

IABR–2016– THE NEXT ECONOMY–

Press Release, 8 March 2016

IABR–2016 includes a focus on productive cities and on urbanization in Africa

Biennale presents a wide range of possible futures for the city of tomorrow

IABR–2016–THE NEXT ECONOMY is a plea for an urban economy that focuses on social challengeso an economy that is driven by meaningful employment, the sustainable use of natural and human capital, and that leads to greater social inclusiveness. The results of the research carried out in five long term IABR–Ateliers, the ones in Rotterdam and Brussels focusing on the productive city and exploring how Western cities can once again become platforms of the new manufacturing industry, are mainstays of the exhibition.

In the conviction that only collaboration in and between cities can realize the potential of the urban age, IABR–2016's program once again highlights rapid urbanization, this time specifically on the African continent. Under the heading *AfricaN What's Next?* sixteen projects showcase the challenges, opportunities and possibilities of African cities in the Next Economy and demonstrate what we can learn from the mostly informal and smallh scale initiatives.

IABR–Ateliers Rotterdam and Brussels

The IABR conducts ongoing research by design on existing urban challenges, organized in Ateliers, and buttressed by formal contracts with local, regional and national governments in the Netherlands and abroad. The themes the IABR puts on the agenda are translated into concrete design challenges and, subsequently, into plans, projects, and solutions that are both applicable and actually applied. An IABR–Atelier is a 'safe place for dangerous ideas,' says IABR director George Brugmans, who is in charge of the Ateliers.

Two of the five current IABR–Ateliers, in Rotterdam (The Productive City) and Brussels (Productive Metropolis BXL), examine how production and manufacturing could once again become an integral part of the city itself.

IABR–Atelier Rotterdam is a partnership between the IABR and the Municipality of Rotterdamm the lead designer is Daan Zandbelt, and the design offices involved are De Zwarte Hond (Rotterdam), L'AUC (Paris) and marco.broekman (Amsterdam). The main research question in Rotterdam is: how can the city and the region promote the manufacturing industry and contribute to an economy that adds local value and is circular and socially inclusive?

In Brussels, the aim of the Atelier is to create a better match between the next economy and the organization of space for innovative productive activities in the middle of the European capital. Atelier Productive Metropolis BXL is a collaboration of the IABR, Architecture Workroom (AWB) and Brussels and Flemish actors including the Brussels Capital Region, Ruimte Vlaanderen, the Public Waste Agency of Flanders (OVAM) and the Province of Flemish Brabant. The Atelier is headed by Mark Brearley (London Metropolitan University).

Both Ateliers explore how spatial quality and urban economy can reinforce each other and which factors can shape the productive city of the future. The outcomes are part of the exhibition, at which the dialogue about the productive city will continue. After the Biennale, the collaborating governments will implement the outcomes.

Partner Projects

The IABR–2016 exhibition also shows nine projects, which partners developed specifically for this Biennale. One of these is 'Connect the Dots' by the municipality of São Paulo. This project is a good¹ example of how smart governance and an integral approach can solve different social, ecological, and spatial problems in one go, in a manner that guarantees that the poor get access to the formal

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production processes in the city.

PBL, the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, presents an interactive installation that visualizes the geography of the productive work landscapes of the Next Economy in the Netherlands, based on an analysis of historical developments, long-term trends, and possible future disruptions in the economy or mobility.

Africa; What's Next?

IABR–2016 pays special attention to urbanization in Africa. Head curator Maarten Hajer invited guest curators Edgar Pieterse and Tau Tavengwa (African Center for Cities, University of Cape Town), and Mark Swilling (Centre for Complex Systems in Transition, Stellenbosch University) to put together a special selection of projects for IABR–2016–THE NEXT ECONOMY. Their selection focuses on the future of the African city under the heading Africa; What's Next?

Africa will face the strongest wave of urbanization in the world: a growth of 400 million city dwellers today to more than one billion in 2050. The continent therefore faces huge economic, social, and ecological challenges. To keep cities livable the continent needs good infrastructure that creates opportunities for work, well-being, and productive investment. However, many African cities are largely informally organized and only offer their inhabitants limited economic prospects.

According to the guest curators, outsiders are often mesmerized by a few high-profile developments and overlook the strength in the diversity of developments. The IABR therefore shows sixteen projects that jointly underline this diversity. On show is the new, large-scale Addis Ababa light rail, for instance, a European rail system built and financed by Chinese (government) companies. The exhibition includes private initiatives as well, for instance Kenyan mobile phone company Safaricom's M-PESA that allows customers to use their cellphone for banking. M-PESA is now also used to sell health insurance in the informal settlements. In addition, the exhibition showcases many new coalitions that enhance progress in the informal sector, like the iShack project in the Enkanini informal settlement in Stellenbosch (South Africa), where an ingenious interplay between the university, businesses and the district realizes the rollout of solar energy and offers people more security, better health, and a higher disposable income.

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During the weekend of 23 and 24 April 2016, the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (IABR) will kick off its seventh edition: IABR–2016–THE NEXT ECONOMY. Under the supervision of executive director George Brugmans and chief curator Maarten Hajer, an international Curator Team once again focuses on the future of the city, investigating the relationship between urban design and tomorrow's economy. Until 10 July 2016, IABR–2016 is a platform for debate and exchange between creative coalitions of designers, administrators, businesses, citizens, and other agents of change with fresh ideas and imaginations of the twenty-first century city, culminating in a closing debate on Sunday 3 July.

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NOTE TO THE EDITOR

For more information about the program, requests for images and interviews and to register for the press preview on Friday 22 April 2016 (11 a.m. – 5 p.m.), please contact press officer Nancy van Oorschot at nancy@iabr.nl or +31-6-41684324. Visit the [press page](#) of the website for downloads.