty, Justice, and Indigenous Peoples: An Essay on Settler Colonialism and Collective Continuance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Food Ethics*, ed. Anne Barnhill, Mark Budolfson, and Tyler Doggett, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 345–366, here p. 345.

7 See, for example, María Montero Sierra and Barbara Nardacchione, eds., *Convivial Tables: The Cross between Food and Ecology* (Madrid: Fundación TB21, 2022).

ing food, such as that of Cooking Sections (Alon Schwabe and Daniel Fernández Pascual), creates projects to play with the need to expand eating as a "locavore" (someone who sources locally-produced foods) to becoming a "climavore," someone whose food systems, culinary habits and ethical dispositions are adapted to climate change.[8] Food, here, becomes a means of communication and gathering.

Food's capacity to ignite gatherings is also socioecologically generative, insofar as it can raise pertinent questions about who the "we" that gathers is and what ties bond "us." Culturally, we know that in social settings "Commensality produces bonding [... because] eating the same food is equated with producing the same flesh and blood, thus making commensals more alike and bringing them closer to each other."[9] But, the bonding and mutual imbrication activated by eating stretches beyond human sociality. As Heather Paxon writes in *Eating beside Ourselves*: *Thresholds of Food and Bodies*, "acts of eating create webs of relations" that encompass "many ingestions and transcorporealities."[10] These include the water and chemicals that flow into food and the microbes dining in our gut, through to the sociocultural and political-economic technologies that shape food production, and the health of the ecosystems where it takes place.

Food networks materialize in very tangible ways the metabolic principle of life's unfolding through mutual seepages, leakages, and imbrications, which cycle across different scales of interrelation. These connections link our bodies' intimate, internal landscapes to external, ecological dynamics. As Astrida Neimanis puts it: "Just as we take our watery being from other

8 See May Rosenthal Sloan, "On Cooking Sections," *Afterall* 49 (2020), pp. 83–89, here p. 83.
9 Claude Fischler, "Commensality, Society and Culture," *Social Science Information* 50, nos. 3–4 (2011), pp. 528–548, here p. 533.
10 Heather Paxson, "Eating Beside Ourselves," in *Eating beside Ourselves: Thresholds of Foods and Bodies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2023), pp. 1–28, here p. 2 and p. 3.

(animal, vegetable, geophysical, meteorological) bodies of water on this planet, we in turn pass our water on to yet other watery bodies, some intimately close to us and others distant and dispersed."[11] In concrete terms, noticing such dynamics can stimulate awareness of how ecosystem health and public health exist in a continuum, and reflection on the eco-ethical implications of considering how human systems impact the wellbeing of rivers, lakes, and oceans. These implications are especially urgent in polluted and toxic environments, which need practices that can summon and galvanize political will and action toward decontamination and protection.

As I have written elsewhere, curatorial and aesthetic practice can support transitions to care-oriented water cultures by imagining other forms of being in, with and through water.[12] In this chapter, I reflect on curatorial practice as a mode of stimulating critical reflection on hydrosocial well-being and explore the role of eating as an aesthetic medium to support metabolic literacies of riverhood. I weave these inquiries through the *Piquete del Río Bogotá*—a communal lunch curated in 2023 to gather sixteen river defenders and caretakers at Tequendama Falls to share a menu of food grown in the river basin. The gathering is part of RÍO BOGOTÁ, an ongoing curatorial collaboration we are developing through the *entre*—ríos collective to address the protracted ecological crisis affecting the Bogotá River in Colombia, one of the most polluted watersheds in the world.[13] The river flows for 380 kilometers, but for only eleven kilometers are its waters healthy. After leaving its pristine highland source, the river starts receiving discharge, and domestic and chemical waste, rendering it practically biologically dead

11 Neimanis, "We are all bodies of water," p. 84.

12 Lisa Blackmore, "Being River: Ambient Poetics and Somatic Experiences of More-than-Human Flows," in *The Routledge Companion to Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Latin American Literary and Cultural Forms*, ed. Guillerma De Ferrari and Mariano Siskind (New York: Routledge, 2022), pp. 249–261.

13 To date, the project has produced three documentaries, social media campaigns, and a publication titled *Cómo cuidar un río* (2023). All are available on the digital platform http://entre-rios.net/rio-bogota (accessed July 16, 2024).

Figs. 1–2: *Piquete del Río Bogotá*, April 26, 2023. Photos: Gabriela Molano. Courtesy of *entre*—ríos.

by the time it has flowed through and out of the city. Our curatorial work in RÍO BOGOTÁ involves connecting and disseminating the caretaking efforts of Indigenous Mhuysca councils, ecological restoration projects, community aqueducts, environmental education, nature tourism, heritage initiatives, and organic food producers across different points of the river basin. Despite their diverse scales, activities, and political stances, what connects these initiatives is the way they practice care for the watershed, where care, following María Puig de la Bellacasa's definition, manifests through "vital ethico-affective everyday practical doings that engage with the inescapable troubles of interdependent existences."[14]

RÍO BOGOTÁ unfolds at the confluences of scholarly research and collaborative curatorial practice, hence my writ-

14 Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, "'Nothing Comes Without Its World': Thinking with Care," *The Sociological Review*, 60, no. 2 (2012), pp. 197–216, here p. 199.

ing weaves critical, analytical, and ethnographic registers to probe the causes of the river's critical pollution and honor the many voices and energies involved in co-creating the project. In what follows, I offer thoughts on how the *hydrocommons* serves as a compass for *entre*—ríos' work, unpacking this neologism as a conceptual-practical understanding of our mutual watery imbrication across complex scales, from intimate to planetary, and the political, ethical and affective implications this has in relation to a range of areas, including governance, care, and aesthetics.[15] I then trace the forces behind the slow death of the Bogotá River and identify legal protection and caretaking initiatives in the watershed. After reflecting on the curatorial rationale of the *Piquete del Río* and participants' experiences of it, I offer closing thoughts on how eating a river can galvanize caregiving practices and contribute positively to ecological cooperation. Questions around eco-cooperation thread through the essay in three intertwined strands in relation to methodologies, values, and practices. I include a narrative account of the *Piquete del Río* to show how our curatorial process unfolded in dialogue with fieldwork and collaborators. This polyvocal style converses with the feminist citation practice of *thinking-with* others as a means of upholding right relations in research and cultivating *care-full* practices for interdependent worlds.[16] Finally, I dwell on the importance of uplifting grassroots and community initiatives as a way to foster broader awareness of the importance of ecological cooperation. These initiatives represent eco-ethical action rooted in protecting "the integrity of a water system as a core value that deserves moral respect."[17]

15 Lisa Blackmore, "Imaginando culturas hidrocomunes: investigaciones interdisciplinares y prácticas curatoriales entre ríos," *Heterotopías* 5, no. 10 (2022), pp. 43–72.

