



2021

REPORT OF THE EU MEMBER STATE EXPERT GROUP

# **TOWARDS A SHARED CULTURE OF ARCHITECTURE**

INVESTING IN A HIGH-QUALITY LIVING  
ENVIRONMENT FOR EVERYONE

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REPORT OF THE OMC (OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION)  
GROUP OF EU MEMBER STATE EXPERTS – 2021

# **TOWARDS A SHARED CULTURE OF ARCHITECTURE**

INVESTING IN A HIGH-QUALITY  
LIVING ENVIRONMENT FOR EVERYONE

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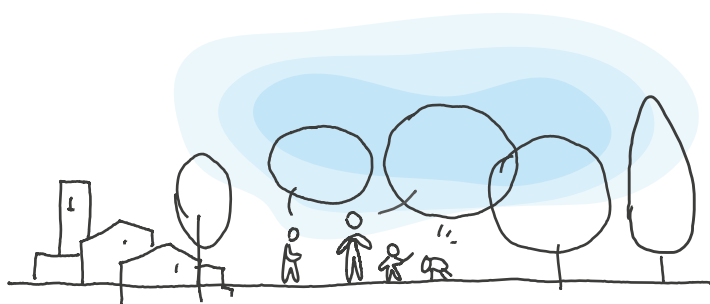
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## INTRODUCTION

Under the priority 'Cohesion and well-being' the Council of the European Union's 2019-2022 work plan for culture established the creation of an Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group of Member States' experts focusing on high-quality architecture and built environment for everyone. In 2020 and 2021 a group of 39 experts nominated by 23 Member States, plus Norway and Switzerland collaborated closely with the aim of addressing current challenges and long-term strategies for our living environment. In the process coordinated by the European Commission, the experts exchanged knowledge, analysed case studies and developed recommendations on the many ways high-quality architecture can help to improve and further develop the spaces and places of Europe for the benefit of everyone.

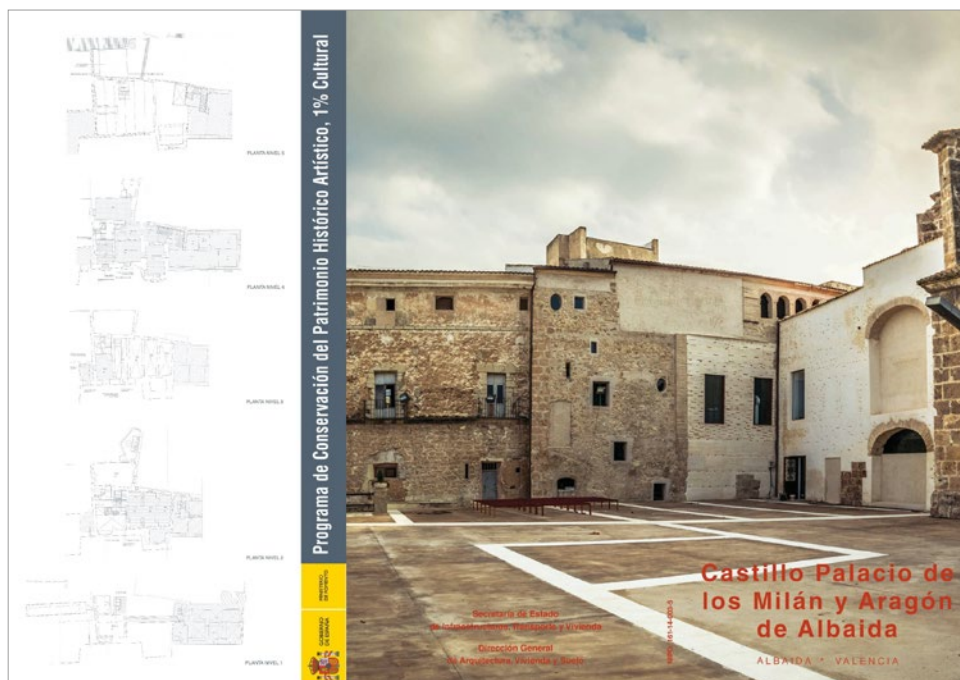
As this expert group was at work, the European Commission launched the New European Bauhaus, which aims at transforming the European Green Deal into a new cultural project, beyond its technological or economic dimensions. While it goes beyond traditional ideas about the built environment, the New European Bauhaus has a considerable intersection with the conclusions of this report as it calls for architectural quality and design thinking as key contributors to the transformational movement it wants to inspire. This publication will no doubt be a major contribution feeding into the design and implementation of the New European Bauhaus.



**New European Bauhaus**  
beautiful | sustainable | together

## WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

Building and planning for the benefit of everyone not only creates cohesion and well-being but also sustainable places to live. A focus on high-quality architecture by all people and agencies involved will therefore also contribute to sustaining the planet and combating climate change. This report looks far beyond the question of 'good architectural design' and the discipline of architecture. Instead, it takes a holistic view and understanding of quality when referring to our living spaces. It considers all human activities that alter the built environment, that are broad in scope and relate to past, present and future building and planning. From the outset *Towards a Shared Culture of Architecture – Investing in a high-quality living environment for everyone* includes the open landscape but also encompasses the built but also the unbuilt, in-between spaces. High-quality architecture relates to the planning and production processes that shape our surroundings while also being concerned with craftsmanship as well as the planning of developments in various forms. In addition to the quality of contemporary creation it includes the concept of cultural heritage and its preservation. How we shape our environment as a whole is an expression of our culture, or 'Baukultur'. The built environment requires a comprehensive, culture-centred approach on how to design the places in which to live, and to ensure that the legacy that society leaves behind is of value. High-quality design solutions develop common values because they not only fulfil functional, technical and economic demands, but also connect people and promote social interaction.



◀ **Rehabilitación del Castillo Palacio de los Milán y Aragón de Albaida, Cuerpo Central** (case study 26 – Cultural 1.5%), Spain, 2014.  
© Ministerio de Transportes, Movilidad y Agenda Urbana



The key challenges and tasks at hand identified in this report are as follows.

- **Culture is key.** The need to place greater emphasis on the **cultural dimension** of our living environment.
- **Planning the future with quality in mind.** The need for an all-encompassing **vision to integrate all essential quality aspects in the long term**, including aesthetics, sustainability and affordability in all processes shaping our living environment.
- **Seeing the bigger picture.** The need for **integrated quality-driven planning processes and funding mechanisms** that include all quality criteria (governance, functionality, environment, economy, diversity, sense of place, context, beauty) for the built environment in their measures – in short, linking holistic quality criteria to funding
- **Promoting a culture of design** when commissioning spatial projects in the public sector is becoming an increasingly complex task.
- **Strengthening competences.** The need for **capacity building** on multiple governance levels as well as **qualifying the decision-makers**.
- **Starting early.** The need to raise **awareness** of the qualitative aspects of the living environment across societies from an early age.

## VISION

The European built environment and architecture of tomorrow should be of high quality and to the benefit of everyone. The quality of our spaces and places is of vital importance to the recovery of Europe, as quality in architecture and our built environment contribute fundamentally to our wellbeing. Leaving no one behind, European multidisciplinary and participatory urban governance models and innovative actions need to foster social inclusion, adapt to climate change as well as promote the sustainable development of neighbourhoods in cities and rural areas through an integrated and balanced approach. The field of architecture continues to play a key role in driving quality standards. The knowledge and skills of professionals and experts in the field should therefore be firmly integrated into spatial development processes at all levels. Research and development, grass-roots initiatives, (temporary) adaptive reuse, culture-led social innovation and co-creation can make significant contributions towards the quality of architecture and the built environment. A major challenge is to ensure that citizens, organisations and authorities are well aware of their abilities and responsibilities to improve the future built environment for everyone. In line with the recently launched New European Bauhaus initiative, it is a joint effort to make the living spaces of tomorrow more beautiful, inclusive and sustainable.



▲ The built environment has a profound influence on people's lives. A human-centred approach through civic stewardship and placemaking is required when we design our cities, towns and villages.

**Clonakilty 400 Urban Design Masterplan** (case study 19), Ireland. Courtesy of Cork County Council architect Giulia Vallone

## QUALITY MATTERS – VALUE FOR EVERYONE

The experience of how we have used spaces and places during the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that access to quality housing, outdoor space and natural recreation are hugely important to our existence and wellbeing. But for too long the overall objective of quality architecture with all its key aspects has been neglected, rather being limited to functional, technical and economic aspects. What is often ignored is that a quality living space not only meets functional, technical, ecological and economic requirements, but also fulfils design objectives when it comes to aesthetic, social and psychological aspects and cultural needs, such as a sense of belonging. High-quality design and well-considered interventions should sustain the life and authenticity of cultural assets and avoid adverse loss of their cultural significance. Beautiful, liveable and lovable towns, villages and landscapes with local identity can only be created if quality standards are met throughout the process of planning and building from ideation to completion and reuse.

A liveable, high-quality built environment is as much about connecting people and strengthening social cohesion as it is about creating spaces for public encounters. In addition to shaping social interactions, high-quality architecture is sustainable as it includes environmentally friendly action that will save resources, promote biodiversity and consider the local climate. Another key aspect is engaging residents in the decision-making processes to help with a community's identification with the built environment surrounding it and to strengthen a shared responsibility for their living space. This process of co-creation also empowers citizens and sensitises them to the issues relating to the quality of construction. As a result, specific, non-standardised solutions strengthen structural diversity and thus avoid levelling out regional differences. In the ideal scenario for the development of high-quality contemporary spaces, local and regional building traditions are coupled with technical innovation.

Wherever possible a high level of expertise is required from all partaking parties and disciplines in order to implement the above quality objectives. Much of the responsibility lies with architects as they often play a central role in all development phases, effectively leading the process.

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Architects and designers are well-placed brokers between different lines of work and of expertise, such as engineering, technology, materials sciences or social studies, among others.

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Architects have a solid track record in interrogating the quality of the built environment and are therefore well equipped to use their knowledge, experience and capacity to spark discussions about the quality goals for the built environment.

Beyond a clear vision and the leading role of architects, all stakeholders, especially the public sector but notably also the private sector, have the responsibility to ensure that quality goals are met to their best available knowledge. To achieve quality in all aspects of the built environment there needs to be awareness of the quality goals and commitment to them on all levels, as well as transdisciplinary and multi-sectoral co-creation and decision-making processes.

## **AN INTEGRATED APPROACH – THE VALUE OF DIALOGUE**

The OMC group's in-depth analysis and debate about quality in architecture, the built environment and sustainable urban development revealed not only that these issues are currently attracting much attention across Europe. It also revealed a wealth of already existing or planned initiatives and programmes that further strengthen the debate around these pressing issues. Against this background, the expert group closely analysed a wealth of relevant EU policies and initiatives to contribute something new to the debate and efforts, to ensure synergies and to improve efficiency of human, natural, financial and other resources in planning and building. The group mapped out and prioritised the initiatives, focusing especially on those with the highest relevance to the topic of this report in terms of their content, timing and the availability of resources. This involved frequent communication and knowledge exchange with relevant European Commission services and initiatives to determine where an inclusion of high-quality principles in current and future programmes is feasible – an advocacy that should be continued beyond the group's term. The authors of this report also sought further cooperation with relevant partnerships of the urban agenda of the EU, among them on culture and cultural heritage.

Importantly, the current New European Bauhaus movement, to be addressed in detail below, is a leading example of a holistic approach on the matter making the cultural dimension of the living environment central to the discussion <sup>(1)</sup>. The approach that underpins the New European Bauhaus can also nurture the renovation wave strategy and help inspire its measures to raise the full potential of the strategy and achieve a 'quality renovation wave', changing mentalities, mindsets and quality of life while achieving Europe's climate neutrality objective. Given the significant momentum the New European Bauhaus has gathered, it will play a key role in helping with implementing the principles and visions laid out in this report. Relevant EU funding programmes (cohesion policy funds, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Horizon Europe and its relevant missions, creative Europe and Erasmus+, among others), as well as national, regional and local funding and investment opportunities need to contribute to the quality of the built environment.

## WHO IS THIS PUBLICATION FOR?

With its inclusive and holistic approach this report will provide various stakeholders with new ideas and approaches, in particular decision-makers in the fields of architecture and the built environment, the culture and heritage sector as well as those tasked with spatial planning and sustainable development at local, regional, national and European levels. But *Towards a Shared Culture of Architecture – Investing in a high-quality living environment for everyone* is also meant as a valuable resource for clients, civil servants and other relevant stakeholders. Key actors (partners, stakeholders, target groups) include:

- **EU institutions** in charge of education and culture, research, innovation and development (RI & D), territorial and cohesion policies, investment programmes and financial resources;
- **national governments and public bodies** of the EU Member States and associated countries;
- **state architect teams** (or similar expert groups at the national, federal or regional level);
- **city architects** and their teams and local or regional governments across the EU;
- **(Spatial planning, design, construction – *Baukultur*) professionals and experts** both within public authorities and administrations as well as in the private sector, professional associations and NGOs working in the field;

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<sup>(1)</sup> It goes far beyond aesthetic considerations and is the main driver for quality planning processes and quality projects, as well as a source of inspiration and innovation for the other pillars of sustainability, given that arts are providers of crucial twenty-first century competences, such as critical thinking and problem solving.

- **specialists in related sectors**, including investors, developers, owners and operators who have responsibility for parts of the built environment;
- **educators of *Baukultur*** experts in the public sector at the national, regional and local levels;
- **providers of guidelines on the built environment** for private-sector stakeholders as well as local administrations;
- **research centres and universities** who conduct studies and offer courses on the built environment;
- **cultural and creative professionals** invested in the idea that creativity, arts and culture play a vital role in bringing urgent solutions to the climate change challenge to the forefront; in imagining, communicating and building a sustainable future; and in encouraging and facilitating action and change at all levels of society <sup>(2)</sup>.

The following quality principles and related assessment tools may also be used by anyone else with an interest in the topic. We all conduct our lives in the built environment and experience it on a day-to-day basis – therefore the issues surrounding planning and building concern everyone. Implementing quality principles can help to raise awareness of this fact; an innovative set of guiding principles will assist people with reflecting on the quality of their surroundings and provide the necessary tools to assess the quality of a place.

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<sup>(2)</sup> 'Creative Climate Action' brief, [https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2021/03/Creative\\_Climate\\_Action\\_Brief\\_final.pdf](https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2021/03/Creative_Climate_Action_Brief_final.pdf)



▲  
**Melanchthonhaus – a writer's house museum renovation and extension in Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany, 2013.**  
 Designed by Dietzsch & Weber Architekten. © Dietzsch & Weber Architekten

## KEY MESSAGES IN BRIEF

Aiming for the following **goals** will help with creating a high-quality living environment for everyone <sup>(3)</sup>.

### HIGH-QUALITY PROCEDURES AND SOLUTIONS BECOME BEST-PRACTICE MODELS.

As guidance on how to improve the built environment for everyone, the highly relevant quality principles mapped out in the Davos Declaration <sup>(4)</sup> should become best practice both in the public and private sectors, alongside the eight quality criteria provided in this report. No governance decision should reduce the quality of a place. We have inherited the built environment we live in, with its already existing spatial context. Balancing (sometimes conflicting) interests in the decision-making process should always result in a compromise that improves the built environment **for as many people as possible – for everyone, for as long as possible**.

### EVERYBODY HAS ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE ABOUT QUALITY.

It is essential to raise awareness of the topic early on. There exist good examples on how we can improve spatial knowledge and skills in formal and informal education to equip the next generation with a better understanding of the qualities and challenges of the built environment. There are many useful examples of how **greater awareness** of the topic among the general population has a positive impact on all built developments in the long run (see case studies presented under 'Awards' and 'Education and awareness raising' later in this report).

### DECISION-MAKERS SUBSCRIBE TO QUALITY.

The decision-making processes for the built environment become a success if as much knowledge and competence as possible is invested at all administrative levels: high-quality design solutions must be knowledge-based and have the currently available and for every place most suitable best knowledge built into them – in addition, they should ideally bring forward the development of new knowledge and skills. All decisions on the design and use of space have a long-term impact on the living environment; for decision-making processes to be very well informed about the standards and expectations around quality, decision-makers should have the most relevant information at their disposal. Such **spatial competence** (subscribing to quality) will result in greater expertise and accountability when making and implementing decisions that influence development of spaces (see case studies presented under 'Laws and policies' and 'Tools, processes and research' later in this report).

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<sup>(3)</sup> The set objectives and activities are based on the OMC expert group discussions and consultations with relevant EU stakeholders.

<sup>(4)</sup> Further information: <https://davosdeclaration2018.ch/davos-declaration-2018>

### CO-CREATION WITH QUALITY IN MIND.

The principles of participatory co-creation are at the heart of all decision-making processes concerning the built environment at all governance levels (including decisions on funding, location, design brief, construction drawings etc.). Alternative plans are open to deliberation and discussion with all people and organisations concerned whose legal rights and field of action might be affected by the decision.

### CONSISTENT PLANNING TO ACHIEVE QUALITY.

The Davos quality principles on *Baukultur* are used as a blueprint throughout strategic planning processes and referenced in all relevant documents at all governance levels. They form the basis for informed choices and decisions on planning and design at all departmental and administrative levels. This is particularly relevant for considerations on high-quality architecture **across the entire building life cycle**: this involves adopting the quality principles during the planning, building and transformation or recycling process, as well as rethinking issues of revitalisation and reuse in terms of the quality goals (see case studies presented under ‘Regeneration, revitalisation and adaptive reuse’ later in this report).

### REGULATIONS, STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES HELP TO ACHIEVE QUALITY.

Legal acts, standards and guidelines support the implementation of *Baukultur* quality principles, complemented with the quality principles where appropriate. The principles should be of relevance at the initial stage of drafting regulations, standards and guidelines. It is important to ensure that **public procurement rules and procedures** at the national, regional and local level foster a **quality-based approach** over a solely cost-based one, that quality is the basis for procuring intellectual services (e.g. engineering, landscape or urban design) and that the best practices for conducting **public architecture and urban planning competitions** are followed. Funding measures and investment mechanisms need to target quality of the built environment (see case studies presented under ‘Laws and policies’ and ‘Funding and investment’ later in this report).

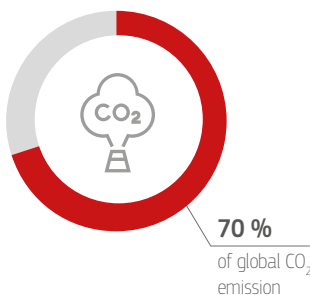
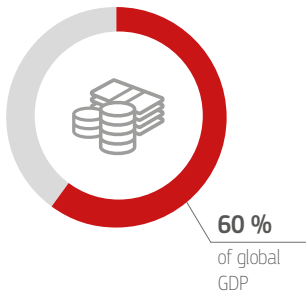


▲  
‘Gazillion Houses’ training kit by  
Arhitektuurikool  
(case study 12), 2015.  
Courtesy of Arhitektuurikool

## THERE IS A MOMENTUM

The EU is supporting an integrated and people-centred approach to creating a sustainable built environment, where architecture plays a major role in designing buildings, public spaces and urban landscapes that contribute to all citizens' quality of life. As detailed in the Council's 2019-2022 work plan for culture <sup>(5)</sup>, architecture is evidently a cross-cutting field and should be promoted 'as a discipline that encompasses the right balance between cultural, social, economic, environmental and technical aspects for the common good'. For this reason, many EU policies (such as those concerning construction, energy-efficiency, climate change, research, cohesion, among others) can contribute to finding solutions for a high-quality built environment.

CITIES AND METROPOLITAN AREAS PRODUCE



In global terms, the UN Sustainable Development 2030 Agenda sets a goal on inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities (No 11) <sup>(6)</sup>. The world is becoming increasingly urbanised. Since 2007, more than half the world's population has been living in cities while that share is projected to rise to 60 % by 2030 <sup>(7)</sup>. Cities and metropolitan areas are powerhouses of economic growth, contributing about 60 % of wealth to the global GDP. However, they also account for about 70 % of global carbon emissions and more than 60 % of resources are used in cities. This process of rapid urbanisation brings with it a growing number of challenges that worsen the quality of life for many people.

There is now a sense of urgency to shift our thinking from people to the planet and to act on climate change – but this development should not take its toll on citizens' quality of life.

<sup>(5)</sup> Council conclusions on the work plan for culture 2019-2022, EUR-Lex-52018XG1221(01): [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018XG1221\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018XG1221(01))

<sup>(6)</sup> The Royal Danish Academy – Architecture, Design, Conservation, the UIA Sustainable Development Goals Commission and the UIA World Congress of Architects 2023 have partnered to publish *An architecture guide to the UN 17 sustainable development goals* (volumes 1 and 2). Through case studies the Guide shows how a high-quality architecture and built environment can contribute to the realisation of each SDG: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>

<sup>(7)</sup> Further information: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/goal-11>



## THE CURRENT EU POLICY FRAMEWORK AND HOW IT CONTRIBUTES TO QUALITY IN BUILDING AND PLANNING

The European architectural policy was established about 20 years ago. The foundation of this policy rests on two pillars. It exists, on the one hand, thanks to the political documents adopted by the Council, which initially invited the Commission and the Member States to promote quality in architecture. On the other hand, the launch of the EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture – Mies van der Rohe Award in 2001 played a key role in highlighting outstanding works of architecture and best practices in Europe.

### First pillar: policy documents

The first EU policy document relating to architecture was adopted about 20 years ago. The Council highlighted the quality of architecture as being fundamental to both urban and rural environments as well as the role of public buildings in leading the way in the **Council resolution** from 12 February 2001 **on architectural quality in urban and rural environments** <sup>(8)</sup>. According to the resolution, architecture is an intellectual, cultural, artistic and professional activity. It also defined architectural work as a professional service which is both cultural and economic.

The resolution also underlined shared characteristics of European towns and cities, such as the importance of heritage, the quality of public spaces and the social mix and diversity of cities. The Resolution furthermore stressed that good quality architecture, by way of improving spaces – and, in the process, the relationship between citizens and their surroundings – can contribute significantly towards social cohesion and employment prospects, while also attracting cultural tourism and regional economic development.

The 2008 **Council conclusions on architecture: culture's contribution to sustainable development** <sup>(9)</sup> already emphasised the need to 'go beyond the rules of the technical code' and highlighted the consolidating and innovative role of architecture in creating sustainable urban development. They particularly addressed the potential to provide opportunities to create, innovate and renew architectural styles by reappropriating or reinterpreting traditional forms of architecture.

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<sup>(8)</sup> EUR-Lex-32001G0306(03): [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001G0306\(03\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001G0306(03))

<sup>(9)</sup> EUR-Lex-52008XG1213(02): [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1597924236719&uri=CELEX:52008XG1213\(02\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1597924236719&uri=CELEX:52008XG1213(02))

Among other things, the Council called on Member States to:

- devise an approach to architecture that involves overall economic, social, cultural and environmental objectives, not including technical standards;
- encourage innovation and an experimental approach in sustainable development in architecture, urban planning and landscaping, particularly within the framework of EU policies or programmes and when commissioning public projects;
- improve knowledge of the architectural sector and its contribution to sustainable development, particularly in terms of statistics;
- raise public awareness of the role of architecture and urban planning in the creation of a high-quality living environment and while also encouraging public involvement in sustainable urban development.

The **European Forum for Architectural Policies (EFAP)** allowed for policy exchange among Member States and led to the publication of a *Survey on Architectural Policies in Europe* in 2012 <sup>(10)</sup>.

In 2013, 5 years after the Council conclusions, the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union took stock of their implementation and summarised the results of this fruitful exchange in their report <sup>(11)</sup>. It pointed out two key issues as being central to the future development of architectural policies across Europe, which also emerged from the EFAP survey.

- (1) Public awareness and political commitment are vital for the successful fostering of good architectural and spatial quality. There is an urgent need to lift the interest of architecture beyond the sphere of the profession only. It is equally a challenge for NGOs and policymakers to jointly act and create demand for a well-designed living environment by and for all EU citizens.
- (2) Research and design initiatives should be strengthened and supported via eligible funding. Particular attention and support should be given to:
  - the overall process as well as the design stage of any project
  - a testing stage, prior to the final design and building phase
  - an evaluation after the project has been completed and the dissemination of findings

<sup>(10)</sup> Available at: [http://www.efap-fepa.org/docs/EFAP\\_Survey\\_Book\\_2012.pdf](http://www.efap-fepa.org/docs/EFAP_Survey_Book_2012.pdf)

<sup>(11)</sup> Preliminary report on the implementation of the Council conclusions on architecture: Culture's contribution to sustainable development – 2008/C 319/05: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52008XG1213\(02\)&from=IT](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52008XG1213(02)&from=IT)

## Second pillar: the EU Mies Award

In 2001, the Mies van der Rohe Award on European Architecture (EU Mies Award, initiated in 1988) became the **European Union's official architecture prize**. It is awarded every 2 years to highlight the contribution of quality architecture to sustainable development and citizens' well-being in Europe. Organised by the Mies van der Rohe Foundation with the support of the European Commission through its successive culture and creative Europe programmes, the EU Mies Award has become the most prestigious of all European architecture prizes.

