

IABR-2020-DOWN TO EARTH

**OPEN CALL
WATER AS LEVERAGE**

IABR-2020-DOWN TO EARTH OPEN CALL WATER AS LEVERAGE

The ninth edition of the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam, IABR-2020-DOWN TO EARTH, calls for the submission of proposals in response to challenges and questions formulated in this Open Call for the Water as Leverage exhibition (working title: Flows), one of the core elements of the 2020 biennale.

Prospective participants—including designers, architects, academics, artists, planners, activists, cities, universities, companies, and social organizations—are invited to respond to this Open Call, and submit their applications by **1 November 2019**.

Before submitting your project, please read through to the end of this document carefully.

IABR–2020–DOWN TO EARTH

IABR–2020–DOWN TO EARTH starts from the premise that we are facing the deepest crisis in human memory. We must urgently rethink the ways we inhabit the Earth, through real climate action, a new political orientation, and integrated planning. This is a design challenge entwined in a political struggle and the opportunity for cultural transformation. We must begin to think of ourselves and our work as a form of political activism, take stock of our capacity for real impact, and remake our disciplines to more purposefully tackle compound global challenges related to the climate crisis.

IABR–2020 seeks designs that directly confront these challenges that loom large, asking how design can:

- + Be an instrument for genuine social, political, environmental, and cultural change?
- + Draw connections across scales of space and time, and amongst the varied interests of different stakeholders?
- + Raise aspirations in savvy ways that connect with possibilities for real-world change, including making the choices it presents politically visible and actionable?
- + Make a physically and socially resilient city, and create a high-quality living environment founded on values of active civic participation, and engagement with diversity, sustainability, and equity?
- + Help to drive transformation at the unprecedented scale and speed required whilst also bringing everyone along via processes of inclusion and capacity building?
- + Stimulate the use of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in urban development narratives, designs and programs, and thus contribute to new approaches to assessment that include weighing social value?

By showcasing substantive, promising strategies to transform our urban landscapes and living environments, IABR–2020 aims to foster people’s capacity to act, offer them real prospects for action, and even incite civic activism.

CONTEXT

IABR–2020–DOWN TO EARTH is the follow up to IABR–2018–THE MISSING LINK, with which it forms a diptych. This edition explores how we can concretely address the missing link – identified and examined in 2018– by using existing urgent water and energy-related challenges as leverage towards transforming our cities and communities. In other words, how can we approach water-related challenges as a starting point for building resilient cities? How can we realize the energy transition while using it as leverage for socially inclusive city making?

While IABR–2020 will focus on two major challenges – Water and Energy Transition – as levers for the comprehensive transformation of our urban landscapes, and for devising new ways to inhabit the Earth, the curatorial approaches will differ.

Thijs van Spaandonk and Robbert de Vrieze, respective Curator and Co-Curator for Energy Transition as Leverage, will work from Bospolder-Tussendijken (BoTu), the city district in Rotterdam where the IABR–Atelier Rotterdam explores the concept of the “socially inclusive energy district”. They will connect the instances of energy transition in the BoTu-district to other pertinent explorations globally by inviting a selected group of practices to Rotterdam and developing a curriculum (or curatorial narrative) and public program on Energy Transition as Leverage, a “practical school for city-making”.

Sarah Ichioka, the Curator for Water as Leverage, and the IABR invite designers and related professionals to submitting concrete design proposals, preferably developed in productive collaboration with local, regional, and national stakeholders, to this Open Call. The final result of the Open Call—best practices and strategies from around the world—will be presented alongside the main content elements initiated and produced by Ichioka’s team, IABR and its strategic partners, and will form the core of the main exhibition in Rotterdam.

Not only will Water as Leverage comprise a substantial public exhibition in the Keilepand, centrally located in Rotterdam’s former fruit harbor and now maker-district, M4H, the Co-Curators for Water as Leverage, Rianne Makkink and Jurgen Bey, will develop associated public programs, events and interventions in and connected to the area —the IABR–Test Site M4H+ since 2018.