16 Puig de la Bellacasa, "'Nothing Comes Without Its World': Thinking with Care."

17 Angela Kalhoff, "Water Ethics: Toward Ecological Cooperation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics*, ed. Stephen M. Gardiner and Allen Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 416–424, here p. 422.

Hydrosocial Metabolism and Hydrocommons Cultures

Water is never just water, but liquid ecologies formed of "turbid histories of capital flows, philosophical currents, aesthetic traditions and residual traumas that connect distinct spaces, times and bodies."[18] It follows that technoscientific paradigms that turn rivers into infrastructures for industrialization and urbanization engender forms of *hydrosocial metabolism* where lives and world-making forces are entangled in often toxic ways.[19] Amid intense anthropogenic transformation, the fluctuating forms and biological health (or lack thereof) of bodies of water across the world express materially how cultural, socioeconomic, and political processes permeate each other to affect hydrological lives. The proliferation of contemporary water stresses reflects the depletion of water cultures grounded in principles of coexistence, care, and socioecological well-being. This scenario calls for alternative water cultures that reclaim hydrological value beyond profit and utility. This is where hydrocommons cultures come in.[20] To imagine the hydrocommons is to re-incorporate into embodied knowledge and practice water's role in connecting and sustaining planetary life in the *transcorporeal* forms of atmosphere, breath, food systems, and so on.[21]

Centering *commonality through water* and *water as commons* animates eco-ethical duties of care and action toward healthier relations for co-flourishing. This is playing out worldwide as scholars identify an emergent wave of new water justice movements grounded in "riverhood"—a sense of iden-

18 Lisa Blackmore and Liliana Gómez, "Beyond the Blue: Notes on the Liquid Turn," in *Liquid Ecologies in Latin American and Caribbean Art* (New York: Routledge, 2020), p. 2.

19 On hydrosocial metabolism, see Eric Swyngedouw, *Liquid Power: Contested Hydro-Modernities in Twentieth-Century Spain* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2015).

20 Blackmore, "Imaginando culturas hidrocomunes."

21 On *transcorporeality*, see Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

tification with and ecological responsibility for watersheds cultivated through "alternative river-society ontologies" and "river-enlivening" practices that counter the entrenched paradigm of hydraulic-bureaucratic control of common waters.[22] These include more participatory and non-corporatized water management strategies that enact alternative "future water histories" rooted in belonging to a common liquid home.[23] Latin America is experiencing a resurgence of water care initiatives, energized by community initiatives and activism, Indigenous knowledges, art research, and even water sports.[24] Examples of such coalitions include the collaboration between the Guatemalan Maíz de Vida, a land and water protector movement that focuses on the rights of the Q'eqchi' Indigenous people, and the performance artist Regina José Galindo in the performance work *Ríos de gente* (2021), in which multitudes assembled to parade under blue strips of fabric to reclaim *libertad para las aguas*—freedom for water.[25] Another case is that of the Chilean collective Bestias del Sur Salvaje, whose projects *Somos cuenca* (We are river basin) articulate watersports, Mapuche, scientific and environmental education, and arts communities to affirm rivers as common goods—a claim that advocates for river rights against the privatization of water enshrined since the 1970s in constitutional law.[26]

Imagining the hydrocommons and cultivating riverhood are also the guiding compass for *entre*—ríos ("between rivers," in Spanish), the interdisciplinary platform I have directed since

22 Rutgerd Boelens et al., "Riverhood: political ecologies of socionature commoning and translocal struggles for water justice," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 50, no. 3 (2023), pp. 1125–1156.

23 Andrea Ballestero, *A Future History of Water* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).

24 See Lisa Blackmore and Alejandro Ponce de León, eds., "Hydrocommons Map," in *Hydrocommons Cultures: Art, Pedagogy and Cultures of Care in Latin America*, LA ESCUELA__JOURNAL No. 1 (May 2024), pp. 492–516.

25 See Maíz de Vida: https://maizdevida.com; and *Ríos de gente* (2021): https://vimeo.com/534620765 (both URLs accessed April 1, 2024).

26 See Bestias del Sur Salvaje's website, http://www.bestiasdelsursalvaje.cl (accessed April 1, 2024).

Fig. 3: Map of the six locations from where the *Piquete* gathered river caretakers. Still from drone footage in *Pulsos del río*, 2023. Courtesy of *entre*—ríos.

2018.[27] Exploring continuities between bodies of water, human bodies, and territories, *entre*—ríos is a confluence of projects that depart from arts practice to create collaborative and participatory experiments that connect us to the environment and to each other. It unfolds in person and online through artistic and interdisciplinary research, and curatorial, pedagogical, and editorial work. RÍO BOGOTÁ is our most recent curatorial endeavor, developed in collaboration with artist Diego Piñeros García, geographer Laura Giraldo-Martínez, and curator Juliana Steiner. We work with six locations along the upper and middle basin of the Bogotá River, from its source in the Páramo de Guacheneque, via the industrial and agricultural flatlands and remnant wetlands of the Sabana de Bogotá, through the ten-million strong Colombian capital's metropolitan area, and toward rural Soacha, where, burdened with a toxic contaminant load from the upper and middle basins, it cascades and flows toward the iconic Tequendama Falls. By this point, the river is a dark flow of oxygen-starved water often topped by toxic foam.

27 *entre*—ríos works online and offline. For an overview of our work, see http://entre-rios.net (accessed April 1, 2024).

