

NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS

REPORT OF THE BRUSSELS LOCAL CONVERSATION

29 April 2021

CO-CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW CITY FACTORY focus on housing and urban renewal



RÉGION DE BRUXELLES-CAPITALE
BRUSSELS HOOFDSTEDELIJK GEWEST
BRUSSELS CAPITAL REGION

Brussels local conversation in a nutshell

The Brussels-Capital Region organised a New European Bauhaus (NEB) local conversation on April 29th from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. on the theme "**Co-construction of the new city factory**". The webinar focused on **housing** and **urban renewal** to explore how to develop a more aesthetic, sustainable and inclusive living environment

This local conversation organised by perspective.brussels and urban.brussels, two administrations of the Brussels-Capital Region, brought together around 40 representatives of academics, associations, private and public actors from different backgrounds: culture, urban planning, construction, architecture, innovation, research, design, participation, circular economy, sustainability, social inclusion...

The local conversation was organised in two parts: a first part with short introductory interventions on local and European actions related to NEB and a second part with debates around three key questions:

1. What **added-value** can bring the New European Bauhaus approach with its focus on aesthetics, inclusiveness and sustainability?
2. How to **co-construct** a more aesthetic, sustainable and inclusive living environment?
3. What **recommendations** for the European Commission?

This report is composed of:

- Our 10 recommendations
- The minutes of the local conversation

The annexes provide more information about the agenda and the profile of participants.

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Our 10 recommendations

Which actors to involve in NEB and how?

1. The European Commission should **work with cities and metropolises. They are strategic partners to create a different Europe.** They have the capacity to work on formal, informal and soft power to implement the NEB on the ground. In this way, **cities can federate diverse actors in an informal way** and further develop this soft-power approach but also bring about the formal institutional commitment that is needed to remove legislative, policy and funding barriers. Cities and urban areas also have pioneering experience and skills, such as circular tenders and building, which should be disseminated among other players.
2. The NEB should also reach other actors beyond public ones. There is a need to **pool forces with all actors, including civil society, cultural and social actors** to establish the capacity to develop others urban fabrics. It is necessary **to find an efficient method** to make these actors and citizens' groups work with experts on the different urban issues in our districts.

What should be the priorities?

3. The **process and the methodology to build a new urban fabric** should be a priority of the NEB: assess, evaluate and connect existing strategies and help to scale and synergize them locally and inter-regionally; experiment and scale-up new ways to work together, be effective, be transversal, be global and break down the silos.
4. Repairing the urban fabric in the **most vulnerable neighborhoods** and renovate public and private **housing of most deprived citizens** should be a priority too. This should be done **in a participative way**, creating local jobs and promoting new (circular) ways of working and renovating.

What should be the NEB?

5. The NEB should be complementary to existing formal regulations. It should be open and **allowing proposals that are not responding to existing formal regulations.** The fact that the NEB is part of the system but supports initiatives that are out of the system is a good opportunity.
6. The NEB should be the place **to incubate the urban transitions** through new practices, new types of projects, new ways of doing and producing things (how to do it, with whom, with what level and form of participation). The NEB must have as a priority to help, multiply and give the necessary support to establish laboratory spaces, production units, incubators of new projects and coalitions through a pooling of forces both from the private and public sector but also from the civil society. Exchange is not enough and **the NEB can provide the space for inter-incubators to structure knowledge and share it within the networks across Europe.**
7. The NEB should be an opportunity to collaborate and think in a disinterested way, and not to confront each other about funding. **It should be a re-foundation and identification of what Europe can build on.**

How could the NEB achieve its goals?