DOWN TO EARTH opens in the first week of September 2020 (exact dates to be announced) in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and will be open to the public until well in December. In October 2020, IABR will be one of the City of Rotterdam’s hosting partners for the Global Climate Adaption Action Summit hosted by The Netherlands.

More on IABR–2020 can be found on IABR’s website: www.iabr.nl

For further contextual information and insight into the team’s evolving conversation, please consult the Curatorial Correspondence documents that have been and will be published at intervals on IABR’s website.

CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

OPEN CALL

This Open Call for the Water as Leverage exhibition (working title: Flows) invites designers, architects, academics, artists, planners, activists, cities, universities, companies, and social organizations to submit concrete design proposals based on the guiding themes and questions articulated herein, and preferably developed in productive collaboration with local, regional, and national stakeholders.

This document outlines Selection Criteria for entries and shares the Guiding Themes and curatorial reference points. However, it should be noted that the curatorial team intends to learn from this Open Call: we are open to have our perspectives expanded beyond these existing reference points, and to be positively surprised by new ideas about, and approaches to, global water-related challenges and opportunities.

SELECTION CRITERIA

According to the World Economic Forum's 2018 [Global Risks Report](#)— which identifies global risks with the highest likelihood and impact in the coming decade — all but one of the identified risks can be linked to water. Water is crucial to sustaining our bodies, communities, cities, and ecosystems, just as (in contexts of disaster) it can endanger the survival of those very same things. How can designers work most effectively and imaginatively within this high-stakes context?

The global water challenges to be addressed within the Flows: Water as Leverage exhibition inherently extend over time—including between generations—and across space / place. Successful design strategies submitted to this Open Call will, thus: acknowledge and learn from past examples in which water was leveraged for positive change, be informed by or represent the perspectives of younger stakeholders, who will inherit a world ravaged by previous generations, and/ or speak to the inextricable connections between the Global North and Global

South (or “developed” and “developing” areas, although thoughtful critical responses to these terms of categorization are also invited), in terms of the causes and consequences of climate change. Furthermore, strategies should speak to the systemic roots of climate change — its interconnections to not only economic and political systems, but also to many “dysfunctional cultural patterns” that form the foundation of our societies (see, for example, [Robert Gilman's essay](#) on the topic).

CORE CRITERIA

Submissions will be judged based on the following Core Criteria:

- + IABR-2020 places clear emphasis on the ‘how’ of implementation, and seeks to present actionable strategies for sustainable development, enabling relevant stakeholders to act. Has the strategy been implemented in the form of specific projects, or is there a viable plan for implementation?
- + Does the design strategy deliver a contribution to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is it capable of showing that added value across multiple SDGs?
- + Does it deliver a contribution to the realization of the Paris Agreement and is it capable of showing that added value both from a mitigation and an adaptation perspective?
- + ... encompass a systems approach: understanding the interlinkages and interdependencies of our environmental, ecological, urban, social, economic, and cultural systems?
- + ... creatively explore the potential for cross-pollination between spatial design disciplines such as architecture, urban design and planning, and other disciplines and fields, such as ecology, water engineering, public policy, and economics?
- + ... critically explore or make tangible the concept of “Water as Leverage”— projects that address global water challenges in ways that multiply value

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- across indicators, and offer potential for transformative capacity?
- + ... make a concrete and important contribution to the development of solutions with a positive impact on living environments (for both human and non-human species)?
- + ... demonstrate capacity to be replicated, translated, or successfully adapted to other contexts? At scale?
- + How effective is the communication of the strategy? Are the materials provided—and particularly the visual components—legible and engaging to both professional and public audiences?