The award draws attention to the major contribution European professionals make to the development of new ideas and technologies. At the same time, it offers both individual practitioners and public institutions an opportunity to gain a clearer understanding of the cultural role of architecture in the construction of our cities, towns and villages. The award sets out to foster a culture of architectural quality in two significant ways: firstly, by stimulating greater professional exchange and the circulation of knowledge and skills throughout Europe in response to the commissioning of transnational projects. Secondly, by supporting the next generation of architects as they set off in their career. In addition, the Young Talent Architecture Award <sup>(12)</sup> (YTAA) was launched in 2016 to complement the EU Mies Award with the aim of rewarding Europe's architecture students' best diploma projects, also assisting them in their transition to the professional world.

Through award ceremonies, exhibitions, publications, debates and a digital app, the EU Mies Award aims to disseminate quality architecture and to foster exchange about its role to respond to the challenges of contemporary society. After cultural buildings were awarded the top prize for many years, the 2017 and 2019 winners were both renovation projects of post-war housing blocks that highlighted the contribution of transformative architecture to the circular economy, energy efficiency and sustainable development. See case study 25 on Grand Parc Bordeaux for more details on the 2019 winner.

<sup>(12)</sup> Further information: <https://www.ytaaward.com>



◀ **Transformation of 530 dwellings, Grand Parc Bordeaux, France, 2017.**  
(case study 25) Architects Anne Lacaton, Jean-Philippe Vassal, Frédéric Druot, Christophe Hutin. Winner of the 2019 EU Mies Award. © Philippe Ruault

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPEAN POLICYMAKING FOR ARCHITECTURE

The recommendations in this report build on the recent cross-European developments such as the Davos Process, the New Leipzig Charter, the urban agenda for the EU, the Green Deal and the New European Bauhaus, to name a few.

The **Davos Declaration ‘Towards a High-quality *Baukultur* for Europe’** <sup>(13)</sup>, adopted by European Ministers of Culture and stakeholders (such as the Architects’ Council of Europe – ACE) <sup>(14)</sup> in January 2018, highlighted the central role of culture in the built environment and called for an integrated quality approach to the way people shape their surroundings. The Declaration specifically referenced the German term and concept of *Baukultur*, which includes architecture, heritage, public space, landscape, infrastructure and a culture of process, among other things. This concept was further discussed at the EU level (1) with the European Directors of Architecture whose informal meetings were launched in 2017 by the French Ministry of Culture for regular exchanges on policy development and (2) at European Conferences on Architectural Policies (ECAP) organised by Member States holding the presidency of the Council.

The **New Leipzig Charter** – ‘The transformative power of cities for the common good’ <sup>(15)</sup> – was adopted at the Informal Ministerial Meeting held on 30 November 2020 under the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Charter continues to provide a key policy framework for sustainable urban development in Europe. The document is strongly aligned with the EU cohesion policy <sup>(16)</sup> and its framework for sustainable urban development and puts the ‘common good’ at its core. Member States agreed to implement the Charter in their national or regional urban policies, and the Charter gives Member States the means to develop policies on high-quality architecture. The common principles in particular are useful sources of reference when formulating cohesion policy (integrated territorial development and sustainable urban development). Part of the New Leipzig Charter is a document providing detailed guidance for the next phase of the urban agenda for the EU according to renewed parameters.

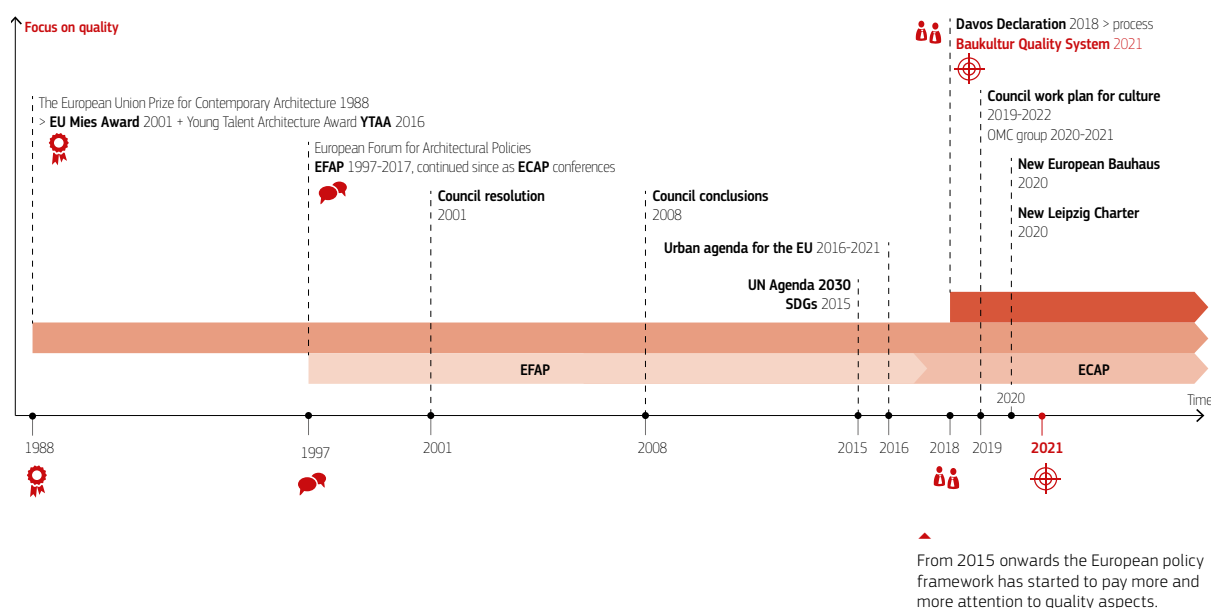
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<sup>(13)</sup> Further information: <https://davosdeclaration2018.ch>

<sup>(14)</sup> Further information: <https://www.ace-cae.eu>

<sup>(15)</sup> Further information: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/newsroom/news/2020/12/12-08-2020-new-leipzig-charter-the-transformative-power-of-cities-for-the-common-good](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2020/12/12-08-2020-new-leipzig-charter-the-transformative-power-of-cities-for-the-common-good)

<sup>(16)</sup> EU cohesion policy contributes to strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union. It aims to correct imbalances between countries and regions. It delivers on the Union’s political priorities, especially the green and digital transition.



The **urban agenda for the EU** <sup>(17)</sup> has proven to be an integrated and coordinated approach to dealing with EU and national policies and legislation relating to cities and urban contexts. By focusing on priority themes (such as circular economy, climate adaptation, culture and cultural heritage, digital transition, housing, innovative and responsible public procurement, sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions, urban mobility, urban poverty, security in public spaces, among others), the urban agenda seeks to improve the quality of life in urban areas.

On 30 May 2016, the EU ministers responsible for urban matters agreed on the Pact of Amsterdam and established this unique urban agenda for the EU. Based on the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, the agenda is based on the following three pillars of policymaking and implementation: better regulation, better funding and better knowledge. As a result, 14 partnerships have started their work in this area since then <sup>(18)</sup>. Each partnership involves, on a voluntary and equal basis, cities, Member States, the European Commission and other stakeholders such as NGOs or businesses. Together they work on developing and implementing concrete plans to successfully tackle the challenges facing cities and to contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Some partnerships have produced information that was very relevant in the writing of this report, such as the Handbook on sustainable and circular reuse of spaces and buildings <sup>(19)</sup> jointly prepared by the partnership on circular economy and the partnership on land use and nature-based solutions.

<sup>(17)</sup> Further information: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/themes/urban-development/agenda](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/urban-development/agenda)

<sup>(18)</sup> Four partnerships were launched in 2016 on inclusion of migrants and refugees, air quality, housing and urban poverty. Four others started their work in February 2017 on circular economy, digital transition, urban mobility and jobs and skills in the local economy. Four more have been launched on energy transition, climate adaptation, innovative and responsible public procurement and sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions. The latest two focused on culture/cultural heritage and on security in public spaces.

<sup>(19)</sup> Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/sustainable\\_circular\\_reuse\\_of\\_spaces\\_and\\_buildings\\_handbook.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/sustainable_circular_reuse_of_spaces_and_buildings_handbook.pdf)

With the **New European Bauhaus** <sup>(20)</sup>, the European Commission has added a cultural dimension to the economic, social and environmental measures of the European Green Deal. The European Commission has initiated a fundamental shift by making the New European Bauhaus a cooperative cultural project, which involves all relevant stakeholders and proclaims architectural quality and design thinking among its guiding principles. The professional community has viewed this as a potential game changer in the transition to a more sustainable economy and society, bringing the Green Deal closer to people for the benefit of their wellbeing. An all-encompassing approach is needed when working and developing spaces of all scales, whatever the size of the project – from landscape architecture to town planning, neighbourhood development, the planning of infrastructure, the construction of buildings as well as interior architecture and design. With the New European Bauhaus, the European Commission aims to facilitate exchange across disciplines to spark creativity and innovation. It reflects well how the related professions <sup>(21)</sup> work on a daily basis as brokers between different relevant realms such as engineering, technology, materials sciences, arts, societal studies, among others. The New European Bauhaus was designed as a space of co-creation to bring about a far-reaching culture of building well, including the wave of building renovation that the NextGenerationEU recovery plan can help finance. As such, it builds on the 2018 Davos Declaration and on the principles included in the New Leipzig Charter and, in its implementation, will help with reaching UN sustainable development goals.

The New European Bauhaus initiative aims to create a design movement integrating simultaneously three dimensions: sustainability, quality of experience (including aesthetics) and inclusion (also covering affordability and accessibility). It therefore aims to bring the Green Deal concepts into real life through the aspirational idea of ‘form follows planet’. The European Green Deal set the goal of making Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 but this will require significant and innovative ways to cut carbon dioxide emissions. The objective of the New European Bauhaus is to support, complement and accelerate an ecosystem of innovation in Europe’s living environment and ways of life through combining the three dimensions mentioned above.

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<sup>(20)</sup> Further information: [https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/index\\_en](https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/index_en)

<sup>(21)</sup> Among them are architects, spatial planners, landscape architects, interior architects, engineers, designers, artists, educators, curators, art historians, archaeologists, doctors in the public health sector, environmentalists, sociologists, anthropologists and researchers of the built environment etc.

## TOWARDS A SHARED UNDERSTANDING: CONTEXT AND DEFINITIONS

This chapter reflects on cohesion and wellbeing in the context of architecture and the built environment, before offering a defined set of quality criteria that are valuable for an integrated, all-encompassing approach when striving for a high degree of quality in architecture and the built environment.

“ *The quality of the urban environment derives from various interventions and policy decisions over time and reflects the collective work of multiple stakeholders – public, private and community. While European cities have developed sophisticated laws and regulations (‘hard power’) to secure diverse public interest objectives through the governance of urban design, the quality of the resulting urban places can be disappointing. Often outcomes are not aligned with commonly shared objectives such as creating environmental sustainability, human scale, land use mix, conviviality, inclusivity, or supporting cultural meaning.* <sup>(22)</sup> ”

Urban Maestro project

The living environment is made up of a combination of the artificial and natural environments, which include both outdoor and indoor spaces. The process of planning and design activities include spatial planning, architecture, landscape architecture, construction activities and the coordination of other decisions relating to spaces for living (for example, traffic and mobility options, utilities, agriculture etc.). The goal of these activities and decisions is to improve the living environment for as many people as possible in the long term. Well-rounded development choices as well as well-informed governance decisions are a prerequisite for high-quality solutions for our spaces.

<sup>(22)</sup> Urban Maestro project: <https://urbanmaestro.org>

## **CULTURE AT WORK**

As described earlier, the quality of our surroundings is crucial in social interaction, cohesion as well as in fostering creativity and nurturing a sense of belonging. The built environment evolves over time; it is multilayered and at the heart of an ongoing process of building and making space for culture. The cultural dimension is therefore central to sustaining and developing the built environment. Architecture is an integral part of our shared culture with the capacity to facilitate social cohesion, improve public perception of safety as well as positively impact health and wellbeing.

The following set of quality criteria is linked to aesthetics in the broadest sense. Architectural quality partly relates to the arts and to craftsmanship <sup>(23)</sup>. Carefully and well-designed spaces are not just aesthetically pleasing but they also provide inspiration, enjoyment and satisfaction for the vast majority of people who use them. Balanced aesthetics can be achieved through sensitive design, skilled construction and by incorporating traditional skills in the planning and building process. Generally, there is a need for new integrated design practices that boldly embrace and build on aesthetic and creative placemaking.

## **PLACES FOR EVERYONE: WHY DIVERSITY MATTERS**

Traditionally, the diversity and variety of traditions of the European continent have had a significant impact on our respective societies – on ways of settling, living together and housing as well as on our landscapes. Increased cultural exchange across the globe has raised Europe's potential for innovation and creativity since diversity stands as one of the EU's core values <sup>(24)</sup>. But once again, looking beyond the nation state will help with finding answers to the pressing questions of today. Recognising diversity and integrating the full spectrum of people and communities not only improves social and spatial cohesion but also contributes to democratic, peaceful coexistence that is beneficial to the environment and the planet.

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<sup>(23)</sup> Preamble to Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications.

<sup>(24)</sup> 'The EU in brief': [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief_en)



Since Europe faces unprecedented societal changes and challenges, it is all the more important to jointly work on a new culture of inclusive planning and design – one that leaves no one behind and circumvents structures and projects which exclude people on the basis of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. For example, social housing from the 1950s and the following decades is still in use but the way it was constructed mirrors social schemes and attitudes from the past, which urgently require an update to improve the living environment and social cohesion as a whole.

Next to changing education and employment practices which help increase the diversity of people working in the field of architecture and planning, what is needed are effective, transparent methods of public participation sensitive to the issues affecting all communities. Public participation can only be a success if all users and their respective communities are included every step of the way. In other words, by listening to residents' needs and making them the centre of public consultation processes, architecture bureaus, companies and administrations can invest in a more diverse living environment and, ultimately, in a more diverse society in which everyone feels respected and recognised.

Ideally, high-quality spatial design generates lively and mixed-use neighbourhoods, counters isolation and segregation by creating contemporary places that can reference past traditions, at the same time integrating new cultural values and supporting diversity and biodiversity. The quality-built environment promotes a sense of place. High-quality design solutions are the basis of all places that fit into the local context and respond to it. At the local level, these spaces retain and work with distinctive features that define a unifying sense of place.

There is a dynamic relationship between diversity in society and diversity of the built environment, which in turn has an impact on society and can be crucial for empowering local actors. As places, especially cities and peri-urban areas, are becoming increasingly heterogeneous and complex, diversity-oriented urban planning has been essential in meeting the various needs of different communities in modern societies. Improving the liveability and attractiveness of rural life has also helped to counter rural flight, including creating infrastructures for mobility and things like wireless access, co-working spaces, as well as spaces for all types of agriculture, promoting innovative farming practices and taking sustainable approaches to forestry.

## **WHAT DOES 'FOR EVERYONE' REALLY MEAN?**

Our living environment should be designed in a way that makes it accessible to everyone. It should be usable by all members of society throughout their lives. Solutions for well-designed spaces guarantee access in various ways to people of all backgrounds and ages, always bearing different mobility needs in mind. High-quality architecture is made for everyone, always ensuring that the functions and uses of space are clear and understandable to those using them. Additionally, high-quality design solutions support the use of public transport and environmentally friendly ways of living (e.g. case study 30 – citizen activism in Riga). Good spatial solutions ensure healthy, safe and secure living environments, as well as promote healthy lifestyles. The well-planned built environment provides sustainable living conditions and strengthens social resilience by creating high-quality, available, affordable and accessible living spaces. Designing user-friendly spaces means considering the comfort and functional needs related to the use of the space and offering solutions that, for instance, can be linked with various opportunities to exercise, connecting roads or recreation areas.

However, the trivialisation of our built environment is becoming increasingly commonplace, as the construction sector is largely driven by technological and economic factors rather than cultural ones. While the historical centres of villages, towns and cities, their monuments and various cultural heritage sites are often protected, and outstanding examples of contemporary architecture and civil engineering can be found all over Europe, little consideration is given to the long-term value and cultural quality of infrastructures, residential areas, shopping malls or industrial sites, among others. Such limited attention and vision for the need to create a high-quality everyday living environment not only affects cities but also rural areas, especially when the appearance of the European landscape is increasingly shaped by uninspiring urban sprawl. For that very reason, action must be taken to improve the quality of the built environment for everyone and everywhere. As underlined also by the European Landscape Convention, we need to equally address landscapes that might be considered outstanding as well as everyday or degraded, be they in rural, urban or peri-urban areas.

## RELEVANCE TO THE 2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

All of the 17 UN sustainable development goals <sup>(25)</sup> are intrinsically linked and, in this context, each of these goals can be applied to processes that shape the built environment, planning, architecture and design and for this reason manifest themselves in finished buildings, settlements and cities all over the world. Architectural solutions not only contribute to sustainable communities and a high quality of life. But the built environment is also at the heart of current changes and challenges – since the sectors of architecture and construction contribute to the consumption of energy and natural resources, facilitate mobility and artificialisation of soil, and produce waste in a major way. Architecture and building culture are, as such, both part of the problem as well as the solution to drastic climate change and devastating environmental crises like flooding in the summer of 2021 in Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria and Germany. The way we build can also intensify social inequalities and affect our health. Urbanisation, climate change, the housing crisis, societal challenges and changing lifestyles require us to design new forms of habitat and urban space.

High-quality architecture with the aim of creating a sustainable built environment should not be perceived as an optional extra task, but rather as part of the response to climate action. Climate goals can be reached more effectively and expediently through high-quality architecture: in societies, it improves the social and cultural aspects of living, ensuring an overall sustainable development of the built environment, besides also impacting on the technical and economic measures for climate protection. High-quality design solutions address the climate goals and contribute to mitigating climate risks since they are environmentally friendly and respect the natural environment as a valuable resource. They enhance the maintenance, development and amplification of all natural parts of the spatial environment. On top of that, this approach provides solutions on how to preserve and promote biodiversity.

The application of circular economy principles <sup>(26)</sup> is becoming increasingly common in architecture and design, which is evident in projects with a vision to eliminate waste and pollution while protecting the environment (for instance, Amager Bakke project) <sup>(27)</sup>. The idea of the circular economy is based on an economic model that minimises consumption, reduces the waste of finite resources and the destruction



▲ Cover of *An architecture guide to the UN 17 sustainable development goals – Volume 2*, published by the Royal Danish Academy – Architecture, Design, Conservation, Copenhagen, 2020  
[How architecture can contribute to the UN's sustainable development goals | Royal Danish Academy](https://www.royaldanishacademy.dk/en/our-work/publications/an-architecture-guide-to-the-un-17-sustainable-development-goals-volume-2)

<sup>(25)</sup> The 17 UN sustainable development goals (adopted in 2015) define the challenges (including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, peace and justice) we need to address to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.

<sup>(26)</sup> See the new circular economy action plan adopted by the European Commission in March 2020. It is one of the main building blocks of the European Green Deal, which will reduce pressure on natural resources and create sustainable growth and jobs.

<sup>(27)</sup> Amager Bakke, also known as Amager Slope or Copenhill, designed by BIG: <https://www.dezeen.com/2019/10/08/big-copenhill-power-plant-ski-slope-copenhagen>



▲  
**LocHal, Tilburg, Netherlands.**  
Transformed by Civic Architects,  
Braaksma & Roos Architects and  
Inside-Outside / Petra Blaisse.  
European Heritage Award Winner in  
2020, conservation category.  
© Stijn Bollaert

of ecosystems by continually reusing materials instead <sup>(28)</sup>. It is also important to include the reuse of buildings in a circular economy perspective, going beyond the current 'waste and demolition' approach <sup>(29)</sup>.

In future, environmental sustainability will focus more and more on the use of resources, cultural assets, materials and spaces. Among other things, wastelands can be utilised to produce renewable energy while, at the same time, they can double up as attractive public spaces designed with the needs of their users in mind where there is room for both site-specific nature and people. In the context of a shrinking population or suburban sprawl, developments are designed to be more compact and consolidated to take advantage of shared resources and existing infrastructure while also sharing the taxpayers' burden.

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<sup>(28)</sup> See the example of ROTOR, which is among others leading an Interreg project entitled FCRBE – Facilitating the circulation of reclaimed building elements in Northwestern Europe: <https://www.nweurope.eu/projects/project-search/fcrbe-facilitating-the-circulation-of-reclaimed-building-elements-in-northwestern-europe>

<sup>(29)</sup> A wealth of knowledge regarding urban regeneration, adaptive reuse and nature-based solutions in cities has been developed by Horizon 2020 projects.

## FROM A HUMAN-CENTRIC TOWARDS A LIFE-CENTRIC APPROACH

In light of the 2030 UN sustainable development goals, it becomes even more pressing to find ways of establishing more symbiotic relationships between cities and the natural world, so that the living environment as a whole, including our public spaces, is more compatible with already existing natural systems. Multidisciplinary research shows how a human-centric approach in city planning can be developed into a life-centric planning philosophy that balances ecological with human values and responds to global challenges like climate change and the loss of biodiversity. Such life-centric approaches can effectively operationalise bio-digital design concepts and tools to increase the portfolio of solutions for the sustainable city by approximating different methodologies and generating combined bio-digital platforms through novel concepts <sup>(30)</sup>.

For professionals in the field, such as architects, designers, urbanists and others, this clarifies the potential of designing the built environment from a perspective that is biological and digital at the same time, one that retains the benefits of 'smart' solutions while also endorsing 'organic' ones. This helps with developing a bio-digital, design-based set of tools that help with the wider use of circular bio-economy principles <sup>(31)</sup> in the form of products, services and experiences. It is vital to further examine such fundamental design questions revolving around the nature of our living spaces, the kinds of technologies we use, the ways they become a part of our spaces and the kinds of interfaces we may use to operate them. Such a bio-digital change in vision for the built environment can speed up the shift from an industrial era of design, which is closely linked with the unavoidable consumption of resources towards an ecological era of planning and building that promotes life and shifts our thinking and expectations as architects and designers.

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<sup>(30)</sup> Bio-digital platforms can be understood, for example, as the digital reflection of the living environment which include data not only about the built environment as an artefact but also about human behaviour (e.g. mobility, perceived qualities of the environment) as well as the natural components of our living environment.

<sup>(31)</sup> The circular bioeconomy principles merge from the intersection of bioeconomy and circular economy concepts.

## RECOVERY FROM CRISES

In architecture, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the focus to the urgent need for quality spaces – the quality of the home, the workplace and the public space. For many, the pandemic has revealed the importance of high-quality housing and urban design. In many ways, housing has proven to be too cramped, over-occupied, lacking basic amenities or proper openings and access to greenery, being mostly unsuitable for teleworking. Restrictive measures to counter COVID-19 have revealed the need for proximity to services and utilities, commercial amenities and natural spaces, among others, at the neighbourhood level. The experience of the crisis has led to a profound transformation of our working, consumption and social habits and, consequently, of our interaction in cities. The quality of housing and its surroundings, as well as their governance, at different scales (building, city, region), have been shown to exist in a fragile reality which has highlighted the need to pay greater attention when planning the living environment. The layout of the spaces we create for services and amenities requires attention to ensure high-quality architecture for a built environment that is diverse while also accessible to everyone.

Over time, both our built environment and our cultural heritage have proven to be resilient and valuable societal assets which have greatly helped when dealing with and recovering from various threats and crises, both natural and man-made. Relying on traditional skills and crafts, among other cultural techniques, they have evolved as very adaptive and responsive frames of reference. Recovering from crisis also calls for imagination to envision and prototype positive alternatives of what our public spaces, homes, workplaces and neighbourhoods might be like in 30 to 40 years, for instance. Imagination matters because societies need a wide range of ideas and options to help them adjust, particularly to big challenges like climate change, demographic trends in aging societies and other challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated a shift in working habits across the globe, bringing the social, cultural and economic importance of placemaking into focus. This pandemic crisis has prompted communities to increase their resilience, to respond locally to global challenges by transforming and adapting their approach to the built environment. Besides caring for and preserving existing values of the built environment, innovation is an important driver of new approaches <sup>(32)</sup>.

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<sup>(32)</sup> Different new ways of thinking about the built environment provide food for thought on the future of our living spaces, e.g. the concepts of rehabilitation and greening of buildings, of urbanisation (Francesc Muñoz), linked to the concept of sense of place; or the ideas of de-urbanisation, linked to the concept of excess land use, the thoughts about rewilding (George Mobiot), linked to the concept of biodiversity as well as the concept of pandemic urbanism (Adrian Parr), including the change of uses that has taken place in domestic space (work and leisure) and in the public space.



