

HIDROTÓPIAS

Floriana Cândea
Ioana Vreme Moser
Pepa Ivanova

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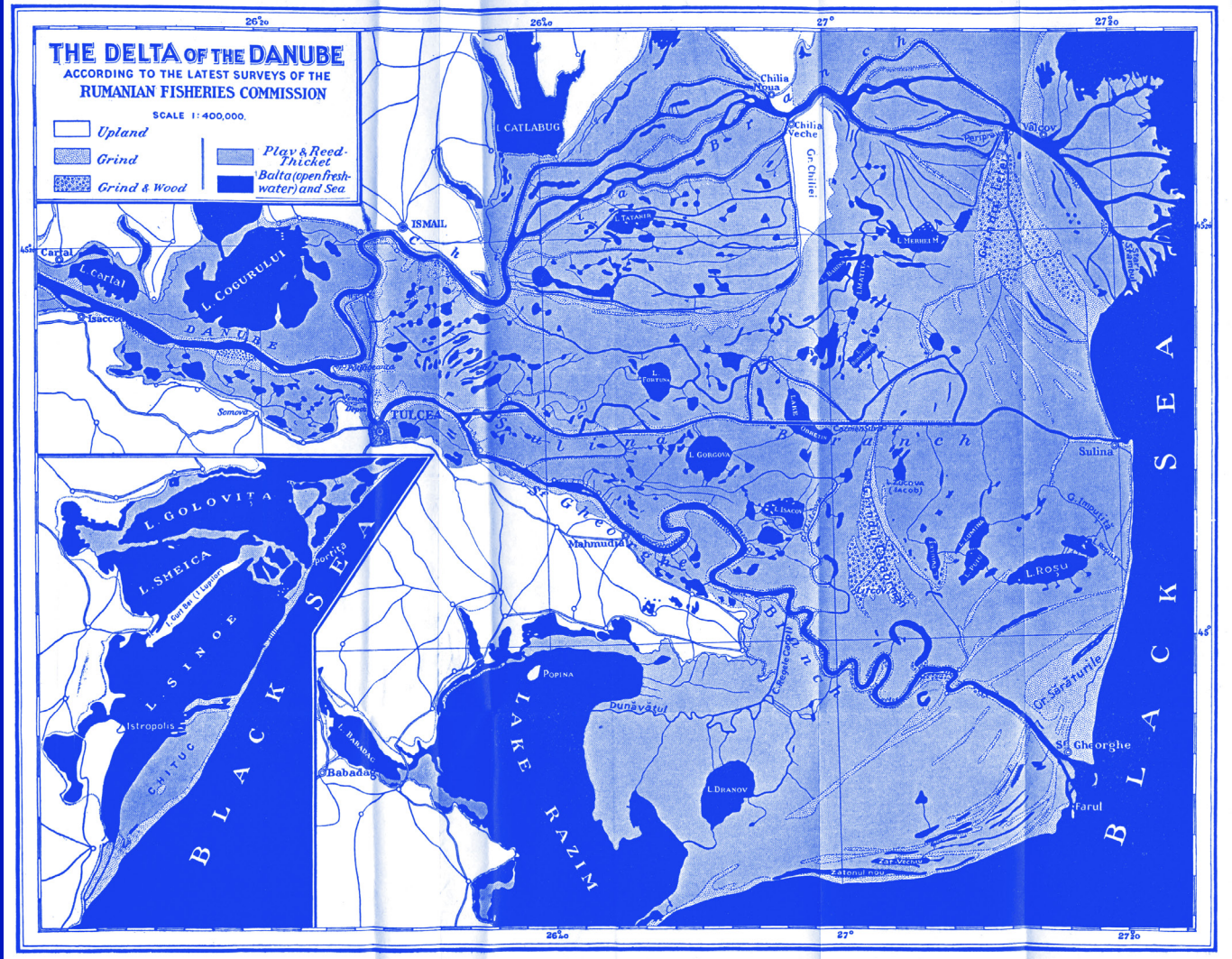
Hidrotopias explores alternative perspectives on the ecologies of the Danube Delta through the eyes of artists Floriana Candea, Ioana Vreme Moser and Pepa Ivanova, whose different practices and knowledge are brought together in this exhibition. The project builds on a series of site-specific researches conducted by each of the artists around the Danube river, its delta and the Black Sea.

For *Hidrotopias*, the research residency, which reunited them in April 2026, was focused on the village of Sfântu Gheorghe and its surroundings; the group was accompanied by geographer Dr. Ștefan Constantinescu and nature guide Razvan Crimschi, who played a major role both in guiding the conceptual development of the artistic projects and in the logistical arrangements necessary for field experiments. The residency was documented by Andreea Udrea who filmed the individual and collective research processes.

