

**METREX  
Symposium  
2024**

**Rules and Space  
to Speed up  
Circular Construction**

**The Hague, NL  
14-15 November**



This event was part of the series EU Policies Explained organised by the Municipality of The Hague together with the METREX Network, and in cooperation with CircuLaw.

The activity is linked to the Interreg NWE Project ASSET.



Den Haag



Cover photo: Maarten Reiling

# Why in the Hague. What is the context?

The City of the Hague hosted this year the first thematic Symposium of METREX - Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas, exploring how 'speeding up circular construction' delving into the following questions: What are the relevant current and future laws and regulations on circular construction? What spatial strategies can aid regions and companies in this transition?'

The City is already a proud member city of the EU mission for 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030, which aims to bring together cities from all EU member states, knowledge partners, private parties, and other governments to learn together what does and does not work and pave the way for the transition to become climate-neutral. As part of this mission, all cities were required to write a Climate City Contract in order to receive the EU Mission Label. This document includes exhaustive data on current climate policies, CO2 reduction potential, and the financial need for accelerating climate action. Just recently, The Hague was awarded the Mission Label as

the first Dutch City. This allows for increased collaboration with partners such as the European Investment Bank.

The Dutch Mission cities (G4+Eindhoven&Helmond and Groningen) also collaborate for circular and biobased construction as one of three top priorities (along with heating transition and zero emission mobility).

Not by coincidence, the METREX Symposium happened during the 'The Hague Climate Week', a week of events to engage all citizens and users of the city to take action for a more sustainable future.

Among the most important events, the gathering to discuss the **Climate Agreement**<sup>1</sup> it contains climate deals covering five different topics:

- **Energy transition:** The transition from the use of fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy
- **Sustainable mobility:** Clean

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<sup>1</sup> The Hague Climate Agreement: <https://duurzamestad.denhaag.nl/denhaag-klimaatneutraal/the-hague-climate-agreement/>

transport without CO2 emissions

- **Circular economy:** More reuse of items and raw materials and less waste
- **Climate adaptation:** A green city that can withstand extreme weather
- The Hague: **the international city of climate, peace, and justice.**

The Climate Agreement has become an integral part of the City's strategy for the 100 climate-neutral and smart cities. Presented for the first time in 2014 with 38 deals and 115 stakeholders involved, it currently includes several new deals which are being discussed and it will further evolve.

The goal is to build a coalition of partners in the city, ranging from residents to big businesses, to work together on reaching our ambition of becoming climate-neutral by 2030.

The process has sparked a lot of regional and (inter) national interest: neighboring municipalities have started creating their own climate agreement.

# DAY 1

## Rules and Space to Speed up Circular Construction

Thursday 14 November

**What are relevant current and future laws and regulations on circular construction?  
What spatial strategies do help regions and companies?**

### *Presentations and talks with*

- **Henk Bouwman**, METREX, Secretary General
- **Peter Pol**, Gemeente Den Haag, Spatial Strategist
- **Menno Rubbens**, Cepezed, Director & project developer
- **Fanauw Hoppe**, Circulaw, Strategy, procurement and contracting for sustainable, climate neutral/positive and circular development.
- **Eveline Bakker**, Circulaw, Procurement law and sustainability, legal instruments to accelerate the circular economy.
- **Michiel Bosch**, City of Leiden, Advisor Circular and Future Proof Constructing

Moderator: **Willem van Winden**, Professor of Urban Economic Innovation at Hogeschool Amsterdam and founder of Regenalyze

### *Main goals*

To explore relevant current and future laws, regulations, and spatial strategies that accelerate circular construction. The symposium brought together experts and stakeholders to share concrete examples from leading cities and discuss the implications of laws such as the reviewed Construction Products Regulation (CPR).

### *Summary conclusions*

- o Green Deal is not going to lead to miracles à 'we need to do it ourselves'
- o On **circular economy/building, more interaction is necessary with Brussels**
- o **A new narrative/storytelling** to be created: communication efforts to be done to explain what circular economy is.

## *Main takeaways*

### **1. Integration Across Processes**

Circular construction requires synergy between design, demolition, and material reuse. Success depends on collaboration and knowledge sharing across all levels of development.

### **2. Real Pricing for Polluting Materials**

Accurately assessing the cost of environmental pollution is essential to create economic incentives for sustainable transitions.

### **3. Leveraging Development Scales**

Utilize tools like procurement, reporting, and lobbying to align strategies at municipal, regional, and national levels.

### **4. Design for Circularity**

Focus on designs that prioritize reusability, minimize environmental impact, and retain the value of materials over time.