## RAISING SPATIAL AWARENESS AND SKILLS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Human understanding of a cohesive society and culture starts to develop in the very first years of lives when life and the perception of space are closely intertwined. Architecture and spatial planning explore and affect the surrounding landscape, regardless of whether it is urban or non-urban. When talking about urban life, we undoubtedly have to consider a very multilayered picture, as the city has become the most common living environment. A better understanding of the urban environment and its cultural layers over time will help to make better use of its potential and, in turn, help its inhabitants lead a better, more fulfilled life. Over time, many different people will have together shaped the built environment, such as decision-makers, designers and those implementing their plans. A very small proportion of these people are architects or planners. Even more important is a solid foundation, namely spatial awareness and education. The outcome could be a more enjoyable living environment for everyone. Spatial awareness, spatial thinking and understanding of place and cultural heritage give us the opportunity to imagine and shape a better living environment.



▲  
 'Explore Space!' ('Uuri ruumi!') exhibition by Arhitektuurikool  
 (case study 12) in the Estonian Museum of Architecture in Tallinn,  
 2019. Courtesy of Arhitektuurikool. © Liisi Anvelt

We live in a civil society where everyone should have the opportunity and courage to influence the space around them. But how do we bring up and educate pro-active citizens who know and want to have a say about the state of our living environment? Meaningful discourse needs to build on common concepts and understanding, which is what spatial education offers. The main focus of learning about spaces should be on developing environmental literacy: noticing, understanding and seeing alternative solutions for spaces and their implications, to be exact. A good spatial education helps with developing social competence, most notably communication and cooperation skills as well as consideration for and acceptance of diversity. The focus of spatial awareness and learning needs to be on the experience of the living environment, the connections between space and society as well as on social activities.

## THE DRIVING ROLE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Bearing in mind that the built environment is a reflection of a community and that the responsibility for its overall quality rests largely in the hands of the public sector, public authorities should champion the value of spatial design as public policy to foster a culture of quality and placemaking.

In Europe, the public sector already has a significant influence on the design of the built environment, either through planning policy, developing control systems, providing funds for investments in infrastructure and the built environment or simply in its role as the owner or user of property. As such it is crucial to better coordinate and reconcile design policy across many different areas, review priorities and use existing resources to lead the way with positive examples. Furthermore, the design quality of places may be seen as a ‘wicked problem’ as it is determined by a considerable number of actors, public and private, and is the result of embedded social norms and cultural values. Considering its social dimension and complex nature, it is necessary to create a favourable climate for good spatial design to flourish as the result of a diverse policy agenda that covers a wide spectrum of issues and areas <sup>(33)</sup>.

<sup>(33)</sup> Spatial design leadership: the role, instruments and impact of state architect (or similar) teams in fostering spatial quality and a place-making culture across five European states. João Ferreira Bento and Terpsi Laopoulou. Tallinn, Estonia, 2019.





◀ **Conservación y preservación del edificio de 'La Castlania'** (case study 26 – Cultural 1,5%), Cambrils, Spain, 2013. © Ministerio de Transportes, Movilidad y Agenda Urbana

As outlined in the New Leipzig Charter, the main role of the public sector in this context is to design and implement spatial development policy for the common good, including for the socially most disadvantaged and most vulnerable groups in society, such as the elderly, migrants, young people and young families, particularly those who live in towns and cities in shrinking and remote areas. The policy should cover healthcare, social services, education, cultural services, housing, water and energy supply, waste management, public transport, digital networks and information systems. Furthermore, the quality of public spaces including green and blue infrastructure as well as the preservation and revitalisation of built cultural heritage are important. The skills and capacities of all stakeholders in the urban context should therefore be strengthened through strategies and tools for their empowerment. Good urban governance can balance public and private interests with market mechanisms <sup>(34)</sup>.

Poor quality of the built environment is very often the result of inadequate reflection and awareness of the specific qualities, user values or demands, budget or maintenance costs a building shall incorporate, or poor understanding of context. For the public sector as the owner, developer or user of property it is essential that public servants and officials have all the relevant skills and can access relevant and up-to-date knowledge in order to articulate a vision of the desired quality for the outcomes of any given planning and construction process. This is in particular challenging on the local level, where staff resources are limited and where the number of (public) construction projects is often too low to build up and maintain the required level of skill and resources. It is equally important to ensure that the public procurement rules and procedures cultivate an approach focused on quality over one focused exclusively on cost.

<sup>(34)</sup> The New Leipzig Charter.



▲  
**Van Nelle Factory, Rotterdam, Netherlands.** Designed by Leendert van der Vlugt, renovated by Wessel de Jonge. Winner of the 2008 European Heritage Award, conservation category. Courtesy of Europa Nostra

At the same time, the public sector is in a position to drive public participation in urban development that should engage all stakeholders and communities in urban and rural areas. This in turn will also strengthen local democracy. Wherever possible, citizens should have a say in processes that impact their daily lives. New forms of participation should be tested, encouraged and improved, including co-creation and co-design in cooperation with inhabitants, civil society networks, community organisations and private enterprises. Experimenting with new forms of participation can help cities manage conflicting interests, share responsibilities and find innovative solutions while also reshaping and maintaining urban spaces and forming new alliances to create integrated city spaces. Public participation is central to the successful delivery of a high-quality built environment <sup>(35)</sup>.

As emphasised throughout the New Leipzig Charter, multilevel governance deserves particular attention: every governmental level (local, regional, metropolitan, national, European and global) has a unique responsibility for the future of our cities based on the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. Complex challenges should be jointly tackled by all levels of urban and spatial policy. This requires the cooperation of all societal actors, including civil society and the private sector. As recommended by the Pact of Amsterdam and the urban agenda for the EU, vertical and horizontal multilevel and multistakeholder cooperation, both bottom-up and top-down, is the key to good urban governance. Places should be regarded as reference points for an integrated horizontal and vertical approach.

In this context, several countries and regions have appointed a **state architect** (or similar, like the *bouwmeester* in Belgium and the Netherlands, an architectural council or the Master Architect at the European Commission) team within their ad-

<sup>(35)</sup> The New Leipzig Charter.

ministration. Their role is to provide design leadership and strategic advice to governments, to improve the design of public interventions, to promote spatial quality and to foster a culture of placemaking. Although teams of state architects have existed in several countries and regions around the world for some time, state architects and their supporting teams have been appointed to start their work fairly recently within public administrations in some European countries <sup>(36)</sup>. The state architect teams (or similar advisory expert groups) clearly have an impact when it comes to leadership on spatial design in the governance of urban design, by promoting a high-quality built environment. In addition, state architects are by many in the field considered important sources of expertise in design-related matters and policy. The appointment of a state architect is a direct way for governments to take charge of design governance, by fostering and promoting placemaking culture.

State architects have championed ‘place leadership’ <sup>(37)</sup>:

- promoting a placemaking culture: convincing politicians, stakeholders and the public to move beyond standardised regulations as a means to achieve the quality of a place
- charting a vision for the future: providing specific goals in the service of a wider agenda for better places
- influencing and motivating people: explaining the specific value of creating better places for different groups and engaging them in the process
- mobilising resources: facilitating partnerships that can provide the necessary funds and resources for projects

The specific functions of a state architect vary from state to state and may include:

- taking a leading role in spatial design which may include promoting good practices as the owner, developer and user of public buildings, promoting design quality as a cooperative process across different sectors and levels of public administration
- improving the system of design governance, for example, by starting and developing a process of participation and negotiation between different policy actors, including public and private stakeholders; providing advice on design policy, promoting better public buildings and fostering public awareness about the importance of design quality
- providing advice on government policy on major development projects, preparing policies and supervising their implementation; representing governments in international forums and meetings, gathering knowledge from open EU initiatives and events

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<sup>(36)</sup> Bento and Laopoulou, 2019.

<sup>(37)</sup> Bento and Laopoulou, 2019.

- promoting inter-departmental dialogue and cooperation by building new bridges and channels of communication between different state departments and public organisations; cooperating with different state actors to persuade them to adopt a proactive placemaking culture instead of a reactive culture
- fostering a placemaking culture by initiating communication between public actors but also with stakeholders in the building industry, such as private developers, investors, regeneration agencies, transport companies, designers and planners, the community and all other interest groups; fostering public awareness about the importance of design quality
- providing advice and resources and a support system at local level, where resources are often insufficient to appoint and keep qualified staff to ensure high quality of the built environment

Next to the success of state architect teams, there exists a quality assurance system of *gestaltungsbeiräte* in central Europe. These are independent advisory bodies for countries, cities, or even villages (such as in Vorarlberg), consisting of experts from other geographical areas and without personal interest in the place, rotating every 2 to 4 years. In France, there are regional conseillers in place, representing another well-functioning model. These state architects (Architectes-Conseils de l'Etat) support regional public services in the design and implementation of territorial policies and actions. The 1977 French Law on Architecture also established Councils of Architecture, Urbanism and Environment (CAUE) in each department. These non-profit organisations provide free design advice and educational materials to public officials and local citizens.

Europe has also witnessed the wide-spread use of **national architectural or urban policies** to address the quality of architecture and the built environment. In the last 20 years, there has been a remarkable growth in the number of administrations that have adopted official documents on architectural policy. This number has been increasing since the 1990s and is expected to continue to grow. The policy documents may be classified in three types:

- (1) **legislation** (France, Lithuania, Sweden, Catalonia – Spain);
- (2) **comprehensive policy** (Belgium – Flanders; Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands; UK – Scotland, UK – Northern Ireland, Iceland, Norway);
- (3) **sectoral policy** (Cyprus, UK – England and UK – Wales).

Regardless of their typology, architectural policies across Member States advance the legal framework at all administrative and political levels to ensure they are quality driven. They are also leading examples on how to embed quality principles in a multilevel governance system. Some examples (such as the architecture policy in Denmark and Catalonia's 2017 law on architecture, but also the ISOS (Swiss Federal Inventory of Heritage Sites) system have been described later in this report under 'Laws and policies'.

## An integrated approach: the role of local authorities in addressing challenges

In today's Europe, about 76 % of the population lives in urban areas. Cities have become the frontiers to face current challenges like migration, demographic and climate change, new concepts of mobility, growing tourism and digital innovation. In addition, the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have had a considerable effect on the cultural life of cities. Preserving culture and the quality of the landscape as well as the built environment is not only a means to an end. It rather has become a powerful strategy to achieve social, ecological and economic goals. Cities and municipalities hold a key position in shaping local infrastructure, public services, affordable housing and public welfare. This includes services for health, social care, education, culture, water and energy supply, waste management, public transport, digital networks, information systems and public spaces as well as green and blue infrastructure.

Cities therefore need to establish integrated and sustainable urban development strategies and ensure their city-wide implementation, from its public areas to its neighbourhoods. All areas of urban policy should be coordinated in terms of space, sector and materiality. This integrated approach relies on a simultaneous and fair consideration of all concerns and interests relevant to urban development. Therefore, it should pool and balance different, partly conflicting, interests as well as the mutually beneficial effects of different interventions <sup>(38)</sup>. A good example is the provision of safe, healthy, affordable, well-designed and adequate housing that is essential to all well-balanced urban policies.

On the other hand, far from limiting themselves to simply acting as regulators or even direct investors, many European cities and communities have developed alternative approaches in order to put themselves in a position to intervene as enablers or brokers in urban development. That way they can initiate strategies to promote a high-quality built environment, often combining different formal and more innovative informal tools to guide, encourage and enable better design. For instance, a city may decide to promote quality by supplementing its zoning-based planning system with non-mandatory guidance, by holding architectural competitions, by setting up a process of peer review for design proposals (e.g. case study 22 – RIAI design reviews), by instigating temporary and urban interventions to demonstrate the potential of particular spaces, or by creating financial incentives linked to achieving certain design or other social objectives.

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<sup>(38)</sup> The New Leipzig Charter.



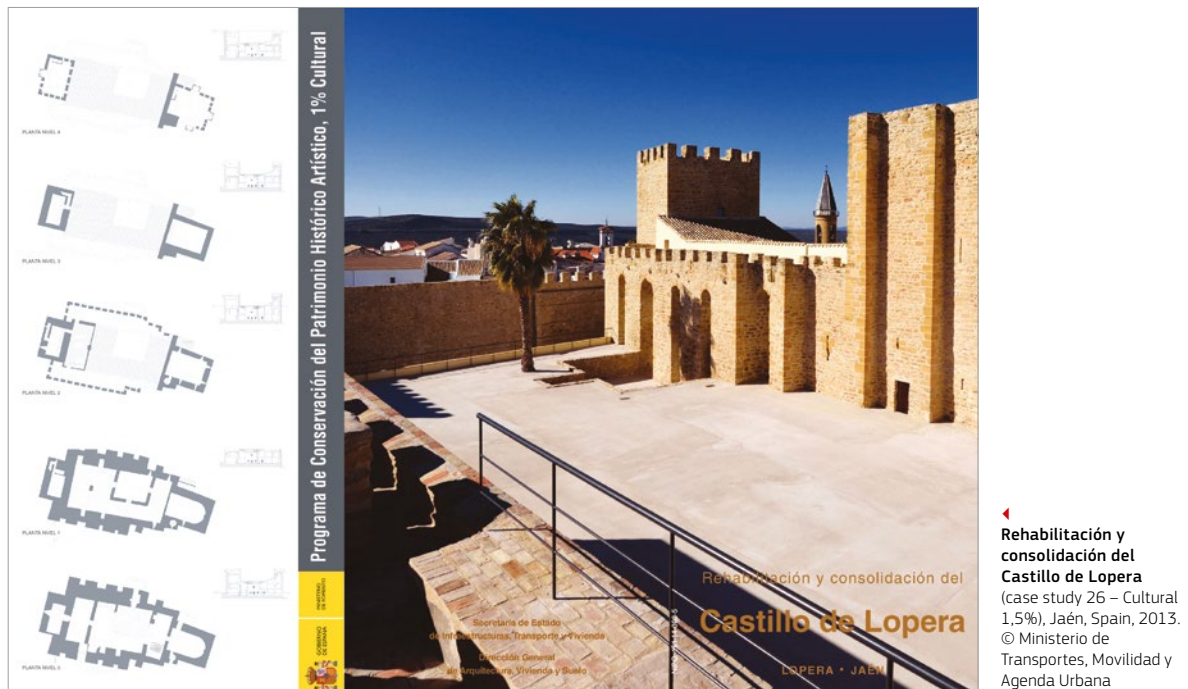


▲  
**Visualisation of Limerick  
 Greenway for Limerick Colbert  
 Station Quarter design review**  
 (case study 22 – RIAI design  
 reviews), by Grafton Architects,  
 2020. © Grafton Architects

An example from Germany, International Building Exhibitions (IBAs) seek to provide a vision for urban development in the future. The exhibitions create opportunities to explore new approaches to urban planning through a workshop system held over several years. This particularly promotes integrated urban development with a focus on social, economic and cultural matters. Each IBA exhibition spotlights several significant and forward-looking concepts, aiming to inspire others by demonstrating innovation. One of the main advantages of IBAs is an ability to overcome institutional barriers and establish practical cooperation on specific projects with a wide range of different players.

Last but not least, the digitalisation of processes and how cities manage them includes rapidly growing data flows and information platforms for smart cities, e.g. the emergence of digital (urban) twins (such as operational dynamic 3D city models of Rotterdam, Helsinki, Tallinn, etc.) is key to integrated urban development. Digitalisation is never an end in itself. Local authorities, as part of the public sector, should advance solution-driven technology based on the cultural, economic and social needs of the public. To ensure no one is left behind, digital transformation and the collaborative procedures needed to implement this should be based on common human values – such as inclusiveness, human-centeredness and transparency as well as in accordance with international law, including human rights law.

Above all, it should be remembered that cultural services and cultural professionals highly contribute to inclusion, education and wellbeing. To ensure that design quality is at the heart of decision-making, many cities and municipalities have created an architectural advisory body to promote design quality within the public sector. The set up and competences of these bodies can considerably vary from country to country, depending on administrative structures and the preferences of domestic stakeholders. Nevertheless, all share the general principle that the public sector should lead by example, being a role model for society as a promoter of sensible ways of building as well as being client and property owner.



### Building on a complex set of architectural competences

An obvious way of increasing the design quality of building projects is by expecting a varied set of high-level competences and skills from designers. In this context, there has been a tendency across Europe to enforce the registration of a title as a requirement to practice.

In terms of core competences and skills, architecture professionals are expected to excel in cultural, functional, technical and material approaches.

The **cultural aspects** relate to preserving resources by high-quality design. Preservation and improvement of the existing built environment is the best strategy to avoid wasting resources. Buildings that are socially and culturally appreciated have longer lifespans and inspire generations of owners and users to preserve the resources invested in them. What we build or retrofit today should aspire to become the cultural heritage of the future. Through smart renovation and adaptive reuse, old or disused buildings can find new, mixed or extended uses matching the social, cultural, environmental and economic needs of our time. Such an approach makes it possible to save the embodied energy and reduce the consumption of construction materials, limit urban sprawl and help preserve local identity and heritage.

The **functional approach** aims at designing for adaptability, accommodating changing needs. Most changes in a building are the result of the occupants' desire to improve their living environment or to adapt it to new needs, and not simply because of maintenance problems or the premature aging of materials. In most cases, buildings are demolished because their adaptation to new needs is seen to be uneconomic, not because they are structurally dangerous. In order to ensure that buildings are used for the longest possible time, architects should design adaptable spaces and fabrics, making future changes as easy as possible so places can be adapted to new needs.

The **technical approach** targets on the one hand the digital shift at large, but also designing for easy replacement and direct reuse. While the fabric of buildings can sometimes last for centuries, certain building components have far shorter lifespans due to their own technical limitations, or because the occupants' needs change before their theoretical end of life is reached. To anticipate this shorter lifespan, it is important to enable easy access to and removal of these components, so they can be cost-effectively replaced or repaired, while at the same time minimising disruption to other components around them.

The **material approach** is about sensory and sensible design specifies the right materials: offering users enjoyment and a healthy environment while also enabling reuse and recycling. Architects can specify components and materials that can be beautiful, cost-effectively reused or recycled, that are durable and robust, easy to handle, easy to repair and biodegradable – for instance, materials that can be kept part of the economy for as long as possible. Architectural solutions are expected to promote circularity. They should therefore consist of a value-oriented hierarchy of activities and procedures aiming to preserve and enhance the value of resources.



Norwegian National Opera  
 & Ballet, Oslo, 2008.  
 Designed by Snøhetta.  
 Winner of EU Mies Award  
 2009.  
 © Oslo Jens Passoth



## A note on communicating the values of high-quality living environments

In several countries, cultural organisations have emerged outside the public sector who raise awareness and promote architectural culture (see the case studies from Estonia and Lithuania to name a few). In line with the main objectives of architectural policies, creating a suitable framework so design quality can be improved, NGOs and professional associations as well as citizen initiatives have raised awareness of the needs of the general public. This, in turn, will have an impact on the quality of the built environment by raising consumers' (clients, buyers, communities) expectations about the quality of design. Recognising how important it is to communicate the value and contributions of architecture to the public has led several governments to financially support those new cultural organisations, mainly through the ministries of culture, education and environment, obtaining the remaining funding from private sponsorship and donations as well as through public funding. Third sector cultural organisations have developed programmes targeting different audiences, such as young people (via school workshops, teaching materials etc.), professional designers (lectures, debates etc.) and the wider public (exhibitions, open houses, TV programmes etc.). Their main objective is to present and provide information about architecture and urban matters, creating valuable space for debate about the future of the built environment.

Changing circumstances and new partnerships call for a different approach to working together on the part of both the public commissioning client and the designer (e.g. see Grand Parc Bordeaux among the case studies and refer to Urban Maestro typology of tools for urban design governance). It is therefore crucial to raise awareness of new commissioning practices, while guiding principles and criteria embedded within those practices should help with delivering high quality. In the expanding field of spatial planning, public commissioning clients now invite and engage with a greater number of stakeholders than previously. They now need to understand new ideas and perspectives, while looking at the overall design. The design sector has also been adapting to the new challenges and relationships, as designers are increasingly invited to develop new specialisations and to take up different roles within the design process. Many designers are better equipped to use their expertise and resources to support the societal agendas and the interactive planning processes by inviting the participation of new players, to explore a variety of perspectives, or to create new networks or methods of communication with communities. These kinds of interventions serve to enhance the quality within projects, and exemplars of design-led approaches are important to disseminate.

Ultimately, while we witness and welcome the emergence of new cultural organisations who foster awareness raising through communication on the values of good architecture, there is yet no cross-European representative networking level or platform in place for those organisations to cooperate and coordinate their action at an international scale. There is room for creation of such an umbrella platform, since the cultural sector, including the architectural centres and institutes, needs it for systemic and well-coordinated communication of high-quality architecture.



▲ **Oris magazine for architecture and culture**  
(case study 14), exhibition 'Oris 100'.  
© Damil Kalogjera

## CONCEPTS AND CRITERIA OF QUALITY

This part of the report offers a closer look at concrete definitions of high-quality architecture and a high-quality built environment. It provides answers to how these terms can be defined, also providing details of the most important criteria to assess them. The goal is to define criteria that may comprehensively include every human activity that changes the built environment, including our relation to the natural environment and incorporating social, emotional and cultural values while also paying attention to technical and functional aspects. Such criteria of quality should follow the principles for the contemporary creation of new and existing buildings, infrastructure and public space, including, but not limited to, buildings of cultural heritage. The high quality aspired to should reference detailed construction methods and large-scale transformations and developments, embracing traditional and local building skills as well as innovative techniques, including a culture of processes and planning.

In line with the Davos Declaration 2018, the Davos Baukultur Quality System was recently developed to deliver a comprehensive definition of high-quality *Baukultur*. This system enables its assessment, reviewing existing systems, research and observations. The Davos Baukultur Quality System offers eight fundamental quality criteria that each describe an aspect of high-quality *Baukultur*: governance, functionality, environment, economy, diversity, context, sense of place and beauty <sup>(39)</sup>. Each criterion is linked to a quality principle while a set of key questions allows the assessment of a place to establish its future quality.

‘Governance’ is about creating the conditions necessary for more informed spatial solutions to take shape and about planning and management processes that ensure quality outcomes. ‘Functionality’ addresses human needs, such as shelter, security and health. ‘Environment’ embraces aspects like sustainability in land use, density issues, climate change and energy questions as well as biodiversity. ‘Economy’ recognises the need of a place or a property being financially viable in the long run, while prioritising cultural values over short-term economic gain. ‘Diversity’ emphasises the need for interaction between people, allowing a mix of functions and an openness to different kinds of uses and users. ‘Context’ refers to the built and non-

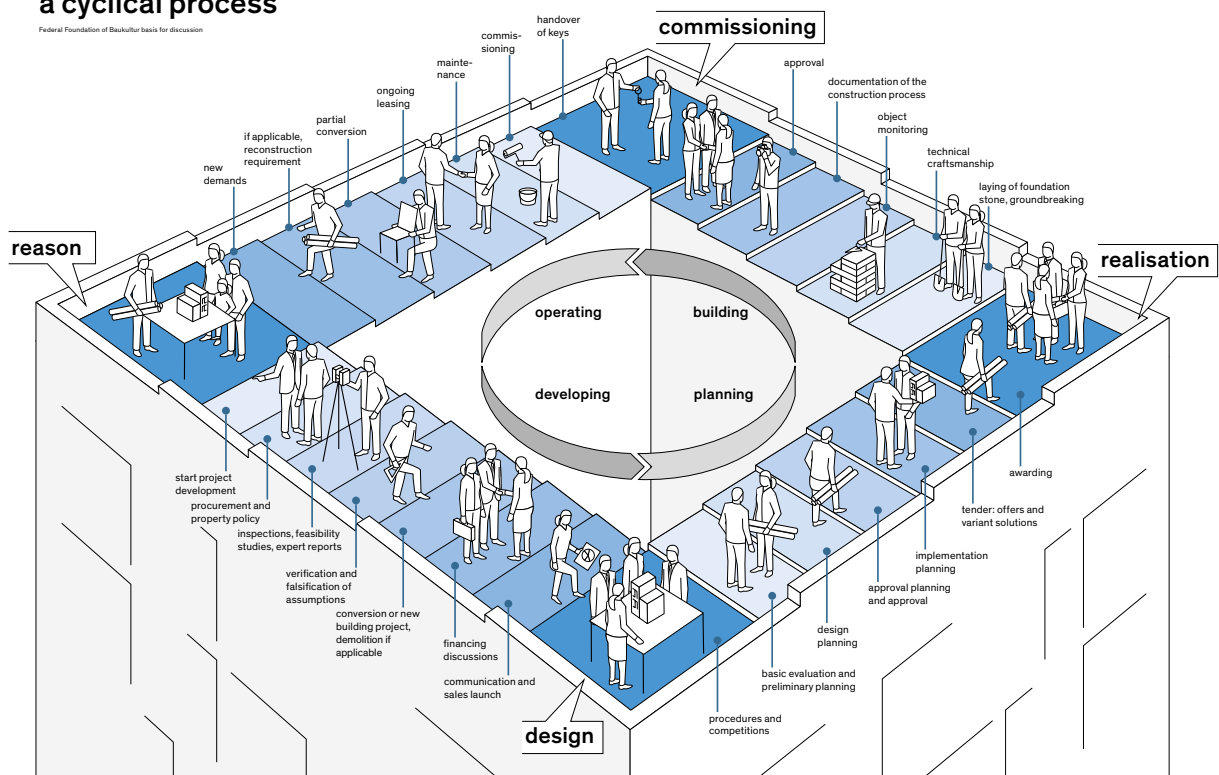
<sup>(39)</sup> Davos Baukultur Quality System, May 2021: <http://www.davosdeclaration2018.ch/quality-system>. The quality system includes an assessment form with a questionnaire for each of the eight criteria. This questionnaire can be adapted to the specific situation of a place or project and expanded if necessary. The completed questionnaire is used to determine the *Baukultur* quality of a place as well as its strengths and weaknesses from a *Baukultur* perspective. If a more detailed analysis is needed, the quality system proposes a comprehensive (but not definite) list of indicators to choose from. These can be used with self-defined benchmark values to help with the analysis of a specific place.

built surroundings and landscape in terms of scale, typology and materiality. 'Sense of place' covers the local character, unique identity and distinctiveness of a place and people's attachment to it. 'Beauty' takes into account the emotional experience and sensory perception of a place and emphasises the need for a positive aesthetic experience and a fulfilling relationship between people and a place.