A HIDROTOPIAS STORYLINE.

It started with the premise that not one narrative can encompass the complexity of ecosystems in one given territory. The dominant trend in thinking remains focused on the fragmentation of concepts and disciplines, resulting, on the one hand, in the objectification of the elements around us (including ourselves) and, on the other hand, in placing human beings at the center of the world, which makes it difficult to adopt a cross-cutting view of it. Observing, identifying, defining, measuring and even predicting, place us in a position of control over our environment.

Thus, even within an ecosystem - which, by definition, is a network of interconnections among living communities that influence one another as well as their environment - we tend to adopt this mindset. The complexity and richness of what actually constitutes an ecosystem make it very difficult for our minds to grasp; we have therefore



["Dr Antipa's map of the delta of the Danube",
The structure and history of Plav, Marietta Pallis, 1916, plate 25]

learned to distance ourselves from it. The field of ecology developed in the 19th century, studying nature and the relationships of interactions between living beings and their environment. An environment that is in a constant cyclical state of movement and transformation, whose mechanisms are both invisible and tangible, and which is dynamic by nature.

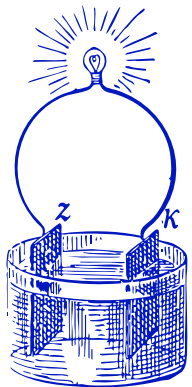
A feedback loop that implies that each cycle is inevitable, yet unpredictable. Despite the existence of this field, human interventions kept on occurring throughout the 20th century, primarily in the form of infrastructure projects, that dramatically affected the Danube river landscape and provoked irreversible impacts on its delta. Dams, intensive channelization for maritime transportation, but also urban developments and industrial complexes that need a nearby body of water in order to function

properly. These constructions failed to take into account the environment's actual needs and disrupted the process of natural cycles in favor of economic growth and financial prosperity. More specifically along the Danube, agriculture, the metallurgical industries (iron, steel), and energy production are among the main sectors of activity. In addition to the impacts on the river's course and life, these human activities have influenced the morphology of the entire delta region: sediment deficit, coastal erosion, associated pollution, etc.

IMPURITIES AS A SOURCE OF ENERGY?

This is the starting point for Ioana Vreme Moser's project *Danubian Filaments* that *Warble Buoys* is part of. The project consists of building a fluid computer based on the cartography of the Danube Delta, highlighting the impacts of the industries related to digitalisation (power, raw materials, semiconductors) from the upstream part of the river to the delta. In order to do so, it was important to determine whether there were indeed traces of heavy metals and other particles in the delta's waters; we know that heavy metals are present, and even visible to the naked eye in the sands along the Black Sea coast, but it remains difficult to accurately assess the link to any specific industry. Impacts exist, but everything stays speculative here. The idea of building a series of sensors emerged, and this is how *Warble Buoys* came to life.

It is inspired by 2 publications: *Elektrotechnisches Experimentierbuch* by Eberhard Schnetzler and *Zweiter Vortrag* from 1909, that is a practical guide for building batteries; it describes experiments conducted with galvanic current and more precisely the conductive properties of saltwater (as sodium favours energy discharge) through pieces of brass, zinc or copper. And the patent N. 4,153,757 from *Method and Apparatus for Generating Electricity* by William T. Clark from 1979, which is a complementary explanation on the electrochemical process.

