

Rotterdam, October 24, 2023

Global Brief – Working on Water

PANORAMA UKRAINE: REBUILDING IN TIMES OF WAR

The devastating, seemingly endless war that Ukraine finds itself in does not mean we should *not* think about reconstruction. On the contrary, the integral rebuilding of Ukraine needs to start now. If only to give a much-needed sense of hope, human dignity and self-empowerment.

With the probability that the Russian invasion will not be resolved shortly, the rebuilding will need to start during the war – under precarious conditions. Because of this, it will take even more time and deliberation than usual to make plans, build enough implementation capacity and push through the necessary legislative reforms. But if we start the hard work now, we can begin the process of actually rebuilding sooner rather than later.

WORKING ON WATER

On 6 June 2023, the Kakhovka Dam in the south of Ukraine was destroyed, causing extensive flooding along the lower Dnipro River and drainage of the Kakhovka Upper Reservoir. The ensuing ecologic, humanitarian, and economic disaster has impacted many cities, towns, and villages in the Dnipro River Delta and will continue to do so for years to come.

Whether it is the landscape, the agriculture, the city, the neighborhood, or the individual house – the metabolism of the city, like that of humans, functions with and is related to the presence of water. This catastrophe reminds us that the built and unbuilt environment are (physically) shaped by vast and complex relations with and ecologies of water, in addition to the more ephemeral matters of culture, mythology, and spatial identity that water also symbolizes.

Good water governance is vital and should take ecology, climate adaptation, flood mitigation, and biodiversity into consideration, making Ukraine more resilient to future challenges. In essence, the reconstruction of Ukraine should be comprehensive and climate-resilient, with a strong focus on future water strategies.

CONCEPT AND PROGRAM

From 27 November to 1 December, the IABR has invited (inter)national designers, municipalities, and water experts to Rotterdam to work on water-related issues in relation to the Ukrainian rebuilding process.

The *Panorama Ukraine: Working on Water* workshop, is a week-long, interdisciplinary program that will include inspiring lectures by leading experts on water-related issues (from design to technology, from ecology to governance perspectives), excursions to relevant projects and practices, and, of course, the situated and in-depth design workshops themselves.

During the workshops, international and interdisciplinary teams will work intensively together on several case studies, located in Ukraine – in a stimulating setting, surrounded by experts and peers from all over the world. Divided into five groups, the participants will approach one of the case studies through the lens of the following subthemes, all related to the rebuilding and reconstruction in the lower Dnipro Delta:

- Equitable drinking water accessibility
- Water as a sustainable energy source
- Water availability for agrarian purposes and industries
- Water in regional ecosystems
- Water in climate adaptation (inland + river + sea)
- Water as a carrier of sociocultural spatial identities
- Integral water governance (from (inter)national to regional and local scale)

In the case studies, architectural and design solutions will be informed by the human scale. The themes and case studies will be considered from national, regional, and local scales, in which different temporalities (short-, mid-, and long-term strategies) are connected. As such, the case studies and design proposals together will form an exploration of the urgent needs of the Ukrainian regions, without losing sight of the long-term (urban) planning, sustainable development goals, and climate adaptation strategies for a future-proof Ukraine – one that is socially as well as environmentally sustainable.

Designers, architects and experts from Ukraine and the Netherlands, as well as local stakeholders from different municipalities, will help all participants to understand the specific and situated needs, contexts, and questions from Ukraine. The designers will use their research and analytical skills and the power of (design)imagination to visualize how spatial design in general and architecture, urbanism, and landscape architecture can contribute to, and form initial conclusions about the situated issues at hand. The results of the five case studies will be presented and discussed collectively. As such, the *Panorama Ukraine: Working on Water* – workshop will serve as an incubator of integral concepts concerning the rebuilding of Ukraine and jumpstart collaborations between international design talent, water experts, and people specialized in innovative governance.

The lessons learned, approaches, strategies, and the propositional (design)solutions developed during these workshops will be made accessible to be deployable elsewhere: after all, water is a global and planetary issue.

WHY THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN UKRAINE AND ROTTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS?

Integral rebuilding does not mean returning to the situation before the war, but rebuilding Ukraine in such a way that the country will embody the latest sustainability goals and technological developments, achieved by using the best creative design practices, innovative technologies, and governance strategies – Ukraine is to be rebuilt as a *sustainable and resilient society*.