The Davos Baukultur Quality System allows those who use it as a reference point to better understand the notion of quality. The recommendations in this report therefore build on the eight criteria of the Davos Baukultur Quality System.

## EIGHT CRITERIA FOR HIGH-QUALITY ARCHITECTURE AND A HIGH-QUALITY BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### Baukultur functional chain – a cyclical process



Design by Erfurth Kluger Infografik.  
Courtesy of Federal Foundation of Baukultur

## 1. Governance

Governance structures sustain rules, norms and actions, guiding place shaping and management processes. Governance refers to the processes of interaction and decision-making based on participatory democracy and full respect for human rights. It not only concerns the different levels of governmental administration but equally governmental agencies, public-private partnerships (PPP), non-governmental organisations (NGO) while the private sector also has an impact on communities.

The quality of *Baukultur* highly depends on the governance decisions the various stakeholders of a place make over time. Good governance creates an environment where better decisions for high-quality *Baukultur* can be made, ensuring proper place management. The Horizon 2020 Urban Maestro project briefly mentioned the above examined tools for successful governance for high-quality urban environments <sup>(40)</sup>. According to the Urban Maestro classification, the tools of governance can be categorised into formal and informal ones <sup>(41)</sup>. Formal tools are 'hard governance' by nature and tied to regulatory authority. They include legislation and law-making procedures, standards, coding and guidance frameworks as well as control procedures. For instance, with reference to the recommendations in this report, it is important to ensure that – at national as well as at local level – public procurement rules and procedures cultivate an approach focused on quality over one focused exclusively on cost, or possibly even exclude solely price-based selections. Quality should be the guiding principle during all stages of procurement dealing with intellectual services, such as engineering, landscape or urban design, to ensure that best practices for public architecture and urban planning competitions are followed.

Relying entirely on formal tools, such as building and conservation norms and regulation or zoning plans, often will not lead to high-quality *Baukultur*. Informal planning tools that are non-regulatory or 'soft governance' in nature can help achieve better results, for example through design competitions, peer reviews and design advisory boards, architectural centres (or similar competence/ expert organisations - see case study 13, Estonian Centre for Architecture - and financial incentives for the protection, maintenance and creation of places of high-quality *Baukultur* <sup>(42)</sup>).

A well-balanced interplay of formal and informal tools will also help to overcome gaps in communication between the various disciplines of *Baukultur*, such as heritage conservation, architecture, planning, engineering and skilled crafts. Furthermore, a well-established dialogue between all *Baukultur* professionals and local stake-

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<sup>(40)</sup> Urban Maestro was launched in 2019 and completed in 2021 by three partners: the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Brussels Bouwmeester Maître Architecte (BMA) and the University College London (UCL). It is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme: <https://urbanmaestro.org>

<sup>(41)</sup> Carmona, M., 'The formal and informal tools of design governance', *Journal of Urban Design*, 22:1, pp. 1–36, 2017; Löw, M., *Vom Raum aus die Stadt denken. Grundlagen einer raumtheoretischen Stadtsoziologie*. Bielefeld, 2018.

<sup>(42)</sup> Urban Maestro, 'New governance strategies for urban design', United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Brussels Bouwmeester Maître Architecte (BMA), University College London (UCL), 2021.

holders is important. Further informal ways of governance are: establishing and promoting models of public participation, professional training or general education to help refine the many processes involving *Baukultur* and strengthen its importance as a common good. To implement public participation successfully, there needs to be an awareness of the topic in general and an awareness of the space, its qualities and the possibilities for shaping it. Education and capacity building play a central role in establishing these skills and in raising awareness and are therefore a central informal tool in *Baukultur*.

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*Governance is all-encompassing and has an influence on all professional areas and social groups. It is therefore strongly related to each of the following seven criteria.*

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## 2. Functionality

A place must fit the purpose which people attach to it – places need to meet different objectives that can change over time. A place should therefore be flexible and adaptable. Already existing places are functional if they can be converted or used differently to how they were originally intended.



▲  
**Civic Centre Lleialtat Santsenca, Barcelona, 2017.**  
 Designed by HARQUITECTES. Shortlisted by EU Mies Award 2019.  
 © Adrià Goula





▲  
**'Hea avalik ruum'**  
**programme in Estonia**  
 Võru town centre renewal,  
 designed by Stúdio Tallinn, 2019.  
 Courtesy of Estonian Association of  
 Architects

State-of-the-art construction techniques, constant innovation and quality craftsmanship are essential to create places that are designed properly, carefully and with a long serviceable life while also being structurally stable and safe. Places respond to the human need for shelter, safety, health and comfort regardless of whether they are for living, working, leisure or the use of infrastructure or public areas, always including easy access. Places exist to protect people from adverse weather conditions, natural disasters and other hazards and to provide safety against violence. The functionality of a place further implies that it should be conducive to people's physical and mental wellbeing to ensure healthy living and lifestyles and combine them with sufficient general comfort.

Functionality as a criterion of *Baukultur* means going a step further instead of merely complying with current state-of-the-art building standards. It takes into account issues related to sufficiency, durability, adaptability, health compatibility, innovation in both the use of materials and urban, architectural and landscape design, as well as comfort in use to ensure wellbeing. In the long-term places must be functional, accessible and adaptable to the mixed uses of different people and communities. This allows for a large number of different functions and users in the long run as well as for the sustainable continuous use of a place and its longevity. The basis for a high-quality design solution is the conformity of the space to the needs of the users and the recognition of various use cases. Spatial solutions become a success if the various kinds of use correspond with the needs of the many different users of the space.

In the case of interior space, usability should equal a comfortable, appropriate division of space and a sensible placement of furniture, lighting and good control of the indoor climate. The rooms and areas are of a suitable size and relate to each other ergonomically. For instance, a home is well-suited for living; a theatre is well-suited for rehearsing and giving performances; streets are suitable for both automotive and human traffic and provide opportunities to linger there. High-quality craftsmanship and healthy materials ensure the longevity of buildings, infrastructure and public spaces and should be subject to continued innovation and development. Effective shelter involves protection from adverse events which are the result of natural hazards or human actions.

Since altering spaces is costly, the quality of the built environment is closely linked to its adaptability and future proofing. High-quality solutions for spaces can be adapted according to clients' specific needs and in view of the social or economic situation. In other words, a good solution is one that can be adapted to serve a new function following just minor changes. No client, architect or local government cannot foresee the future. But planning for as many forms of use as possible is a way of doing justice to sustainability. The purpose of a building or space may change over time and as such both flexibility and practicality are key factors. Altogether, investments need to take into account how (at what cost) the spatial solutions can be adapted in future.

*The other criteria deal with local and traditional techniques of craftsmanship (→Sense of Place), therefore minimising the upkeep of new and existing places with adequate maintenance costs through smart and low-tech interventions (→Economy). Such interventions have a significant impact not just in terms of their high level of sustainability (→Environment) but also in the way they affect the social safety guaranteed by socio-political measures in the form of social mixing and mix of uses, coupled with the attractive and vibrant atmospheres people desire today, especially in urban areas (→Governance, Diversity, Economy).*

### 3. Environment

The term environment implies a 'natural environment' that includes humanity's interaction with living species, climate, weather and natural resources. This also encompasses the complex environmental links between flora and fauna with its diverse variety of living organisms, as well as the natural elements air, water and soil with its natural resources. Humans and other living organisms build their existence on the environment and extract renewable and non-renewable raw materials from it. Climate change, loss of biodiversity and depletion of natural resources are now the biggest challenges for humankind. Building and planning has a major impact on these ecological threats – and quality in architecture and the built environment today can also contribute to mitigating these threats.

The environment in Europe and beyond is subject to the impact that humans and their use of space have on it as we continue to create different types of landscapes which are of very different qualities. Half of the earth's population now lives in cit-



▲ Flood-defence walls along the banks of the River Fealge were replaced and repaired. The design of new areas of construction improved the public space with widened footpaths, enhanced wall finishes, quality architectural lighting and landscape features. **Clonakilty 400 Urban Design Masterplan** (case study 19), Ireland. Courtesy of Cork County Council architect Giulia Vallone

ies, while the planning and construction sector has a major impact on the environment <sup>(43)</sup>, shaping and changing it in a major way alongside agriculture and other human enterprises. The non-renewable fossil energy sources consumed through building and mobility have a significant influence on our climate and weather. In turn, climate and weather have an impact on building activities and design. The growing amount of land consumption and the sealing of our lands as well as rising temperatures change the conditions for our ecosystems, reducing biodiversity and increasing natural dangers. Air, water and soil are affected by waste and toxic anthropogenic emissions through products and materials used for building.

Environment as a criterion of *Baukultur* considers the use of natural resources, biodiversity and emissions in the field of planning and building, including how we deal with the limited resources of land and materials. Diversity of flora and fauna from private gardens to public spaces, green space and landscapes on a larger scale are all considered a part of this criterion. It further includes embodied energy as well as the energy the building industry consumes through various energy sources in addition to emissions released into the environment as they have a major impact on the climate. Mobility, too, strongly influences the environment and is included here with a focus on its sustainability.

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*The following issues are dealt with in the previously mentioned criteria: integrating buildings and infrastructures into the landscape as well as preserving protected areas and objects, where the environment is referred to as a concept of space (→Context), place quality including the big scale of landscape and why it is significant for people's identification and place attachment (→Sense of Place), economic sustainability (→Economy) and social aspects (→Diversity) of environment.*

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#### 4. Economy

The term economy describes the production, distribution, trade and consumption of goods and services by individuals, businesses, organisations or governments. It includes business administration as well as welfare economics and covers areas including accounting, finance, project management and marketing.

The economy criterion addresses questions of how human activity can be justified economically and looks at which activity brings the greatest possible benefit to an individual or a community. Economy is one of the three pillars of sustainability alongside society and the environment <sup>(44)</sup>. It promotes inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Economic activities are unevenly distributed in terms of space since there is a concentration of economic activities in cities and, even more so, in the densely built areas of cities <sup>(45)</sup>.

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<sup>(43)</sup> For instance, the construction sector is responsible for 40 % of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

<sup>(44)</sup> UN Environment Programme: <https://www.unenvironment.org>

<sup>(45)</sup> Ahlfeld, G., *The Economics of Density: Evidence from the Berlin Wall*, London, 2012.



High-quality architecture and *Baukultur* generate long-term economic added value by improving the conditions that are needed for positive commercial and social development to thrive. Developments in society, such as a general improvement in wellbeing, lead to stability and promote social cohesion and integration- which in turn may improve economic productivity. Considering the complete life cycle of places is of great importance when assessing costs and economic efficiency. Accurate and comprehensive planning for all stages of the life cycle should be carried out before construction starts to achieve the best possible quality at a reasonable cost. Collaborative methods that support quality and efficiency should be considered in the early stages of creating spaces.

The costs of *Baukultur* should be considered, starting from planning and construction to the operation and maintenance as well as deconstruction and recycling. In terms of the cost-effective use of resources, the aim when constructing and operating a property is to minimise the total life cycle costs in relation to its location and running costs. Companies and businesses aim for the most efficient use of their resources; this can be any kind of resource: finance, material or labour force. In construction, efficient use mainly relates to materials, other resources used, and the amount of work involved, which is kept as low as possible. Real estate economics should therefore from the outset reflect the development, production, management and marketing of real estate.

Above all, market prices need to be considered in order to be able to assess the economy of a place. This involves the price level of the real estate, plus the overall conditions that determine how a building or property fits into the market that governs its surroundings. The market price for property is subject to various factors, such as the attractiveness of the location, its proximity to amenities, the available public services in the area, heritage values, the accessibility of the location and the quality of its construction and design. In order to assess the realistic demand for real estate, its stakeholders look at an area's population and job prospects as well as a possible lack of supply in certain residential, office or industrial property segments. In this context, the target groups for whom building supply is created are therefore crucial.

The structures of ownership also influence the economy of a place. In order to ensure sustainability, the focus should be on easily tradable solutions, while ownership models other than sole ownership can place restrictions on marketability and viability. Diverse ownership structures and investment models, however, offer the potential for innovation and inclusion of a wide range of income groups and may therefore be the best solution for the economies in certain areas, helping to



▲ The design of Emmet Square provides access for all and an additional gathering space as an ideal stage for children's activities, traditional music sessions, cyclists, disabled users, etc. – a high-quality recreation amenity for the entire community. **Clonakilty 400 Urban Design Masterplan** (case study 19), Ireland. Courtesy of Cork County Council architect Giulia Vallone

put into practice a more comprehensive, socially beneficial form of sustainability. The choice of location has to be considered in regard to its added value for the regional economy. The economic benefit for the wider environment of any measures concerning maintenance, planning or construction should therefore be taken into account.

In summary financial resources should be used wisely during the planning of high-quality design solutions, with a keen eye on minimising the life-cycle costs of the structure without making concessions to its overall quality. The costs of spatial solutions include expenses for their planning, design, construction, use, maintenance and demolition; additionally, indirect costs will arise in order to ensure mobility, energy and food production, education, healthcare and defence as well as many other related costs. Good spatial solutions add economic value to an area by creating durable developments of better quality, as well as helping to establish conditions that are favourable to economic development. The savings become evident when taking a cumulative view of as many cost groups and communities as possible.

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*The following issues are dealt with in the previously mentioned criteria: the management of places (→Governance), the sustainable use of space (→Environment), the realisation of mixed-function spaces and aspects of accessibility (→Functionality).*

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## 5. Diversity

Diversity is a concept used in sociology and social psychology to distinguish and recognise the characteristics of groups and individuals. Diversity is the norm in our increasingly globalised, individualised urban societies with people of various origins, ethnicities, ages, genders, sexual orientations, people with disabilities, various religious practices, cultural and socialisation-related identities. In real terms the heterogeneity of societies is strong in socioeconomic, social and ethnic terms, but also with respect to lifestyles, attitudes and activities.

Ultimately, a major challenge and long-term goal in democratic societies is striving for recognition and equality of various groups, also celebrating the positive effects of diversity to society and its wellbeing. While it seems that Europe is experiencing an unprecedented phase of social openness – expressed through institutional aims such as inclusiveness and a respect for minorities, by creating space for different values and social fluidity – issues of inequality, migration, growing populism and even the rise of neo-fascist voices reveal the vulnerability of our societies and values.

The criterion of diversity in *Baukultur* is of great significance in terms of the socially binding effect it has on people and the built environment. *Baukultur* which places greater emphasis on diversity reflects and promotes inclusive societies and strengthens social cohesion by way of including and accommodating specific needs



▲  
**Forfatterhuset Kindergarten,  
 Copenhagen, Denmark, 2014.**  
 Designed by COBE. Shortlisted for  
 the 2015 EU Mies Award.  
 © Rasmus Hjortshøj

of individuals and communities. Well-adapted places encourage people to connect as they facilitate interaction and shared responsibility, supporting integration into society and helping to prevent segregation, gentrification, alienation and abandonment. This makes for places where people of different social and ethnic origins, various age groups, abilities and disabilities can live, work and interact. Vibrant, mixed-use and socially diverse neighbourhoods are inclusive, contribute to democratic societies based on human rights and leave no one behind – an essential condition for the success of public policy. In rural areas, diversity in *Baukultur* means the social diversity of people in small centres offering a mix of functions which can be found in everyday spatial settings (landscapes, settlement patterns and buildings).

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*The following issues are dealt with in the previously mentioned criteria: in terms of Baukultur, diversity is a intersecting criterion closely linked to the inclusion of all relevant actors and the many different societal groups in the process (→Governance); openness (flexibility and adaptability) of structures and planning contexts allow for a diverse mix of the functions of places, which can be adapted to changing, mixed uses and users with easy access for all people (→Functionality); diverse ownership structures and investment models offer an openness for innovation and the inclusion of various income groups (→Economy); championing ecological sensibility, and particularly biodiversity, leads to natural and landscape diversity (→Environment); reacting in a sensitive way to context and improving or creating beauty (→ Context, Beauty) increases diversity in the form and shape of the built and non-built space.*

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## 6. Context

Context can be understood in spatial terms and refers to the nature and quality of the relationship of a place with its surroundings. Context considers all the characteristics, connections and phenomena of a geographically defined area in which a place – a single building or a larger unit such as an industrial estate or a village – is embedded, or, in other words, how a place relates to its surroundings at any scale.

In Europe and in large parts of the world, there are hardly any untouched natural surroundings left; even building on virgin land by definition means shaping an already anthropogenic space where people find themselves in a cultural environment shaped by human beings. All space-related activities in a place, such as planning, new construction, retrofitting the existing stock and the conservation of cultural heritage, have an impact on the spatial context and they modify the pre-existing situation. The relationship between a place and its built and non-built environment is determined by its surrounding cultural landscape and morphological characteristics, such as urban grain, coherence, scale, materials, colours, for example, which characterise and define spatial quality.

Accommodating new objects into a given context can increase, maintain or diminish the spatial coherence and the quality of the place with regard to its cultural landscape, heritage, urban and social fabric, infrastructure as well as public and green spaces. The context criterion gives evidence of these spatial relationships and connections and assesses them in terms of spatial coherence: depending on their concrete realisation, planning and building measures influence the scale of the surroundings, use of existing landscape, infrastructure, open space, settlement structures, density patterns, building typologies, volumes, materials and colours of the spatial context – or they oppose them, meaning that both cases can be of high quality in concrete cases.



▲  
**Chapel dedicated to St Lucy, Santa Lucija, Malta, 2015.** (case study 18)  
© Restoration Directorate



▲  
**Hompesch Arch, Żabbar, Malta, 2016.** (case study 18)  
© Restoration Directorate



Most European cities are already fully built and developed. This shifts the main task of architects and planners to the reuse, conversion and eventually extension, repair or renovation of the existing building stock, rather than building new structures. When cultural heritage forges positive relationships with new buildings, it is often better preserved and protected. The pedestrian perspective should be maintained, while that of motorists should be kept to a minimum. High-quality public and open spaces should be available and integrated into urban settings.

Overall, high-quality spatial design creates places which fit into the local context, and which have distinctive features that help to create a sense of place and identity. In that way, high-quality architecture and urban design consider the historical contexts, the refinement of the tangible and intangible culture and utilise these as important resources and tools. High-quality architectural design finds new uses for objects of heritage value.

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*The following issues are dealt with in the previously mentioned criteria: aspects of social context (→Diversity), economic context (→Economy), natural environment (→Environment) as well as historic and individual context (→Sense of place).*

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## 7. Sense of place

The term sense of place relates to the authenticity of the built and non-built environment, characterised not only by its natural and physical identity but fundamentally also by its social fabric and all associated interaction. In addition, it may relate to its function and to issues around remembrance. This forms the basis of the cultural identity of a place and gives meaning to life in a particular location. The following ideas are commonly discussed in literature and encompass a sense of place in relation to *Baukultur* <sup>(46)</sup>.

The current developments in globalisation, digitalisation and mobility have increased the yearning for distinct places with a strong and specific identity. Sense of place in this context is a multidimensional, complex construct which characterises the relationship between people and spatial built and non-built settings. It is often used when speaking about in relation to the characteristics that make a place special or unique, as well as to those that foster a sense of authentic human attachment and

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<sup>(46)</sup> Low, S. M. and Altman, I., *Place Attachment: A conceptual inquiry*, pp. 1–12, 1992; Proshansky, H. M., Fabian, A. K. and Kaminoff, R., 'Place-identity: Physical world socialization of the self', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 3, No 1, 1983, pp. 57–83; Stokols, D. and Shumaker S. A., 'People in places: A transactional view of settings', in: Harvey, J. (ed.), *Cognition, Social Behaviour and the Environment*, New Jersey, 1981; Kyle, J. B., 'Sense of place and new urbanism: Towards a holistic understanding of place and form', PhD thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia, 2007; Russell, H., Smith, A. and Leverton, P., 'Sustaining cultural identity and a sense of place – New wine in old bottles or old wine in new bottles?', The College of Estate Management, 2011, available at: [https://www.ucem.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/sustaining\\_cultural\\_identity.pdf](https://www.ucem.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/sustaining_cultural_identity.pdf); Wolf, K. L., Krueger, S. and Flora, K., 'Place attachment and meaning – A literature review', in: *Green Cities: Good Health*, University of Washington, 2014, available at: [https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm\\_Place.html](https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm_Place.html); Gokce, D. and Chen, F., 'Sense of place in the changing process of house form: Case studies from Ankara, Turkey', *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science*, Vol. 45, No 4, pp. 772–796, 2018.



▲  
**Kannikegården, Ribe,  
Denmark, 2015.**

Designed by Lundgaard & Tranberg  
Architects. Finalist for the 2017 EU  
Mies Award.

© Anders Sune Berg

belonging <sup>(47)</sup>. These factors are either built into the place or into the meaning people give to it, but more often they are a mixture of both. Places with a strong sense of place have a strong identity that is deeply felt by its inhabitants and visitors. Unique local topographic, morphological and socioeconomic structures determine and shape the character of a place, its atmosphere, but also its capacities for action and problem solving, therefore structuring and advancing the lives of people <sup>(48)</sup>.

Sense of place in relation to *Baukultur* is the general concept which describes the relationship between people and their (local) spatial settings, including concepts such as place attachment, place identity and place dependence <sup>(49)</sup>. Place attachment is defined as a positive emotional bond that develops between groups or individuals and their environment, at any scale, and therefore includes landscape and nature. Place identity represents those aspects of self-identity, which involve and are reflected by the environment and its social and personal meanings. Place dependence refers to how well a setting serves the achievement of goals, given an existing range of alternatives. Sense of place is influenced and conditioned by a place's spatial but also societal identity and vice versa: the character of these relations is reciprocal and dynamic.

<sup>(47)</sup> ICOMOS International, *Québec Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of the Place*, 2008.

<sup>(48)</sup> Löw, M., *Soziologie der Stadt*, Frankfurt am Main, 2010, p. 64.

<sup>(49)</sup> Hunziker, M., Buchecker, M. and Hartig, T., *Space and Place – Two aspects of the human-landscape relationship*, 2007; Jorgensen, B. S. and Stedman, R. C., 'Sense of place as an attitude – Lakeshore owners' attitudes toward their properties', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 21, No 3, 2001, pp. 233–248.

In summary, high-quality spatial solutions consider the needs of individuals, communities, spaces and places, of values and resources. They are grounded in architecture that has a positive impact on culture, social life, community involvement, health, integration and the rule of law, everywhere and across all walks of life. A built environment of high-quality is a common good that shapes the territory according to the needs of those who live in it.

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*The following issues are dealt with in the previously mentioned criteria: aesthetic perception of the beauty of a place (→Beauty), social diversity and cohesion (→Diversity), the different topographic and physical-constructive and planning layers and characteristics of the surroundings (→Context) and civic participation (→Governance)*

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## 8. Beauty

Until the 18th century, philosophical accounts <sup>(50)</sup> attached an objective quality to beauty. The Vitruvian *venustas* implying a visual quality in architecture that would arouse the emotions of love and delight has evolved over time. Beauty is not a physical value and measurable like height or width; there is no intrinsic variable of 'beauty' or 'non-beauty' which defines a place, but a judgement linked to certain characteristics and values to an entity that provides a perceptual experience of pleasure or satisfaction, leading to feelings of attraction and emotional well-being.