8. There is a need to seize developments in order to conceive the city's construction not purely in a technical manner. It is necessary to **move towards a type of strategic and operational urban planning which is spread out over time and which integrates the uncertainties and the necessary evolutions**. One example is "asset base community management" which is a good method and supports this dimension of human urban ecosystem.
9. Change must enter inside (of the system). Pilot projects are not enough. If we want to cope with future challenges, we need systemic change, we need to reproduce those pilot projects and we need to adapt regulations based on the learnings of the pilot projects. Thereby, the question of the NEB is **"How to turn the pilot projects into systemic change"**?
10. The NEB should be more than a peer-to-peer network and a 'community of practice'; **we must exchange between incubators and involve others European programs** (Research, innovation, cohesion, culture, climate, industry...). We need to connect the big ambitions with the big investment frameworks to boost these incubators

Minutes of the local conversation

Presentations

Tom Sanders (Director Territorial Strategy at perspective.brussels)

In its introductory statements, Tom Sanders points out that the development of sustainable and inclusive cities is indeed a significant part of the solution to the social and environmental problems that are at stakes around the globe. The question that arises from this observation is in order to be as effective as possible and to combine energies and make them complementary. The New European Bauhaus initiative offers a great opportunity to tackle these issues across Europe.

Xavier Troussard (Head of Unit at European Commission)

Xavier Troussard explains the genesis, the philosophy and the development of the New European Bauhaus. **The New European Bauhaus (NEB) is a project that brings people together, that gives the opportunity to go beyond the divisions of the different professions, silos and bubbles** and thus invites to work together on this issue of our living space. To this end, the project focuses on the space we share on a daily basis (village, neighborhood, place of work and living). This implies above all the living space but also the buildings, the architecture and the public space. In the transformation of spaces, the objective is to see how best to combine three dimensions: sustainability, inclusivity and aesthetic. The aesthetic dimension goes beyond functionality to bridge the gap between technical and cultural aspects, one goes with the other.

He invites all participants to take part in the [NEB Awards](#) opened until 31 May and in the design phase until the summer by becoming official partners or contributing with projects and activities.

Benoit Moritz (President of the Scientific Committee for Housing): recommendations on housing

Benoit Moritz presented the conclusions and recommendations of the Scientific Committee for Housing (SCH). This Committee was set up by the government of the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) in June 2020 to specify the stakes of housing in the BCR in the pandemic context in order to reflect on architectural and urbanistic evolutions in a post-pandemic context. The report identified 5 main issues and developed 34 recommendations grouped around four main dimensions you can find [here](#).

During the presentation, the focus was put on renovation of existing building, fitness of accommodations, new architecture and housing in relation with the public space:

- Amplify the fight against insalubrity by putting in place a technical control of rented housing.
- Pursue urban revitalization policies by putting the emphasis back on the **renovation of old buildings**.
- For vulnerable homeowners, strengthen support for **renovation by granting loans**
- Promote the **renovation and socialization of private housing stock** through the dismemberment of property for owners in difficulty.
- Increase the **infrastructural resilience of housing** by focusing on: (1) generous distribution spaces and common areas, (2) a view over green spaces for all housing, (3) adaptable and scalable housing.
- In a logic of city of proximity, emphasize **housing in its relation to public spaces** and proximity facilities.

Tony Van Nuffelen (international affairs at urban.brussels): genesis and strategy of Brussels urban renewal policy.

For more than 25 years the Regions is investing in the regeneration of more deprived areas where there is little interest from private investors.

The aim is to **repair the urban fabric in the most vulnerable neighborhoods** to improve the quality of life and seeking synergy with all actors involved in the process of implementing its revitalization programs. The improvement of the socio-economic and environmental situation is done via public-public or public-private projects, large or small investments, market-correcting measures on housing and socio-economic actions. The participatory process contributes to its social cohesion.

To achieve these objectives, four main policies are implemented:

- [Sustainable Neighborhood Contracts](#)
- [Urban Renewal Contracts](#)
- [City Policy](#)
- [grants for housing renovation and façade improvement](#)

Several housing units or public spaces created are already inspired by the New European Bauhaus principles and are bringing together sustainability, inclusion with quality and aesthetics. Like for instance the passive building with 5 social housing in Schaerbeek that got the Mies van der Rohe award 2017 or the co-creation and temporary occupation of Marie Janson square in Saint Gilles.