## Key messages from speakers and group discussions

### Why to build circularly? What is the urgency of the topic?

with **Menno Rubbens**  
Director & project developer, **Cepezed**

Menno Rubbens has given an overview of what is circular building and what is different when approaching circular construction. When talking about carbon-neutral construction, people often talk about 'recycling'. Yet the recycling of materials is too low on the 'R-priority ladder'(see image). Recycling isn't as big of an environmentally positive op-

tion as people might think. Recycling is sometimes used as a greenwashing method by companies to seem more environmentally friendly. The truly circular option is to redesign and re-use the old materials. To accomplish this and become circular-ready can be done by rethinking the way we're currently building considering the impact of our action

on the environment. Therefore, what his design company introduced is the **Design for reassembly**, meaning that when deciding what materials we want to use for a building, one must consider how these materials will be useful again after the building is dismantled.

## circular construction

R-priority

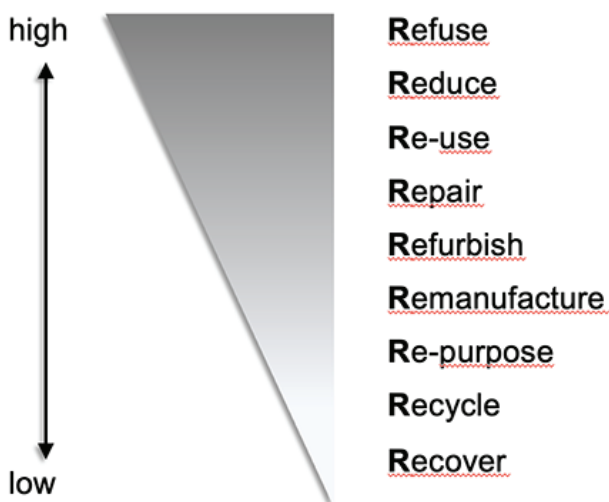


Image by Cepezed

## *Definition*

Circular construction means creating “circular-ready” designs, ensuring materials can be reused or repurposed after their lifecycle.

## *Challenges include*

- o Underdeveloped market for secondary materials.
- o Lack of clarity on how to disassemble buildings for reuse.

## *Solutions include*

- o Design materials for future inclusion in secondary markets.
- o Use tools like digital twins or manuals (akin to IKEA guides) to simplify construction and deconstruction processes.

## *Strategies*

- o Circular-ready designs.
- o Emphasis on environmental impact.
- o Designs that maintain component value through reuse.



## Latest insights into (EU-) laws and regulations on Circular Construction

with **Fanauw Hoppe** and **Eveline Bakker**  
**Circulaw**

Circulaw is a legal knowledge platform dedicated to enabling the circular economy transition.

They describe their goal as an organization to 'humanize' law texts. They want to communicate about laws in a way where the emphasis isn't on what isn't possible due to a certain law.

On the contrary, they want

to show people what is possible within that same law. 80% of the Green Deal is geared towards producers of goods and services.

They have shown how complex the legal framework enabling and fostering circular development is while pointing out the possibilities for the different actors to have

their role in speeding up the process.

In fact, even though the Green Deal is an EU-wide law, there are some pleas to consider that offer some space for the countries' internal systems to grow their ambitions and play a pioneering role.

>>> READ&REACT

CircuLaw ended their talk by inviting people to read their position paper on 'EU law perspective for the circular construction sector' and send feedback at [eveline@circulaw.nl](mailto:eveline@circulaw.nl). The document is available in PDF ([link](#))

### Main takeaways Position Paper



1. The legislative package is focused on creating minimum standards harmonized throughout Europe.
1. It's up to Member states to facilitate frontrunners, especially through green public procurement. This may prove to be difficult.
1. Legislative packages makes it difficult for frontrunners; little to be expected and potentially inhibiting effect due to EU harmonization

Recommendation:

We suggest working on a '**common CE framework**' in which standards on 'more ambitious sustainability requirements' for construction products.

Image by CircuLaw

## *Challenges include*

- o Complex Legal Frameworks
- o Circular economy obligations are scattered across multiple laws, such as the CPR and Levels frameworks
- o Regulations vary in clarity and enforceability, making hard the implementation process

## *Proposed Solutions*

- o Standardize evaluation systems to balance frontrunners' experimentation with consistent progress for others.
- o Allow frontrunners to innovate within a general framework that provides foundational guidance.
- o Use reporting as a communication tool to share findings and improve transparency.

## *Call to Action/ Key messages*

- o Legal frameworks should integrate design thinking to better align with the realities of circular construction.
- o Public procurement can serve as a tool to accelerate the transition without waiting for complete regulatory frameworks.
- o We have to work together and share the findings to achieve the results and steer the development.

