
SAVE THE DATE

Land as a resource

WASTED SQUARE METERS IN CITIES: Increasing the use of space & buildings

Come to Brussels to learn, get inspired and exchange with pioneer cities exploring **alternatives to urban sprawl and implementing measures that avoid demand for land and construction materials.**

The workshop is a side-event of the European Sustainable Energy Week organized the same week in Brussels. It is organized in the framework of the PATH2LC project, an EU-funded project.

When: Thursday 22 June 2023 (9:00 – 16:00)

Where: STAM Europa, rue d'Arlon 104, Brussels, Belgium

This workshop is targeting primarily **local authorities of all sizes** willing to tackle the issue of urban sprawl and understand the challenges and drivers faced by other municipalities.

The workshop is limited to 35 participants maximum to allow interactivity and exchange between participants.

Coffee, snacks and a lunch will be provided to all participants.

Registration link: <https://my.weezevent.com/wasted-square-meters-in-cities-increasing-the-use-of-space-buildings>



CONTEXT

Europe loses about 1.007 km² of soil due to land take annually (EEA, 2017), which is approximately a loss the size of the city of Berlin. Impacts are manifold: loss of soil functions and ecosystem services, habitats for soil biodiversity, healthy water, and nutrient cycles. Land use needs to improve. The **EU soil strategy** for 2030 calls on Member States to only set land take targets for 2030, with the **aim of reaching land take neutrality by 2050**. As proposed in the soil strategy, Member States are requested to implement measures that follow the land take hierarchy: to achieve no net land take, (1) land take needs to be avoided, (2° more land needs to be reused, (3) land take need to be minimized, and, finally, (4) land take needs to be compensated for.

At city-level, in a context of scarce urban land and the fight against climate change, **many urban spaces and buildings remain paradoxically under-occupied**. For many years, cities have been built with **monofunctional buildings** leading at the same time to planned obsolescence. If the way of conceiving the city has evolved, cities are still consuming far too many resources including land and building materials. As an example, if the cement industry were a country, it would be the third largest emitter in the world, behind China and the US.

According to the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON), land take exceeded the population growth during the 2000 – 2018 period¹. “Even areas experiencing depopulation usually still show increases in artificial surfaces.” Cities need to go through a **resource diet**. And the **use of space and buildings in cities** is one of the sectors that must radically change. On average, the use rate for a school is around 20%, when an office building is used around 30% of its time across a year².

This workshop will explore alternative ways of doing the city, particularly by **better occupying and sharing the built environment**. Building less means first **dealing with existing buildings**, either because they are unoccupied, under-occupied or no longer correspond to the use for which they were designed. During this one-day workshop, participants will **try to imagine cities that would stop eating their surrounding land** and focusing on their renewal, densification, and repair.

This topic poses the question of how we use and share our resources (in this case, the buildings and space in cities) to meet the basic needs of all. The problem is not so much about the availability of space and buildings, but how these resources are shared among a territory.

Participants will have the chance to discuss in small groups with pioneer cities reactivating vacant buildings, densifying their territories through innovative approaches such as BIMBY (Build In My Back Yard) or facilitating temporary uses.

¹ ESPON, 2020, policy brief, reuse of spaces and buildings

² https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2023/01/11/urbanisme-en-ville-les-benefices-d-un-usage-intense-des-batiments-sont-nombreux_6157385_3232.html



AGENDA

- 8:30 – 9:00: Welcome & Icebreaker
- 9:00 – 9:30: Setting the scene – presentation of the policy brief “reuse of spaces and buildings” by **Marjan van Herwijne** from the **European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion**
- 9:30 – 10:30: Inspirational speech: circular urbanism, what are we talking about? by **Sylvain Grisot**, Urban Planner, Founder of **dixit.net**, author of the “Manifesto for Circular Urbanism” + Q&A

10:30 – 10:45: BREAK

- 10:45 – 12:30 Deep dive on various examples from Brussels & around (world café) - 1st round (participants will have the possibility to choose and explore two examples during 45min each)
 - o Tools to optimize the use of existing buildings in cities: the case of one-stop-shop for vacant spaces in **Brussels** (CityDev)
 - o Zzz zwischenzeitzentrale temporary use agency, **Bremen**
 - o The experience of the city of **Ghent** with temporary use with the REFILL Urbact project

LUNCH BREAK (12:15 – 13:30)

- 13:30 – 15:00: Deep dive on various examples from Brussels & around (world café) – 2nd round (participants will have the possibility to choose and explore two examples during 45min each)
 - o Action coeur de ville” to fight the urban retail vacancy in the city of **Arras**
 - o Soft densification through the BIMBY (Build in My Back Yard) strategy, **SCOT Vosges Centrales**
 - o “Soft requisition and housing sensors”: the **Charleroi** strategy to reactive privately-owned housing units and make them accessible to low-income households

15:00 – 15:30-45: Closing & final remarks (to be defined)