Beauty as a criterion of *Baukultur* results from a highly positive aesthetic, spatial and atmospheric impact on the observer who experiences the place emotionally. The observer, whether a person or society in general, has a sensory perception of the place, expresses an opinion and judges its beauty <sup>(51)</sup>. In the context of *Baukultur* 'perceived beauty' in relation to a specific place always includes its surroundings or – depending on its scale – its surrounding landscape. The emotional experience <sup>(52)</sup> of beauty has to be followed by a rationally founded attribution of specific aesthetic value <sup>(53)</sup>. There are places that are universally known as being of incomparable beauty, which are aesthetically, socially and economically stimulating for their communities; their beauty makes them a destination for visitors of different social

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<sup>(50)</sup> After 1750 the traditional value of proportion and ornament became highly controversial and with the introduction of the term 'aesthetics' by Baumgarten, the visual merits of all artefacts tended to be assessed more subjectively as judgement of reason – despite Kant's definition of beauty with its claim to '*subjektiver Allgemeinheit*' (subjective universality) – and lost its value after 1800, when beauty was 'altogether in the eye of the beholder'.

<sup>(51)</sup> Herold, S., 'Nicht, weil wir es für schön halten. Zur Rolle des Schönen in der Denkmalpflege', Bielefeld (submitted as a dissertation to TU Berlin, 2016), p. 394, 2018.

<sup>(52)</sup> Pallasmaa, J., 'Space, place and atmosphere. Emotion and peripheral perception in architectural experience', *Lebenswelt – Aesthetics and Philosophy of Experience*, Vol. 4, No 1, 2014, p. 237.

<sup>(53)</sup> Scruton, R., *Beauty – A very short introduction*, New York, p. 7, 2011.



▲  
**Transformation of 530 dwellings, Grand Parc Bordeaux, France, 2017.**

Architects Anne Lacaton, Jean-Philippe Vassal, Frédéric Druot, Christophe Hutin.  
Winner of the 2019 EU Mies Award.  
© Philippe Ruault

classes and levels of education. There are landscapes of outstanding beauty and some of them are listed <sup>(54)</sup>.

We no longer have universally valid beauty standards or principles, and the values ascribed, and the meanings allocated to a place vary among people and over time. But beauty should be an explicitly declared objective of place-making, planning or building. To reach this goal, professionals and experts must engage in an ongoing, broad debate on what is or can be perceived and judged as 'beautiful' based on experience, now and in the future. A lively discussion should take place on different levels, as beauty in *Baukultur* is relevant to everyone and has to be conceived not as an exclusive niche issue and additional cost factor, but as an essential cultural value and shared perception.

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*The following issues are dealt with in the previously mentioned criteria: place quality refers to people's relationship in terms of place attachment, place identity (→Sense of Place), specific geographic spatial contexts (→Context) as well as social (→Diversity) and economic (→Economy) values of beauty*

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<sup>(54)</sup> The World Heritage enlisting criteria do not include explicitly any beauty standards regarding the built environment. However, the fact that the majority of the World Heritage Sites are perceived as outstandingly beautiful in our days, even if they were not enlisted by objective aesthetically building criteria, demonstrates once again that the concept of beauty is changing but remains universally relevant (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria>).



## CASE STUDIES

### METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following case studies were compiled after mapping relevant EU initiatives and emerging funding programmes. The chosen case studies illustrate diverse ways of using quality design criteria in order to achieve high-quality outcomes, while also raising awareness of high-quality standards in architecture and the built environment. The selected examples particularly illustrate efficient use of human, natural, economic and financial resources <sup>(55)</sup>. During the course of the work of this OMC group, COVID-19 shifted the public focus of how the built environment reflects the values of communities. The responsibility and leadership in developing and delivering overall quality in the built environment rests largely in the hands of the public sector. Public authorities play an active role in placemaking, especially with regards to the emphasis they place on spatial planning and design as well as their expertise and knowledge in articulating the desired quality linked to planning and construction.

This report highlights case studies that embody all or some of the eight quality criteria which are part of the Davos Baukultur Quality System. The following case studies are best practice examples at all governance levels (in both public and private sectors) and can serve as models for other countries. The overall categories were kept broad and the case studies captured by the OMC group are by no means a comprehensive overview or, indeed, claim to fully represent the wealth of both formal and informal approaches to *Baukultur*. The following case studies should rather be considered as a set of inspiring examples which are worthy of further consideration.

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<sup>(55)</sup> As part of developing this report, a methodology for coordinating, researching, collaborating and responding to the mandate was devised and a structure based on several sub-groups reporting back on key areas of interest was established. Significant amount of feedback from the expert group was received through these consultations and was used to identify best practices in each participating country, in addition to a collection of case studies that would inform and illustrate the key recommendations of the report on the value of a high quality in architecture and the built environment for everyone and the tools necessary to achieve it.

## LESSONS LEARNT

- A wealth of knowledge, creativity and understanding of architectural practice and design thinking is evident.
- Due to the high level of expertise and motivation, Europe is well-placed to make a significant contribution to further developing the concept of *Baukultur* and to drive action against climate change.
- Political commitment is key to making high-quality *Baukultur* a reality, also by providing the necessary resources and structures.
- Measures and initiatives fostering the high quality of the built environment must be constructive at all levels (EU, national, regional and local) and in all public bodies (federal states, central governments, regional organisations, etc.).
- Understanding what constitutes high-quality *Baukultur* means in its all-encompassing approach and, subsequently, how to release its potential to the benefit of all people is directly linked to all communication and awareness-raising efforts and is therefore key when implementing successful programmes and initiatives.
- New tools and approaches that are emerging include soft governance, which includes assessing how to reach quality goals, community engagement and support.
- The most effective ways of reaching better results in *Baukultur* are based on cooperation across disciplines and sectors.
- Involvement and participation of citizens and civil society organisations often ensures a better outcome.
- Almost all selected case studies can be transferred to other Member States, with some modifications.
- Architectural policies are very important in promoting and encouraging innovation and best practice high-quality design and engagement with communities is essential to sustainable development.
- Technical innovation in spatial design and co-creation in the design process can be crucial in achieving quality goals and standards.

## CATEGORIES AND CASE STUDIES

The OMC group sought out positive examples of high-quality in architecture and the built environment from the respective countries of its members. The following eight categories were defined in response to recently emerging EU topics, themes, activities and the impact of the recent pandemic:

- awards,
- laws and policies,
- education and awareness raising,
- regeneration and revitalisation,
- tools, processes and research,
- funding and investment,
- grass-roots initiatives,
- technical innovation (reused materials, new technologies).

Overall, 76 case studies were collected and presented in a matrix, demonstrating a broad range of existing best practice across European countries. Subsequently, 33 case studies stood out as most distinctive and representative within the eight categories that were defined by the working group <sup>(56)</sup>.

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<sup>(56)</sup> A methodology to collect information was based on a template into which each national representative was requested to fill out information about the case studies from her/his respective country. Questions included what category they were responding to, the governance levels, key outcomes of the project, funding approach etc. In addition, the question 'How multidimensional is the concept of architectural quality?' was posed and the representatives used the assessment table in the worksheet – referring to the Davos criteria, drawn up by the subgroup working on quality and quality criteria.

## AWARDS

The category of awards yielded the most submissions, reflecting the importance the international community and the participating countries place on the outcome of good practices in contracting architecture and spatial planning. Many prizes exist in Europe on all levels of governance, targeting the quality of architecture, also promoting the value of architects' work as an important contribution to culture. The internationally acclaimed awards – the Pritzker Prize, the EU Mies Award, the RIBA Gold Medal and the Alvar Aalto Medal – all inspire, communicate and promote high-quality architecture and honour the work of all of its recipients with great prestige. Awards are a key means of communication in raising awareness of the EU's ambitions and objectives in terms of delivering high quality and building well for all.

In the Member States there is a wide variety of award schemes, which are dedicated to the quality of architecture and spatial planning. Awards are often aimed at design-led area plans, with the designers at the centre, supported by national organisations of architects. Many governmental prizes also exist, aiming to promote awareness on the national level for quality in design, spatial planning and architecture. The examples presented here range from an award for best works of architecture and urban design in Lithuania to Foment of Arts and Design (FAD) first initiated in 1958 to promote a permanent and continuous recognition of good architecture and design in Spain; to the Golden Cubes award, the Polish edition of the international competition of Architects Union (case study 11), which has been listed under 'education'; to the Czech Municipality Architect Award (CZ) (case study 1) and the 'Public contracting Authority Award' from Belgium (case study 2). Both of the latter awards will be discussed in detail further down. It is also worthwhile to mention the Austrian *Bauherrenpreis* award, the most prestigious prize in Austria, offered not to the architect but to the client.

What became evident is that the scope of awards is shifting to a more holistic approach. For example, the objectives of the EU Mies Award are to promote an understanding of the significance of quality in architecture as well as to reflect the complexity of architecture in terms of technological, constructional, social, economic, cultural and aesthetic achievements. The implications of architecture in connection with the construction market will always impact on societies, especially in transmitting a cultural message. Quality therefore refers to the universal values of generic buildings, regardless of their programmes, the essence of things rather than their formal style and value.

To meet new challenges and to highlight the importance of sustainability, new award schemes such as the Dezeen Awards (2018) <sup>(57)</sup> have emerged. About 80 % of the environmental impact of a building, its interior and the products used are determined at the design stage. For this very reason, the architecture and design industries play a vital role in bringing about a more sustainable and circular economy.

<sup>(57)</sup> Further information: <https://www.dezeen.com/2021/02/04/dezeen-awards-2021-sustainability-categories>

Awards can be sponsored by governments and their organisers will need to consider aspects such as making jury arrangements and communicating the nominations and results. In ideal circumstances, awards increase access to knowledge and experience through inspirational commissions which help those responsible for the development of their physical development to define their precise role in planning and building. Inspiring examples help demonstrate that excellent commissioning which draws on strong design leads to excellent results. Award schemes and the communication around the prizes increase general interest in the importance of spatial design. Awards should not exclusively promote the professional debate surrounding architecture, design and land use. Ideally, they should also help cultivate an appreciation for effective commissioning and quality aspirations among those working in the field, and a much wider public.

## CASE STUDIES

### (1) MUNICIPALITY ARCHITECT AWARD (CZECHIA)

The Municipality Architect Award acknowledges the cooperation between a municipality (local government) and an architect or an architectural studio in Czechia. The result is not a single winner – the award is always given to an architect in conjunction with a municipality and as a result prompts long-term cooperation between the two stakeholders. The results are widely accepted and well-liked by the general public. This example of awarding to multiple stakeholders greatly helps to promote good cooperation between the involved, especially regarding the interplay between public commissioners and designers.



▲ **Soběslav, Czechia.** The 2020 Municipality Architect Award (‘Architekt obci’) was presented to architect Jaromír Kročák for his many years of professional work as an architect and his support for quality architecture in the region. Courtesy of the Architect of the Year archive

### (2) THE PUBLIC CONTRACTING AUTHORITY AWARD (FRENCH-SPEAKING BELGIUM)

Awarded to public clients by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, the Public Contracting Authority Award (Prix de la Maîtrise d’Ouvrage Publique) aims to recognise the quality of a building or a place but, most of all, the quality of the process that led to the success of the project. It focuses on practices, collaborations and also difficulties that were part of the story of the project, seeking out improved, more relevant practices for planning and building. This award scheme takes a sim-

ilar approach as the Dutch Gouden Piramide (Golden Pyramid) award <sup>(58)</sup>, a state prize awarded biennially for excellence in commissioning work in architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, infrastructure and planning. Every building client in the Netherlands is eligible for the award. The prize is open to municipalities, private individuals, companies, organisations and specialised building clients among others.

<sup>(58)</sup> Further information: <https://www.goudenpiramide.nl/english-summary/gouden-piramide>

### **FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS – WHY GOOD AWARDS MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE**

- Awards are very important in raising awareness of the importance of quality in architecture and spatial planning.
- Award schemes should focus on the needs of society, promote all-encompassing views of the built environment and help meet actual societal challenges in spatial planning.
- Awards and prizes should also reward clients and thereby promote good approaches to inspire other building clients.
- Awards and prizes should be integrated into wide-reaching national programmes to promote awareness of the general public through campaigns and education about spatial quality and about the role local authorities and construction companies play.
- Awards and prizes should take sustainability, the reuse of buildings and the recyclability of materials as well as the concept of the carbon footprint on board.

### **LAWS AND POLICIES**

The case studies fitting into this category offer an insight into the wide range of legislative frameworks that exist and are important in policymaking. This category considers that national, regional and local policies and laws on architecture and spatial quality are the basis for delivering a high-quality built environment. The chosen examples show attractive approaches in constituting and shaping laws or in developing policy to influence good planning, architecture and spatial quality in the field.

The last decades of the 20th century saw many central and local governments in Europe create national policies and laws to promote quality. These were based on the understanding that a legal framework was essential so that responsible structuring and management of the physical environment alongside the maintenance of cultural heritage could become a reality. The development of these laws and policies by early adopters inspired other countries to pursue similar approaches, meaning that policies in the field of spatial quality and architecture are common practice in Europe nowadays.

The Horizon 2020 research project Urban Maestro took a closer look at this area of practice and demonstrated the uptake of national policies on architecture, providing an overview of European policy and law. The Urban Maestro project also provided valuable context which helped with identifying and examining case studies for this publication. A survey map produced by the Urban Maestro team reveals the current

landscape of policies and spatial design governance practices across Europe. An integral part of the Urban Maestro research focused on soft governance and other less formal approaches that evolved from national policies. The Urban Maestro research revealed that policies were important when promoting artistic quality, innovation and courageous experimentation. It also highlighted that policies are essential when developing talent and internationalising the professional field. The complex relationship between design and cultural heritage and the renewal of urban centres demonstrated how a range of activities is required to unlock the potential of vacant or under-used sites. For instance, this may include establishing formal policies to safeguard the physical environment and providing guidance to create space for experimentation and civil participation, among others.

An overview of the legal *status quo* in Europe shows that legislation governing the physical environment is changing fast, from new development and urban expansion to the regeneration and revitalisation of existing buildings and areas. While most commissioning clients still come from the public, semi-public or private sectors, new groups and coalitions of companies, organisations and individuals are emerging – many of which have a societal interest in finding better, more appropriate solutions for spatial questions and societal needs. In some cases, this is supported by public institutions, for example, the Bundesstiftung Baukultur in Germany (case study 15), which publishes a *Baukultur* report every 2 years, a detailed status report developed at federal level on the presence of *Baukultur* in building and planning projects. The most recent report examined the social value of public spaces from the perspective of citizens and the creators of the built environment alike also suggesting recommendations for policymakers, planners and other stakeholders. After publication, the *Baukultur* report is debated in the German Parliament and becomes a general point of reference for informed policy, building and planning decisions.

The Austrian federal guidelines for building culture demonstrate how formal policy can be used to a good effect. The federal guidelines on *Baukultur* take a comprehensive view of building culture to provide sustainable solutions. The federal guidelines stipulate general principles of building well, which are detailed further in 20 guidelines based on six areas of action: development of towns, cities and the landscape; construction, restoration and operation; process and procedures; promoting awareness and public participation; research, transfer of knowledge and expertise; and finally, guidance, coordination and cooperation.

In contrast, the Belgian BWMSTR label in Flanders was introduced to promote spatial research without a client. It engages at the earliest moment of the process with a start-up budget to allow research, networking, brief and concept development in order to provide a first spatial image. The Vlaams Bouwmeester and their team are committed to placing projects on the political agenda and tend to focus their attention on areas which require action. The Lithuanian law on architecture, established in 2017, sets out principles for the work of architects and defines it in relation to the public interest in order to support high-quality architecture and built environment.

Commissioning building projects in the public sector is becoming an increasingly complex task. Local and regional authorities are faced with major changes in the field in which they operate, for instance adapting to the UN sustainable development goals or EU legislation relating to sustainability. They also face many social and spatial challenges, which must be addressed alongside transition issues such as the just energy transition or improving the existing building stock's resilience towards climate change. Effective spatial design can help when navigating the many-faceted challenges to be addressed with the help of specific design knowledge and relevant expertise. Public- and private-sector commissioning clients should be fully equipped to fulfil their role effectively. However, a somewhat limited understanding of good design and spatial quality and how its absence may impact how a community lives suggests that important opportunities are missed where spatial design and architecture are seen as separate services or areas of expertise, rather than being part of the multidisciplinary response to social and policy demands. This does not just apply to the field of architecture, but also to landscape architecture and urban planning.

## CASE STUDIES

### National/regional level

#### (3) CATALONIA'S 2017 LAW ON ARCHITECTURE

represents ground-breaking legislation, the first such legislation in Spain and the second in Europe (after France) to establish architecture as an activity of public interest which greatly influences wellbeing and social cohesion. As a result, the government and public administrations of Catalonia put in place procedures to encourage quality in architecture and town planning. They also promoted a proper framework of action in public procurement and also set a benchmark for activities in the private sector. The Spanish government is also now developing a national law on architecture and the built environment. The Catalan law aims to:

- promote the values of architecture and urbanism
- maintain the existing built heritage and enhance the publics' knowledge of it
- promote innovation, creativity and quality in architecture, particularly through the use of technology in the construction phase that offers integrated information on buildings
- promote education about architecture, built heritage and their impact on the circumstances and quality of life, as well as the importance of maintaining built structures while they are in use
- promote the role of synthesis and architectural innovation in building and of their potential to encourage sustainable development, energy efficiency and the reduction of greenhouse gases
- contribute to architecture's potential for economic growth and employment
- establish mechanisms in administrative procurement for the organisations, bodies and entities that make up Catalonia's public sector, subject to public sector procurement legislation
- encourage simultaneous and coordinated participation of all professional disciplines involved in the architectural process, to ensure that quality is a common objective and responsibility
- safeguard architecture a discipline which is intrinsically linked to the historical shaping of the landscape, both on account of its heritage and identity values as well as of environmentally friendly methods of construction



**(4) THE ISOS** is the Swiss Federal Inventory of Heritage Sites of national importance and goes far beyond a traditional list of protected heritage objects. It started to be developed and compiled from the 1970s onwards. Through a recently revised methodology, the ISOS now delivers an analysis of all Swiss built sites (cities, towns and villages) and their territory. It divides built areas into different zones, describing in detail their qualities and pointing out which developments should be maintained, or which ones are disruptive. The ISOS also provides advice on how and where development might be considered. It is a legal requirement to consider the inventory in any planning process, and it therefore makes an essential contribution to high-quality *Baukultur*.

ISOS site record of  
Pontresina, 2021.  
© FOC



**(5) THE ARCHITECTURE POLICY OF DENMARK** offers a wide spectrum of procedures and regulations directed at architecture and sustainability, with an environmental, social and cultural focus. A number of strategies are generally laid out by the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of City, Housing and Rural Districts. Projects are designed to support social and cultural sustainability, including in remote or outlying areas. Inspirational results of this policy approach include an open competition for sustainable social housing of the future, a catalogue for recycling and transformation of cultural heritage sites in municipalities as well as a plan-led approach for shrinking villages. An important part of the Danish policy is that it guides municipalities in developing their own architectural policy based on spatial plans to which the local archi-

tectural policy and green transition catalogue have to relate. The policy also includes guidance on teaching initiatives targeting children, youths and adults with training packages on architecture, sustainable cities and design. Young adults are encouraged to take part in summer schools with new digital platforms used to publish activities and to maintain dialogue and a pragmatic, horizontal approach to implementing the architectural policy.

## Local level

**(6) THE KULDĪGA DESIGN CODE** from Latvia is an example of how a small town introduced its own quality criteria to protect its unique historical image and craft skills. The code includes design guidelines for buildings and public spaces as well as competence centres and restoration workshops for citizens. Funding has been made available for projects and areas as small as street facing mini-gardens consisting of plant pots.



▲  
**Window restoration workshop at the Kuldīga restoration centre**  
(Kuldīga design code), 2019.  
Courtesy of Kuldīga Municipality. © Ričards Sotaks

**(7) For Sweden's GUIDELINES FOR ARCHITECTURAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIC WORK IN MUNICIPALITIES**, the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning produced a guide for municipalities that provides advice on how an architectural strategy for urban areas can be developed. A municipality can use many different instruments to stimulate knowledge about building and discussions about carefully designed living environments. Strategic approaches include developing an architectural strategy; the promotion of the value of architecture and the designed living environment; engaging citizens in conversations about archi-

ture and designed living environments; applying traditional methods of construction and drawing on art and artistic processes to further commitment. Other innovations are used to explore situations such as land allocation, temporary architecture, test beds, architectural competitions, municipal architecture awards, urban planning awards and education on aesthetics and architecture. The guidelines were introduced in 2020 and since then many municipalities in Sweden have successfully developed or are currently developing effective policies on architecture.

## FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

- An integrated Danish/Catalan/Swedish-style policy framework can respond to the needs of society by impacting wellbeing or public participation as well as to the needs of the planet by impacting sustainability and climate goals
- Building a legal base is essential to structuring and managing the physical environment responsibly and to maintaining cultural heritage
- Designated policies and laws can help to establish guiding principles for the work of architects and provide clear definitions of the public interest in scenarios that support high-quality in architecture and the built environment

- Spatial policies are important to promote artistic quality, innovation and experimentation
- Important opportunities are missed where spatial design and architecture are seen as separate services or areas of expertise and not as a part of a multidisciplinary response to social and policy demands; this applies not only to the field of architecture, but also to landscape architecture and urban planning
- A greater awareness of new commissioning practices is needed; guiding principles and criteria embedded within those practices ensure effective methods to deliver high-quality spatial solutions

## EDUCATION AND AWARENESS RAISING

This category covers a wide range of issues, and is a central pillar of many architectural policies. It is of great importance when stimulating knowledge and understanding of architecture as a culture of building well, also when stressing the importance of quality in the built environment and its benefit to people's lives. Education nurtures aspirations for quality in the built environment, for building social cohesion, wellbeing and the appreciation of communities to the importance of their surroundings, the condition of the urban landscape or city district and providing access to past achievements captured in specific categories like monuments or industrial heritage. The case studies selected for this category are therefore diverse, formal and informal, wide-ranging and innovative in their contribution to advancing quality.

Formal and informal education contributes to developing design craftsmanship, professional skills and social awareness. Themes of education can be derived from current events and topics, such as restructuring, densification and sustainability. Education may highlight the disciplines of architecture and urban design. Or it may explicitly address the differences between interior architecture and architecture in general, between architecture and urban design and between urban design and landscape architecture. Educators play a key role in teaching a wide range of skills, techniques and practical knowledge on researching, communicating and reflecting on the issues at hand.

Design education is another integral part of developing an awareness and appreciation of high-quality architecture and the built environment and the cases studies selected reflect formal and informal approaches to architectural education. The formal architectural education (training), consisting of theoretical and practical courses at a university or school of architecture, is the basis of any architect's career. There exists also a wealth of informal learning in formats of public participation such as discussions, workshops, exhibitions, co-designing projects, volunteering for events such as lessons for children and young people in primary and secondary schools,

including extracurricular activities outside of the classroom. In design education, informal learning helps with the understanding of design as a discipline, to raise awareness about the value of the spatial environment and to learn which decisions influence how we shape our world.

Many Member States' policies and laws on architecture embody in one way or another individual and collective learning styles, design thinking techniques and practices. While the main focus used to be on developing the expertise of professionals, a multidisciplinary approach to learning has become a lot more common. In addition, the creative sector as well as communities now participate a lot more in the design process, which suggests that education plays a far greater role in developing new skills. This subsequently means that local authorities can also tap into new forms of public knowledge, communicate the benefit of new technologies and digital opportunities and come up with new forms of engagement with all sectors of the industry and citizens of all ages and backgrounds.

Many initiatives in the field of education are presented with a variety of different approaches and perspectives to education can be found, for example in Lithuania and Poland where an integrated approach to promoting informal learning and awareness raising is common.

In Lithuania, **the Architecture Fund** is a non-profit organisation that operates as an open, voluntary-based platform, engaged in architecture, culture and education. It provides assistance to a number of initiatives developed on a voluntary basis. Its core programme consists of a lecture series and public discussions, topical tours and excursions, an educational programme, travelling architecture workshops, a festival, the Open House Vilnius projects as well as other curated projects and exhibitions. In its profile and activities, it is similar to the Estonian Centre for Architecture (case study 13), and other architecture centres and institutes across Europe.