Kristiaan Borret (Bouwmeester Maitre Architecte): recommendations on urban design

[Urban Maestro](#) "New governance strategies for Urban Design" is a Horizon 2020 program financed project led by UN-Habitat, University College London, and the Brussels Bouwmeester Maitre Architecte. The project focuses on the "soft power" modalities of urban design governance and the approaches where public authorities act in a semi-formal or informal capacity for improving spatial quality in cities across Europe.

It recommends the right mix of formal and informal tool to reach place quality. 'Soft powers' can be harnessed quickly and cost-effectively, and can be successfully linked to formal tools and investment processes in a manner that focuses and enhances efforts to deliver design quality

To improve the urban design governance, urban maestro focuses on six aspects and "C" key words:

- 1) Culture: The full value and potential of cities can be released by committing to **build a culture of urban design quality** that copes future urban challenges.
- 2) Capacity: Putting in place the **right structures and people** is a key step to realizing design quality governance.
- 3) Coordination: and interaction between **formal, informal and soft-power tools** should be brought together in order to be effective and influencing the delivery of design quality
- 4) Collaboration: **Developers, investors and citizens** should be engaged in an ongoing conversation about design quality.
- 5) Commitment: It is essential to consider how to tie design quality aspirations to **financial incentive mechanisms** and to private sector know-how. For instance, different forms of ownership could be adapted and evolve in Brussels (long-term land lease) so that housing becomes more affordable and that the public sector controls better and on a long term the land.
- 6) Continuity: **Learning and refining practices** in the light of best practices and changing local circumstances is a continuous process.

Recommendations to the European Commission: The NEB will be complementary to existing formal regulations. It should be open and **allowing proposals that are not responding to existing formal regulations**. The fact that the NEB is part of the system but supports initiatives that are out of the system is a good opportunity.

Change must enter inside (of the system). Pilot projects are not enough. If we want to cope with future challenges, we need systemic change, we need to reproduce those pilot projects and we need to adapt regulations based on the learnings of the pilot projects. Thereby, the question of the NEB is “**How to turn the pilot project into systemic change**”?

Conversation

Anna Lisa Boni (Secretary General of Eurocities)

On the added-value of the NEB, there are two key ideas:

- 1) The idea of integration of different approaches, priorities, sectors and issues that allows to work in a transversal and coordinated way **breaking silos**.
- 2) The idea of **co-construction of these living spaces** with all the various and diverse actors that exist in the territory, even those who are traditionally less involved, such as cultural ones our social innovation.

Eurocities is pleased that Europe is interested in urban spaces and living environments. Through the NEB, we have the opportunity to co-construct and launch a movement that helps to break out of the traditional governance silos.

The NEB is an opportunity to move in the direction of transforming the city by co-creating it with the criteria of sustainability, ecology, social inclusion and aesthetics. This latest should be a dimension considered locally.

Recommendation to the European Commission: to **work with cities and metropolises** as they have the capacity to work on the "6 C" presented by the Brussels bouwmeester. In this way, **cities can federate diverse actors in an informal way** and further develop this soft-power approach but also bring about the formal institutional commitment that is needed to remove legislative, policy and funding barriers.

Hélène Rillaerts (member of Brussels cluster ecobuild, engineer architect at BUUR's design office and expert in sustainability on a neighborhood scale)

- Importance of **urban ecosystem**: the human context defines what is possible and the **human dimension is an enormous force** for feeding projects and moving towards an economy of resources to stimulate dynamics in the districts and boost cohesion in the neighborhoods.
- It is **pointless to tear everything down to start something new**.
- Among the recently built sustainable neighborhoods, the successful neighborhoods are the one that have managed to use these human dynamics by integrating them into the projects, through involvement, participation and co-creation, co-management of the project and by **empowering residents in the technical aspects of the neighborhood**.

Recommendation for the European Commission: There is a need to seize developments in order to conceive the city's construction not purely in a technical manner. It is necessary to **move towards a type of strategic and operational urban planning which is spread out over time and which integrates the uncertainties and the necessary evolutions.** One example is "asset base community management" which is a good method and supports this dimension of human urban ecosystem.