# Circular construction policies and activities of the Leiden region and their experiences with laws and regulations

with **Michiel Bosch**

Advisor Circular and Future Proof Constructing  
City of Leiden

The City of Leiden exemplifies how municipalities can use public procurement to drive circular innovation showing how small municipalities can lead the transition through innovative approaches like tender evaluations, creating significant impact even in complex contexts.

They have developed a system of assessment in the tendering procedures which helps with the development of circular solutions. Issues

encountered and possible solutions have been highlighted.

The municipality is working on incorporating circular construction by thinking about being Future Proof or Paris Proof. When it comes to construction, they are changing the way they're calculating the costs. What they do is incorporate the value of the materials that are being used and are still worth money when a building is being demolished

again. This means instead of having a budget of 10 million to construct a building and working towards zero, they start out with 11 million and end up with a building and 1 million worth of materials in the building. The costs of the building are still the same, yet it introduces a new way of thinking!

## Circular Economy

- Waste (housing)
- Consumer topics (ie. Single Use Plastics)
- Health Care

## Circular Construction

- Public space / Infrastructure
- Real Estate: Municipality
- Real Estate: Developers

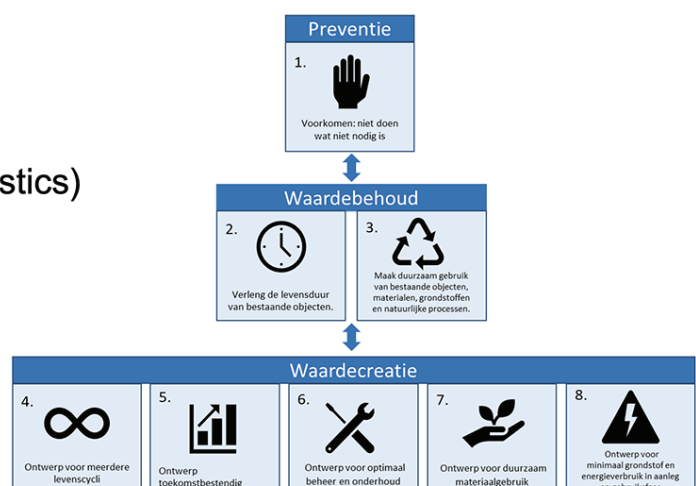


Image by City of Leiden

### *Issues include*

- o National policy restrictions limit flexibility for municipalities to go beyond baseline guidelines.
- o Translating sustainable goals into practical, implementable solutions remains complex.
- o Balancing best practices with scalability is difficult in the design phase.

### *Key Achievements*

- o Developed tender assessment systems to promote circular solutions.
- o Introduced metrics to stabilize and guide impactful projects.

### *Proposed Actions*

- o Assess real pricing for polluting materials.
- o Address space constraints for circular initiatives.
- o Align tax systems to incentivize labor and reuse over new materials.
- o Synchronize laws with long-term goals (2030, 2050 targets).

The inspiring outcome of Michiel’s speech is that the cities, even smaller municipalities, can innovate and make a difference in the way such complex topics as Circular transition are approached. By introducing the evaluation metric in the tendering processes, they are stabilizing the development and producing more impact.

### *Final messages*

1. **Collaboration is crucial:** knowledge sharing and joint efforts across levels of government, regions, and sectors are needed to drive progress.
2. **Municipalities must proactively use procurement and reporting to initiate circular solutions** while awaiting comprehensive legal frameworks.
3. **Circular construction** is not just about compliance — **it’s about adopting a mindset of innovation, value retention, and environmental responsibility.**

*Contributions  
by Rapporteur Mariia Chernova  
and Demelza Scheffer*

## *Inputs from roundtables' discussions*

### *Key messages*

#### **Group 1**

**We need to create a new storytelling** to support a mind-set change; a new storytelling adopting a vocabulary that can be widely understood. We need to **look for the grey spaces**: where laws and regulations leave enough space for introducing innovation. And last, but not least, **we need to Be brave and take the risk now**: if not, we will never move toward the necessary steps to change. Vision is needed to push for exploring new and different possibilities, which are more than you think.