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

Submissions will also be assessed according to the following Additional Criteria, yet need not meet all of them:

- + How does the design strategy translate global goals for sustainable development into tangible local, regional and/or systemic actions and impacts?
- + How does it build a mandate / demonstrate agency for designers, citizens, and/or designer-citizens to effectively intervene within political, financial, socio-cultural and/or spatial systems?
- + ... effectively combine, integrate or juxtapose climate change adaptation with climate change mitigation (i.e. reduction of greenhouse gas emissions)?
- + ... reduce structural inequality (social, economic, cultural)?
- + ... draw upon historical examples in which water was leveraged for positive change?
- + ... incorporate intergenerational voices and perspectives?
- + ... speak to connections between the Global North and Global South, in terms of the causes and consequences of climate change?
- + ... contribute to the creation of a physically and socially resilient city, and a quality living environment founded on values of active civic participation, engagement with

- diversity, sustainability, and equity?
- + ... articulate a holistic business case for its viability?
- + Does the submitting team embody a diversity of perspectives, with team members representing different genders, generations, and (where possible) sociocultural backgrounds?

GUIDING THEMES

The **Water as Leverage Open Call** proposes a number of **Guiding Themes**, articulated below, that reflect some of the most urgent issues and questions within contemporary global water challenges as understood by the Curator and her team. These six themes are shared in order to inspire, not to constrain; they give a sense of the variety of types of work we are interested in receiving, but are not exclusive.

These themes are informed by and aligned with a number of key curatorial references, including [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) (in particular SDG6), [The Geography of Future Water Challenges](#) by IABR strategic partner The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL), the UN/World Bank High Level Panel on Water (HLPW) Outcome Document [Making Every Drop Count](#), and the IPCC's [Special Report on Climate Change and Land](#). Other related international policy frames include the [Paris Agreement](#), the [Sendai Framework](#), and the [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#).

I. Encourage Valuing of Water

- + Recognizing and celebrating the true value of water in all of its forms is key to preserving and protecting it. How might we articulate the social, cultural, political, economic, environmental, spiritual, and emotional value of water such that we might more fully commit to cherish and protect it?
- + How might we invite participatory recognition, protection, education and investment in the manifold benefits of water; its life-giving abilities, its pleasures, its beauty?

CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

II. Promote Inclusive Access to Safe Drinking Water & Sanitation

- + Billions of people around the world lack access to clean water and robust sanitation systems, which are crucial to health and poverty reduction.
- + How might we integrate urban and nature-based solutions to ensure that everyone—regardless of gender, age, ability, nationality, socioeconomic position—has access to clean, safe water?
- + How might we manage existing water pollution, promoting shared responsibility for this precious resource for the benefit and health of all species and communities?

III Explore the Role of Water in Life-sustaining Systems

- + Water is essential to sustaining life for all species, on all parts of the planet. How might we design water-based strategies that produce benefits across multiple categories (e.g. SDGs), demonstrating linkages between human systems of food and energy production, biodiversity, social equity, and so on?
- + How might we protect, restore, or intervene within water systems to support biodiversity and multi-species flourishing? For example, how might we explore the interconnections between fresh water and marine systems to address the fast-degrading ecological conditions within aquatic ecosystems?

IV. Invite Just Water Management & Governance

- + Water systems disregard national boundaries, connecting otherwise disparate communities. How might we invite innovative approaches to water management and governance that promote responsible and collaborative protection of this common resource?
- + How might we design systems and infrastructure that distribute water in just and equitable ways, under a variety of extenuating circumstances (transboundary ecosystems, human conflicts, disaster relief and so on)?

V. Address the Relationship between Water, Climate Change & Disasters

- + Water-related disasters (e.g. drought, floods, heatwaves), affect about 160 million people each year (PBL). People living in informal settlements in cities in the developing world are disproportionately unprotected from the risks of these water-related disasters. How might we design interventions to increase these communities' capacity for resilience; and their ability to manage and mitigate the risks of such disasters?
- + How might we design infrastructure, settlements, and/or systems that address preparedness and response strategies to water-related disasters, and support those who are facing displacement, conflict, and forced migration related to such disasters?