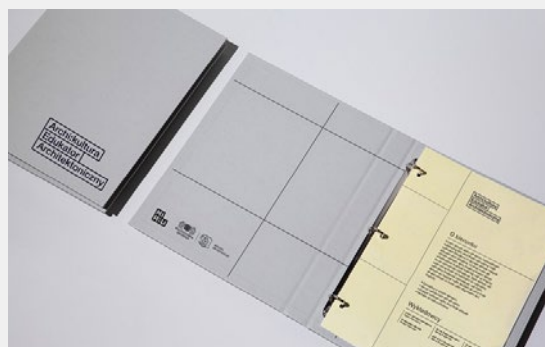
Lithuania's 2020 programme '**Architecture lessons for a remote school**' Architektūros pamokos nuotolinei mokyklai is a series of video lessons aimed at teaching architecture to school children. During the lessons, architects and researchers on architecture introduce children to the history of architecture, its theory, to projects being built or already in existence and also explain practical tasks. The aim of the lessons is to help with educating the future generation of active citizen who care about the quality of their environment; to provide students with information about the profession of architecture in an appealing, accessible format and to present an insight into the work of Lithuanian architects. The video lessons are freely available via a YouTube channel.

## CASE STUDIES

In Poland, the National Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning has developed a manifold set of actions to support awareness and create a culture of quality architecture (cases studies 8 to 11).

### (8) THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY POSTGRADUATE COURSE 'ARCHIKULTURA – EDUKATOR ARCHITEKTONICZNY / ARCHI-CULTURE – ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATOR'

This is a standout project focused on introducing a postgraduate programme to qualify educators of architecture in Poland. The question of who educates the educators is an emerging theme for heritage conservators and skilled workers who recognise the benefits of apprenticeships and believe that trade guilds help to keep building standards high. This postgraduate course helped to establish a cross-disciplinary dialogue between the faculties of teaching and architecture, who jointly established a comprehensive way to structure and organise individual activities and events to implement meaningful *Baukultur* education in primary and high schools – either as extra-curricular classes or as cross-curricular topics. This is a particularly good example of a postgraduate programme to qualify educators of architecture, which can easily inspire educators in other Member States to create a similar course.



▲ **Archikultura – Edukator Architektoniczny / Archi-Culture – Architectural Educator' training kit, 2021.** Courtesy of the National Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning in Poland

### (9) ADE – ARCHITEKTURA DLA EDUKACJI – ARCHITECTURE FOR EDUCATION

During the COVID-19 pandemic digital meetings, networking and access to virtual conferences and courses advanced exponentially. This case study demonstrates how the tools of the digital age were used to develop an online platform to create a space for various stakeholders to exchange knowledge and experience with the aim of gaining extra skills. The main aims of the platform were: e-learning (postgraduate studies,

online learning courses, films, 'archipedia' – an architectural encyclopaedia, educational materials), networking (strengthening the community of educators of architecture, also creating a database of those formally and informally committed to the architectural education), knowledge sharing (of specialist and non-specialist in character) and creating popular formats (short films, exercises and educational games for children and educators).

### (10) LABORATORIUM REGIONÓW

The Laboratory of Regions aims to increase the awareness and knowledge of regional heritage in Poland and the potential of places that have an architectural identity. This project has model character and can be considered in other countries who are looking for solutions to addressing regional planning issues of abandonment and depopulation in rural or previously

industrial areas. The project is based on extensive research which led to the publication of a manual which provided tools and procedures to advance good architecture and urban design. The Laboratory of Regions aims to improve the quality of the built environment by raising awareness of local approaches to building and development, distinctive architectural languages and the character of local communities.

### (11) GOLDEN CUBES AWARDS

Awards in the Polish edition of the international Golden Cubes are given to the most prolific educational projects. The awards honour the work of proactive educators and organisations who raise awareness of architecture's importance among young people.

▲  
 'Architektura w ruchu' ('Moving Architecture')  
 exhibition by Artanimacje Association.  
 Golden Cubes competition, 2021. ©Artanimacje



### (12) ARHITEKTUURIKOOOL (ESTONIA)

The School of Architecture (Arhitektuurikool) is a hobby school where kids between the ages of seven and 19 explore and create the spaces around them. There is no other initiative like it in Estonia and only a handful of this kind in Northern Europe and the Baltics. Arhitektuurikool students develop environmental literacy through noticing, understanding and seeing alternatives to the way places are built and what they mean to the public. In addition to weekly lessons, Arhitektuurikool also organises inspiring architecture-related events across Estonia, publishes study materials to promote creative thought and provides education about the built environment. In addition, the team behind Arhitektuurikool has developed a unique elective course that is taught in high schools, also training teachers and preparing teaching materials for them. Parents have also started to participate in the programme.



▲  
 'Explore Space!' ('Uuri ruumi!') exhibition by Arhitektuurikool  
 in the Estonian Museum of Architecture in Tallinn, 2019. Courtesy of  
 Arhitektuurikool. © Liisi Anvelt



### (13) ESTONIAN CENTRE FOR ARCHITECTURE

The Estonian Centre for Architecture (ECA) focuses on developing architectural culture in Estonia and promoting contemporary Estonian architecture abroad. Besides the promotion of contemporary Estonian architecture, its mission is to raise awareness of the benefits of good quality architecture and urban space and to help Estonian architects and architecture offices to gain international prospects and contracts. By crossing borders and reaching new audiences and stakeholders, the ECA aims to combine the knowledge and competence of the architecture sector with other sectors in society – and by doing so contributes to the advancement and innovation of both. The centre's main activities include the international Tallinn Architecture Biennale, the City Forums (Linnafoorumid), the Open House Tallinn project, various tours and exhibitions, the 'lightning' ('Välkloeng') lecture series, training courses for both the public and private sector, screenings, seminars and workshops, as well as coordinating and producing the biannual Estonian exhibition at the international Venice Architecture Biennale.



▲ **Body Building** installation by Siim Tuksam and Sille Pihlak at the Tallinn Architecture Biennale (Estonian Centre for Architecture), 2015.  
© Tõnu Tunnel

### (14) ORIS HOUSE OF ARCHITECTURE (CROATIA)

Oris House of Architecture in Croatia offers activities that encourage creativity in the fields of architecture, urbanism, design and other arts. The organisation also conducts events and activities that contribute to the quality of life and spiritual wealth of citizens in general. This impressive building is also the headquarters of the editorial office of Oris, the leading regional architectural magazine. With more than 600 square metres of space right in the centre of the Croatian capital, Oris House of Architecture is a place that promotes architecture, design, art and culture. Its interior includes a multimedia hall, a readers' corner, offices and a restaurant – it is a place for meetings, socialising and creativity. Its programme includes lectures by prominent architects from Croatia and abroad. Exhibitions, seminars, conferences, product and service presentations, cultural events and workshops are also part of the varied programmes.



▲ **Oris magazine for architecture and culture**  
exhibition 'Oris 100'. © Damil Kalogjera



### (15) FEDERAL BAUKULTUR FOUNDATION (BUNDESSTIFTUNG BAUKULTUR) (GERMANY)

The Bundesstiftung Baukultur, launched in 2007, is an independent institution with the goal of advancing and publicising issues related to building culture. Apart from promoting *Baukultur* as a topic of public debate through publications, events and workshops, the foundation also initiates far-reaching debates among professionals in charge of planning and construction, also including other disciplines and fields of expertise. It receives funding from the German federal government

and is the only institution of its kind in Europe. The foundation is one of very few institutions in Germany that can submit a report to Germany's federal parliament and cabinet, thanks to a statute in law. Its main publication is the biennial *Baukultur Report*, which addresses current issues and gives recommendations to decision-makers. The report is available in German, French and English. The most recent edition on the topic of public spaces particularly focused on urban development and open space, designing infrastructures as well as on democracy and process culture.

### (16) THE SALVOS PROJECT (FINLAND)

The Finnish Salvos project brought architectural and environmental education into visual arts, studying the content of architectural and environmental education and teaching in art schools for young people. The project examined the overlaps of the two topic areas with the help of methods from the visual arts. New targets were set for the national curriculum for visual arts after a thorough examination of arts education <sup>(59)</sup>. These new targets included visual literacy, building a relationship with the arts, inclusion and influencing. The purpose of the project was to enhance environmental awareness and to increase knowledge of the history and the present-day impact architecture has on our lives and the role it plays in building a sustainable future. The project focused on the immediate surroundings as a learning environment and supported children and young people to take a stand on environmental planning, also encouraging them to create works of art in public spaces. The Salvos project helped to establish experiential and communal teaching methods to

strengthen visual observation of the environment and the formation of a personal relationship with the built environment and nature. It is a leading example which highlights natural heritage and biodiversity are integral parts of the built environment and of the wellbeing of societies, which require greater consideration in building processes.



▲  
Approximately 1 000 children and young people were involved in the Salvos project in 2016–2018  
© Miia Änäkälä, Arts and Crafts School Emil Valkeakoski

<sup>(59)</sup> 'Basic education in the arts' is art education provided primarily for children and young people on an extracurricular basis. Basic education in the arts is organised across Finland in nine art forms: architecture, visual arts, crafts, media arts, music, literary art, circus art, dance and theatre. It is an official part of the Finnish educational system, with its own legislation and National Core Curriculums. It is goal-oriented education that progresses from one level to the next. Basic education in the arts comprises two syllabuses: the general (500-hour) syllabus and the advanced (1300-hour) syllabus. The schools' financing comes from ministries, municipalities and participation fees.

**(17) LANDLUFT (AUSTRIA)** is a non-profit association based in Austria advocating building culture in the rural areas of German-speaking Europe, focusing on small and mid-sized towns, villages and communities. The basis of the approach is to generate an understanding of building culture as a catalyst for positive and future-proof community development. Its Baukulturgemeinde-Preis is an award given out every 4 years for exceptional *Baukultur* at local government level to exemplary communities in Austria and southern Germany. An exhibition shares the winning communities' experiences and approaches, combined with study trips, workshops and lectures.



▲  
20th anniversary of Landluft 2019.  
© Landluft / Jonathan Meiri

## FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

- A solid framework for informal and formal learning strategies when teaching the topics of spatial design and architecture in primary and secondary education will positively increase awareness of the living environment. Poland's 'ADE – Architektura dla edukacji – Architecture for education' course is a good example of this approach.
- There is a wide range of topics and issues that can be included in educational frameworks and curricula, with perspectives ranging from local to national to international. This can include the value of historic sites, reuse of materials and structures, the circular economy, spatial design, the use of scale in architecture, design craftsmanship, international initiatives such as the UN's sustainable development goals, professional skills and social awareness. Generally, it is important to link the challenges facing societies to design thinking.
- In formal education, it is important to re-activate the awareness of spatial design and architecture from time to time so pupils will encounter the topic several times during their school years and also have this reflected in the curriculum.
- Informal manuals and tools for citizens who want to work on their spatial environment and its quality will help to foster awareness and public participation. This may be promoted by national governments.

## REGENERATION, REVITALISATION AND ADAPTIVE REUSE

Reuse, regeneration, retrofitting and revitalisation of the existing, historically grown building stock and landscape is one of the great challenges of the future. Although new building will play an important role, most of these changes will involve adapting and improving existing buildings and structures. It will also involve working at different scales concerning neighbourhoods, villages, cities, infrastructure and landscapes. The recent New Leipzig Charter recognises the challenges and opportunities as well as the different historical, economic, social and environmental backgrounds of European cities and proposes common principles and strategies for sustainable urban development policies. A multidisciplinary approach based on integrated urban development and related governance is recommended to put this approach into action, and by doing so to build and support long-term resilience and achieve a balance in regional growth.

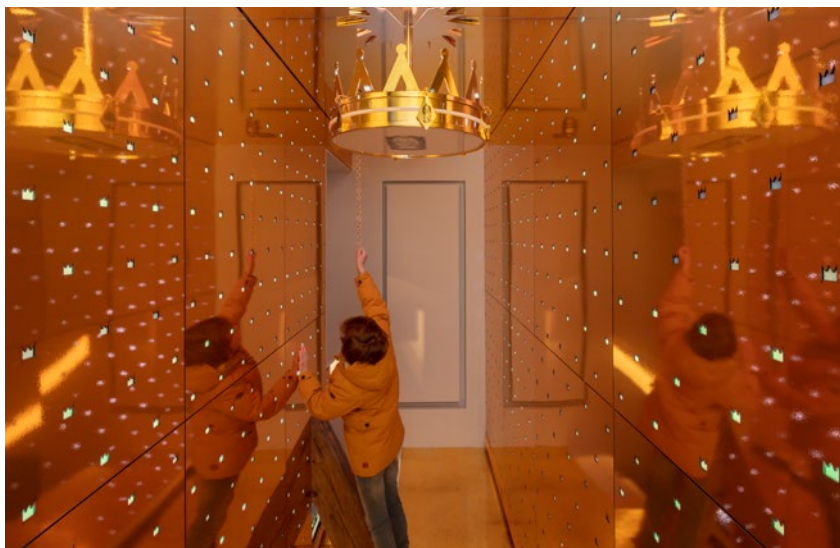
“ Climate scientists have taught us that limiting global warming to 1.5 °C will require not just change but ‘rapid and far-reaching’ system transitions on a nearly unprecedented scale. Achieving this will require all of Europe working together, which means the project must capture the hearts and minds of Europeans. Leveraging the potential of craft, creative industries and cultural heritage can support just outcomes and help deliver both a green transition and strengthened social inclusion, as highlighted by the ambition of the New European Bauhaus. That is why Europe’s cultural heritage needs the European Green Deal to succeed. This is why cultural heritage is essential to the success of the European Green Deal. Enhancing the place of culture and cultural heritage in the European Green Deal is also in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which acknowledge that natural and cultural heritage can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, resilience, adaptation, and sustainable development.”

Extract from European Cultural Heritage Green Paper (60)

Through smart renovation and transformation, heritage sites can find new, mixed or extended uses. As a result, their social, environmental and economic value is increased, while their cultural significance is enhanced. As part of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 an EU initiative was launched on ‘Heritage in transition: re-imagining industrial, religious and military spaces for the regeneration of urban and rural areas’. The resulting Leeuwarden Declaration ‘Preserving and enhancing the values of our built heritage for future generations’ <sup>(61)</sup> highlights the benefits of re-using built heritage and lists a number of basic principles to ensure quality in

<sup>(60)</sup> Read further on ‘Putting Europe’s shared heritage at the heart of the European Green Deal’ at: <https://www.europanostra.org/putting-europes-shared-heritage-at-the-heart-of-the-european-green-deal/#:~:text=The%20European%20Cultural%20Heritage%20Green%20Paper%20is%20produced,the%20Creative%20Europe%20programme%20of%20the%20European%20Union>

<sup>(61)</sup> Leeuwarden Declaration, ‘Preserving and enhancing the values of our built heritage for future generations’: [https://www.ace-cae.eu/fileadmin/New\\_Upload/15\\_EU\\_Project/Creative\\_Europe/Conference\\_Built\\_Heritage/LEEWARDEN\\_STATEMENT\\_FINAL\\_EN-NEW.pdf](https://www.ace-cae.eu/fileadmin/New_Upload/15_EU_Project/Creative_Europe/Conference_Built_Heritage/LEEWARDEN_STATEMENT_FINAL_EN-NEW.pdf)



◀ **Exhibition 'Holidays! In the East and West – The School Church', Groningen, Netherlands.**

Designed by Studio 212 Fahrenheit and MX13 Architects. Winner of the 2021 European Heritage Award in the category of education, training and awareness-raising projects. Courtesy of Europa Nostra

adaptive reuse operations and processes <sup>(62)</sup>. The Faro Convention promotes a wider understanding of heritage and its relationship to communities and society.

Working at a different scale, towns and villages are the vital infrastructure of regions and present the greatest opportunity to guide the overall behavioural change needed to achieve quality and to truly understand environmental sustainability. Urban centres tend to concentrate and cluster key cultural assets while they also play a role in maximising and using finite resources wisely and efficiently, at the same time building community awareness and capabilities. To deliver a better quality of life for all, to deliver the European Green Deal, which supports the journey towards net zero emission in 2050, means that fundamental, wide-reaching changes will need to be made to improve the wellbeing of communities. In addition, it means that we need to face the immediate challenge to recover and rebuild in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, considering the social and economic insecurity it has brought to individuals, families and communities.

Community organisations now have the power to mobilise people towards the greater good and bring about good wins through interaction and co-creation between the public and private sector. In this situation, soft skills are as important as hard skills while the skills and services that support this public process need to be in place so that a high-quality built environment can be delivered for the benefit of all. The case studies in this category are examples of a strategic approach to town centre regeneration through repairing and upgrading existing buildings as well as downgraded public spaces and infrastructure to support residential living and to enhance the quality of life in rural towns and villages.

<sup>(62)</sup> The document was supported by the following networks: Architects' Council of Europe, Europa Nostra, Future for Religious Heritage (FRH), the European Federation of Fortified Sites (EFFORTS) and the European Initiative for Industrial Heritage (ERIH).



## CASE STUDIES

**(18) RESTORATION WORKS SCHEME FOR LOCAL COUNCILS (MALTA)** was launched to assist the 54 municipalities of mainland Malta with the restoration of landmark buildings and other stationary monuments of both historic and artistic value. Local communities are often particularly interested in the historic connections of these buildings (as the context) to their daily lives and as a result identify strongly with them. The scheme therefore helps to increase public awareness of heritage buildings and sites and also of the methods and skills used to restore them.



Niche of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Paola, Malta, 2017.  
© Restoration Directorate

## (19) CLONAKILTY 400 (IRELAND)

The local authority in the Clonakilty implemented the Urban Design/Public Realm Masterplan with a strong focus on engaging the public. The main objective of the masterplan was the socioeconomic regeneration of the centre of the Irish town of Clonakilty to mark the 400th anniversary of the town borough. It highlights the important role of the town architect, a unique role in Cork County Council since the 1960s when planning laws were introduced which stated that architects would act also as urban planners of the towns in making local area plans. This design-led approach empowers the town architect to coordinate public and private developments, including influencing local policy to preserve the architectural heritage and to include the participation of local communities. The challenge was to bring life back to the main street and re-establish a sense of place and community. Clonakilty was badly hit by a number of floods, with one of the worst recent in 2012. Although with limited funding, Clonak-

ilty400 helped to create a vision shared by the community and, close to completion, it has already helped to restore a sense of pride and community in the town.



The completion of the Main Street, Phase II, 2016, Cork.  
The idea was to make the local community aware of the heritage value of its townscape, including the preservation of traditional shopfronts and re-establishing social activities on the street. Clonakilty 400 Urban Design Masterplan Ireland. Courtesy of Cork County Council architect Giulia Vallone

**(20) THE REVIVE PROGRAMME (PORTUGAL)** has facilitated the reuse of 49 properties owned by the Portuguese government for tourism or cultural purposes. The converted buildings are of architectural, heritage, historical and cultural significance and were previously used as military buildings, hospitals or monasteries. This reuse and conversion programme is likely to be extended and follows strict heritage guidelines, using private investment. It is in line with government rules, to support a sustainable economy and the renovation of the buildings and surrounding landscapes for the benefit of communities and the local economy.



▲ **Convent of São Paulo – view of the cloister, Elvas, Portugal.**  
Historic convent converted into a hotel under the Revive programme, 2020.  
© Turismo de Portugal, IP

## FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

- The Maltese case study demonstrates how cultural heritage is integral to implementing the European Green Deal and aspects of sustainable development. It also shows how targeted investment can help secure key cultural assets in historic centres while preserving conservation skills and expertise so the buildings can be enjoyed by future generations in the local communities.
- The Revive programme is another impressive example of a rehabilitation programme, which also safeguards cultural assets so local economies and communities can remain resilient and sustainable. Similar initiatives have been launched in Italy (such as the Valore Paese example of public-private partnership, or the transformation of the San Pietro cloisters <sup>(63)</sup> into an open hub for innovation in Reggio Emilia, as a governance model).
- The case study from Clonakilty showcases local authority strategies to a design-led approach for the re-shaping of existing town spaces into high-quality public spaces. It is also a great example of effective public engagement where a local community re-imagined its town and harnessed key infrastructural funding to put in place environmental improvements and place making to everyone's benefit.
- Generally, it is a good idea to co-create when it comes to reuse, to brainstorm and engage step-by-step with all stakeholders involved. That way existing buildings and structures can be preserved and will subsequently continue to play an important role in spatial development while also contributing to a sustainable living environment.

<sup>(63)</sup> The Simon architecture prize, Cloisters of San Pietro: <https://www.simonprize.org/work2020/cloisters-of-san-pietro>



## TOOLS, PROCESSES AND RESEARCH

This category highlights a number of good examples of strengthening and speeding-up the design process, also making it more accessible.

Governance procedures in this area can be formal or informal. At this stage, an overview of informal tools follows since exclusively using formal tools does not always lead to high-quality *Baukultur*. Informal tools, such as public participation, contribute to strengthening *Baukultur* and its contribution to a common good. An inspiring example of public participation is the ‘Immersive residencies programme’.

In some countries architecture funds also support experimental design. For example, the Creative Industries Fund’s architecture grant scheme in the Netherlands supports projects that contribute to the quality, development or understanding of the field of architecture and spatial design <sup>(64)</sup>.

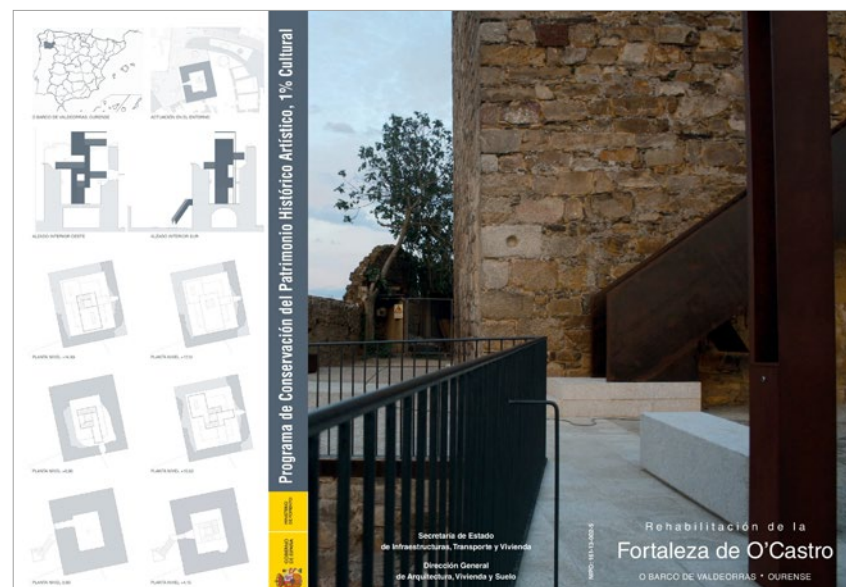
Another example is the Open Call system from Belgium, which is the Vlaams Bouwmeester’s most important instrument to support public clients in raising the quality of public developments <sup>(65)</sup>. *Panorama Netherlands* provides a good example for effective storytelling. The Urban Maestro workshops demonstrated how storytelling plays an important role in the governance of urban design, although putting the ideas that emerged from the workshops into practice will not be easy <sup>(66)</sup>.

<sup>(64)</sup> Further information: [www.stimuleringsfonds.nl/en](http://www.stimuleringsfonds.nl/en)

<sup>(65)</sup> Kroese et al., 2009.

<sup>(66)</sup> Urban Maestro workshop 2: ‘Design environment’.

Rehabilitación de la  
Fortaleza de O’Castro  
(case study 26 – Cultural 1,5%),  
Ourense, Spain, 2013.  
© Ministerio de Transportes,  
Movilidad y Agenda Urbana



## CASE STUDIES

### (21) PANORAMA NETHERLANDS

*Panorama Netherlands* presents a panoramic view of how the Netherlands can change over the next few decades, against the backdrop of major changes in society. The Dutch Board of Government Advisors developed the panorama to inspire the creators of the Dutch National Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment. It is intended to be a first step towards a

shared, recognisable and positive vision of the future in 2050. In addition, it proposes a number of starting points to setting up a judicious and widely supported strategy for the future organisation of the country. *Panorama Netherlands* is a publication as well as a physical panorama: a 360-degree inspiration at eye level which gives its visitors a view of the future.

### (22) DESIGN REVIEWS (IRELAND)

RIAI Design Reviews are an innovative way for local authorities or clients to explore the potential of a project or site and develop wide-ranging ideas through expert architectural advice. The RIAI, the Royal Institute of Architects Ireland, assembles a panel of five to six architects with expertise relevant to a respective project. Architects are generally experienced in solving problems and their unique ability to analyse complex issues and develop design solutions is of great benefit to communities. The architects involved in the design reviews receive a detailed briefing before developing ideas, including research of relevant international examples. The ideas are shared through reports, films and public engagement – public

feedback is incorporated into a final report. The Design Review Report then informs the next development stage, such as a masterplan or spatial framework. The objective is to stimulate thinking and discussion among the public and other stakeholders on the possible ways of developing or redeveloping an area. Design Reviews focus on a particular neighbourhood or urban quarter with a view to kick starting the imagination with creative ways for these areas to be redeveloped. Communities across Ireland can benefit from architectural expertise early on in urban regeneration. Local authorities and semi-state bodies tasked with regeneration or developing brownfield sites for creating new sustainable neighbourhoods can also request design reviews from the RIAI.