Fig. 4: Banks of the Bogotá River in El Charquito. Still from drone footage in *Pulsos del río*, 2023. Courtesy of *entre*—ríos.

Through the co-creation of diverse media, including meals, documentaries, events, and publications, we work to enliven a sociocultural imaginary that amplifies the efforts of organizations, community, and grassroots groups whose care-giving practices insist the river is not dead, but very much alive.

Slow Death of the Bogotá River

Like other polluted rivers, the Bogotá's tragic state is a somatization of the sociocultural, political, and economic dynamics that have caused its contamination. The *páramo*, where it is born, is a unique high mountain ecosystem commonly termed a "water factory" (*fábrica de agua*) by virtue of the ample water it produces to quench the nation's thirst. This meeting point of clouds, mists, groundwater, lagoons, and bogs is a sacred "womb" for the Indigenous Mhuysca people who are the ancestral inhabitants of this territory. The Mhuyscas devised ingenious, symbiotic ways of inhabiting the flooded plains of present-day Bogotá, navigating in canals through networks of *camellones* and *zanjas*, the complex system of raised

beds and artificial channels dug into the wetlands to cultivate native foods and catch endemic species, like the *capitán* fish and freshwater crabs.[28] Spanish colonization transformed this amphibious culture, displacing the Mhuyscas into reserves and initiating drainage works to found the city that has drastically enclosed and reduced the wetlands. This emerged alongside the expansion of private land tenure, farming, and urbanization after independence, continuing through the early nineteenth century and up to the present day. At the turn of the twentieth century, the river was tapped as an energy resource with the construction of the El Charquito hydroelectric plant, in the rural municipality of Soacha, a point where, having snaked through the city, the water starts to cascade through a rocky valley—the ideal site to turn turbines and power the expanding city.[29] When the river began supplying electricity to the capital of barely 120,000 people in the early 1910s, the population of El Charquito still tended to vegetable plots along the riverbanks.[30] Since then, toxic discharges from urbanization and industrialization along the watershed have increased to such an extent that by the 2000s, when the city had grown to nearly seven million people, the river had become an open sewer.

In 2014, following a series of legal instruments termed "popular action" (*acción popular*) that began in the 1990s, the High Courts passed the *Sentencia del Río Bogotá*. This ruling directly attributed blame for the river's contamination to inhabitants and industries in the basin and indirectly blamed national ministries and local institutions, such as the water and energy

28 Lorena Rodríguez Gallo, "La construcción del paisaje agrícola prehispánico en los Andes colombianos: el caso de la Sabana de Bogotá," *SPAL Revista de Prehistoria y Arqueología* 28, no. 1 (2019), pp. 193–215.

29 Juan Camilo Rodríguez Gómez, Carmen Elisa Acosta Peñaloza, Hugo Hernán Ramírez, Nancy Liliana Villazmar, *Historia de la Empresa de Energía de Bogotá*, vol. 1 (Bogotá: Empresa de Energía de Bogotá/Universidad Externado de Colombia, 1999), p. 111.

30 The anecdote is from an oral history community timeline created by Álvaro Botello of the Escuela de Pensamiento Ambiental y de la Paz Humedal El Charquito and shared with *entre*—ríos during 2023.

companies, Empresa de Acueducto y Alcantarillado de Bogotá (EAAB), Empresa de Energía de Bogotá (EEB), and Emgesa for not controlling waste discharge.[31] The *Sentencia* found that pollution had violated collectively held rights, including access to water and a healthy environment, rational use of natural resources to ensure sustainable development, and the preservation of animal and plant species.[32] The ruling decreed the river's decontamination and the watershed's restoration within three years, along three lines of action: (1) environmental and social improvement of the Bogotá River hydrographic basin; (2) institutional, intersectoral and economic articulation and coordination; (3) deepening of educational and citizen participation processes.[33] Ten years on, while some progress has been made (such as decontamination of a stretch of the river near the Salitre water treatment plant in northern Bogotá), the goal of ecological restoration remains a distant horizon.

The *Sentencia* helps us to understand two key things. First, following Max Liboirin's definition of pollution as "not a manifestation or side effect of colonialism but [...] an enactment of ongoing colonial relations to Land," the river's pollution is a long durée phenomenon, both a legacy of cognitive and real violence stemming from European conquest and an effect of the instrumentalization of the river that endures to this day.[34] Second, it enables us to recognize the Bogotá River as a non-human victim of "slow death," a phenomenon that Lauren Berlant defines as "the physical wear and tear of a population and the deterioration of the people in that population that is almost a defining condition of their experience and historical existence."[35] Slow

31 *Sentencia 2001-90479*, March 28, 2014.

32 See Observatorio Colombiano de Gobernanza de Agua, "Sentencia del Río Bogotá," n.d., http://www.ideam.gov.co/en/web/ocga/sentencia (accessed April 1, 2024).

33 Ibid.

34 Max Liboiron, *Pollution is Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), pp. 6–7.

35 Lauren Berlant, "Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)," *Critical Inquiry* 33 (2007), pp. 754–780, here p. 754.

death is enacted by multiscalar, heterogeneous agencies, from institutional political power, the actions of groups or movements, to individuals' everyday acts, which cause the systematic and sustained exposure of certain lives to conditions that diminish their vitality. The river's slow death attests to a systematic lack of care, materialized in the absence of adequate sanitation infrastructure upstream and downstream, the lack of effective action to stop companies large and small from dumping pollutants in the river, and the displacement from the collective imaginary of ancestral and popular cultures of riverhood. The accretion of toxic discharges on a gradual, protracted, everyday basis performs the temporality of slow death, which normalizes egregious harm within sociocultural imaginaries to the point that, paradoxically, it seems both perfectly banal and utterly outrageous.