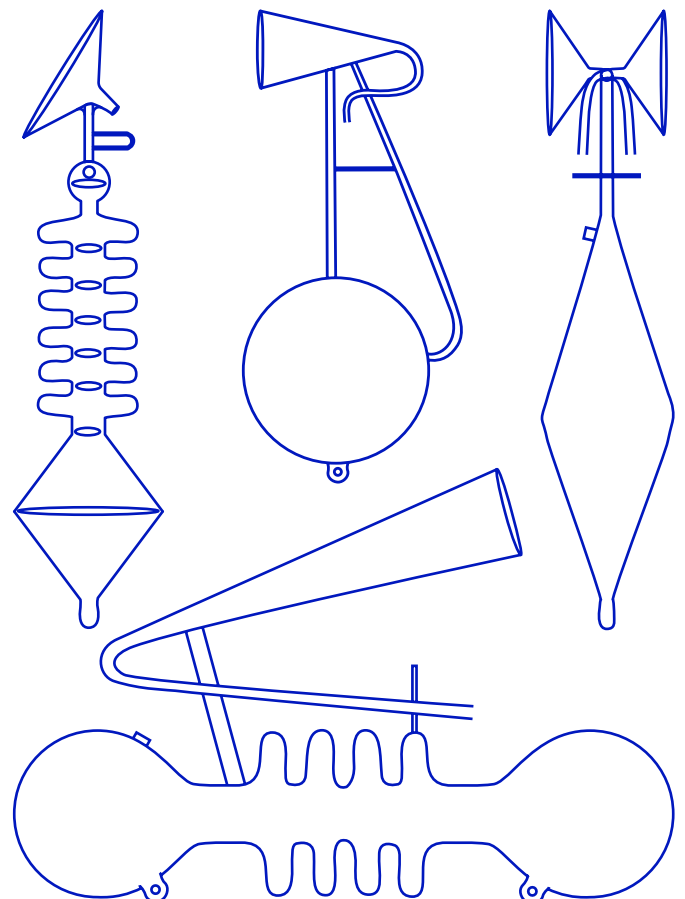


[Abb. 38. Darstellung des galvanischen Stromes. *Elektrotechnisches Experimentierbuch*, Eberhard Schnetzler, *Zweiter Vortrag*. Der Galvanische Strom, 1909]

So as Ioana assembles an oscillating circuit from obsolete minimal parts, she connects it to a submerged probe that generates electricity from the salinity levels and the particles present in the water, thereby demonstrating that the more impure the water, the higher the power density is likely to be. The entire device generates an electronic sound whose rhythm and intensity vary according to these parameters. The sound is then amplified by the glass structures, themselves inspired by older models of water buoys and electrical insulators. The choice of glass echoes the sands of Sfântu Gheorghe, which have absorbed heavy metals through flowing sediments. After some experimentation in the surrounding canals of the village to identify the perfect spot, *Warble Buoys* went afloat.

As the sculptures were drifting, the Danube water became part of the circuit, re-establishing a sense of balance, revealing and internalizing its composition, regardless of its state. Like an unexpected bonus, they blended in the soundscape as local birds responded to them, - a Savi's warbler, a common reed warbler, and a great tit - the sounds mimicking the birds' chirping.

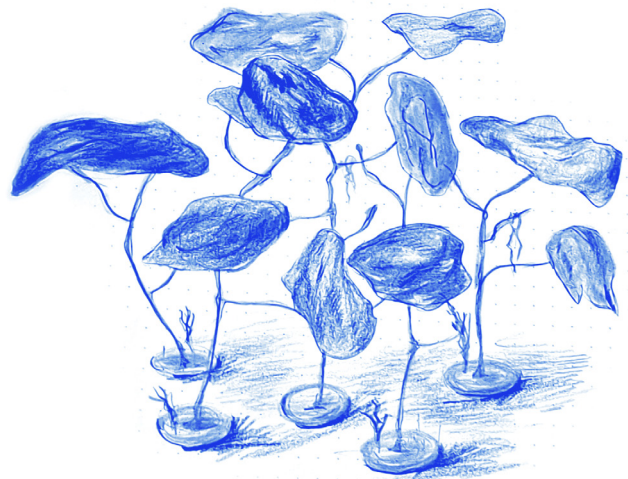
Spontaneously, the experience turned into an in-situ performance in which the sculptures and nature simultaneously took the spotlight ; they offered to the river a poetic composition where the boundaries between electronic sound and birdsong, glass and sand, impurities and energy, blurred and merged, creating a metaphorical space and a fleeting moment of symbiosis.



HUMAN BEINGS, INVASIVE SPECIES

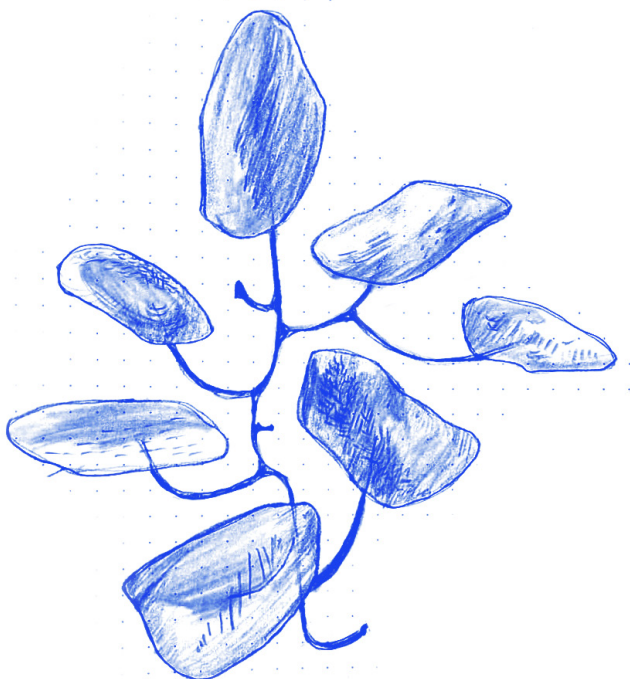
Seas are generally exploited just like any other body of water ; they play a crucial role in terms of natural resources, food, and transportation, and are used as a disposal space for all kinds of waste and extractions. Unlike all other seas, only about 10% of the Black Sea is inhabited, as its oxygenated surface layer does not extend beyond a depth of 150 meters. On top of that, infrastructure projects that have altered the Danube region also impact the Black Sea, leading to an overall increase in pollution and water temperature in time. Adaptation and coexistence in continuously transforming waters are the challenges addressed by Pepa Ivanova's project *Eat That Invasion*, through the concept of invasion and the metabolic capacity of maritime territories.