### (23) IMMERSIVE RESIDENCIES PROGRAMMES (FRANCE)

The immersive residencies programmes in France (the 'Preuve par 7' project and the 'Ateliers hors les murs') aim to reinvent planning methods outside the traditional commissioning framework in order to revitalise disadvantaged areas through culture and architecture. The objective is to champion bottom-up and participative approaches by setting up multidisciplinary teams of young professionals whose mission is to open dialogue between local authorities and residents, create levers for an alternative economy in rural and urban areas, highlight the collective memory of a territory and support local stakeholders in conceptualising and designing their project. The teams are allowed to experiment and deviate from certain building regulations.



▲ View of the 'Trésors de Banlieues' exhibition in Gennevilliers, (the 'Preuve par 7' project) bringing together 260 works of art owned by more than 50 municipalities in Ile de France, accumulated over time, often with the political idea of bringing art to the people. Architect (layout) Patrick Bouchain. © Sami Benyoucef / Ville de Gennevilliers, 2019

**(24) OPEN CALL (FLEMISH-SPEAKING BELGIUM)**

The Open Call is one of the main tools of the Vlaams Bouwmeester (government architect) to promote the quality of the built environment in Flanders (Belgium). It is a unique and innovative method of selecting designers for public commissions by Flemish regional and local authorities, based on a two-phase design competition that complies with public procurement law and European competition rules. The open call enhances the quality of public buildings and spaces – and therefore the living environment.

Ideas and visualisations provoke reactions, and that lead to the fine-tuning of a project on the part of the stakeholders. This contributes significantly to establishing a planning and building culture. As part of the open call, the Vlaams Bouwmeester challenges several design teams to visualise the project brief, which in turn challenges public administrations in a positive way and helps them make a considered design choice.



▲ View of the exhibition 'Open Call'.  
20 Years of Public Architecture at Z33 Hasselt, 2020.  
© Michiel De Cleene

**FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS**

- Developing projects together with users and local stakeholders has a positive effect on a community's sense of belonging. A good example of public participation is the immersive residencies programme. Architectural interventions can be developed and promoted as close as possible to users, thanks to this and similar programmes.
- There is a need for experimentation (*permis de faire*), design by research and design thinking, since these are vital for creating free space in which the futures of spaces can be researched.
- National architecture funds with grants for experimental approaches, such as the Creative Industries Fund in the Netherlands, can help initiatives to conduct spatial research and develop new ways of collaboration to face the major challenges that concern the built environment.
- Forward-thinking models, such as *Panorama Netherlands*, can help to visualise and research the future of spaces. With *Panorama Netherlands*, the Dutch Board of Government Advisors leads the way in showing how the complex issues of today can lead to welcoming changes in the future.

## FUNDING AND INVESTMENT

The link between funding and high quality is of strategic importance. In this context, the Urban Maestro research provided great insight into ways of incentivising good approaches to planning and design proceedings from the outset. Urban Maestro also provided directions for innovative funding and procurement. Embedding quality criteria into project briefs and funding streams was a key recommendation, essential to achieving high-quality outcomes.

The chosen examples demonstrate innovative and alternative ways of linking funding to the delivery of high-quality outcomes for cultural heritage, major refurbishments and new developments. Next to the case studies presented below, Creative Living Lab in Italy <sup>(67)</sup> provides a good example of successful use of public funding for urban regeneration projects. Many of the financed projects concerned small towns, similarly to the 'Hea avalik ruum' programme in Estonia where reviving of city centres has been an excellent opportunity to engage locals, increase their sense of community and attractiveness of the living environment. Such examples present quality-driven measures to help the local governments to improve their living environment through comprehensive revitalisation of town centres, including both the public spaces as well as adjacent buildings and property.

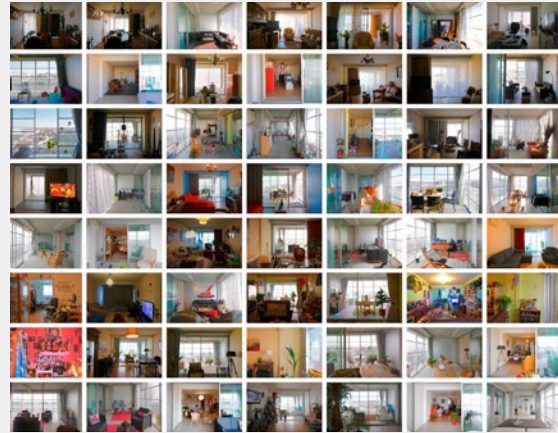
Key lessons learnt in this section include: the importance of embedding high-quality criteria in the design of funding programmes to ensure the best built environment outcome, the wise application of limited resources to deliver favourable results for all. The delivery of the green renovation wave as part of Europe's recovery and transition strategy, may be the game changer opportunity to take an all-encompassing approach to delivering a sustainable built environment, while moving significantly towards the 2050 climate action target.

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<sup>(67)</sup> Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity at the Ministry of Culture of Italy: [http://www.aap.beniculturali.it/eng/creative\\_living\\_lab.html](http://www.aap.beniculturali.it/eng/creative_living_lab.html)

## CASE STUDIES

**(25) TRANSFORMATION OF CITÉ DU GRAND PARC BORDEAUX (FRANCE)** shows how three social housing blocks, built in the 1960s and a prominent part of the Bordeaux skyline, were saved from demolition by the new social landlord. A major renovation was undertaken aligned with the needs of the community, which were integral to the design process. The transformation of the fully occupied buildings started from the interior to give them new qualities: more space, more light, better views and an upgrade of facilities as well as a significant improvement on energy efficiency without increasing rents. This recipient of the 2019 EU Mies Award <sup>(68)</sup> (and the 2021 Pritzker Prize for Lacaton Vassal) is testament to the high quality and success of the project and participation model, which can be replicated throughout Europe.



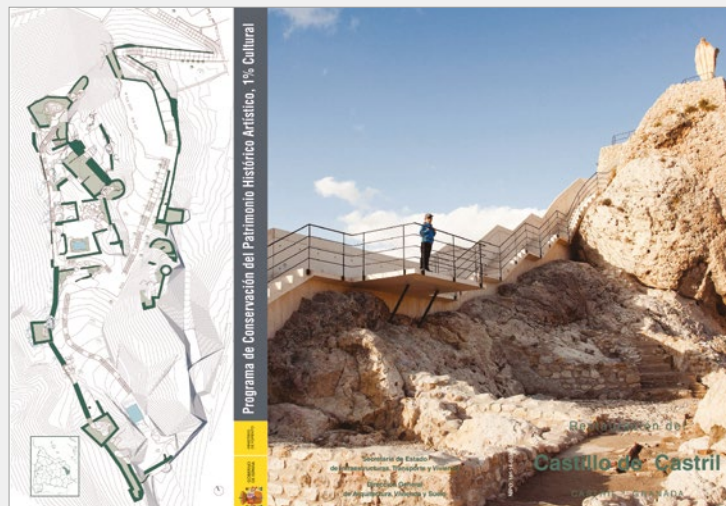
▲ **Transformation of 530 dwellings, Grand Parc Bordeaux, France, 2017.** Architects Anne Lacaton, Jean-Philippe Vassal, Frédéric Druot, Christophe Hutin. Winner of the 2019 EU Mies Award. © Philippe Ruault

<sup>(68)</sup> Further information: <https://eumiesaward.com/work/3889>

**(26) CULTURAL 1,5 % (SPAIN)** is an effective measure introduced as part of the Spanish Historical Heritage Act of 1985, which established the requirement of allocating at least 1,5 % of the budget for public contracts for the conservation or renovation of

buildings declared to be of cultural interest. Spain's central government has since co-financed, together with the owners, more than 1500 procedures in 600 municipalities to ensure the proper funding of the built heritage.

► **Restauración del Castillo de Castril (Cultural 1,5%), Spain, 2013.**  
© Ministerio de Transportes, Movilidad y Agenda Urbana



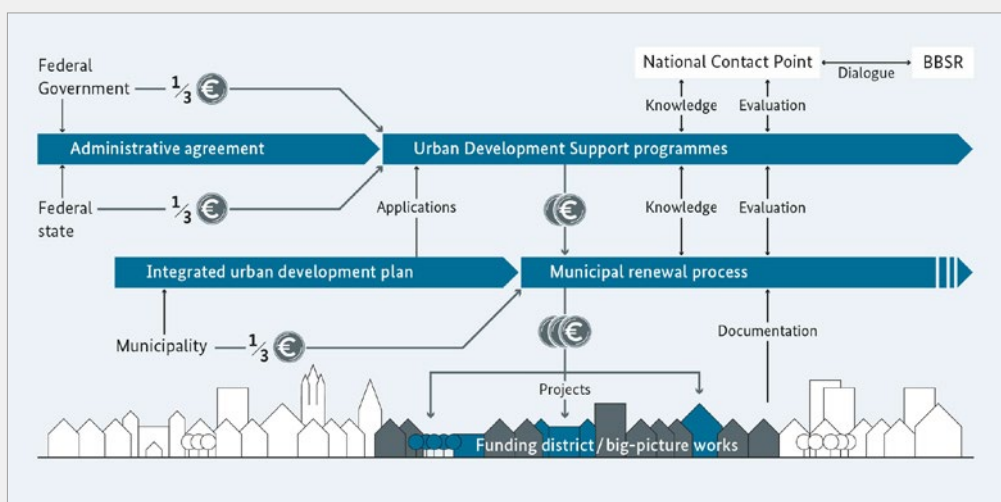


**(27) THE SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD CONTRACT – CONTRAT DE QUARTIER DURABLE (BELGIUM)** is a Belgian plan of action implemented by the regional government and local authorities, including the residents of a Brussels neighbourhood. Every 4 years municipalities can apply for regional subsidies

for a particular area. After a year of researching the location, a basic roadmap ('dossier de base') sets an agenda for different types of public investment (renovation, new public facilities, social activities), which the local authority must implement within the specified period of 4 years.

**(28) FEDERAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (STÄDTEBAUFÖRDERUNG) (GERMANY)** is one of Germany's instrumental programmes to advance sustainable urban development, both in cities and smaller towns. The programme's central goal is to strengthen urban planning in inner cities and town centres, while also addressing heritage and monument protection as well as public and open spaces. The German government, the federal states and the municipalities usually split the costs three ways. The prerequisite for claiming funding is a local, integrated

urban development concept, which takes key aspects of *Baukultur* into account. The programme aims to enable participation in public and social life for all and, in turn, to strengthen social cohesion. In addition, it makes a significant contribution to the implementation of the Leipzig Charter and the Davos Declaration and therefore contributes to the sustainable redevelopment of the urban core and a reduction in land consumption – promoting urban development that is geared towards existing building stock and high-quality *Baukultur*.



▲  
An example from Germany of an integrated urban development support programme in which different levels (national, state and local) join forces (Städtebauförderung).

© complan Kommunalberatung GmbH & Erfurth Kluger Infografik GbR



## FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

- The importance of developing funding incentives to achieve high-quality results is demonstrated, for instance, by the **Cultural 1,5 %** programme, which ensures that cultural heritage is considered in public contracts for new construction.
- The **Transformation of Cité du Grand Parc Bordeaux** in France is a landmark project which opens up new avenues for future best practice models for the long term. The scheme was based on a holistic vision, taking on the renovation of existing social housing stock and delivering a just and fair transition to energy efficiency and affordable quality housing for everyone. The project recognised the importance of empowering communities and signals the change required to enable bottom-up, citizen-driven policymaking rather than one which is solely government-led. This kind of policymaking is urgently needed to bridge the gap between policymakers and citizens in order to prevent subprime results.
- The importance of incorporating quality criteria into funding programmes, measures and incentives to ensure high-quality outcomes that stem from a holistic vision for the physical, cultural, environmental and social identity of a place.
- Further evidence of the need for quality-driven investments can be found in research undertaken by **Urban Maestro**, and the case studies presented within the research. They reveal different levels and ways of funding and the success this kind of approach can bring. Examples include land value capture models from Copenhagen and Freiburg, innovative financing models for public-private-partnerships in real estate development, as well as civic initiatives based on a Citymaker Fund (Netherlands) investment model to support and to sustain start-ups and social enterprises of great value to communities, which gives rise to a network of place makers across Europe.

## GRASS-ROOTS INITIATIVES

People's attachment to their living environment is often high and general architectural and spatial awareness can also prosper thanks to this public interest. Local initiatives such as communal green spaces, neighbourhood vegetable gardens or allotments, community businesses and disused buildings or places that are transformed for temporary use show that people want to get involved in their living environment. Often so much so that they want to help shape their living environment as a collective. Public debate has an essential role to play when raising awareness of the societal value of spatial quality. More quality leads to better liveability for residents and visitors. Citizens' initiatives may often be grass-roots, but they usually have a major effect on the living environment because they consolidate the community's efforts and attention, while being strongly rooted in the local culture.

## CASE STUDIES

### (29) KAAPELITEHDAS CREATIVE HUB (FINLAND)

is situated in a former Helsinki Cable Factory, which is currently the largest cultural centre in Finland. This is another great example of a movement taking shape in Europe, which has seen communities come together to repurpose and revitalise a building and turn it into a hub of innovation and social interaction. The Cable Factory demonstrates the need for a financial model to underpin worthwhile civic initiatives. All the more so since such initiatives can run out of steam because of a lack of financial support from the traditional banking sector. The gradual process of reclaiming, re-imagining, trialling temporary use and then adapting it for mixed use led to the overall vision, one with considerable diversity of use and vibrancy. While the original factory building was designed by architect Waino G. Palmqvist, several contemporary architects have worked on the renovation and the new Dance House Helsinki, such as JKMM Architects and ILO Arkkitehdit, among others.

It houses three museums, ten galleries, dance theatres, art schools, artist studios, band rehearsal spaces and spaces for businesses. Unique spaces are also available for rent on a short-term basis to stage concerts, exhibitions, festivals and fairs. Around 900 people work at the Cable Factory and each year nearly 340,000 people attend carefully curated events.

The administrator is the property management company Kiinteistö Oy Kaapelitalo, which is owned by the City of Helsinki. The company is responsible for renovating and renting the former industrial complex and tailor it to the needs of arts, culture and artisan crafts. Kiinteistö Oy Kaapelitalo has more than 300 long-term tenants and numerous subtenants at Cable Factory. The overall aim is to find tenants who support not only the development of the cultural centre in general but also each other's activities. The income is generated almost entirely by rents without any public subsidies.

#### View of the Cable Factory creative hub (Kaapelitehdas) in Finland.

While the original factory building was designed by Waino G. Palmqvist, several contemporary architects, such as Pia Ilonen and Heikkinen-Komonen Architects, have worked on the renovation of the building. The new Dance House Helsinki extension is designed by JKMM Architects and ILO Architects.

© Patrik Rastenberger



**(30) CITIZEN ACTIVISM IN RIGA (LATVIA)** is an example of citizens making themselves heard and getting through to politicians and decision-makers. This citizen movement shared a frustration over the decline in quality of Riga's public spaces. To change this state of affairs, an alliance of local businesses and neighbourhood activists started posting design solutions for better streets on social media, then catching the attention of a wider audience and politicians. Thousands of people locally and internationally praised inspirational visualisations and drawings by Oto Ozols, who took a fresh approach to many of Riga's major urban landscape problems <sup>(69)</sup>. This created a critical mass and pushed the issues high up in the of the city's local elections in 2020. The movement made all parties take note and commit to improvements to the quality of architecture and public space in Riga in their campaigns.



▲  
**Proposal for Aleksandra Čaka iela in Riga, 2021.**  
Courtesy of Oto Ozols

<sup>(69)</sup> 'The Evolution of the Intersection' on Vimeo:  
<https://vimeo.com/547644784>

## FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

- Community-generated economic and environmental initiatives can serve as a good example to learn from for future policies and strategies. Grass-root initiatives will foster a soft infrastructure, the invisible and stabilising framework of society, which is essential to create enablers.
- Volunteering is essential to grass-roots initiatives, adding essential social capital and staff to projects.
- Grass-roots initiatives are not only about the development of housing and infrastructure, but they also address particular social issues such as the quality of the living environment, healthcare, energy, space for entrepreneurship or education.
- Involving students in grass-roots pilot schemes and integrating related assignments into the curriculum creates new dynamics.
- Grass-roots initiatives create fields of experimentation for citizens, entrepreneurs and the government, helping explore new relationships between those stakeholders.
- Knowledge sharing is key, both in terms of using existing knowledge as well as generating and communicating new knowledge.

- It is important for local, regional or national governments to think of ways to encourage and promote grass-roots initiatives, for example through grant scheme (as in the case of the Dutch creative industries fund) or with the help of other financial or organisational incentives.
- Grass-roots initiatives and citizen movements are great at highlighting the cultural, historical and architectural value of (disused) places, including through temporary occupation, or reuse leading to more long-term quality results.

### TECHNICAL INNOVATION: REUSE OF MATERIALS AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

We live in a time marked by a great number of innovations being introduced at a very fast pace. This provides opportunities for new design and educational approaches which arise from progress in technology and materials. New ways of working that emerged during the pandemic such as virtual training and micro education (e.g. an Erasmus+ project Construction Blueprint that addresses skills for the construction industry) <sup>(70)</sup> may be essential to unlocking the potential of the EU Green Deal. Opportunity for research and space for experimentation as well as prototyping are essential to technical innovation. They are important because they inform new practices and change the way we develop construction methods and materials. The following case studies present solutions to environmental challenges. They promote the circular economy, climate-friendly measures and sustainable building using renewable resources and advanced digital technologies.



◀ **Forfatterhuset Kindergarten, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2014.**  
Designed by COBE. Shortlisted for the 2015 EU Mies Award.  
© Rasmus Hjortshøj

<sup>(70)</sup> Further information: <https://constructionblueprint.eu/results/>



## CASE STUDIES

**(31) SOLARKULTUR (SWITZERLAND)** proposes an alternative approach energy production and infrastructure, based on a method of comprehensive solar planning for an entire municipality in Switzerland with two main objectives: producing a maximum of solar energy while ensuring high-quality *Baukultur*. With those aims in mind, the local authority will consider and define the qualities of the living environment. It will compile solar and energy data to determine the locations where solar installations may be energy-efficient and suitable from a *Baukultur* perspective. SolarKultur will also look at the places where the installation of solar panels was rejected and advise on alternative investments for property owners, such as collective installations. A municipality close to Geneva has already put a pilot scheme into action, developed in cooperation with university and public authorities, with a view to transferring the methodology to other municipalities.

**Solkultur**  
methodology to maximise solar energy  
with high-quality *Baukultur*.  
Irradiation plan for Carouge,  
Switzerland, 2019. © FOC



**(32) THE STEAMPUNK INSTALLATION USING AUGMENTED REALITY (ESTONIA)** showcased how digital technology can be used to shape the future of construction by creating a very complex way of twisting and bending timber strips without any physical drawings to work from <sup>(71)</sup>. This innovation in augmented reality shows how a designer may work in future, combining precise digital models with human craftsmanship to produce exciting and complex constructions. Designed by Gwyllim Jahn, Cameron Newnham (Fologram), Soomeen Hahm Design and Igor Pantic with Format Engineers, the installation was built for the 5th edition of Tallinn Architecture Biennale in 2019.

<sup>(71)</sup> Further information: <https://www.archdaily.com/926191/steam-punk-pavilion-gwyllim-jahn-and-cameron-newnham-plus-soomeen-hahm-design-plus-igor-pantic>



**Steampunk installation using augmented reality tools**  
at the Tallinn Architecture Biennale, 2019. Designed by Gwyllim Jahn, Cameron Newnham (Fologram), Soomeen Hahm Design and Igor Pantic with Format Engineers. © Tõnu Tunnel

### (33) SARA KULTURHUS (SARA CULTURAL CENTRE)

in Sweden is both a cultural centre housing a regional theatre, two art museums and the city library as well as a hotel and conference centre. Designed by White Arkitekter, the cultural centre is a place for concerts, performances, meetings, exhibitions and events as well as a venue with capacity for large conferences. Sara's Kulturhus is built in a way that reflects constant change with large, open spaces that encourage meetings between people in a welcoming environment. It is an open living room in the city and housed in one of the world's largest and tallest wooden buildings. The 20-storey building is mainly constructed from locally sourced wood in the form of glue-lam beams and CLT-slabs, creating both an architectural landmark as well as an example of advanced timber engineering. The project has been covered in international media as a part of a new wave of tall wooden buildings. The importance of local participation through the course of this project with ambitious and technically advanced architecture has made this project a success.



▲  
**Sara Kulturhus**  
a 20-storey building mainly constructed from locally sourced wood, creating both an architectural landmark and an example of advanced timber engineering. Designed by White Arkitekter.  
© White Arkitekter

## FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

- It is important to engage with new technologies to improve design capabilities, enhance best practice and to disseminate research and innovation for the common good.
- There are many new opportunities and ways to raise awareness of the important role of architecture through digital tools which communicate the vision of a high-quality living environment.
- New technologies, such as augmented reality, immersive environments etc. create new possibilities to guide and support experimentation and innovation for high-quality interventions.
- The use of sustainable, locally sourced materials should be one of the guiding principles in the design process of the future.
- It is important to foster the development of new sustainable (including bio-based) materials alongside new ways and techniques of using them, for example, the use of timber in high-rise construction.



## GET INTO ACTION – RECOMMENDATIONS

“ The design quality of our buildings and places has a direct effect on people’s quality of life. The conservation, maintenance and reuse of historic buildings have similar benefits transmitting cultural identity and pride as well as contributing to climate change action. Although the importance of architectural quality in achieving a more sustainable urban development has been recognized in several international declarations, places with good spatial quality continue to be the exception rather than the standard. Acknowledging that this situation is socially and ecologically unsustainable, one of the main challenges ahead is to change the current system and its embodied values, so as to produce more sustainable, economical and socially equitable built outcomes. <sup>(72)</sup>”

Bento and Laopoulou, 2019

This publication has provided many avenues to raising the quality of architecture and the built environment for everyone. This all-encompassing approach is largely based on the Davos Baukultur Quality System which highlights key aspects of quality in our built environment. The latter helps to standardise and streamline our understanding of what quality means when speaking about the built environment and all of the processes that shape it.

To properly implement the quality principles, it is vital to integrate them into all decisions concerning and governing design at multiple levels, especially at the national, regional and local levels. This publication has shown that a lot of the tools and procedures to improve our living environment can be transferred from one EU Member State to another.

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<sup>(72)</sup> Bento, J. F. and Laopoulou, T., ‘Spatial Design Leadership – The role, instruments and impact of state architect (or similar) teams in fostering spatial quality and a place-making culture across five European states’, Tallinn, 2019.

It is highly recommended that governments monitor how successful Member States are at applying quality criteria over time, with assistance from professional associations, organisations in education and research, cities and municipalities, different local and regional bodies and other partners. It is also recommended that Member States create designated plans of action to improve the quality of the built environment at national, regional and local levels.

At **national level**, the **recipe for success** consists of the following:

- make sure there is a **strategic plan with specific goals for a quality living environment** – it can be a public policy on architecture, urban development, construction or similar;
- make sure there is a **team to implement the plan** – such as a state architect team, city architect offices at local level, design review panels, or similar;
- make sure that quality goals are **followed across all levels of governance**;
- **all key actors and stakeholders must be on board** in the pursuit for quality (see the section ‘Who is this publication for?’ at the beginning);
- **investment plans** must be **linked to the goals for a quality** built environment;
- the policy document defining the quality objectives should be a **central point of reference, always at hand and linking back to everyone and the budget**.

Beyond the overarching recommendations, the following chapter addresses various levels of governance and stakeholders:

- EU level,
- national and regional levels,
- local level,
- private-sector stakeholders and non-governmental organisations,
- professionals.

For each of these, the findings are based on the three categories contained in the Pact of Amsterdam, which shapes the recommendations laid out in the urban agenda for the EU: **better knowledge, better funding and better regulation**.

## OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL LEVELS

Regarding the impact **across all governance levels** (EU, national, regional, local), it is important to address the following points.

