

r i f t



Agnes Denes, *Wheatfield - A Confrontation*
Manhattan May 1, 1982 – Sep 30, 1982
(Photograph: artist's website)

The water I will draw tomorrow from my tap in Malibu is today crossing the Mojave Desert from the Colorado River, and I like to think about exactly where that water is: I particularly like to imagine it as it cascades down the 45-degree stone steps that aerate Owens River water after its airless passage through the mountain pipes and siphons... my own reverence for water has always taken the form of this constant meditation upon where the water is, of an obsessive interest not in the politics of water but in the waterworks themselves, in the movement of water through aqueducts and siphons and pumps and forebays and afterbays and weirs and drains, in plumbing on a grand scale.

Joan Didion, *Holy Water*

Landscapes, towns and cities have been physically shaped by the resources that we use. Activities associated with the transportation of food, fuel and water into and out of settlements leave their traces. They are legible in place names, expanses of paving and built structures; from the scale of a city-wide sewer to a shopfront railing that protected against herded cattle. The exchanges, past and present, that make everyday life possible are hidden in plain sight.

Our society, with these complex interdependencies, relies on expansive networks for basic resources: food, water, clothing, energy, knowledge, relationships. This has been a long-term transformation that is not just a social phenomenon but a cultural and spiritual one too. We have become disconnected, physically and

psychically, from the natural world and from each other. The health of the economy and individual consumption has been prioritised above the natural world and collective well-being. This so-called 'metabolic rift' has rendered us "cognitively blind to the health of the living systems of which we are a part".¹

Our cultural explosion, our vast numbers, our technology and the resources we consume create imbalances affecting all other life-forms on earth. The genetic evolution of these life-forms is much slower than our cultural evolution and cannot keep up with the changes we have created... Damage has been done to the earth, the environment and to human principles

Agnes Denes, *Book of Dust*

In this project, you are invited to look for historical traces, current networks and potential connections to nature and human community in your environment. This should present an opportunity to personally reflect on how design research and practice might inform or benefit the relationships between human society and the wider world.



Caruso St. John. Town Square, Stortorget, Kalmar, Sweden, 2003.
(Photograph: architect's website)

You are asked to create two interdependent pieces of work.

IMAGE 01: The first is a map. This map might be on a global scale, mapping the journey of your daily food, the trip made by your bottled water or clothing. On a national or local scale you might map food growing in your town, or neighbourhood, imagine the flow of water as it drains from your sink or the street, record the insects and animals that share your environment, or chart social interactions observed on a street. In an abstract space you might map your non-physical communications over a given day.

IMAGE 02: The second is a design proposal that seeks to intervene in, or reveal, your mapped space. This might be a proposed action or built spatial intervention. It might be at the scale of city infrastructure, or the scale of a body, plant or insect. It may be a site of repair, facilitating transformation. It might influence the means of knowing, learning about or valuing our resources, our connections and our relationship with the natural world.

¹ Thakara, p. 18, 155, For discussions of *Metabolic Rift* see also John Bellamy Foster re. Karl Marx.

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Also, see John Thakara's book, above

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