For instance, the ctenophore *Mnemiopsis leidyi*, or comb jelly, first appeared in the Black sea in the 1980s, carried in the ballast water tanks of cargo ships from the western Atlantic Ocean coast. This insatiable creature caused an ecological disaster by devouring large amounts of the native species' larvae. Its population is now controlled, thanks to a similar introduction of *Beroe Ovata*, another comb jelly that feeds on the *Mnemiopsis*. The rapana venosa, a predatory sea snail native to Japan that appeared around the 1940s, shares a comparable story. As a result of their abundance, these invasive species have found their way onto our plates and become a major income for trawling fisheries. Along with them, waste water, and pollution (chemicals, plastics, oils, etc.) have found place in the project in the form of speculative recipes that serve as ecological warning.



It reimagines a future in which we might have to incorporate invaders into our diet due to the lack of other options.

After collaborating with oceanologists and chefs in Varna, Pepa needed to understand a little more about the culinary traditions, the fishermen's habits and catches, and invasive species of the Danube Delta; *Sea on pieces* features various types of seawater encapsulated in glass sculptures that harbour algae blooms, sea foam, plastic waste, and chemical pollutants, caused directly by human activity and indirectly by global warming, but also clear water as an analogy for balance and symbiotic co-existence. The objects can be activated into serving vessels for the project's recipes.



And as the project demonstrates, the main responsible for all these phenomena is the human being, driven by commercial and geopolitical interests that triggered a domino effect of consequences across space and time. This validates the question that first sparked in the artist's mind: are we truly the greatest invasive species the Earth has ever known? The answer is most certainly yes.

“I BREATHE, THEREFORE I AM”

With this quote, the philosopher Luce Irigaray disputes the idea that the action of thinking makes our existence undeniable, it is rather the action of breathing. This is a powerful statement, as it underscores that everything that breathes, both individually and collectively, is connected by the air it shares. We, human beings, are an integral part of the environment, and therefore, an ecological and breathing cycle.