Reconstruction work and water management, and how these two domains interrelate, have a long history in the Netherlands, specifically in Rotterdam. The city of Rotterdam was heavily bombed during the Second World War. On 1 February 1953 the southwest of the Netherlands was heavily flooded due to a storm. In both cases, the approach was not to reconstruct *what was*, but to *rebuild better*. Rotterdam became an inspiring modern city as imagined in the 1940s, '50s and '60s. The Dutch Delta works are an example of integral infrastructure and water management. The Netherlands has recently shifted its policy focus from 'controlling the water' to working with 'water and soil as guiding principles' in spatial planning: learning to relate to in a reciprocal, ecological manner – living *with* water and looking for renewed correlation between what happens in the subsurface of our landscapes and what is built on top of it. During the workshop activities we will develop visionary concepts for the Ukrainian Dnipro Delta, in a joint effort by participants from all over the world, and in a context created for expertise and knowledge exchange.

Considering the vital role of water in the rebuilding process in Ukraine and the Netherlands' world-renowned expertise on water-related issues – in terms of technical solutions, governance, and design – the workshop will result in inspiring, integral, and future-proof ideas about a climate-proof and socioecologically sustainable future of Ukraine. As there is no blueprint for the near future, we will learn with and from each other.

RESULTS

After an intensive and inspiring week, the participants will present their results on the last day (Friday, 1 December). We aim to have various spatial designs for specific parts of the Kakhovka Dam region, both on different spatial scales and with different temporalities, in addition to more strategic plans for water management.

The results will include timelines, narratives, sketches, and reflections on lessons learned. The ambition is to integrate all of these designs into a map of the entire region, which will be shared in an online knowledge-sharing and archiving environment. As such, we will jointly develop building blocks for Ukrainian and global communities struggling with water management issues, that can be shared with and applied in other global contexts.

PANORAMA UKRAINE

Panorama Nederland is a future perspective on the spatial planning of the Netherlands presented by the Dutch Board of Government Advisors (College van Rijksadviseurs, CRa for short) at the end of 2018, developed in collaboration with independent network and think tank for metropolitan development Vereniging Deltametropool and landscape, architecture, and urban strategy office West 8. The Panorama method has been developed to illustrate how the major social issues of today can be the key to welcome structural improvements in the future. With Panorama Nederland, the CRa outlined an optimistic and attractive picture of the future: imagination in the driving seat, desire and ambition as the engine.

The *Panorama Ukraine* workshops will be based on the Panorama methodology: working in a participatory and inclusive way on collaborative visions of the future, with translation into practice for Ukraine's reconstruction. It will serve as the kickstart of the Panorama Ukraine project: a long-term program for the intensive exchange of knowledge and creation of expertise about the following integral rebuilding themes:

- Healthy and future-proof neighborhoods
- Sustainable energy production
- Circular economy
- Sustainable mobility
- Regenerative agriculture
- Regenerative water management and biodiversity
- Good governance

The goal of the Panorama is to create frameworks, approaches, and design by research solutions for rebuilding. It is a method that allows us to start rethinking and rebuilding now, while keeping the long-term vision in mind. It is important to remember that rebuilding is always an integral task in which spatial, social, ecological, and economic challenges are interconnected. However, to make things feasible, accessible, and understandable for all, the task of rebuilding is approached thematically and divided into several events that focus on different interrelated themes. The aim is to gradually build knowledge, commitment, and lasting collaborations.

INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE BIENNALE ROTTERDAM (IABR)

Since its first edition in 2003, the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (IABR) has been drawing attention to the value of research by design. The IABR believes that the disciplines of architecture, landscape design, and urban design have an essential, pioneering, and unifying contribution to make to the radical transitions the world is facing as a result of climate change. Whether we are talking about water management, the energy transition, the need for housing, or food supply: both in the Dutch context and worldwide, these issues all have spatial implications.

In this respect, the pursuit of a healthy and equitable ecosystem is central to the IABR. In the context of the longer-term *Panorama Ukraine* program, the IABR will take care of the project coordination together with partners Archiprix International, Ukraine-the Netherlands Urban Network (UNUN), College van Rijksadviseurs (CRa), Vereniging Deltametropool (VDM), the Independent School for the City, the City of Rotterdam, the Nieuwe Instituut (NI), and local Ukrainian partners such as ReStart Ukraine.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Date: Mon 27 November – Fri 1 December 2023

Location: Keilezaal, Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Organized by: International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (IABR), Archiprix International, Ukraine-the Netherlands Urban Network (UNUN), College van Rijksadviseurs (CRa), Vereniging Deltametropool (VDM), the Independent School for the City, the City of Rotterdam, the Nieuwe Instituut (NI), and local Ukrainian partners and stakeholders.

