

New wave

Water represents 65% of an adult's body weight and 70% of the globe's surface. Although these figures are well-known, they are still striking. Water is omnipresent on Earth, vital for our survival, and essential for all human activity. There are no cities without water. Yet, "the masters of unsustainable development have done everything to remove it. One century was all that was needed to render the surface impermeable", denounced the historian, André Guillerme, in *Le Monde* in 2010. In an era of global warming combined with soil hardening, an increasing number of floods and tidal waves endangers the contemporary city. A life source, water has become a threat, while remaining a resource that we must preserve. Cities' shapes are in keeping with these changes. Cities like New York, Hamburg, London, Malmö, Singapore, Christchurch in New Zealand, and even Lyon and Marseilles, which turned their backs on their shores, rivers and oceans, are now seeking to recover these coastal sites and highlight this vital element. For some, it is about transforming the city, for others about revitalizing it. Often, the challenge is twofold: containing the threat, while developing the resource. So, good-bye constructions that bury and channel. A new wave of know-how – inspired by ancestral techniques – inundates many projects. Hello to wetlands, recessed gardens, stormwater tanks. Raised platforms and constructions on piles multiply in the latest urban and architectural projects. The developments are designed around an element that is generally invisible. "Our work focuses on the water theme as a component of the project", emphasize Ter, landscape designers. Their younger colleagues of the French Babylone office share this approach. For them, working with this often hidden resource is a means of "finding the connection between us and the ground, the geography, the spirit of the site and everything that creates the quality of an urban space". Is this a revolution? It is more about going back to the source.

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