The normalization of slow death manifests in news reports (often published on May 12, "Day of the Bogotá River") that stage counterpoints between polluted waters and the under-construction Canoas water treatment plant, set to open in 2029. With 30% of wastewater treated by the Salitre plant, Canoas is to process the remaining 70% of Bogota's sewage, filter solid waste and metabolize organic matter. Even as media reports turn attention to the river, the emphasis on large-scale sanitation infrastructure, extensive public policy, and transnational capital acts to the detriment of small-scale local and community initiatives engaged in river stewardship. This is shocking when we consider that even into the early twentieth century some inhabitants of Bogotá remained connected to the river through domestic, leisure, and social activities such as bathing, washing, sailing, and picnicking.[36] Now, slow death debilitates cultures and practices that value banks and waters as gather-

36 A virtual exhibition offers a fascinating visual and historical narrative of this shift. See Stefania Gallini, Laura Felacio, Angélica Agredo, and Stephanie Garcés, "The City's Currents: A History of Water in 20th-Century Bogotá," *Environment & Society Portal*, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2014, no. 3. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6295 (accessed April 1, 2024).

ing spaces. The enduring instrumentalization of the river as infrastructure hinders understandings of the watershed as a hydrosocial metabolic whole, a hydrocommons whose health requires a multiscalar, multisectorial culture of care. This could be achieved by installing water treatment infrastructure through the whole watershed, imposing legal instruments to control toxic discharges, and conducting citizen awareness campaigns to cultivate riverhood.

Care Coalitions, Curatorial Collaborations

Even as this systematic lack of care has taken hold of the watershed, the decades of lobbying that led to the *Sentencia del Río Bogotá* are proof that many still felt deeply attached to the river. The 1990s were a key period in citizen self-organization to protect its ecosystems. Following recognition of Colombia's ethnic groups as subjects of rights and political actors in the Constitution of 1991, Mhuysca groups began seeking official recognition and expanding education and cultural practices that included reigniting deep spiritual connection to water bodies in the region through *pagamentos* (offerings).[37] The year 1993 saw the creation of the Fundación La Conejera, a coalition of actors working for the defense, protection, and restoration of the eponymous wetlands in Suba, northern Bogotá. In 1994, Fundación Al Verde Vivo was founded to study the watershed's ecosystem and carry out ecological restoration projects, also initiating a series of river navigations (in 1997, 1998, 2001, and 2015) that have disseminated and denounced pollution in the media. Also in 1994, the Fundación Ecológica Granja El Porvenir was founded to advance the restoration of the cloud forest, practice organic farming, and promote environmental education in the Tequendama area between the middle and lower

37 For a timeline of citizen actions, see *entre*—ríos, "Línea de tiempo," RÍO BOGOTÁ, 2024, https://entre-rios.net/linea-de-tiempo/ (accessed April 1, 2024).

basin. Many more coalitions have continued to form over subsequent decades, advancing ecological restoration and conservation, permaculture, Mhuysca self-governance, environmental education, ecotourism, and heritage work.

The RÍO BOGOTÁ project stemmed from our encounters with a group of citizen-led coalitions whose work caring for the river advances understandings of the watershed as a hydrosocial metabolic whole. Their actions not only improve socioenvironmental conditions; importantly, they also reclaim spaces for grassroots cooperation and citizen agency in determining ecological wellbeing. Our project addresses how curatorial work can amplify awareness of this culture of care as valuable metabolic literacy work, asking: What forms and mediums could ignite connections between river caretakers working in the watershed? How might disseminating their work encourage others to reconnect to an ailing, but ultimately living river?

These questions grew out of a trip to Bogotá in August 2022, when we reactivated fieldwork paused during the COVID-19 pandemic two years earlier. We organized visits to Soacha, where we had been working with Diego Piñeros García and the Escuela de Pensamiento Ambiental y de la Paz Humedal El Charquito. We met curator Juliana Steiner, whose project *Ecotone* (part of Bard College's Center for Human Rights and the Arts program) supports the reactivation of ancestral water management, food traditions and amphibious cultures in the urban wetlands of Suba, Bogotá, and the Sesquilé Mhuysca council.[38] After the fieldtrip, we connected with doctoral researcher Laura Giraldo-Martínez, who works on upper basin community water management in the *River Commons* research project at Wageningen University.[39] Our decision to collaborate came

38 In Suba, Juliana collaborates with artist María Buenaventura and landscape architect Diego Bermúdez, and many others, on *Zanjas y Camellones*, see *https://zanjasycamellones.com/* (accessed April 1, 2024).

39 *Riverhood* and *River Commons* are two five-year research projects that focus on enlivening rivers, river co-governance initiatives, and new water justice movements, see https://movingrivers.org/ (accessed April 1, 2024).

from a shared concern for the watershed's health, an impetus to connect and disseminate the work of river caretaking initiatives, and a desire to cultivate holistic approaches to rivers as rich and complex webs of life, where plants, animals, people, affects, and memories all mingle.

In February 2023, we travelled from the river's source to the start of the lower basin at Tequendama Falls to meet with and listen to collectives at six different locations, who we later gathered at the *Piquete del Río Bogotá*. This fieldwork and subsequent trips to spend time with collaborators have given rich and inspiring insights into how highland woodland restoration, ecotourism, environmental education, local heritage research and dissemination, Indigenous education and governance, wetland defense and protection, food sovereignty initiatives, and organic food production, all contribute to supporting life in the watershed.[40]

Our trip began with the Pedraza family in Villapinzón, a few kilometers downstream from the source. Retired schoolteachers, Efraín and Leonor, and their daughter Claudia, are actively involved in community aqueduct management and organic farming; they run an organic produce service and ecotourism start-up with cabins and a restaurant on their land. Living close to the páramo, they are deeply aware of preserving this vital ecosystem and protecting the entire watershed. On the border of the protected páramo, intensive potato production starts to contaminate the land with toxic chemicals, while a few kilometers downstream the river enters an urbanized area for the first time, where untreated sewage and domestic waste from houses that flank its banks pour into it, before it flows on to receive chemicals from the industrial tanneries and flower nurseries. In Suesca, we met members of Manos a la Cuenca, a coalition of academics from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, school-

40 These stories are included in the publication; see Lisa Blackmore, Laura Giraldo-Martínez, Diego Piñeros García and Juliana Steiner, eds., *Cómo cuidar un río* (Bogotá: *entre*—ríos, 2023).

teachers, community councils and cultural organizations who work to restore micro basins to improve the local hydrology and water retention in the soil.[41] Nearby, in the Cabildo Mhuysca, an Indigenous settlement founded in the 1990s in nearby Sesquilé, we met with community leaders and attended a seed blessing ceremony and *círculo de palabra* (community assembly) staged to mark the start of the agricultural year in observance of ancestral practices rooted in reverence for land and water.