VI. Gain Inspiration from Past Successes

- + What can we learn from successful historical examples of when water was leveraged to implement transformations that dramatically improved quality of life (for humans and/or other species); or promoted values such as active civic participation, and engagement with diversity, inclusivity, sustainability, and equity?
- + What were the factors that contributed to these successes? What might history teach us about how design can most successfully engage with complex systems; about unexpected connections and outcomes?

A Note on Geography

Submitted work may respond to these themes anywhere in the world, but in particular may wish to consider the following geographic categories where future water challenges may be most concentrated, as identified by PBL:

- + Drylands and water-stressed areas,
- + Cities,
- + Transboundary river basins,
- + Coastal zones and deltas.

EXHIBITION CONTEXT

LOCATION: THE KEILEPAND AND TEST SITE M4H+

The Water as Leverage exhibition will take place in the Keilezaal, located in the Keilepand, a port-industrial concrete warehouse, completed in 1922, that has been designated an industrial monument. The Keilezaal, located on the first floor of the former warehouse centrally located in the M4H-area, is a space of approximately 1.130 square meters and the ideal setting for this exhibition.

The current residents of the Keilepand, whom the IABR will join in spring 2020 when we move our offices there, form a mix of architecture and urban design firms and companies that are active in the small manufacturing industry, such as woodworking and urban farming, all keen on developing approaches that foster the circular economy for which the area is a precursor. It makes the Keilepand a central hub in the area, the Merwe-Vierhavens district, formerly one of the biggest fruit harbors in the world, and now a 'city-harbor' locally known as M4H.

A global player, the Port of Rotterdam has a special relationship with the City of Rotterdam. Though this relationship has become more fragile in recent decades, the arenas in which the City and the Port come together, the so-called 'city-harbors' such as M4H, are now of growing importance. This is where smart links between the inevitable transitions in energy and resource use (circular port, circular economy) and the broader socioeconomic development of both residents and businesses in the city can be established.

M4H is one of two locations where The City and the Port launched the Rotterdam Makers District, and it is expected to become the hub of the innovative manufacturing industry in the Rotterdam The Hague Metropolitan Region. In 2018 IABR, Port and City agreed to establish the **IABR-Test Site M4H+**, building on studies by IABR-Atelier Rotterdam, The Productive City and What Do You Need? In the coming years, the IABR, together with many partners in the area will research, design and test plans for circular area development in collaboration with local stakeholders in M4H and in the surrounding neighborhoods. Test Site M4H+ will be a pilot project as well as a platform for the solutions needed to optimally integrate the space that the old port economy has left behind in what will have to become the resilient Rotterdam of the future.

AUDIENCE

IABR welcomes a broad range of visitors: from international delegations, expert teams, policy makers and cultural and innovative enterprises to students, local residents and anyone interested in urban planning, art and culture. Therefore, the exhibition content should be relevant and attractive to both professionals, as well as the general public.

The estimated number of visitors is between 35,000 and 50,000.

CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION

- + All projects must be submitted by 1 November 2019. Prospective participants will be notified no later than 13 December 2019.
- + Proposals can only be submitted by completely filling out the IABR-2020-APPLICATION FORM, please [click here](#).
- + Applicants are allowed to submit various proposals, but must completely fill out and submit the IABR-2020-APPLICATION FORM and all attachments for each proposal separately.
- + Participation is open to (coalitions of) design professionals, public institutions (e.g. municipalities, state and national governments, NGOs, universities and others), private companies, and citizen initiatives.
- + Public or private stakeholders (such as municipalities, governments, NGOs, private companies) should (have) play(ed) an active and/or commissioning role in the development and/or implementation of the design strategy.
- + Selected participants must submit all information, images, drawings, and other material free of any copyright or other rights held by the participant or third parties in order for the material to be duly included in the IABR's catalogue, presented on its website or generally used for communication and/or general publicity.
- + Additional conditions may apply after the preselection and/or final selection of the proposals for the exhibition.

