

DELTA ATELIER

The Netherlands and Flanders are both part of the same unique spatial system in the Rhine-Meuse-Scheldt delta, a densely urbanized area that plays an important part in the global economy. Here, the transformations and transitions we face today and in coming decades will manifest in their own, specific way, and therefore also require specific spatial strategies. This is why the IABR and Architecture Workroom Brussels, together with the Government Architects of the Netherlands and Flanders, have established the Delta Atelier.

The Delta Atelier aims to develop concrete prospects for action that will both reposition our delta as it faces the climate goals in the Netherlands and Belgium and create a laboratory for other deltas across the world. Knowledge sharing provides governments and local partners with internationally developed insights into the spatial challenges both countries share. While coupling local and regional challenges with replicable instruments that can subsequently be scaled and tested on a national and international level will create new opportunities.

Climate Goals

In its multi-year policy plan, *IABR 2017 – 2020: Towards a Resilient City*, the IABR focuses on the future of the city in the context of climate change and growing social inequality. Insofar as it can, the IABR wants to contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations and the climate goals stipulated in the Paris Climate Agreement. Good design and spatial transformation that factor in the ecosystem play a crucial part. And it is precisely in these fields that the IABR, as an architecture-cultural institution, can make a concrete contribution. We can only solve the world's climate issues if we first solve them in our explosively growing urban landscapes, where we now by definition use space at the expense of the ecosystem. Well-designed, socially inclusive, resilient cities and the way in which they are functionally and permanently embedded in the landscape and in the spatial system are major transition keys.

From Delta to Delta Atelier

Flanders and the Netherlands are both part of the same unique spatial system in the Rhine-Meuse-Scheldt delta. This system, interconnected in an urban, natural, and economic sense, is our gateway to the world. It is a 'golden delta' that, situated at the mouth of major rivers and on the North Sea and functioning as an intersection between north and south Europe, between the English-speaking world and the European continent, and as a bridge between Scandinavia and Western Europe, has been the basis for our leading position in the global economy and our high prosperity for centuries.

The revolutions and transitions we face today and in coming decades will manifest in their own, specific way, and therefore also require specific spatial strategies. A growing number of practices in the Netherlands and Belgium now recognize the need to add their own studies, (inter)national collaborations, and experiments to a collective narrative about the future and, on the basis of a shared ambition, to work more collectively on transition challenges. To make that transition leap requires an alternative work environment that can bundle the expertise, practical knowledge, and experience of different practices.

One step in that direction was the series *Designing the Future*, seven substantive work sessions organized from December 2016 to February 2017 by Architecture Workroom Brussels, the IABR, the team of the Flemish Government Architect, the Flemish Association for Space and Planning, and the Public Waste Agency of Flanders around urgent social themes that each explored the potential of research by design. On the basis of the conviction that very different people can have relevant experience, practical knowledge, and expertise, we deliberately decided to invite a very diverse group of people from both Belgium and the Netherlands to each session.

In the context of the IABR–2018+2020–THE MISSING LINK, the IABR and Architecture Workroom Brussels together with the Government Architects of the Netherlands and Flanders have next decided to embark on a further learning and development trajectory, the Delta Atelier. This Atelier wants to contribute to the acceleration of plans to implementation, to a collectively supported future perspective that is simultaneously very ambitious and modest. Ambitious, in the sense that we are effectively convinced of the strength of bundling, coupling and stacking insights and strategies, and of design and spatial transformations as levers for the realization of the necessary transitions. Modest, because we realize that we cannot nor should want to work towards a unique and definitive answer, and because we know that we will not be able to do all of this by ourselves.

Unlike in an IABR-Atelier, which is a practice that works on a specific local or regional challenge, the Delta Atelier therefore focuses on connecting practices, creating a learning practice, fostering theory in practice and vice versa, and finally also on testing in practice what is being developed in a joint learning environment. Research and researchers, design and designers, administrators and policymakers, doers and thinkers, implementers and customers, builders and citizens, the indigenous and foreigners, and professionals and audiences will join the Delta Atelier to work together.

This is why the IABR and its curators have published a *Call for Practices* rather than a *Call for Projects*. Subsequently, 30 very different practices from the Netherlands and Belgium were selected that will be coupled with the IABR-Ateliers and the research by design projects of the curators in the Delta Atelier. The result: for three years, more than 40 practices will actively collaborate to bridge the gap we named *The Missing Link*.

From Missing Link to Prospects for Action

The Delta Atelier addresses, dissects, examines, and identifies the 'missing link', looks into it and tackles it. We have to do things differently, and we can! That is the challenge in which design can play a crucial part, examining and imagining the future that we *can* want.

IABR–2018+2020–THE MISSING LINK focuses on the future of the delta that we *can* want in work groups, programs, and exhibitions. At the same time we see our delta as a laboratory for other deltas across the world, which often face even bigger challenges. In 2018 we will mainly focus on our own delta, but towards 2020 we will increasingly work on its connection with the world, and vice versa. This way, we will turn the delta into the laboratory for knowledge sharing and development that we announced in the Curator Statement.

The collaboration between the Netherlands, Flanders, and the Brussels Region provides governments and local partners with internationally applicable insights into the challenges the two countries share. We believe making intensive efforts to couple local challenges with replicable instruments that can subsequently be scaled and tested on a national and international level will meet with success, because this creates concrete prospects for action that will reposition our delta as it faces the climate goals in the Netherlands and Belgium, and as a laboratory for the world.

Program 2018–2020

Using the Curator Statement and the Research Agenda as a framework and starting point, the Delta Atelier program is organized in three steps.

The IABR–2018 is used to develop a joint work agenda. It includes eight work sessions and a work conference; the latter will be held during the final weekend in Rotterdam. A second work conference will take place in Brussels in the autumn of 2018, where we will close the IABR–2018.

Between 2018 and 2020 we will subsequently focus fully on the development and testing of methods and spatial transformations together with the practices. A third work conference will take place in 2019 in Rotterdam and intermediate work sessions will be held at various locations.

The aim is to further develop the argument, to bundle and unlock knowledge and thus collect the proof that we, as a Delta Atelier, want to put on the table of society and politics during the IABR 2020. Certainly during the exhibition and final conference in Rotterdam in 2020, but also in any other way the joint practices may want to develop together during the work process.