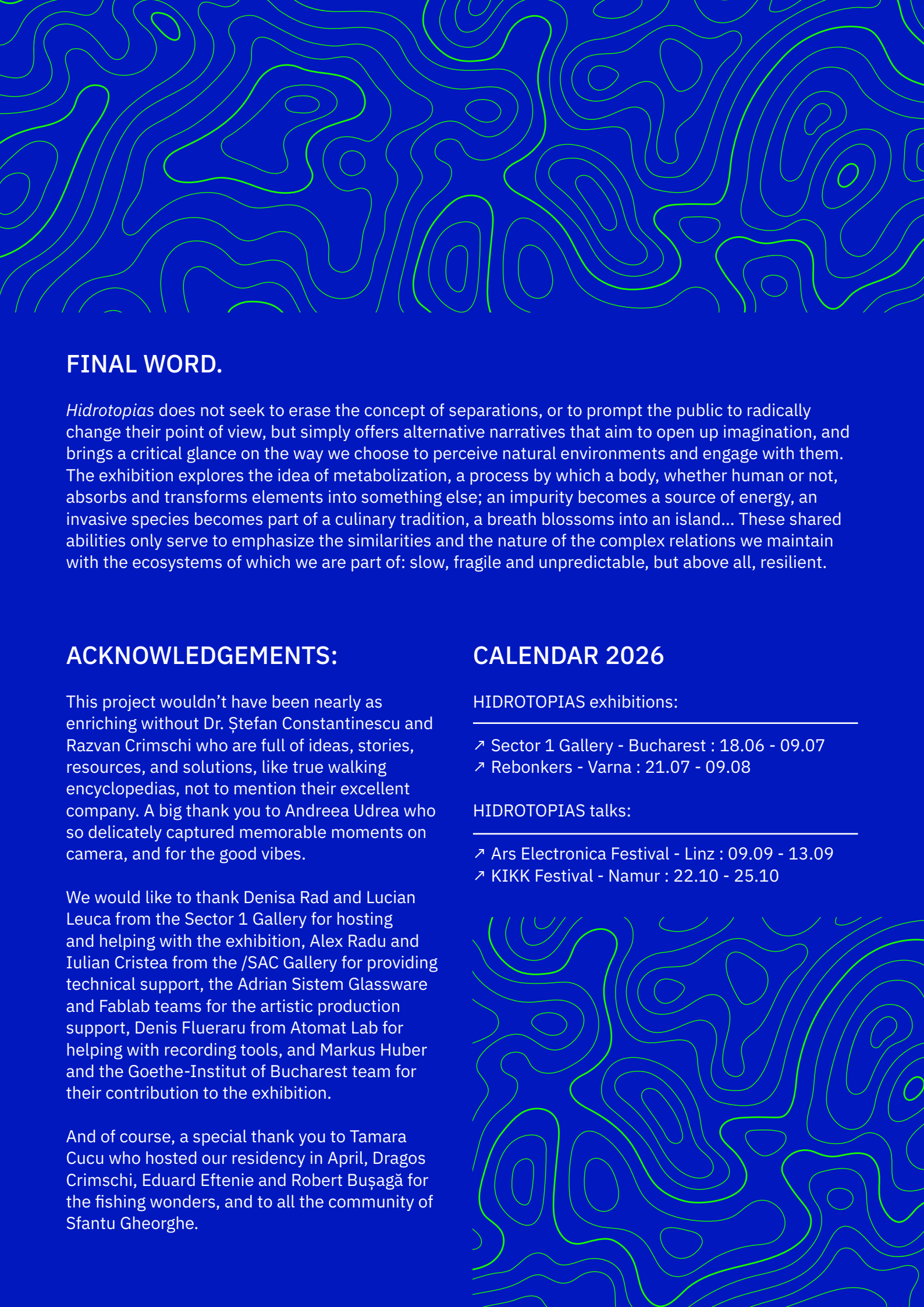


“Two pieces of the Sherneshenko Sahi Plav turned upside down, near Lake Rosulet”, The structure and history of Plav, Marietta Pallis, 1916, plate 14

Floriama Candea’s *Neural Bloom* draws a representation of this concept through the floating reed islands the Danube Delta occasionally spawns. They are a floating mass of vegetation and peat, a space where water, air and organic matter constantly blend, and become home to birds, insects or fish. They aimlessly and irregularly drift according to the wind and water currents, catching any elements (including debris such as plastics) that come their way which causes them to grow, sometimes to the point of completely obstructing canalways. In the early 20th century, ecologist Marietta Pallis studied the floating reed systems of the Danube Delta. She found that, once disassembled, they cannot

be identified anymore as a floating reed island, and therefore cannot be classified. Nor can they be fixed, as they are in perpetual motion and their boundaries are vague. They are semi-autonomous and dynamic systems influenced by an entanglement between respiration, the decomposition of organic matter, and air movement, which requires patience and observation rather than intervention. In this sense, she has come to the conclusion that a “benign” ecology in which wetland systems are not viewed merely as objects of study but as alternative forms of knowledge to be integrated, is more relevant.

Inspired by both Marietta Pallis and Luce Irigaray, the project proposes to explore the floating reed systems as a transitional space of coexistence and a breathing environment. Floriama observed them, collected reeds and samples from them, and tested the air sensors’ response she would need for her work. The installation itself is a hybrid of organic and artificial matter, composed of actual reeds, roots, and technological dispositives, which mimics respiratory chain reactions through different scenarios that can be activated by the public. It highlights and materializes our individual capacity to influence a shared collective environment through simple gestures, as well as our relationship to it. Beyond that, *Neural Bloom* questions how we position ourselves in relation to the concept of ecosystems and suggests that our perception plays a crucial role in the way we shape the world around us.



FINAL WORD.

Hidrotopias does not seek to erase the concept of separations, or to prompt the public to radically change their point of view, but simply offers alternative narratives that aim to open up imagination, and brings a critical glance on the way we choose to perceive natural environments and engage with them. The exhibition explores the idea of metabolization, a process by which a body, whether human or not, absorbs and transforms elements into something else; an impurity becomes a source of energy, an invasive species becomes part of a culinary tradition, a breath blossoms into an island... These shared abilities only serve to emphasize the similarities and the nature of the complex relations we maintain with the ecosystems of which we are part of: slow, fragile and unpredictable, but above all, resilient.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This project wouldn't have been nearly as enriching without Dr. Ștefan Constantinescu and Razvan Crimschi who are full of ideas, stories, resources, and solutions, like true walking encyclopedias, not to mention their excellent company. A big thank you to Andreea Udrea who so delicately captured memorable moments on camera, and for the good vibes.

We would like to thank Denisa Rad and Lucian Leuca from the Sector 1 Gallery for hosting and helping with the exhibition, Alex Radu and Iulian Cristea from the /SAC Gallery for providing technical support, the Adrian Sistem Glassware and Fablab teams for the artistic production support, Denis Fluerau from Atomat Lab for helping with recording tools, and Markus Huber and the Goethe-Institut of Bucharest team for their contribution to the exhibition.