#### **Group 2**

It is necessary to Make it 'the normal'. What is not yet enough is the variety of stakeholders. We need to work toward **shared ownership and common knowledge and involve people from different sectors. Form a platform, a movement to develop the CE approach.** New ways of evaluating the outputs of CE. **Make the benefits locally understood to society as a whole.**

#### **Group 3**

**We, local and regional governments are setting the example. Not the member states. The Regions have to come together and make our voices (lobbying) heard in Brussels in order to set higher standards and rules. We must do that for our children and grandchildren and the planet.**

#### **Group 4**

**We, the frontrunners start a revolution by implementing true pricing collaboratively and coherently at different administrative levels**

## DAY 2

# Rules and Space to Speed up Circular Construction

Friday 15 November

## The spatial consequences of circular construction The experiences of a Dutch urban region

### *Presentations and talks with*

- **Bart Bomas**, BVR
- **Chandar van der Zande**, City of Amsterdam
- **Menno Rubbens**, Cepezed, Director & project developer
- **Fanauw Hoppe**, Circulaw, Strategy, procurement and contracting for sustainable, climate neutral/positive and circular development.
- **Eveline Bakker**, Circulaw, Procurement law and sustainability, legal instruments to accelerate the circular economy
- **Michiel Bosch**, City of Leiden, Advisor Circular and Future Proof Constructing
- **Arco Timmermans**, Leiden University
- **Richard Koek**, City of The Hague

Moderator: **Willem van Winden**, Professor of Urban Economic Innovation at Hogeschool Amsterdam and founder of Regenalyze

### *Opening Statement*

*'Figures say we need 40 percent more space for a circular economy'*

The second day was introduced by the host, Petra Cafnik, Academic Director of the Unknown Campus. The Unknown University is a private university. For the first year, they run a Bachelor in Entrepreneurship to prepare and equip students to adapt and respond to the challenges ahead. 'There is a possibility of change. We can fix it now', it is their belief.

The transition to a circular economy is not happening fast enough. What the University offers is a platform, a community of people, start-up founders and students who can work together for collaboration. The location - De Titaan - is one of the fully sustainable buildings in the Binckhorst. Building materials are reused for different purposes. It used to be a former tobacco factory which was less healthy for the society. It has now become an impact-focused area for startups and programs of scale-ups.

## Main takeaways

**1. Spatial strategies are key to support the transformation from a linear economy towards a circular one.**

**2. Municipalities and regions can do a lot more with agreements and value chains**

- Stronger rules on EU and national governmental levels are needed, but this can't be the only discourse. Local- and regional governments mustn't wait and act on what they can do now.
- Explore gray areas to seek for unexpected possibilities within the existing regulation's framework

**3. Make a new narrative of making- and transforming space**

**4. Time matters**

- The discussion of time is often not incorporated. How will the plan evolve?
- Adaptability over time unlocks the circular potential of a building. It is not the material that makes the building circular.

**5. Circularity needs to become a matter of public interest. How to talk about circularity with citizens?**

**6. There is a momentum now. And needs to be taken**

There are new EU commissioners selected now. In an EU mission letter, the new EU commissioner is coming with a **Circular Economy Act**. There is a lot of power in the municipalities and regions, to come up with a new agenda for the EU Commission.

