

Press Release 13 June 2012

## Landscape architect Dirk Sijmons appointed curator of the 6th International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam

**Dirk Sijmons has been appointed curator of the next edition of the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam. The 6<sup>th</sup> IABR has the working title “URBAN by NATURE” and opens in May 2014. It focuses on the ‘natural’ character of the city as human biotope. By examining the metabolism of the urban organism, the 6<sup>th</sup> IABR explores the relationship between city and nature whilst also reflecting on *city as nature*. The city as nature, as a metabolism, not only comprises the built environment, but the broader context: the landscape that is the material condition for our urban society.**

Today, when the feverish pace of urbanisation has radically altered the relationship between the city and the world, the IABR is convinced that now is the time to consider the city from the vantage point of landscape architecture. City making will need to take account of the multi-dimensional complexities and cross-dependencies within the infrastructures of water management, food production and waste processing, energy production and distribution, infrastructure, heat islands and data flows. By developing cutting-edge visions of the complex ecology that is the city we will be able more effectively to manage the adaptation, growth and shrinkage of the urban regions and megacities that will soon house 80% of the world’s population.

Dirk Sijmons, renowned landscape architect, former Governmental Advisor on Landscape and one of the founders of H+N+S Landscape Architects has a clear and compelling vision of the theme. Sijmons: ‘Looking at the city through the lens of landscape architecture allows us a clear view of the situation. There is just one course of action available to us: if we are to resolve the world’s ecological problems we first need to resolve the problems facing our cities. And the only way we can reach these solutions is by naming and researching them in terms of the metabolism of the city.’

With **URBAN by NATURE** the IABR builds directly on two of the three large projects of the current fifth edition. In Istanbul, the IABR and the Municipality of Arnavutköy are presently working with Architecture Workroom Brussels, 51N4E and H+N+S Landscape Architects on a radical, new strategy to bring two opposing forces in the area - ecology and explosive urbanisation - into a mutually beneficial balance. The *pilot projects* will be realised in 2014.

The second large project of the 5th IABR, Test Site Rotterdam, and the collaboration with ZUS will also be continued, and will concentrate on the sustainability of the urban ecology of the Rotterdam Central District and the vital corridor connecting the area with Rotterdam North.

IABR director George Brugmans: ‘With the appointment of Dirk Sijmons the IABR unites unique expertise and international experience where the disciplines of urbanisation, landscape and infrastructure intersect. Recognised as a world-wide authority in his field, Sijmons will join forces with the IABR in seeking innovative visions and responses to the symbiotic relationship between city and nature.’

#### *About Dirk Sijmons*

Dirk Sijmons (1949) studied Architecture at Delft University of Technology and is one of the three founders of H+N+S Landscape Architects. Dirk Sijmons was awarded the Rotterdam-Maaskant Prize in 2002. In 2004, Dirk Sijmons was appointed Governmental Advisor on Landscape by the Minister of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries. In 2007, he received the prestigious Edgar Doncker prize in the category of 'true Dutch culture'. In addition to his work for H+N+S, Sijmons is currently Professor of Landscape Architecture at Delft University of Technology.

#### *About the IABR*

The International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (IABR) was founded in 2001 on the conviction that architecture and urban design are a public concern. The most important task for architecture is to contribute to the standard of housing and living of billions of people. Through design research focused on the future, the IABR raises discussion about pressing social issues. In addition, it links the disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture and urban design. Each edition has a theme and a programme that reflects current discussion within the profession. The exhibitions, publications, conferences, films, lectures and debates provide a platform for innovation and exchange among professionals, policy-makers and citizens at home and abroad.

The 5th edition of the IABR is currently underway, with a programme held at venues across Rotterdam and in Almere until 12 August. On 19 June this year, Making City São Paulo opens in Brazil; in October, Making City Istanbul will open in Turkey.

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#### *NOTE TO EDITORS*

*For more information about the IABR, please contact the IABR Marketing & Communications Department at [press@iabr.nl](mailto:press@iabr.nl) or Press Officer Nancy van Oorschot directly on: + 31 6 41684324.*

## On the theme of the 6th IABR: URBAN by NATURE

The sharp distinction that has long been drawn between culture and nature is now in the throes of breaking down. Slowly but surely the idea that man's ability to create, both technically and culturally, is inextricably bound up with nature and is an integral and inevitable part of evolution, is gaining ground. The 'city', with which we shape the spatial expression of our urban society, including the cultural landscape that sustains its every aspect, constitutes a separate category within the vast collection of human artefacts.

The 6<sup>th</sup> IABR views the city and urbanisation as a highly effective spatial organisation strategy evolved and refined by man in a process spanning more than 7,000 years. It considers the city as a human biotope, the on-going process of urbanisation as its key behavioural trait, and the intricacies of the city's physical and functional relationships with its environment as its metabolism. This complex ecology is gradually and increasingly steering a course of its own, and affecting human actions in the process.

Reflecting on the future of the city also compels us to reflect on this complex ecology. We have no choice but to reconsider this super-techno-organism that we, as humans, have produced, and recognise its profound impact on the environment. The dark side of urban ecology – a lifestyle that will need several planets to support our consumer appetites at their current level and the dawning realisation that gratifying these needs relies on a short-lived convenience, our ability to pump the air full of fossil fuels (that is the biomass production of four hundred million years) in less than four centuries – prompts pessimists to lament that the human race is showing signs of becoming a 'pestilent organism'. But if this is indeed the case, our ability to learn from our mistakes means that we can at least act as a thinking pestilent organism, and take remedial action. Many global issues have their roots in the city, or at least have an urban component. In light of which, the 6<sup>th</sup> IABR approaches urbanisation issues from the other side – if city and nature form a single, complex ecology, there can be no solutions to the world's environmental challenges without first resolving its urban challenges.

**URBAN by NATURE** embraces the philosophy in which nature and culture, city and landscape become progressively more hybridized and together attain a new meaning. Rooted in this conviction, the 6<sup>th</sup> IABR examines urbanisation through the lens of landscape architecture, which offers scenarios for mediating between nature and culture and steering a course through this hybridizing world.

**URBAN by NATURE** concentrates research on three key areas, which will be put into practice at various sites, in the same way that various projects were "tested" during the 5<sup>th</sup> IABR.

In 'city and nature' researchers explore ways of bringing into balance these two, apparently antagonistic forces, to mutual advantage. The ideological, architectonic and cultural manipulation of nature in the history of park design will be employed to present the meaning and design of the park of the future. The second key area examines each element of the urban metabolism as a separate design task for (landscape) architecture, while also and primarily assessing their direct and indirect instrumental capacity to steer urbanisation through infrastructural planning. This theme spans a wide-ranging terrain, from water management (drinking water supplies and waste water management), energy (electricity, heat delivery and heat exchange – such as heat island effects – plus energy transition) to infrastructure for (data) traffic and material supply flows (from food supplies and construction materials to waste refuse processing).

**URBAN by NATURE** strives to unlock these issues for architecture, urbanism and landscape architecture by challenging the primacy of technocracy. In achieving this, the third key area combines all the elements generated by the research into a main exhibition that presents scenarios, strategies and models for a sustainable urban future.