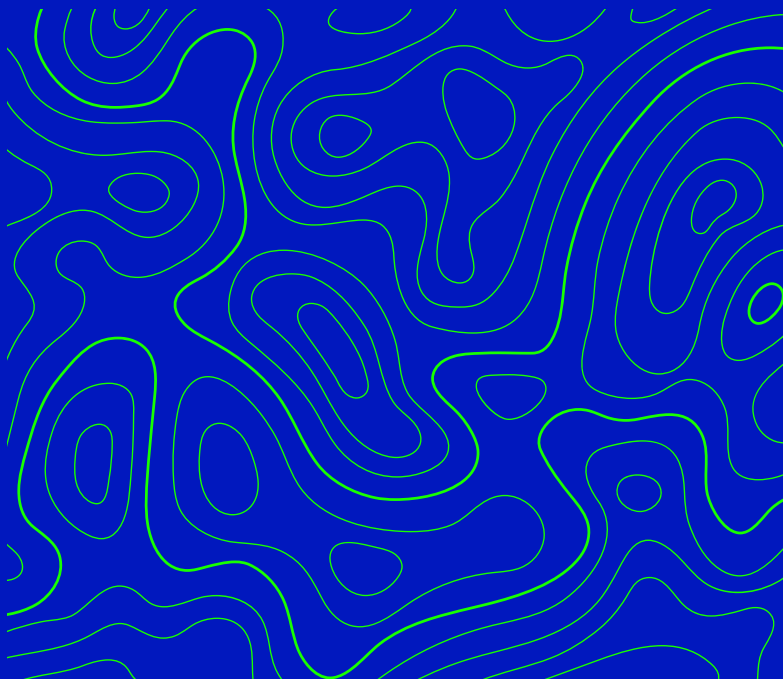
And of course, a special thank you to Tamara Cucu who hosted our residency in April, Dragos Crimschi, Eduard Eftenie and Robert Bușagă for the fishing wonders, and to all the community of Sfântu Gheorghe.

CALENDAR 2026

HIDROTOPIAS exhibitions:

- ↗ Sector 1 Gallery - Bucharest : 18.06 - 09.07
- ↗ Rebonkers - Varna : 21.07 - 09.08

HIDROTOPIAS talks:

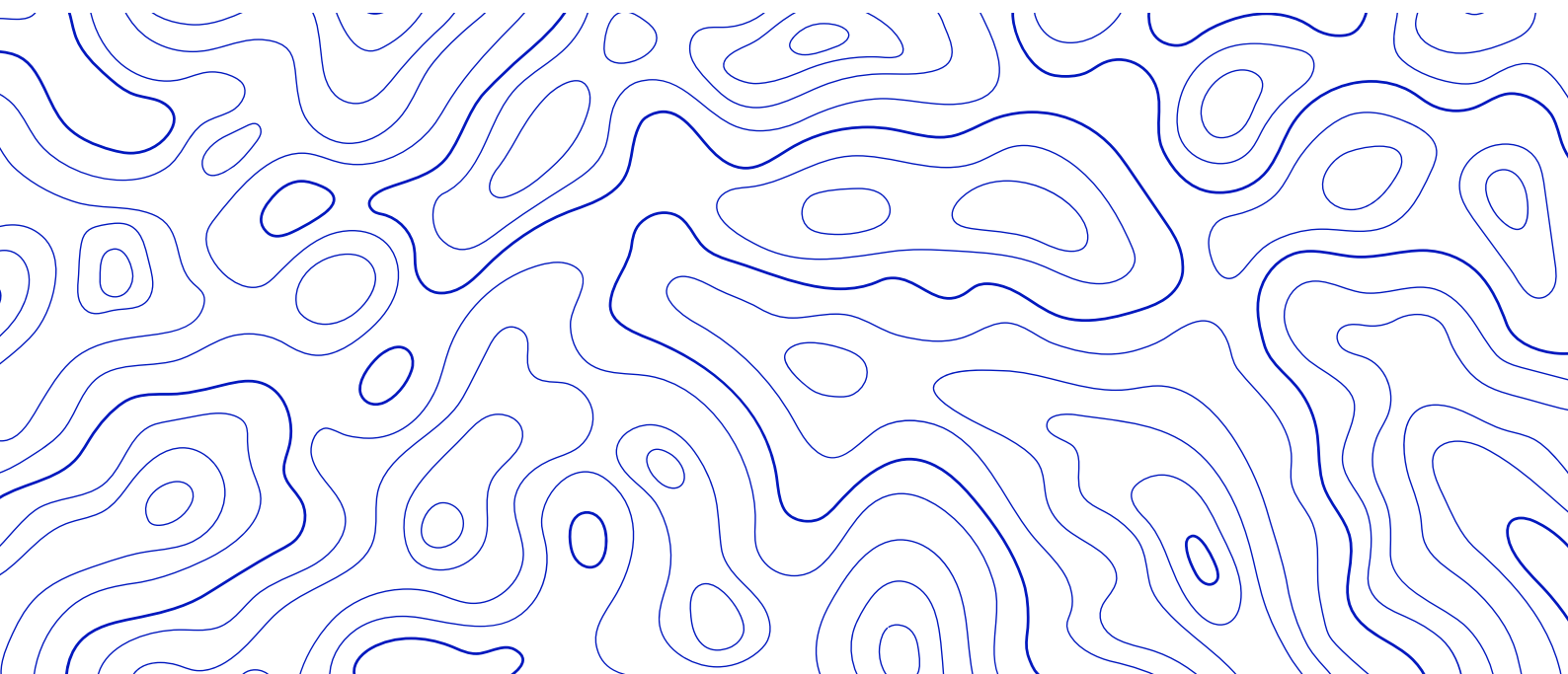
- ↗ Ars Electronica Festival - Linz : 09.09 - 13.09
 - ↗ KIKK Festival - Namur : 22.10 - 25.10
- 