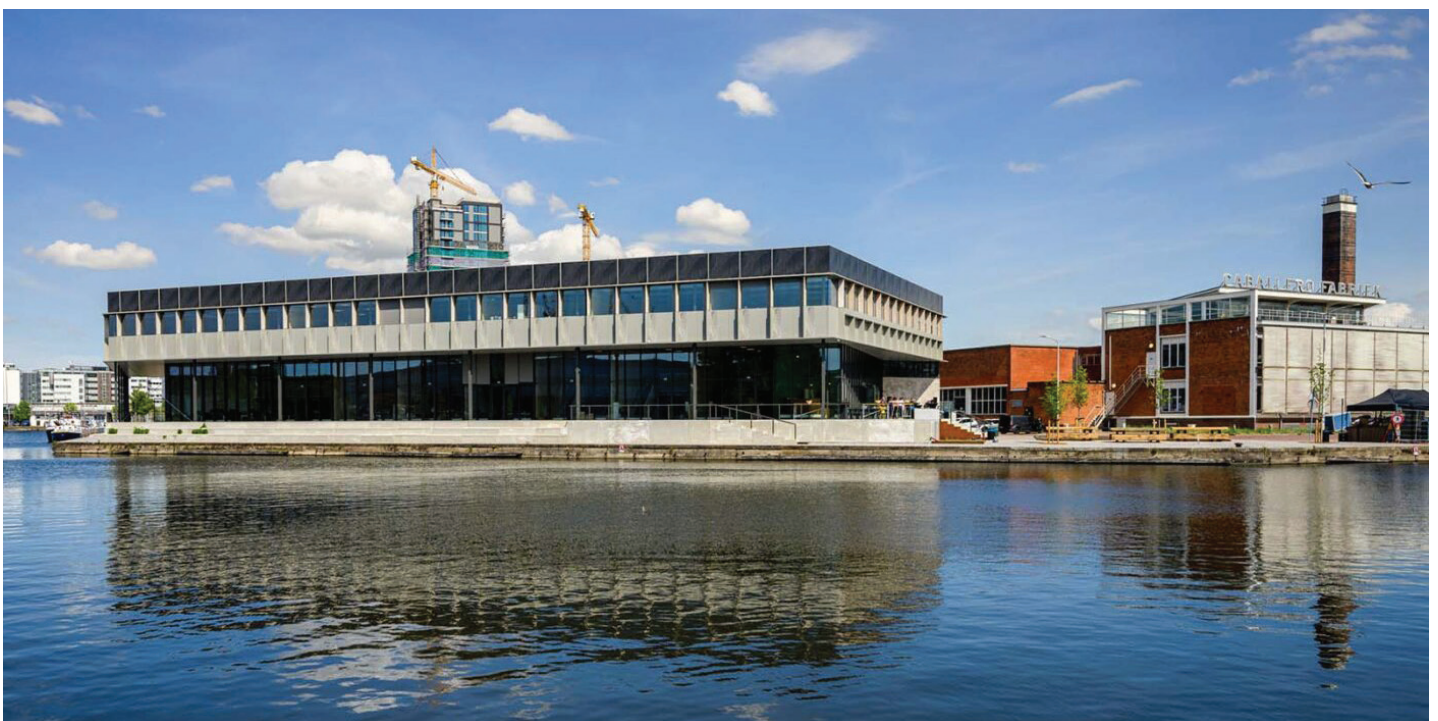


Image by City of The Hague





## Key messages from speakers and group discussions

### Spatial strategies for circular construction

with **Bart Bomas**

senior project leader at **BVR**

BVR is a Rotterdam-based office for spatial advice. Their main focus is the development of spatial plans in the Netherlands.

Circular economy is central in Bart's work: he is currently involved in the Interreg NWE Project 'ASSET' (<https://sure-eurodelta.eurometrex.org/projects/>).

Previously, the office has developed the 'Circulaire economie en Ruimte' for the Dutch Ministries:

**What would be the impact of the circular economy on space?**

As a starter, PBL has recently concluded in a study that 40 percent more space for a global circular economy and

minus 10 or 20 percent less space for a regional circular economy will be needed. How do we deal with these figures?

### What are the spatial implications of the Circular economy? Challenge and Goals

- o **To transform our economy from linear to circular is a must.**  
The current economy is linear and based on fossil fuels, creating the problem of breaking through the so-called *ecological ceiling* of our planet. Such a transformation implies a parallel phasing out of the linear economy.
- o There is a lot of uncertainty about the space required for the circular economy.
- o To make space for a circular economy implies considering 4 types of space: harvesting, production, consumption, and logistical space
- o To make the linear economy circular implies spatial transformations and, therefore **a spatial strategy**.

This starts from making a space research:

- 1/ what are the material chains;
- 2/ What are the local conditions;
- 3/ What are the directions (Existing spatial narratives).

## Commission for a Spatial strategy for PZH

At the demand of the Province of South Holland, BVR elaborated a Spatial Strategy by exploring areas with chances of developing a circular economy approach and creating scenarios for the region. By analysing the flows of activities and places such as industrial areas, business areas for circular companies, small urban locations, R&D areas, and the framework of infrastructure like energy, they came up with 3 possible actions:

1. Scale up and make space for startups.
2. Reconstruct and shift spaces, to transform the area and to put the business in the right spot.
3. Break down the linear economy and business that we don't want.

## 10 lessons learned on rules

- EU legislation as a driver;
- Redesign waste legislation: if you pick up waste, it is waste management.
- Develop certificates.
- Introduce an R-label: we need some kind of labeling;
- Scaling up circular industries: 3 mln. houses are required in the Eurodelta;
- Develop spatial strategies;
- Steer business allocation;
- Make covenants on sustainable healthy building;
- Use tenders; be a launching customer.
- Use rules on flexibility.

## Emerging Issues:

- o **Repurposing:** Changing the existing space is the priority because new space takes too long.
- o **The narrative of making - and transforming space** has to change as well.
- o **Need of land and the costs of land:** Circular economy takes a lot of land. How much will we pay for this land?
- o **Governance:** how do municipalities and regions (and national level) work together for the space claim?

## Possible solutions:

- o Agenda to set how to make space versus respacing
  - o Different municipalities should start sharing spaces looking beyond their boundaries
- 3 cases: PZH, Groene Metropool, Amsterdam South Oost

## What does already exist:

During these months the Ministry of Internal Affairs is making guidelines for the circular economy within the urban planning regulation.

