MARJETICA POTRČ
The Personhood of Nature

in conversation with
Nitin Bathla,
Santiago del Hierro,
Laura Turley,
Anna Wienhues,
and special guests

FS23 elective 1 ECTS credit www.topalovic.arch.ethz.ch
The 2021 referendum on water rights in Slovenia pointed to a shift in attitudes towards nature in contemporary culture: from a society of owners to a society of caretakers. In the eyes of a caretaker, a river is not an object but a subject. As a subject, its rights will eventually be recognized by law, which, no longer human-centred, will acknowledge the agency of nature. Who, then, is a river as a person, and what is our dialogue with it?

Can a river own itself? What does a river want? Marjetica Potrč explored these issues in a project for the 23rd Sydney Biennale (2022), in which she collaborated with the Wiradjuri elder Ray Woods, a caretaker of the Lachlan River in New South Wales. She will discuss Woods’s knowledge and practices and their similarity to positions taken by today’s environmentalists.