Ioana Vreme Moser is a sound artist and researcher interested in electronics, the materialities of sound, and tactile experimentation. She works with electronic circuits, repurposed components, and raw technological processes, bringing them into dialogue with her own body, organic matter, found objects, and environmental stimuli. These encounters give rise to sonic worlds that reflect on the history of electronics, their production chains, technological waste, and the relationships between industrial infrastructures and the living world. Her practice unfolds at the intersection of research, experimentation, and sound composition.



Pepa Ivanova investigates the interconnected factors that contribute to the balance of marine ecosystems, while exploring the polluted ecologies of the Black Sea, she designs speculative culinary recipes that warn about futures that may or may not come. Interested in the epistemological values of scientific, observational data and modes of knowledge production, Pepa often initiates art-science collaborations. She works with digital technologies, custom electronics, sound, performance, living matter, and materials such as porcelain and glass. Through installations composed of objects, light, and sound, she explores adaptation, transformation, and relationships between species.

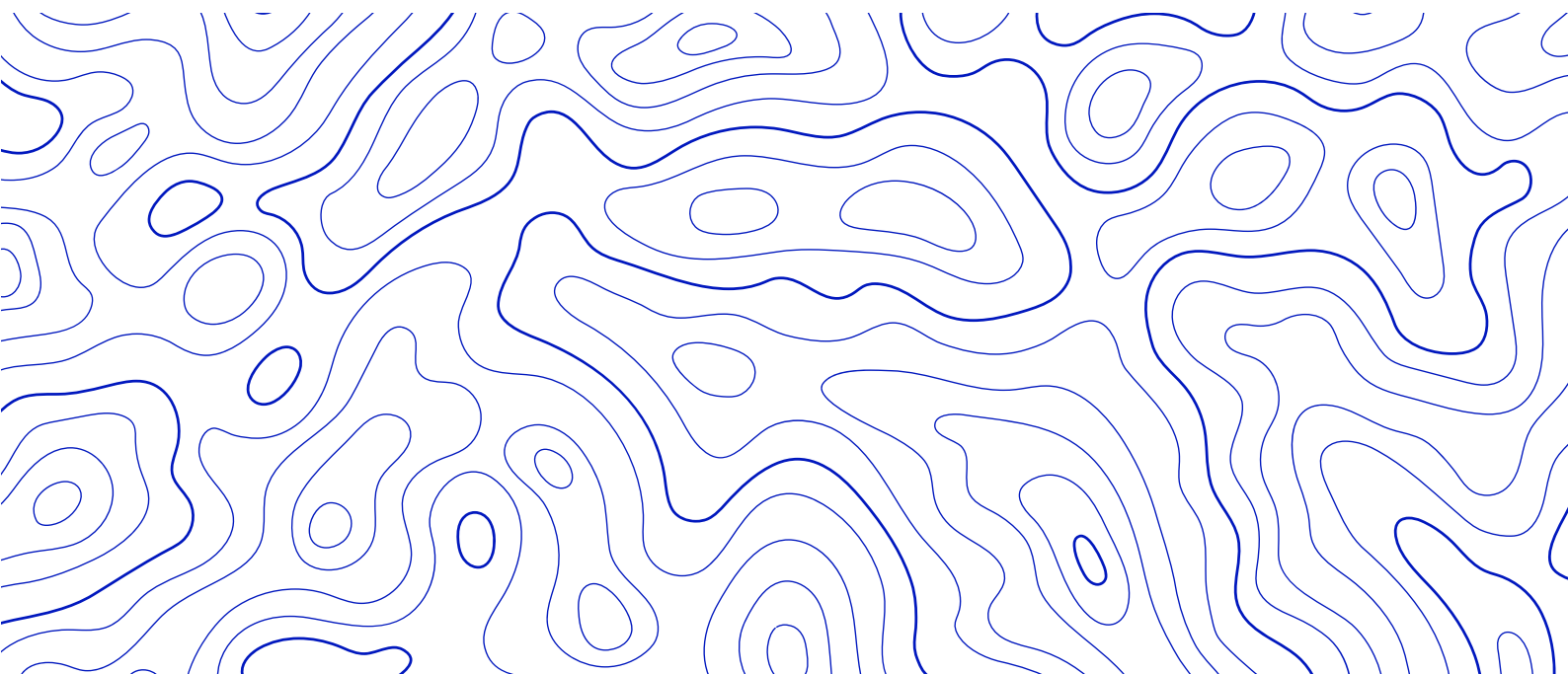




Floriama Căndea explores the relationships between objects, systems, and the ways we perceive them, creating hybrid identities at the intersection of nature and technology. Her practice spans interactive, kinetic, and video installations, sculpture, experimental electronics, drawing, and printmaking, alongside experiments with bio-based materials. Interested in the connections between science, philosophy, and technology, her work investigates the ecological and cultural implications of the Anthropocene and the possibility of new forms of coexistence. Guided by curiosity and a speculative approach, she moves between artistic research, living systems, and emerging technologies.



Răzvan Crimschi is a local nature guide in the Danube Delta and a keen observer of the region's ecosystems. For more than two decades, he has navigated its labyrinth of waterways, witnessed the Delta's transformations, and shared its stories with visitors, researchers, and artists. His work combines practical field knowledge with a deep understanding of local biodiversity, helping connect people to the rhythms and processes of this unique territory.





Ștefan Constantinescu is a researcher and lecturer at the Faculty of Geography, University of Bucharest, where he teaches Historical Cartography, GIS, and Oceanography.

His background is rooted in coastal geomorphology and the study of deltaic systems, with a particular interest in the relationship between landscape, history, and cartographic representation. For him, maps are not merely tools for orientation, but complex forms of knowledge that bring together geographical, historical, and cultural information.