In Bogotá, we visited the protected wetlands area, the Reserva Forestal Thomas Van der Hammen, established in 2000 in Suba, where the *Zanjas y Camellones* project has reactivated Mhuysca ancestral technologies of raised-bed agriculture through a transdisciplinary collaboration of art, archaeology, landscape architecture, and curating guided by Mhuysca elder Abuela Blanca Nieves. The encroaching urban development that towers over the low-lying wetlands strikes a dramatic contrast there, demonstrating the riverine ecosystem's ongoing enclosure by a city that ignores the important natural water filtration work done by the wetlands. This counterpoint between city and wetland reflects ongoing tensions between infrastructural plans and community resistance against the building in the reserve, which maintains a vital biological and hydrological corridor between the Cerros Orientales mountain range and the Bogotá River.[42]

The penultimate point in the six locations was the Escuela de Pensamiento Ambiental y de la Paz Humedal El Charquito (EPAP—School of Environmental Thought and Peace). EPAP was founded in 2018 as a community initiative to restore the wetland in the village of El Charquito, which sits above the now-obsolete hydropower plant that first produced electricity

41 Through Laura's networks and doctoral research, we soon learned that this vocation of care and place-making underpins collaborations with other agents in Suesca, including the cultural foundation Fundación Silbido de La Montaña, who recover culinary heritage and offer filmmaking training to young people; the Asociación Solidaria de Recicladores Unidos por Cundinamarca ASORUC, who foster recycling culture; and the Fundación Al Verde Vivo (mentioned above).
42 Two recent projects blocked from advancing in 2023 were an extension of the Avenida Boyacá highway and Lagos de Torca, a proposed housing project.

Fig. 5: Reactivating the communal *chagra madre* (the communal seed garden) at the EPAP, July 22, 2023. Photo by the author.
Fig. 6: Roof of Casa Museo Salto del Tequendama, circa 2011. Photo from *El Castillo de Bochica* (Bogotá: Fundación Ecológica Granja El Porvenir, 1999).

for Bogotá. Here, at the most polluted point of the river, EPAP maintains a community allotment providing organic seeds for more than thirty families to grow food, enhancing possibilities for collective self-determination.[43] They also run bird-watching expeditions and weekly craft sessions that have re-rooted the community in a territory that is perceived—on their account—as a place where nobody would want to live because of the smell of the polluted river. Their removal of invasive common brush and planting of more than 800 native trees have also restored the wetland so the water they take from it to irrigate the communal garden is both healthier and more abundant than when the initiative began.[44] In El Charquito, they live in awareness that they are eating the Bogotá River watershed: irrigating their plots with water from the wetland they protect makes their native, organic crops taste even sweeter.

43 On the links between food sovereignty and collective self-determination, see Powys Whyte, "Food Sovereignty, Justice, and Indigenous Peoples."
44 We obtained proof of this during a visit on July 22, 2023 with our colleague Luis Alejandro Camacho, from the Universidad de Los Andes, who measured water quality at three points in the wetland.

Our final stop was to meet María Victoria Blanco and Carlos Cuervo, directors of the Fundación Ecológica Granja El Porvenir and Casa Museo Salto del Tequendama. Tequendama Falls is one of the most emblematic points of the basin and the most polluted; it features prominently in Muysca narratives about ways of living in Bogotá's flooded savannah and is an icon in Colombia and beyond, conjured with awe by the likes of Alexander von Humboldt, Frederic Church, and Pablo Neruda in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, today, as the river plummets 157 meters down the waterfall, it rises again in clouds so toxic they eat through wire fences.[45] María Victoria and Carlos have been restoring the cloud forest in fourteen hectares of former livestock pastures for some thirty years and, in 2011, they purchased the building overlooking the falls. Initially, this construction opened in 1923 as a train station, before serving as a hotel and restaurant until its closure in the 1980s, when tourism stopped amid the river's pollution. The building and falls became notorious as a modern ruin and suicide site, but María Victoria and Carlos countered this negative perception by restoring the former site into a museum—Casa Museo Salto del Tequendama. Their sustained lobbying resulted in the Casa Museo being designated a National Building of Cultural Interest in 2018 and the Salto del Tequendama (Tequendama Falls) being declared Colombian Natural Heritage in 2019.

One story María Victoria and Carlos shared became a touchstone of tenacity and hope that resonated with anecdotes other caretakers throughout the watershed had told with us. When they acquired the Casa Museo, María Victoria and Carlos hired an architect to guide the restoration. Her first recommendation was to fumigate the roof, at that point covered with plants that had grown unchecked during the building's abandonment, irrigated by the vapor rising from the contaminated river. They refused. Where some saw ruin, they saw life enduring and flour-

45 Johanna Gómez Márquez from the EPAP shared this information during a visit to the Granja Ecológica El Porvenir in early 2023.

ishing. They called in the fire department and a local school, raised ladders, and created a human chain: firemen lowered the plant-laden tiles, passed them to students, who loaded them on transport to be taken to the cloud forest restoration project at Granja El Porvenir. There, more hands planted each tile's specimens, and the roof became a forest. Today it is a mature, verdant, humid woodland—a pasture transformed into mist that births clean water, flowing down the steep hillside to join the Bogotá River, quenching it with new life.

Setting the Table

On that final day of our trip along the Bogotá River, we lingered at Tequendama Falls, hypnotized by the torrent of contaminated water. Our eyes prickled with the pollution, but none of us wanted to leave. A few days later, we met to imagine a way of gathering the river caretakers and envisaged a communal lunch on the terrace at the Casa Museo, with the Tequendama Falls as backdrop. There, the Bogotá River is especially hard to swallow—*difícil de tragar*, as the Spanish expression goes. It is a paradoxical sight and site: the most aesthetically sublime landscape, yet the water is the most contaminated with industrial, agricultural, urban, and domestic pollutants. Today, lining the roadside, informal barbecue stands sell *arepas* and corn on the cob, and people stop there to take selfies at the cascading falls; but few stay for long.