Joachim Declerck (Architect and founder of 'Architecture Workroom Brussels' which is an official partner of the NEB)

- It is important to understand that with NEB, we approach things in reverse. We start from the street and the neighborhood to see how the great intentions/ strategies can land. It is important to structure the landing. Ultimately, it is in the street and in the neighborhood that change will take place. **We must go down to the street and to the neighborhoods and adapt our urban fabric.**
- The challenges we face force us to think about other types of projects. So the biggest job is to **test how existing tools and urban challenges can make a productive change.** The NEB allows for a cultural change that we need to face the challenges. It is necessary to couple the 'IN and the OUT' and to focus the role of the incubators for this cultural change to multiply the achievements.
- It is not only the duty of public actors. There is need to pool forces with all actors, including civil society, to establish the capacity to develop other urban fabrics. It is necessary to **find an efficient method to make these actors and citizens' groups work with experts on the different urban issues in our districts.** The question is how to proceed, through which methods, with which spaces and in which 'laboratory'?

Recommendations to the European Commission: The **NEB should be the place to incubate new practices for new types of projects, new ways of doing things** (how to do it, with whom, with what level and form of participation). The NEB must have as a priority to help, multiply and give the necessary support to establish laboratory spaces, incubators of new projects and coalitions through a pooling of forces both from the private and public sector but also from the civil society. Exchange is not enough and the NEB can provide the space for inter-incubators to structure knowledge and share it within the network.

The NEB must be more than a peer-to-peer network and a 'community of practice', **we must exchange between incubators and also involve European programs.** We need to connect the big ambitions with the big investment frameworks to boost these incubators.

Pablo Lhoas, Dean of the faculty of architecture de l'ULB (partner of the NEB): The university is insufficient in the context of the NEB ambition. Public administrations have also a role to assume in the framework of the implementation phase of the NEB. **NEB is an opportunity to think about the making of the city and urban settlements in a less framed and more rich way than the traditional European calls.** It will be necessary to identify today's problems in order to be able to project into 25 - 30 years, and thus propose a more interesting project of society. ULB also wants to organize a 'summer school' on NEB topics and invites others to join the initiative.

Recommendations to the European Commission: The NEB should be an opportunity to collaborate and think in a disinterested way, and not to confront each other about funding. **It should be a re-foundation and identification of what Europe can build on.**

Joachim Declerck: Through NEB, the system is at stake and not the administrative territories. This is where the interest and complexity of co-creation lies. We need to go beyond the beautiful, inclusive and sustainable goals, and establish what needs to be done in relation to other climate ambitions and Brussels 2030 as a cultural project.

Pablo Lhoas: The nature of the problems is relatively similar throughout Europe and **a method must be defined to prepare the pilot action phase of NEB**. For instance, the Region could take in charge a secretariat that would start developing a common working method for Brussels. The idea would be to extend the model established in Brussels elsewhere and ULB could help through 'Civitas' a network of 9 universities.

An Rekkers (Director at Vereniging voor Ruimte en Planning - VRP vzw): One of the biggest challenges in Flanders and in Europe is the urban renewal of existing buildings. What is typical in Belgium is that there are many private owners. This makes it a challenge **to find solutions to renew and renovate this existing building in collaboration with the private owners**. How can we stimulate this by giving the means for these private owners to be involved, to participate, and to find ways to renovate? How can we adapt the system by taking into account the Belgian specificity?

Sandra Coumans (MAD – Mode and Design Brussels): Proposed to the European Commission to **take advantage of the capacity of the cultural sector to imagine**, because artists are experts in imagination. We need them to be able to work towards great ambitions and solutions that will last in the long term.

Edoardo Guglielmetti (Commissioner.brussels): It would be necessary to inform and sensitize "other" actors who have a significant impact on urban dynamics without being immediately aware of their role in NEB, such as the private sector responsible not only for the production or maintenance of buildings, but also insurances, media, mobility actors, service providers (including social ones). This would help to get out of the usual circle of urban planners, designers and architects.