## EU taxonomy and how to translate that into local circular construction policies

with Chandar van der Zande,  
City of Amsterdam

Before working for the City of Amsterdam, Chandar learned a lot of governance models with citizens what the barriers are, and how to move beyond those. The Netherlands is good for this, because of the flat organization. In his spare time, Chandar constructed a biobased building. Rules and regulations are interesting, how do you get a certification and proof fire prevention. Chandar brings

all his practical experience and knowledge to support this transition from a public authority perspective.

Amsterdam has a big circular team to work on the circular transition. In the last 10 years, they developed circular analysis and principles and moved to a circular economy strategy, which is the basis for their work now. The execution agenda has more than

17 actions. His team has met all the departments in the domain of living environment to engage them in this process of change. Although we do a lot of things (instruments), a lot is coming from the EU: taxonomy makes it more transparent. A lot of construction companies need to deal with this already.

### Ambitions

- o A'dam looking 'into the future' – the doughnut city (happy people on a liveable planet)
- o The focus is on re-scaling, using the frontrunners (How do we keep frontrunners happy?)
- o Circular Implementation Agenda 2023-2026
- o Narrow, slow, close the loop and replace material
- o Scale up at the neighbourhood level.
- o Make the city circular

### How do we translate EU framework into the instruments we have on the local level?

How do we use these European frameworks (unified way to talk about the buildings) and translate this into the instruments that we (want to) have and apply them on the local level? Taxonomy mentions the sustainable practice, whether the building is yes/no sustainable can be determined by the top 3 indicators.

Main questions on the local level:

- o **How can we calculate the 'whole impact'?**
- o **What level should we reach to stay in line with the planetary boundaries?**
- o **How can we think about the frameworks and instruments we have?**

## Current References

- Framework urban policy levers for circular economy transitions
- Amsterdam has a benchmark “het nieuwe normaal” – 25 buildings selected that can show that this circular construction is possible.

## Challenges vs opportunities:

There is an opportunity for frontrunners and municipalities, to raise the bar higher.

- o EU taxonomy is a unified way of how the practice is deemed sustainable when gives a significant contribution to CE and does not significantly harm

### **Problem: How does the public actor label sustainable companies?**

Companies can tell on their website to be sustainable companies by picking some and saying ‘We are helping a fair world’. Companies can make a report on whether or not the companies’ activities have a significant contribution to the (circular) economy. If the company does significant harm, the company is ‘not EU taxonomy aligned’. This helps especially transparency of the market and financial investments of the financial market into the ‘EU taxonomy aligned’ companies.

- o EU taxonomy has been watered down. A serious commitment to Paris-alignment requires a higher benchmark. What about further pushing the EU standard?

**Opportunity:** We could make it stricter for climate mitigation x minus kilograms. The EU taxonomy framework is a transition instrument to support sustainable activities in businesses. Companies have to comply with this EU taxonomy framework. The level is a starting stone and is quite low. We should put the bar higher and do twice as well as the ‘normal’. The City of Leiden is already going in this direction fixing criteria that do not include the price. This element is out of the equation and does not influence the choice.

## Ideas/potential solutions from Q&A

- Contracts and agreements combined with an execution agenda toward clear goals should guide the process.
- Explore solutions in the grey area.
- Select frontrunners from the market and stimulate the most sustainable companies already aligned with the EU taxonomy framework based on a few indicators (phase one). Improvements can come at a later stage.

## Issues highlighted

- From the local authority’s point of view, there are not enough arguments, initiatives, and regulations, to support one company and leave another behind (if doesn’t comply with the desired high-standard requirements).
- On the one hand, the EU court holds (local) governments accountable for their responsibility to prevent anything that can harmfully affect the climate. On the other hand, the national government says local governments can’t meet that need. The tipping points will be coming too soon. This challenges the law and the national level.

# Panel discussion and conclusions of the Symposium

## Statement#1 What is a circular building?

- *There is no such thing as a circular building. A building may have some circular potential, but whether that potential is ever realised depends on future developments (statement from Menno Rubbens).*

- *We must make the health of our buildings and cities easily measurable by shaping criteria, design principles, and measures (statement from Richard Koek).*

*Richard Koek, Expert on Urban Design at the municipality of The Hague:*

As a municipality, the most sustainable choice is not building at all, which is part of our strategy.

When we are working on plans for new buildings, then circu-

lar, sustainable, healthy and environmentally friendly are the criteria to develop circular buildings.

These same criteria have become part of the way we make policies, and use measurable indicators to help designers, developers, and end users to come up with design principles.

Circularity is maybe not yet on top of the policy agenda, but it is important for us.

**A major challenge remains: How to talk about circularity with citizens?**



*Michiel Bosch, policy advisor circular building at the municipality of Leiden:*

In spatial planning, we make decisions on how to make a city and give opportunities to make high rise buildings which might become less circular buildings. We know that concrete will never be demountable.