There is a joke that our RÍO BOGOTÁ collaborator, environmental engineer Luis Alejandro Camacho, never tires of telling in talks and on fieldtrips. Evoking the importance of the Bogotá River watershed as a strawberry-producing hub, he jests that when people buy the traditional plastic cups filled with fruit and Chantilly, they are not eating *fresas con crema* but *fresas con cromo*—strawberries and *chromium*, not strawberries and *cream*. This play on words evokes the heavy metal discharged into the river by leather tanneries, which then seeps into the

Fig. 7: Employees from Compañía de Energía Eléctrica de Bogotá (EEB) dine on the banks of the Bogotá River. Image source: Grupo Energía Bogotá, https://www.enlaza.red (accessed April 3, 2024).

succulent red berries through the water used to irrigate them. Luis' dark humor reminds us how eating always implicates our bodies in the hydrosocial metabolic exchanges that connect human political, cultural, and economic institutions with nonhuman lives and ecosystems. Toxicity is part of the metabolic relations in the Bogotá River's food networks, but in our curatorial discussions, Diego reminded us of other possibilities. He unearthed archival images of historical *piquetes*—informal and formal riverside picnics where people gathered to feast on local produce from the watershed. We imagined a contemporary piquete overlooking the Tequendama Falls, an uncanny vision that would pay tribute to the waterfall's iconic gravitas, while generating inevitable unease at the combination of cooking and contamination. Our idea was that this performative and ritual feast would amplify the realm of possible relation with the river, evoking specters of former piquetes to revive the possibility that the river might again, one day, summon people to its banks to celebrate its abundance.

We invited anthropologist Cristina Consuegra and artist Carlos Alfonso to research, design and cook a menu for the *Piquete*. The two have collaborated over several years on research into native food cultures and biodiversity through cooking as a practice of creating what they conceptualize as "mutual worlds."[46] Cristina had already produced a publication highlighting the importance of piquetes in the Tequendama region as a celebration of life that springs from the watershed.[47] With Cristina and Carlos, we returned to organic plots along the river, retracing the trip from the páramo, via Sesquilé and El Charquito, to the terrace at Tequendama Falls where the *Piquete* would take place. They were speechless. We did not know each other very well then, but Carlos approached us and, in his soft and gentle voice, ventured to ask: "Hey, but can you really eat here? I mean, the pollution is really intense. Don't you feel it? It's really inhospitable." The inhospitable nature of the Falls was important because instead of looking away from the river, our *Piquete* would be a way of *staying with the trouble*, to use Donna Haraway's term—a performative act of ingesting the river in order to embody mutual, metabolic imbrication in its waters.[48]

In a later meeting, when we were debating the feasibility of this plan, Diego reflected that "It's the crisis that's summoned us. Symbolically, it's important to take action from the most critical place." I agreed: "The Falls are the point where all our lives and bodies have already poured into the river. The river is what we hold in common and what holds us in common." David Medina, the project's digital designer, agreed, adding: "From adversity, you can begin to direct an arrow towards the future. Not by idealizing the river, but by dreaming together about pos-

46 Alfonso and Consuegra, *Mundos mutuos.*

47 Cristina Consuegra and Diana Pizano, *Piquete campesino de tierra templada* (Bogotá: self-published, 2016). The research was done also in collaboration with Rosana Cerere and Jennifer Rodríguez.

48 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

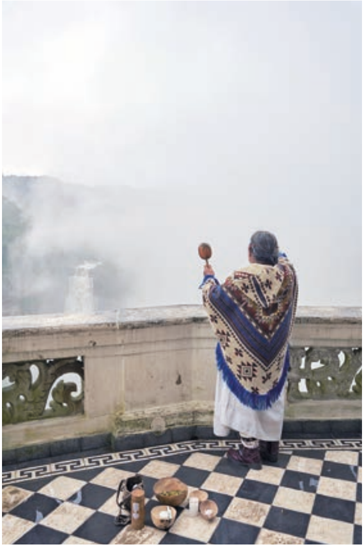
sible futures." Cristina spoke of *slow hope*, an ethos, inspired by Christof Mauch, she cultivates with her partner Gerrit and their son Silván, which names a practice of patient actions, a ferment that proliferates life, if we tend to it.[49] Against the systematic lack of care that has exposed the river to slow death, slow hope named an alternative praxis of affective attachment and commitment to tending to the fragile flourishing of life. Laura shared that in Suesca they insist that "the river is living fertilizer," a generous way of understanding its capacity to generate life precisely through the organic material it carries in it. Carlos picked up this thread and proposed we think metabolically about giving precedence to foods "that are life-giving for us and give life to the river." Reflecting on the abundance of life-giving care he had witnessed in how people tended to their vegetable plots, he said: "We have to do the most we can with whatever's on hand."

These ideas became the compass for a menu guided by an emphasis on the ways that water, plants, and humans feed positively into each other. Carlos and Cris began reaching out to our six collectives and collaborators in the upper and middle basin, co-creating ideas with members of the caretaking initiatives who would gather at the *Piquete* to eat dishes that incorporated ingredients grown by themselves and others. These dishes mixed native species, ancestral traditions, memories, and hopes for life in the river basin. There were *many hands in the dough*, as the saying goes in Spanish.

Digesting the *Piquete*

The day came, and it rained. But Abuela Blanca Nieves, a Mhuysca elder from Suba, cleared the mist with a *pagamento* (offering) of her heart to the spirits of trees and owls, the mist

49 On slow hope, see Christof Mauch, "Slow Hope: Rethinking Ecologies of Crisis and Fear," *RCC Perspectives 1*, (2019), pp. 1–43.



Figs. 8–9: *Piquete del Río Bogotá*, April 26, 2023. Photos: Gabriela Molano. Courtesy of *entre*—ríos.

and river kin. The *Piquete* began with a ritual act of metabolic literacy. Each diner held a *totumo* (a bowl made from an ancestral fruit) filled with water collected a few kilometers from the river's source, where it still runs clear. Carlos invited them to pour the water into their hands, "a gift from the páramo," and let it seep into their skins. Cristina recited the text on the menu: "Downstream, fresh water from the source flows into you. With you united here, the regeneration of the watershed flows upstream," reaffirming the spirit of reciprocity with which we aimed to connect the gathered diners to the river and to each other through food.