Andreea Udrea is a documentary filmmaker, video journalist, and founder of Unda Film. With a background in psychology and documentary film directing, she develops projects that explore the relationship between individual experience and social context. Her work spans independent film production, reportage, interviews, and audiovisual campaigns. Her documentary projects have been developed and presented internationally, and her most recent film, *The Wind Blows Where It Pleases*, received funding from CNC Romania.



Diane Pricop is an independent cultural producer and co-founder of Obsolete Studio, an initiative dedicated to supporting artists and researchers working at the intersection of environmental, social, and technological challenges. Her practice focuses on the development of art-science projects, including residencies, exhibitions, publications, and educational programs. Through her work, she facilitates interdisciplinary collaborations and contributes to building future-oriented contexts for artistic research and production.

Disclaimers:

"Hidrotopias" is co-funded by the National Cultural Fund Administration (AFCN) with the support of Goethe-Institut Bukarest. The project does not necessarily reflect the views of the National Cultural Fund Administration. The AFCN is not responsible for the content of the project or for how the project's results may be used. These are entirely the responsibility of the grant recipient.

"Warble Buoys" (Danubian Filaments) is supported by STARTSAQUAMOTION which is co-funded by the European Union under the STARTS – Science, Technology and Arts initiative of DG CNECT (GA no. LC-03568055). Views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or DG CNECT. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

"Neural Bloom" and "Sea on pieces" (Eat that Invasion) are Funded by the European Commission through TIDAL ArtS, a Horizon Europe project contributing to the EU Mission to Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030.

Qolony is a nonprofit organization based in Bucharest, Romania, dedicated to fostering connections between art, science, and technology. Drawing inspiration from self-organizing bacterial colonies, Qolony serves as a metaphor for the vibrant diversity of human thought and the decolonization of knowledge. It aims to organically generate a collaborative network, a vital bridge between professionals in these fields. Qolony is guided by the belief that transdisciplinary practices are the foundation for the development of innovative ideas, contributing to the building of a more inclusive and sustainable future. To this end, Qolony actively supports and facilitates various events, such as exhibitions, conferences, artist-researcher discussions, and artist residencies, all centered on the intersection of scientific research and artistic creation.

Exhibition text by Diane Pricop - Obsolete Studio
Biographies by Floriana Candea - Qolony
Graphic design: Stefan Manole

More info at qolony.eu

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