*Menno Rubbens, director Cepezed Projects:*

**The discussion of time is often not incorporated. How will the plan evolve over time?**

Circularity in society is building together and adapting to external influences. We should think about how the building can adjust to the unforeseen.

And we should incorporate time in everything we do.

**Adaptability unlocks the circular potential of a building.**

It is not the material that makes the building circular.

*Chandar van der Zande, teamcoordinator circular built environment at municipality of Amsterdam:*

In 5 years, the Earth will reach the tipping point. In terms of prioritization, circularity became vague. If we talk about the **criteria**, we need to look at **the EU taxonomy framework, which can help us prioritise circularity.**

*Eveline Bakker, legal counsel at Circulaw:*

**Circularity is a systemic**

**problem.** What is the role of the municipality? If municipalities want to do more, then they must be more active and become promoters of a circular system, than just a facilitator of the process.

*Michiel Bosch, policy advisor circular building at the municipality of Leiden:*

There will be 200.000 new buildings around the Oude Lijn from Leiden to Dordrecht. Most of these buildings will be high-rise. It is counterproductive and it is a conflict whether we should build fast or we should build sustainable. It is technically possible to build 70 meters sustainable, but it might be more expensive.

*Richard Koek, Expert on Urban Design at the municipality of The Hague:*

Is there more work 'to do' on communicating about circular building? There are possibilities in the existing space, refurbish and reuse. If you focus mainly on high rise, then it is part of the discussion with investors. This is difficult. You need some spaces and areas where you can go higher. You must prove that it is sustainable.

## Statement#2 Ambition level

- *Recycling is hijacking the circular discourse, but the future lies in designing without waste, not reusing waste (statement from Menno Rubbens).*
- *If we can't grow our cities within planetary boundaries, we shouldn't grow them at all (statement from Chandar van der Sande).*
- *We should only build when it is adaptive and Paris Proof, putting up unsustainable housing now is capital destruction (statement from Michiel Bosch).*

*Chandar van der Zande, team coordinator circular built environment at the municipality of Amsterdam:*

**If we still allow new buildings built with concrete, these buildings will add problems to the problems.** We know the impact if we build with traditional materials. We focus a lot on the CO2 reduction. It is nice to have that CO reduction is being realized. Renewable materials happen to bring CO2 reduction with this. It is hijacking the discourse. **Clarity on the boundary conditions as a starting point for designing the buildings is key.**

We should agree to this. Is this possible: yes? Even if we use biobased materials, then we are staying in the planetary boundaries or we are going beyond them. Academic science says that 1,5 degrees is already off the table. How do we deal with the existing housing?

*Michiel Bosch, policy advisor circular building at the municipality of Leiden:*

If we have high ambitions now, then we have a better case

in the future. But it is also a conflict between what we want: build fast and not sustainably or good quality housing for everyone?

*Richard Koek, Expert on Urban Design at the municipality of The Hague:*

In the last 5 years, we have built 1.100 houses. However, we still have 44.000 people looking for a house. The market puts the pressure, besides the environmental pressure. Parties find other ways and come up with proposals because we didn't say we want sustainable buildings. You can put more criteria on top, but it won't help because the national government says what are the criteria of 'Building Decision'. There are architects' offices that don't take the job assignment if the commissioner doesn't want to build in wood. The big manufacturing industry says that they would like to have proof of the sustainability. The small medium-sized sector would like to transform and help, but municipalities shouldn't say 'You must do this'.

**To change the industry, we must help them and show them good practices.** We don't have a lot of ground as long as the national government; it will stay difficult. It is a promotional public affair, why are we not coming across that we want to build sustainability? Make a connection between circularity and health could be a way forward.

## Statement#3 Rules and regulations

- *Stronger rules are necessary if governments want to drive change towards a circular economy (statement from Eveline Bakker).*
- *If all parties would do what they promise on their website, we would not need any regulation (statement from Michiel Bosch).*
- *Focus on coalition building with various types of players, organise this also at the regional level because the region's input is appreciated in Brussels and offers great opportunities (statement from Arco Timmermans).*

*Michiel Bosch, policy advisor circular building at the municipality of Leiden:*

'Building Decision' is the baseline. How does the public statement on the website align with the European rules? All parties are developing these kinds of public statements but in practice, they do not comply with the rules.

*Bart Bomas, senior projectleader at BVR:*

Circularity is a big topic. But in practice, it is tough. The lawsuit of Shell shows that you don't have to put your promise into practice. In the construction and building sector, they are very conservative. They know what they can do and know what they do. How to reduce the risks for the building sector is an aspect not to be forgotten.