Cristina and Carlos conscientiously researched, crafted, and presented the menu to conjure practices of care for land and water to which each of the six collectives and initiatives are committed. As they narrated the menu dish by dish to the diners, we served the spread that traced *taste-ways* from the river's source to the waterfall below us, connecting points along the

Fig. 10: *Piquete del Río Bogotá*, April 26, 2023. Photo: Gabriela Molano. Courtesy of *entre*—ríos.

basin through ingredients and recipes. The *caldo de río* broth made of trout, tubers, and nettle, evoked the tradition of riverside soups (*sancocho*) cooked in cauldrons on wood fires. Jennifer's banana-leaf wrapped *tamales*, made with rabbits raised at María Victoria and Carlos' Granja El Porvenir and herbs foraged in the páramo, paid tribute to traditional piquete fare. Don Efraín showed everyone how to eat the warm potato and peas, sucking the green spheres straight from their pods as he had done as a young boy in the upper river basin. Ancestral, fermented *chicha* and *masato* drinks arrived from the Mhuysca community in Sesquilé and with Abuela Blanca Nieves from Suba. From Suesca, Nathalie brought cakes made with native tubers, a culinary innovation made through the Fundación El Silbido de la Montaña's research into food heritage. Rosita's *envueltos* (boiled corn puddings wrapped in leaves, a recipe that combines traditions from her native Santander and El Charquito—where she lives just meters from the river), were sweet and generous, like her. And there was much more, served on raw terracotta dishes, made with clay extracted from lands in the Magdalena River basin, which the Bogotá River flows into at the end of its course.

Each person had a sheet of paper with two questions set before them on the table: What reflections and sensations did eating the Bogotá River bring to you? How did it feel to meet other people dedicated to the river? People shared the happiness of sitting "by a very sacred place," that "the river, for us, is life, food, wealth," and that eating it inspired them to reflect about "abundance, the living territory, knowledge that comes from territory, life that sustains life, the world of possibilities that the river offers and the relationship with it." The abundance of life that flourishes through the river basin, and gratitude to the river, resonated through many responses. "How wonderful to feed on the abundance of our beloved River. What pride in true wealth. What a desire to continue growing food and being part of this abundance. Thank you for so much love, to the hands that planted and prepared this food: it fills the heart," wrote one

diner. "I find it incredible that so many different flavors, colors, shapes and sensations of products are generated around the river to be consumed around people committed to the cause of its recovery," wrote another. For another diner, eating the river simply "makes you want to take more care of the river, which is what gives life to that sacred food and drink."

Food for Thought

The Bogotá River is often represented as an abject object—an *other* within the watershed's communities. It is no longer a gathering place but an infrastructural problem only to be solved through hydroengineering. Reincorporating the river into public imaginaries as part of a hydrocommons must counter this act of othering that implies it is not worthy of affective attachment or the quotidian labor of care. In this chapter, I have explored eating as an aesthetic medium that might enhance metabolic literacies and galvanize cultures of care, reciprocity, and accountability among communities working to protect the watershed. Within this, the *Piquete del Río Bogotá* contested the river's slow death by re-animating a spirit of riverhood through the tradition of celebrating food and recipes from the watershed. The *Piquete* staged a performative act of *eating the river* as a literal way to incorporate the watershed's role as a hydrosocial metabolic whole and common concern—a precious support system for the relational web of life. Through its abundant menu, long table, ceremonial spirit, and the iconic backdrop of the Tequendama Falls, the *Piquete* engaged feasting as a culinary register to honor this abundance, and to amplify the cognitive dissonance sparked by the idea of dining at this incredibly polluted yet sublime point. Through this dissonance, the event stayed with the problem of the river's pollution, while insisting through its culinary spread that the river is not dead, but that life continues to flourish when the watershed is tended to *carefully*. Becoming "locavores" of the watershed's complex hydro-

social reality stressed the contentious imbrication of humans in the ecological health of its ecosystems but also gave material expression to the rich culinary traditions that have shaped life along the river basin and its banks.

The potentiality of *eating a river* reaffirms the capacity of food and commensality to reorient ecological relations toward less anthropocentric modes of engagement and to embrace embodied epistemologies. As philosopher Annemarie Mol recently wrote in *Eating in Theory*, eating can be a mode of knowing that troubles problematic separations of nature and culture through the literal incorporation of other lives, and difference, since while "Knowing is usually framed as following from a subject's engagement with objects of knowledge perceived from a distance [...] in eating foods, the known objects become incorporated into the knowing subject. This makes for the transformation of both object and subject."[50] Through this meeting of worlds and mutual metabolic worlding, eating is a mode of doing and relating that also stirs bonds of kinship and companionship. This became clear in the *Piquete.* Savoring the abundance of life through its menu offered a moment to connect through commensality, drawing the river inwards and inside into intimate relation by ingesting the fruits of the territories through which it flows. It also sparked a collective sharing of stories of care and slow hope practiced in river stewardship, as well as the frustration and anger caused by the political, economic, legislative, and cultural forces that perpetuate the river's slow death.[51]

What the *Piquete* also made clear was that imagining and enacting the hydrocommons demands significant physical, ecopolitical and affective labor. Small-scale initiatives alone will not decontaminate the Bogotá River, but their work is fun-

50 Annemarie Mol, *Eating in Theory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), p. 4.

51 To hear these testimonies, see *Pulsos del río Bogotá* (*Pulses of the Bogotá River*; 2023), https://entre-rios.net/pulsos-del-rio-bogota/ (accessed April 1, 2024).

damental to creating the metabolic literacies that can energize other ways of relating to and through the watershed. The *Piquete* showed us that eating as a mode of knowing and relating can support and galvanize that work. We still remember the reactions of our friends in El Charquito when we told them about the plans to gather collectives, produce, and recipes from the upper to middle basins at Tequendama Falls. "Tell them to bring capitán fish!" they exclaimed, referring to the endemic species that was once the staple diet of the Mhuyscas who grew food and fished on lands now subsumed into Bogotá's urban sprawl, but that because of pollution can now only survive in the highland source. Spoken from a place beside the river's contaminated flow, this exclamation anticipated eating as *embodied knowing* of the watershed and being in metabolic relation. The excitement it conveyed thus ultimately speaks of the affective potentialities of eating as a way of relating and perhaps of even conjuring alternative horizons when the capitán might venture downstream again.

