

## SAVE THE DATE

# LAND AS A (SCARCE) RESOURCE WASTED SQUARE METERS IN CITIES: INCREASING THE USE OF SPACE & BUILDINGS

22 JUNE 2023 (9:00 – 15:00)

STAM EUROPA, RUE D'ARLON 104, BRUXELLES

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 taking place the same week in Brussels. It is organized in the framework of the PATH2LC project, an Horizon 2020 project.*

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 km<sup>2</sup> 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 period<sup>1</sup>. “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 year<sup>2</sup>.

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.

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<sup>1</sup> ESPON, 2020, policy brief, reuse of spaces and buildings

<sup>2</sup> [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](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\_**

### **\_9:00 – 9:30: Setting the scene by Marjan van Herwijne\_**

Presentation of the policy brief “reuse of spaces and buildings” by **Marjan van Herwijne** from the **European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion**

*Marjan Van Herwijnen is a senior project expert at the ESPON EGTC in Luxembourg. She works on the development and implementation of applied research projects and web applications for territorial analysis and on communicating territorial evidence towards policy makers.*

Many cities in Europe experience population growth, generating increased pressure on urban land uses in and around their cities, often leading to uncontrolled urban sprawl. Evidence showed that during the 2000-2018 period, land take in Europe exceeded the assumed need (population growth). This ESPON policy brief aims to inform European, national, regional and urban authorities about how to reuse spaces and buildings to help achieve sustainable urbanization.

### **\_9:30 – 10:30: Inspirational talk by Sylvain Grisot\_**

*Sylvain Grisot is an urban planner, founder of the urban transitions' consultancy agency **dixit.net** and author of two books “**Manifesto for Circular Urbanism**” and “**Let's repair the city: proposals for our cities and territories**” together with Christine Leconte, architect.*

In the face of urban sprawl, French urban planner Sylvain Grisot has outlined alternatives to how cities tend to develop, get built up and how space is used in them. He calls this alternative approach “circular urban planning”. Rather than a scientific theory, it's a collection of practices and cases that enables cities and planners to think differently about cities and their uses.

### **\_10:30 – 10:45: BREAK\_**

### **\_10:45 – 12:30 Deep dive on examples from pioneer cities #1 - world café\_**

**#1 - Zzz zwischenzeitzentrale temporary use agency, Bremen by Oliver Hasemann from ZZZ Bremen** - Since 2009, the German city of Bremen has been running the ZZZ. This temporary use agency wakes up vacant buildings and unused lands by filling them with innovative economic, social, and cultural projects.

**#2 - The experience of the city of Ghent with temporary use** within the the REFILL Urbact project by **Emma Tytgadt**

**#3 - Understanding the nature of vacancies with the city of Thessaloniki (GR) by Meric Ozgunes**

### **\_12:15 – 13:30: LUNCH BREAK\_**



## **\_13:30 – 15:00 Deep dive on examples from pioneer cities #2 - world café\_**

**#4 - Action coeur de ville” to fight the urban retail vacancy in the city of Arras (FR) by Lucie Wodecki and Maximilien Dumoulin**

**#5 - Soft densification through BIMBY (Build in My Back Yard) strategy, SCOT Vosges Centrales (FR) by Laurence Bertrand & Villes Vivantes**

## **\_15:00: Closing & final remarks\_**

