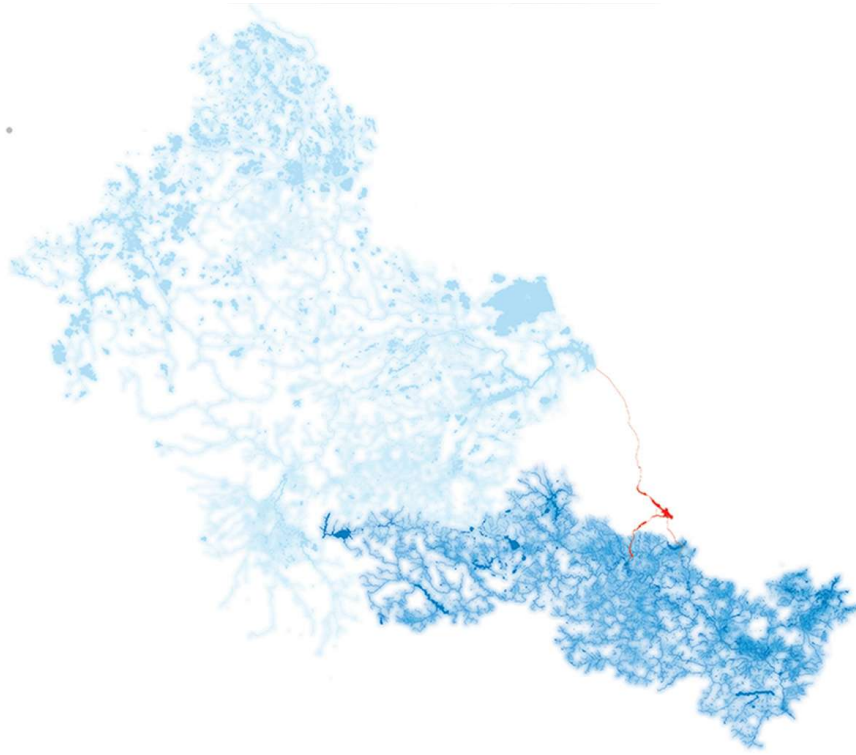


Anna Kamyshan

Voices (Towards Other Institutions) #24



'The Moscow river basin after the construction of the Moscow-Volga Canal. Red: the Moscow-Volga canal. Blue: the Moscow river basin. Light blue: the Volga basin.' Picture from The Moscow River Age exhibition, Milan Triennial, Broken Nature: Design Takes on Human Survival, 2019.

Being Friends With A River

Last year I read an article by Jason Moore that was basically a collection of all the possible scenarios we face with global warming. One of the predictions was a rapidly increasing number of different pandemics. So when the COVID pandemic started, the only thing that surprised me was the fact that the prediction came true so quickly.

When answering the question of *'How will we live together?'*, the most important thing is understanding what stands for the 'we'.

For several years I had been working for the The Moscow River Friends project. It is an artistic and educational initiative we started as a continuation of the Moscow River's urban redevelopment. In the name of this initiative, a hint is hidden: How can one be friends

with the river?

It is not a legal foundation, like friends of something,' where people are united based on a common interest. 'The Moscow river friends' stands for the possibility of friendship between a person and a river.

I believe that the possibility of this kind of friendship is, in a way, a form of answering the question 'How will we live together?'. There are several reasons for this.

First, it defines who WE are in a very concrete form: we are not only people but also different forms of life on earth, in different kinds of relationships with each other.

Second, it also includes an answer to part of the question 'How?', and the answer to this question is 'friendship.'

It may sound very hippy, but let's take a closer look at the example of friendship with the river.

What is friendship? It is a relation where that is beneficial for those involved, and at the very least harmful to no one.



'Eco-social regions. An Illustration from a children's geographical encyclopedia, *Odyssea*

Publishers, 2118. From the library of Anna Kamyshan.' Picture from The Moscow River Age exhibition, Milan Triennial, Broken Nature: Design Takes on Human Survival, 2019.

So each of us consumes water for drinking and washing. It is a vital need for people. From this perspective, the consumption of river water shouldn't harm the river.

But we know the situation of the Moscow river today. Using an anthropomorphous metaphor, we can say that the river's immune system for self-cleaning can't deal with the current conditions. Our consumption of the water harmed the river in a way that hurts our friendship with it. We are exploiters.

A simple marker for the friendship can be next: if you can safely enter the water of the river or even more - drink the water from the stream, it means the condition of the river is good enough, and your need from the river doesn't harm it. So you are in a good and mutually beneficial relationship.

Though it is very simple, I believe that this test works to a certain point. And I like that this kind of attitude towards other types of subjectivity — like rivers, forests and so on — all those life forms that are part of our existence, no less than other people, can help us (the people) live together in the future.

Anna graduated from the Strelka Institute and studied Social Science at the postgraduate program of the University of Manchester and MSSSES. She was leading the Moscow river redevelopment project in architectural practice Meganom in 2015-2019. In 2018, together with Yuri Grigoryan, Taisia Osipova, and Glafira Parinos, she co-founded 'the Moscow River Friends', an unofficial public organization. In 2019 she co-curated the Russian pavilion at the Milan Triennial, Broken Nature: Design Takes on Human Survival. The exhibition 'The Moscow River Age' was awarded the Wax Bee Prize. Currently, Anna is a Director of the Conceptual Department and Research Projects in Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center in Kyiv.

Anna Kamyshan
Being Friends With A River