This conjecturing of potential futures through food networks recalls a point that Aymara thinker Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui makes in a 2015 interview, where she appreciates the English idiom "food for thought," because of the deep connections it infers between eating and thinking, metabolizing and relating. These connections form part of a "process of wonderful mental composting" activated when thought occurs at the confluences of practice, activism, and embodiment—a poetics (rather than an ideology) of thinking that germinates action.[52] Eco-cooperative action is ultimately what the RÍO BOGOTÁ project, as an engaged form of curatorial practice, seeks to uplift, in the knowledge that action is conjugated more forcefully and joyfully in the plural than the singular. Of course, the diners

52 Huáscar Salazar Lohman, "Entrevista a Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui: Sobre la comunidad de afinidad y otras reflexiones para hacernos y pensarnos en un mundo otro," *El Aplante: Revista de Estudios Comunitarios* 1 (2015), pp. 141–168, here p. 148.

at the *Piquete* already knew this. In conversations around the table, Juanes Botello, a young organic gardener from the EPAP in El Charquito, shared how the experience of eating together reaffirmed his reasons for starting his organic garden:

> This is one of the reasons why I started to advocate for native produce and changed my diet … it makes me feel connected. It makes me feel part of the exploration of flavors … and here I am exploring them, delving into that vast, culinary world. … I thought it was a dream … Being able to share such an ample and generous meal you've prepared, feels very special, very fraternal.

At the end of the meal, Carlos Cuervo, co-director of the Casa Museo Salto del Tequendama where it was held, also celebrated how eating together could disseminate alternative ways of imagining the river as an emergent hydrocommons, as he toasted how "starting from today, we will begin to tell a common story. Today marks the first day of this new history, of all the stories that have not yet been told."[53]

Eating a river, feasting on it, thus also tilled ground for potential future actions of ecological cooperation as the people gathered around the table recognized their common purpose and mutual affinity for the river. Shared affinity for specific ecosystems is precisely the *affective potentiality* that Rivera Cusicanqui identifies as a stimulus for ecopolitical cooperation and care-giving action. Rather than along ideological or national territorial lines, she notices how coalitions are forming through a sense of kinship to river basins, mountain chains, hills, and forests they feel summoned to defend, dubbing these groups "communities of affinity."[54] Crucially, she argues, such affinities can improve socioenvironmental conditions, since the peo-

53 These two testimonies are part of the film *Piquete del Río Bogotá* (2023), https://entre-rios.net/piquete-de-rio/ (accessed April 1, 2024).

54 Huáscar Salazar Lohman, "Entrevista a Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui: Sobre la comunidad de afinidad y otras reflexiones para hacernos y pensarnos en un mundo otro," *El Apantle 1* (2015), p. 143–165.

ple who "react to a polluted river [...] are the communities of doing that can urge another type of action [....]."[55] The extent to which the community of affinity assembled by the *Piquete* can become a community of cooperative doing beyond their individual initiatives depends on group synergies, dispositions, and on our future curatorial work's capacity to nourish the will to connect and act. There is no room here to discuss all the activities that have unfolded since the *Piquete*, but it is worth mentioning a few collaborations that followed, including the broadcasting of podcasts that Claudia Pedraza recorded that day, and visits that members of the EPAP made to Sesquilé to learn about composting techniques. The RÍO BOGOTÁ project itself continues to grow out of the *Piquete*, sustaining a spirit of cooperation through the co-creation of films, a publication, and a digital platform that disseminates (literally, scatters the seeds) of that initial culinary encounter.[56]

As a reflection on ecological cooperation through curatorial practice, this essay also overflows the immediate space-time of the *Piquete* insofar as it engages wider conversations about the extent to which environmental humanities research and practice can make meaningful, tangible contributions to crises like the pollution of the Bogotá River.[57] The value of the field lies in its potential to "inhabit a difficult space of simultaneous critique and action" where it invents *forms* of critical and creative work that inspire public engagement with ecological challenges and crises by imaginative work that make constructive contributions to tangible realities.[58] Curatorial practice itself does not do the tangible labor of river care; but, when ori-

55 Salazar Lohman, "Entrevista a Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui," p.155.
56 RÍO BOGOTÁ is hosted at http://entre-rios.net/rio-bogota (accessed April 1, 2024).
57 See Lisa Blackmore, "Cultivating Ongoingness Through Site-Specific Arts Research and Public Engagement," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 31, no.1 (2022), pp. 159–176, and Caroline Levine, *The Activist Humanist: Form and Method in the Climate Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023).
58 Deborah Bird Rose et al., "Thinking Through the Environment, Unsettling the Humanities," *Environmental Humanities* 1 (2012), pp. 1–5, here p. 3.

ented to ecological cooperation and water ethics, it has a valuable role to play in advocating for transitions to care-oriented water cultures that can ensure the ongoingness of watersheds. Ultimately, this is the aspiration behind staging an act of eating a polluted river: the desire to *supplant* the pessimism and apathy of slow death by *planting* cultures of riverhood that put into practice the metabolic literacies cultivated on and beyond the *Piquete*'s dining table. To attend to growing and eating food, and celebrating native, organic produce, is to cherish the values that are embodied and enacted in the work of *tending to* the cultivation and flourishing of life. Etymologically, to "tend to" evokes the Old French *tendre* and Latin *tendere*, which trace embodied, affective, and committed acts of care. The ethical disposition of inclining toward, stretching, offering up, directing oneself, and holding a course is mirrored in the motions of sowing, watering, pruning, harvesting, cooking, serving, sharing… A whole choreography of abundance and tenacity amid adversity is danced in vegetable plots and kitchens along the course of the river, sketching a practice of care-full work for fragile, abundant, interdependent worlds.