Please note that the IABR will not enter into direct correspondence regarding the preselection and final selection of proposals for the exhibition. Any questions should be directed via the Public Q&A as described in "Procedure Outline" below.

CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION WHEN SELECTED

- + Selected participants will be fully responsible for the production, transportation, and deliverance of exhibition material in the format agreed upon by all parties.
- + The IABR will, upon request, provide a general letter confirming selected participant's intended inclusion within the exhibition, and outlining standard terms of crediting (e.g. exhibition, online, and in related print publications) for sponsors and partners. Beyond this, the IABR shall not enter into correspondence with sponsors of individual Open Call projects—any third-party relationship management shall be the sole responsibility of the authors.
- + If scale models or other physical materials are selected for the exhibition, the participant is responsible for sending the material to the exhibition site as well as taking out appropriate transport insurance.
- + If films are submitted for the exhibition, the spoken language should be English or the film(s) should have English subtitles.
- + The IABR will be responsible for printing the selected image material, texts and building the exhibition framework as well as the installation of all works in the exhibition, unless agreed upon otherwise.
- + During the exhibition, all materials will be insured by the IABR against theft and damage.
- + The material becomes the property of the IABR, unless other agreements are entered into before the material is shipped to the exhibition. In the latter case, the participants themselves will be responsible for collecting the material after the exhibition. Note that the material can only be stored for a very limited time after the exhibition.
- + There is limited AV and computer equipment available for individual works.

CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION

- The party submitting the work may be asked to compensate the exhibition organizers for the cost of obtaining the necessary equipment.
- + In the case of complex presentations, for example composite scale models or large installations, teams may be asked to assist in order to ensure appropriate installation and placement. This also applies to disassembly after the exhibition.
 - + If the entire exhibition or part of it goes on tour after the exhibition, additional agreements will be made with the parties submitting the pertinent projects.
 - + The IABR always reserves the right to ultimately opt out of materials and works previously selected for the exhibition ('final selection at the door').

PROCEDURE OUTLINE

A careful selection - based on the above Selection Criteria - will be made by the Curator of Water as Leverage, Sarah Ichioka, in consultation with her curatorial team, and the President of the IABR, George Brugmans, according to the following procedure.

18 September – 1 November 2019

- + Proposals may be submitted up to and including 1 November 2019, 9:00AM (CET) using the [digital application form](#).
- + Proposals can only be submitted by completely filling out the digital application form.
- + A public Q&A procedure shall be in place through 10 October. Any questions related to the procedure of the Open Call may be emailed to call@iabr.nl. An aggregated and anonymized Q&A shall be published online and will be updated until 29 October 2019.

November 2019 – January 2020: Preselection

- + Persons or institutions submitting works will be notified no later than 13 December 2019 as to whether their project has been preselected for participation.
- + The IABR may ask preselected participants to further develop their strategy presentation in accordance with the guidelines that follow from the exhibition design concept, and to submit their finalized proposal and extra material no later than 17 January 2020.

January – August 2020 (until December): Final Selection & Exhibition

- + Preselected participants will be notified as to whether their (amended) proposal has been approved by the IABR and selected for participation before 1 March 2020.
- + Additional conditions may apply after the preselection and/or final selection of the work.
- + Participation will be formally confirmed in an Exhibition Agreement which will only be considered final when signed by both parties.
- + Selected participants will be informed in due time and not later than 1 April 2020 of the deadline for sending all definitive files with images (high resolution), texts, captions and credits for the catalog and for the exhibition, as well as all (updates of) films and photos/sketches of exhibition items (models, etc.) for final approval and use by the IABR.
- + Selected participants will be provided in due time with the list of the final selection of items to be included in the main exhibition of IABR-2020-DOWN TO EARTH-WATER AS LEVERAGE.
- + IABR-2020-DOWN TO EARTH is scheduled to open in the last week of August 2020 (tbc) and to close in December 2020.

IABR—

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