Conclusions: Tom Sanders (Director Territorial Strategy at perspective.brussels)

- The **horizontal cross-cutting issue** that has been put forward is very relevant. Beyond the NEB, institutions and cities are going to get on **the path of transition**, whatever the ambition and the purpose of the NEB will be. Lessons will be drawn from this pandemic to engage in the next stage of the adventure for a virtuous transition.
- The **process and the methodology to build a new urban fabric should be the priority** of the NEB. The question of **territorial scales** is also important from neighborhood to administrative city, metropolitan area and even macroregional level like Eurodelta.
- **Public authorities have indeed an important role to play** in the implementation phase of NEB in order to develop the initiative and keep the momentum. There is a need to define more precisely this role in the coming weeks.
- Finally, going beyond solely the NEB initiative, **it is a shift and a whole change program** in which all actors must engage

Annex 1 – Agenda

- **When?** Thursday, April 29th from 10am to 12pm.
- **What?** A local conversation "Co-constructing the new city factory" as part of the New European Bauhaus.
- **How?** Webinar organized in two parts: a first part with short introductory interventions and a second part of debate.
- **Moderation:** Tony Van Nuffelen (urban.brussels) and Alfredo Corbalan (perspective.brussels)

09:50	Connexion / Verbinding
	Introduction / Introductie
10:00	Mots de bienvenue / Welkomstwoord Tom Sanders, perspective.brussels
10:10	Présentation de l'initiative New European Bauhaus Presentatie van het initiatief New European Bauhaus Xavier Troussard, Commission européenne / Europese Commissie Q&A
	Actions bruxelloises / Brusselse activiteiten
10h20	Logement : recommandations du Comité scientifique du logement Huisvesting: aanbevelingen van het Wetenschappelijk Comité voor huisvesting Benoit Moritz, président du Comité scientifique du logement / voorzitter van het Wetenschappelijk Comité voor huisvesting
10h30	Rénovation urbaine / Stadsrenovatie Tony Van Nuffelen, urban.brussels
	Bonnes pratiques européennes / Europese goede praktijken
10h40	Gouvernance : recommandations du projet européen Urban Maestro Governance: aanbevelingen van het Europese project Urban Maestro Kristiaan Borret, BMA
10h50	Q&A
11h00	Pause / Pauze
	Conversation / Dialoog
11h10	1. Réactions de 4 acteurs / Reacties van 4 actoren <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Association internationale / internationale vereniging EUROCITIES, Anna Lisa Boni, Secrétaire Générale - Construction durable / duurzame constructie BUUR pos, Hélène Rillaerts - Association bruxelloise / Brusselse vereniging BRAL, Marie Couteaux - Architecture-urbanisme-innovation / architectuur-stedenbouw-innovatie AWB, Joachim Declerck 2. Débat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quelle plus-value peut apporter l'approche New European Bauhaus centrée sur l'esthétique, l'inclusif et le durable ? / Welke meerwaarde kan een New European Bauhaus bieden, met de nadruk op esthetisch, inclusief en duurzaam? - Comment co-construire un cadre de vie plus esthétique, durable et inclusif ? / Hoe kunnen we samen een meer esthetische, duurzame en inclusieve leefomgeving creëren? - Quelles recommandations pour la Commission européenne ? Welke aanbevelingen voor de Europese Commissie?
11h55	Mots de conclusions / Slotwoord Tom Sanders, perspective.brussels

Annex 2: Profile of the 40 participants

Answers to two slide questions asked at the beginning of the local conversation (not all participants took part in the votes)

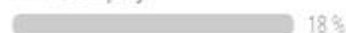
What type of organisation do you represent?

22

Public service



Private company



Academic / research institute



Non governmental organisation



Other



In which sector(s) of activity are you involved? select max. 4

24

Architecture / urbanism / heritage



(Circular) economy



Participation / co-creation / social



Culture



Research / innovation



Sustainable development