*Moderator Willem van Winden:*  
**Are stronger rules necessary? What rules and regulations should be much tougher and stronger?**

*Eveline Bakker, legal counsel at Circulaw:*

Coming back on our presentation (by Circulaw) yesterday, we need stronger rules on EU and national governmental levels, but this can't be the only discourse. Also, we believe that municipalities and regions can do a lot more with agreements and value chains. Local- and regional governments mustn't wait and act on what they can do now, because we don't see a circular economy happening in practice now.

*Fanauw Hoppe, legal sustainability counsel at Circulaw:*

Municipalities can also set the rules in procurement. How can municipalities act as agents, can affect the circular transition? We don't need other laws, but we need to use the rules and regulations. Certain regulations may be key for the circular transition. We could lobby to change these rules. There are many

laws, like the 'Building Decision', conflicting with a circular economy which is based on the linear economy. This is the main thing in the Netherlands

*Arco Timmermans, Professor and Expert of Public Affairs at Leiden University:*

What are the aspirations for a circular transition? The X-curve model could also be constructed by the players. What do we need? This is a strategy to push and facilitate the circular transition. A strategy requires two routes:

- The low route: bottom-up how local- and regional-level initiatives can build on other rules.
- The high route: top-down strict rules.

If municipalities think about influencing the rules, you need to "download rules" and "upload rules". Many of the elements for the EU taxonomy framework consist of directives, that have to be implemented by the member states.



### 1. What is the set of issues that we want to pursue in recycled/circular buildings?

What is the price for houses that need to be paid? There is a hijacking of the debate on circularity. You can see a circular building as an opportunity. You can use this opportunity to promote this issue.

### 2. What kind of stakeholders are we talking about?

What are stakeholders that create value and critical mass? There are maybe some unusual suspects. (For example, Bouwend Nederland is a large brand of large powerful players).

### 3. How can we build a transition coalition and arrive at a common agenda?

If we think about these elements, it can help to design a strategy and push it both from the bottom up and top down.

### We need a more strategic coalition to bring this circular transition forward.

There can't be one coalition trying to fix everything. It is becoming infeasible. The challenge is a coalition small enough for feasibility and big enough for critical mass. The interesting question is to become a winning coalition.

### What constitutes an effective coalition?

It is now clear where we stand and what we need to do. Circularity is a technical matter

now. You need to put this in a narrative that sticks to the people. Helping sustainable building is maybe a bit vague.

Durable living in Europe is one way to achieve this. **There is a momentum now.** There are new EU commissioners selected now. In an EU mission letter, the new EU commissioner is coming with a **Circular Economy Act.** There is a lot of power in the municipalities and regions, to come up with a new agenda for the EU Commission.

There are so many rules. It is not possible to align everyone on the same page. Besides what we don't agree on, there are a lot of things we know as needs & requirements. The language for the circular transition is now being formed. Finding common ground is making sense to build arguments.

We could be opportunistic on the opportunities of a circular transition. How do we tell inhabitants about this? What is the responsibility of local- and regional levels? What is valued on all different levels: money, permits, and no lawsuits?

Today, we didn't discuss statements about space for dirty and loud circular business and circular greenwashing. These are technical spatial issues. We need the space for a circular economy now. There is a lot of circular greenwashing going on now.

Note:

- The transition team circular building puts together different initiatives started from last October 2024 onwards.
- NGO's are now targeting building developers on what they say but don't do, which can hamper developers (Rotterdam Natuurlijk: <https://rotterdamnatuurlijk.nl/>)

*Contribution by Emma de Wijs,  
Rapporteur Jurre Bajjards and  
Tibor Hargitai*

## *What is next?*

### **ASSET Project 2.0 Proposal and Application**

On the macro-regional scale of Eurodelta, ASSET Project 1.0 explored how to create a circular built environment.

A new Interreg NWE Project proposal is currently being prepared and also thanks to today's discussion it will look at calculating how much and where do you need space for making chains and flows of circular materials. City to city, region to region, business to business, we are maybe missing the interconnections right now. It is not only a topic for research parties. How do we scale up into different networks and movements (as there are more of these collaborations)?

Project coordinator: Dagmar Keim, program manager International and Sustainability

### **Circulaw Position paper**

Expected feedback on the position paper made by Circulaw by January 24 (please contact Eveline Bakker at [eveline@ecolaw.nl](mailto:eveline@ecolaw.nl))

### **Follow-up meeting:**

Dates and program will follow

# METREX SYMPOSIUM

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### Contents per day session

DAY 1 :

Contributions by Rapporteur Mariia Chernova and Demelza Scheffer

DAY 2 :

Contribution by Emma de Wijs, Rapporteur Jurre Baijards and Tibor Hargitai

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