### KNOWLEDGE

- (1) **Raising awareness and fostering awareness raising** – especially from an early age (kindergarten onwards) – on how to create high quality in architecture and the built environment for everyone through an integrated and holistic approach with the cultural dimension at the centre. This can be achieved by developing a comprehensive set of tools to sensitise the wider public on the topic while, at the same time, supporting the culture of quality (e.g. the work of the Netherlands' state architect team, initiating Panorama Netherlands – case study 21). Providing more **cooperation, education and peer-learning opportunities** to foster and disseminate success stories. Taking into account **all areas, not exclusively the larger urban areas** that are better equipped in terms of human, economic and other resources. Launching, supporting and promoting **award programmes** as highlighted in the case studies 1, 2 and 11.
- (2) **Strengthening the capacity** of the public and private sectors to embrace and implement quality principles in an integrated and sustainable way (e.g. case study 22 – advisory design reviews in Ireland, and case study 24 – Open Call system in Belgium). Engaging **the best design experts and involving skilled ways of governance** in developing spatial interventions and investment projects to advance the quality of the built environment. In addition, **qualifying decision-makers and involving competent professionals in decision-making processes** – the decisions must be balanced and taken **together with competent Baukultur experts** who help to assess the potential spatial impact of each decision. Capacity building should occur at the national, regional and local levels – ensuring the hiring and training of competent and multidisciplinary staff, especially in remote and rural areas where human resources and funds are not sufficient to mobilise *Baukultur* expertise (e.g. case study 23 – the immersive residencies programmes – focuses precisely on disadvantaged territories). Spatial design and architecture should not be seen as separate services or areas of expertise, but part of the multidisciplinary response to social and policy demands.
- (3) **Improving design, environmental and soft competences** among professionals in the field, also when preparing the graduates of architecture schools to work in public administration. There is still a lack of highly qualified *Baukultur* professionals working in national, regional and local authorities. Adding educational programmes to prepare graduates and professionals to **work in public administration** would help to integrate their skills and knowledge into

decision-making and participatory processes. Equally, it is crucial that spatial planners and designers are up to date on the methods and procedures of public administration.

- (4) **Supporting the upskilling and reskilling of construction workers and engineers** to help with implementing the quality criteria for the built environment in a holistic way.
- (5) **Supporting research, innovation and experimentation** to encourage improvements in the quality of the built environment. Fostering creative practice research and development of diverse design research models in architecture and urban planning. Increasing knowledge, understanding and **quality of research in creative disciplines and its methods**. Building a new generation of **creative practice researchers and research-led practitioners** able to meet the complex and often competing demands of contemporary and future society.
- (6) **Promoting and moderating complex public participation and bottom-up processes** informed by the quality goals. Each spatial intervention has an impact on the users and the environment; therefore, the place-specific cultural, social, economic and environmental context should be considered while including all of its stakeholders in the decision-making. A promising example at the European level is the New European Bauhaus campaign 'beautiful, sustainable, together' as a process, approach and methodology to raise awareness of the untapped potential for quality in our living environment.



▲  
**Husarenvilla – headquarters of the Federal Foundation of Baukultur**  
 (case study 15) in Potsdam, Germany. Renovation by Springer Architekten  
 and Weidinger Landschaftsarchitekten, 2011.  
 © Till Budde / Bundesstiftung Baukultur

## FUNDING

- (1) Integrating the quality assessment system within funding and investment programmes** as well as building it into incentives, **strategic development documents, legal acts** and other **regulations** or **guidelines**. Investment opportunities need to contribute to the quality of the built environment. Therefore, it is important to mainstream **quality principles across funding areas** that concern spatial development and the built environment, especially in public procurement procedures – connecting quality standards to the direct and indirect **funding and procurement** of infrastructure and construction. **Uptake of a quality assessment system** of the built environment should become best practice in national, regional and local funding programmes as well as in EU co-financing schemes when addressing significant urban challenges, to ensure integrated quality goals are met in sustainable urban development programmes and projects.

The implementation of the key principles of good urban/ spatial governance <sup>(73)</sup> across all relevant funding and investment mechanisms is based on:

- (a) **a place-based approach** – on a balanced analysis of the specific local situation, identity and heritage and especially potential benefits and risks, of all the relevant stakeholders and possible restrictions, while following place-based development;
  - (b) acting in the interest of **public welfare**, providing services and infrastructure for the common good – inclusive, affordable, safe and accessible for all <sup>(74)</sup>;
  - (c) **participation and co-creation** – involvement of the general public as well as social, economic, cultural and other stakeholders in order to consider their concerns and knowledge <sup>(75)</sup>.
- (2) Taking up the responsibility and the leading role as public authorities to test new solutions and set good examples as owners, developers and users** of property.
- (3) Updating the existing sustainability assessment frameworks** (e.g. Level(s)) with all-encompassing quality criteria that take into account all viable aspects of the living environment.

<sup>(73)</sup> As pointed out in the New Leipzig Charter.

<sup>(74)</sup> The New Leipzig Charter.

<sup>(75)</sup> The New Leipzig Charter.

## REGULATION

- (1) **Following and improving best practices** to reach the quality goals on **all governance levels**: for instance, making sure that *Baukultur* competence can be called on during all decision-making processes by putting **state architect teams** (see Belgium, Ireland, Sweden, the Netherlands) and **city architect offices** or similar in place, organising **design review panels** (see case study 22), etc.
- (2) Embedding the quality principles **into all relevant regulations, public policies and strategies to ensure their implementation** in all planning and building processes, as well as in state property management.
- (3) Emphasising the quality principles for the built environment during the next revision of the EU directive on **public procurement and its transposition by Member States to ensure**:
  - (a) that **public procurement rules and procedures** foster a **quality-based approach** over a solely cost-based one, possibly even excluding only price-based selections;
  - (b) that quality is the basis for procuring intellectual services (e.g. engineering, landscape or urban design); and
  - (c) that the best practices for conducting **public architecture and urban planning competitions** are followed.
- (4) **Providing guidance** by professional bodies to decision-makers when implementing the quality assessment system in all activities shaping the living environment. Giving the **professional bodies** (e.g. state architect teams or similar, the national architects' associations, Chambers of Architects) **capacity to ensure that the procedures of allocating public funding** to the development of the built environment are in line with quality objectives.
- (5) **Reinforcing, adapting or establishing** EU-level, national, regional and local **urban /spatial policies** that foster high-quality in architecture and the built environment for everyone.
- (6) **Addressing the digital transformation** to enable the development of high quality in architecture and the built environment – improving digital public services to help reach quality goals <sup>(76)</sup>. Implementing comprehensive, powerful and resilient public data infrastructure and governance that drives the quality of the built environment.
- (7) **Creating a favourable regulatory environment to enhance participatory co-creation** in spatial design processes. **Appropriate procedures** should be in place to ensure effectiveness of participatory co-creation processes. The success of participatory co-creation is also linked to overall awareness of society and changes in society. In that regard, **providing spatial competences and**

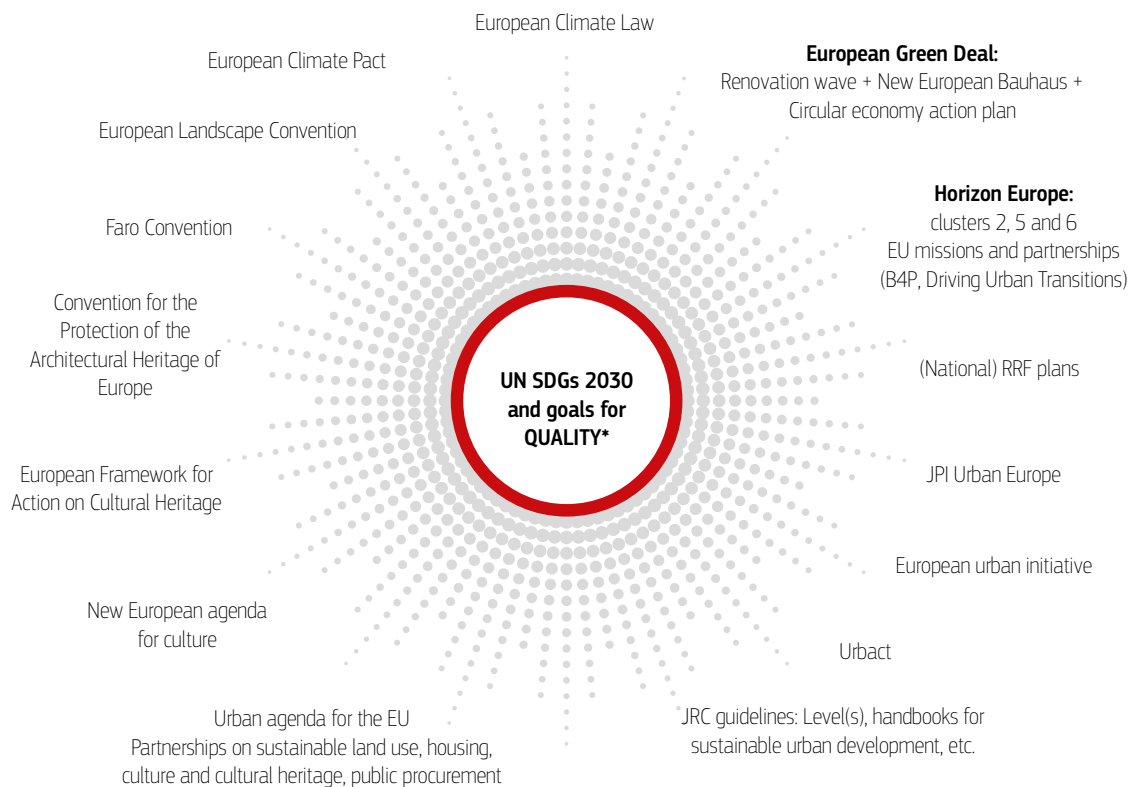
<sup>(76)</sup> In line with the New Leipzig Charter, emphasising that data should be used for the common good, with ethical and socially responsible access, use, sharing and management. At the same time, this data usage should be carefully weighed against privacy issues. Cities should have access to data relevant to public tasks.



**skills in formal education** helps the future society – future clients, professionals, decision-makers, builders – to better plan high-quality spatial solutions together. For instance, awareness of cultural significance and best practices among all participating actors ensures suitability when re-imagining, making plans for conservation and the reuse of heritage.

- (8) Measuring improvements in achieving quality:** develop monitoring procedures to see how well the goals for high quality in architecture and the built environment have been implemented and are perceived by users. Good examples include various liveability indexes such as the OECD Better Life Index <sup>(77)</sup> and national indexes, (post-occupancy) studies at regional and local levels about the citizens' satisfaction with the living environment, among others.

<sup>(77)</sup> Further information: <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org>



\* set by Davos process, New Leipzig Charter, EU Mies Awards and national architecture policies

▲ Quality-driven approaches should inform various existing and future policy areas, initiatives and work programmes. Quality aspects in architecture are not yet included in all relevant policies, initiatives and programmes, although considerations relating to cultural heritage and *Baukultur* are already, to some extent, embedded in cohesion policy. It is crucial to include quality criteria when drafting relevant new work programmes and when updating policies, strategies, regulations and guidelines. It is also important to share best practices and implement quality-assessment systems in funding mechanisms.

## EU LEVEL

In addition to the overarching recommendations, it is important to address the following points.

### KNOWLEDGE

**(1) Providing more opportunities for research, innovation and experimentation** so high-quality in architecture and the built environment can become a reality for everyone. The key programmes include:

- (a) Horizon Europe, in particular:
  - Clusters 2 (Culture, creativity and inclusive society), 5 (Climate, energy and mobility) and 6 (Food, bioeconomy, natural resources, agriculture and environment),
  - the EU mission on 100 climate neutral cities by 2030 and its Climate City Contracts and the EU mission on adaptation to climate change including societal transformation,
  - the relevant European partnerships, such as ‘Driving urban transitions to a sustainable future’ (DUT) and ‘Build4People’ (B4P),
  - Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions;
- (b) the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities – KICs on Climate, Energy and Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries – CCSI;
- (c) the Joint Research Centre, including through the New European Bauhaus;
- (d) the Erasmus+ and creative Europe programmes;
- (e) the European urban initiative;
- (f) the city science initiative.

**(2) Promoting the uptake** of the comprehensive quality criteria in the **different sustainability assessment frameworks** developed by the European Commission, such as Level(s).

**(3) Providing more opportunities for cooperation, knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and peer-learning** to discuss and disseminate principles on quality architecture among Member States in relevant EU programmes such as creative Europe and Erasmus+, among others. For instance, the cultural sector, including the architectural centres and institutes, needs a representative platform for systemic and well-coordinated communication of high-quality architecture.

## FUNDING

- (1) Mainstreaming the **integration and uptake of quality principles across EU funding programmes** which support spatial development and construction, especially through public procurement.
- (2) **Connecting all-encompassing quality principles with direct and indirect funding of infrastructure and construction projects by including them among the award criteria in calls related to key EU programmes and initiatives**, such as:
  - (a) the cohesion policy funds <sup>(78)</sup>, in particular through the partnership agreements and operational programmes with Member States and regions;
  - (b) the territorial cooperation programmes (such as Urbact and the European urban initiative);
  - (c) the (implementation of) the recovery and resilience facility (RRF) plans;
  - (d) the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD);
  - (e) the New European Bauhaus;
  - (f) the renovation wave;
  - (g) the circular economy action plan, the LIFE programme and other relevant components under the umbrella of the European Green Deal.
- (3) Encouraging EU institutions to take up the responsibility to test and set good examples (lead by the example) as **owners, developers and users of property**.

## REGULATION

- (1) Emphasising the quality principles for the built environment during the **next revision (and transposition) of the EU directive on public procurement**. Quality needs to be the basis for procuring intellectual services (e.g. engineering, landscape or urban design); thus, the public procurement directive should have a designated chapter for procuring intellectual services. Allocation of public funds must be transparent, also ensuring equal access to them.
- (2) Paving the way for the **integration/mainstreaming of principles for high-quality architecture and the built environment in EU regulations, policies and strategies**, in particular those related to the cohesion policy, the European Green Deal, the European Climate Law, to name a few.
- (3) **Facilitating the cross-border mobility of architects and other *Baukultur* professionals** and improving their working opportunities. It is important to address equal access to the profession for the next generation, based on their qualification and actual skills. In that regard, the **Qualification Directive** needs

<sup>(78)</sup> For the 2021-2027 period the EU cohesion policy funds include the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund, and the Just Transition Fund.

a revision to harmonise the qualifications system across the EU. In addition, promoting **mutual agreements of recognition** with third countries in terms of professional education and qualification requirements would help the young talents to work outside the EU.

## NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

Depending on the administrative structure, the regional level may be equivalent to the national level in some countries (for example in Belgium, *Länder* (federal states) in Austria and Germany, autonomous regions in Spain among others).

Regarding the strength of the national level in ensuring the quality of the built environment, it is widely accepted that the national and regional <sup>(79)</sup> administrations continue to play an important role in society, namely in market regulation and in steering societal goals, placemaking being no exception. The role of the state has therefore reached a new dimension: besides defining the regulatory framework, it also takes an active leadership role, disseminating a message of quality and promoting the general public's appreciation of architectural, (peri-, non-) urban and landscape culture of both our cities as well as more remote, rural places. National laws and policies are essential to set out the ambition as well as key principles and actions a government intends to take to encourage improvements in the quality of the built environment.



Fontainas, a public space, housing and public equipment project, designed by B612 Associates.

Laureate of the 'Wide scale' category for the 2020 City of Brussels Public Authority Contracting Award (case study 2). Courtesy of Cellule architecture – Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles.  
© Maxence Dedry  
(Ceci n'est pas un cliché)

<sup>(79)</sup> In federal countries the appropriate state level in the field of architecture may be at the regional level. An example is how state architects sometimes work at regional (e.g. Brussels region) or city (e.g. in CZ) level.

In addition to the overarching recommendations for all levels, decision-makers and policymakers should be as follows.

### KNOWLEDGE

- (1) Establishing and supporting **state architect teams** (examples of Ireland, Sweden, *bouwmeesters* in the Netherlands and Belgium, etc.), **design review panels** (e.g. Ireland) or similar advisory expert groups and quality-driven procedures (see case study 24, Open Call in Belgium) to embrace and encourage the professional competences and skills needed to ensure high-quality outcomes.
- (2) Facilitating and supporting the exchange of knowledge and best practice with other countries/ regions to inform and guide the (local) decision-making process towards more quality in the built environment.

### FUNDING

- (1) Providing **incentives for a holistic assessment and development of the quality of places** facing current and future challenges in sustainable urban development including **in the procurement guidelines and** award criteria of tenders.
- (2) Integrating **the holistic quality approach and principles for infrastructure and construction projects** in the partnership agreements and operational programmes of EU cohesion policy funds as well as in the (implementation of) the recovery and resilience facility plans.

### REGULATION

- (1) Reinforcing, updating or establishing national or regional spatial development policies that foster high quality in architecture and the built environment for everyone. **The quality of the urban environment derives from various interventions and policy decisions. National and regional laws and policies are relevant and useful to coordinate the variety of actors involved directly or indirectly in spatial design.**
- (2) Ensuring the **coordination** of all relevant ministries, agencies and services to embed a quality-based and holistic approach in all policies and activities which have an impact on the built environment.

## LOCAL LEVEL

In addition to the overarching recommendations, it is important to address the following points.

### KNOWLEDGE

- (1) Appointing **City Architects with an interdisciplinary team** who champion urban design leadership and promote liveable and inclusive urban spaces.
- (2) Setting up **advisory committees** (e.g. case study22 – advisory design reviews or boards in Ireland and Austria) or **similar expert platforms** to take the lead when it comes to reflecting on urban issues (such as in case study 4 – ISOS from Switzerland). Such committees or platforms can **provide advice** in the fields of architecture, city planning, urban development, as well as contributing **technical know-how and providing assistance** with the conception of new projects or, indeed, the renovation of existing buildings and their integration in the urban environment. In some countries there are already **local architectural advisory bodies** dedicated to promoting design quality at the local level <sup>(80)</sup>. **Local design review panels** can help support local authorities to improve the quality of the built environment by helping to address design issues early on, during the pre-application stage of planning. Composed of a group of experts or individuals, they provide design advice on projects with a strong impact on **public space** as well as on new urban development plans.
- (3) Promoting the development of **skills development and lifelong learning to empower citizens and public administrations** to improve the quality of places, cultivating place-making culture.
- (4) Ensuring **permanent involvement of cultural services and cultural professionals** in spatial development processes due to their crucial role in achieving quality in the built environment and meeting societal needs.
- (5) Including **local communities in decision-making processes** and encouraging **grass-roots initiatives and activists** to embrace principles of quality architecture as part of the solution, fully integrated into the respective projects. Grass-root initiatives can be, for instance, neighbourhood groups promoting housing development or citizens' associations transforming abandoned buildings or sites for temporary occupation, which often reveals the potential of places and leads to increasing quality and long-term refurbishments.

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<sup>(80)</sup> Some of these bodies give free technical advice to clients and local authorities, as others charge a small commission for their expert service, such as helping to set up architectural competitions (Bento, 2012).



## FUNDING

- (1) **Making use of all financial incentives and (co-)financing tools to apply and increase quality standards in planning, design and building processes.** Investment capacities of municipalities and local governments are generated through their own income, allocations from national and regional levels, as well as specific EU, national and regional funding programmes. Thus, it is important to keep the quality goals in sight when using gathered capital from all those different sources. This means adding quality criteria to the assessment and selection procedures in investment plans and funding mechanisms.
- (2) Making the best use of value-based public procurement procedures, for example, through conducting **public architectural design, landscape architecture, urban design and urban planning competitions** where needed. Best practice in such public competitions means to offer a quality-based selection procedure, which enables a contracting authority to acquire a project plan or design selected by a jury. Providing they are properly conducted, the competitions become a valuable source for innovative, efficient and sustainable solutions while also making it possible to benefit from the extensive know-how available in the market <sup>(81)</sup>.

## REGULATION

- (1) Leaving no one behind, attention must be given to both **urban and non-urban places**, facilitating access to knowledge at the local level and making sure that **smaller cities and towns as well as the periphery are included** in (para-) urban / spatial design development.
- (2) Driving the **digital shift** to enable the development of high quality in architecture and the built environment – developing and implementing **integrated and inclusive strategies for smart cities for the common good, including quality and impact assessments with awareness of long-term effects**. Digital solutions can – particularly in times of crises – safeguard and boost the capacity of local authorities to foster the quality of the built environment.
- (3) Adapting the local regulations to allow, acknowledge and support the **potential of grass-roots and citizens' initiatives** aiming to preserve, reuse or transform the built environment.

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<sup>(81)</sup> See the ACE recommendations for the organisation of Architectural Design Contests, [https://www.ace-cae.eu/fileadmin/New\\_Upload/5\\_Policies/UPDATED\\_Policy\\_2017/GA2-17/EN/6.1.1\\_GA2\\_17\\_Compet-Rules.pdf](https://www.ace-cae.eu/fileadmin/New_Upload/5_Policies/UPDATED_Policy_2017/GA2-17/EN/6.1.1_GA2_17_Compet-Rules.pdf).

## PRIVATE-SECTOR STAKEHOLDERS AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

In addition to the overarching recommendations, it is important to address the following points.

### KNOWLEDGE

- (1) Integrating the best design expertise and adequate governance skills to **find a good balance between private and public interests** when developing spatial interventions and investment projects.
- (2) Ensuring that all **investments** advance the quality of the built environment through an integrated and all-encompassing approach.
- (3) Paying greater attention to **quality architectural solutions over solely technology- or efficiency-driven ones**: unless whole life costs and impacts are fully addressed, priority should be given to simple, passive, low-tech, locally tested solutions that do not consume energy and are less susceptible to human error.

### FUNDING

- (1) Ensuring that the **participants in (architecture, planning, design) competitions are adequately compensated** to support and enable excellence in design and spatial planning.
- (2) Generating greater acknowledgement that **taking part in public architecture, planning and design competitions is an investment in architectural quality**. Architects invest an impressive number of skills and resources into entering competitions.
- (3) In close cooperation with the public sector, setting up and fostering funding bodies and mechanisms that **support experimental and innovative projects and activities** of designers, makers and cultural institutions in the creative industries, such as the Creative Industries Fund in the Netherlands. See case studies under 'Funding and investment' for further examples.

### REGULATION

- (1) Under market-driven conditions, making the best of **public-private-partnerships (PPP) and possible incentives** to create and support a planning, designing and building culture that stands for long-term quality and sustainable investment rather than short-term profit. Preserving and enhancing the quality of the built environment by implementing planning and architecture policies focused on design quality.
- (2) Providing better access for **young and emerging offices** to (both public and invited) architecture, planning and design competitions.

## PROFESSIONALS

In addition to the overarching recommendations, it is important to address the following points.

### KNOWLEDGE

- (1) Fostering the wide-spread appropriation of the integrated quality-assessment **system in education and continuous professional development**, as well as incorporating such a system into the research agendas of schools, universities and institutes.
- (2) Paying greater attention **to quality architectural solutions over solely technology- or efficiency-driven ones**: unless whole life costs and impacts are fully addressed, priority should be given to simple, passive, low-tech, locally tested solutions that do not consume energy and are less susceptible to human error.
- (3) Supporting capacity building, peer learning and lifelong learning programmes for **professionals (including from the construction sector) to acquire and update the relevant skills** (including digital skills as well as soft skills to manage co-creation and participatory processes).
- (4) Promoting, supporting and conducting research projects which provide substantial opportunities for real-life training and testing of **design-led practice-based research**. It is necessary to introduce **creative practice research methods** to a new generation in architecture schools and universities all over Europe as a contribution to a wider research effort to increase the knowledge, understanding and quality of research in creative disciplines, its potential and its methods.

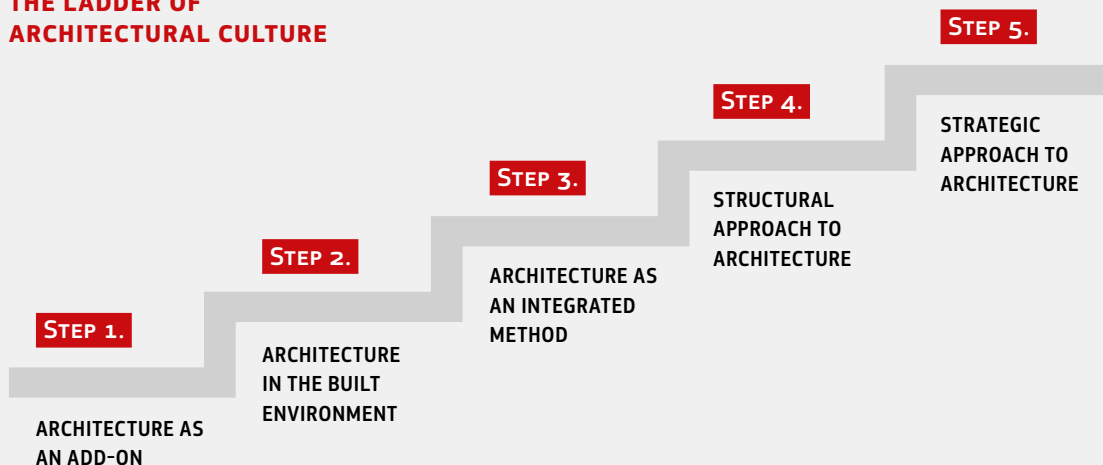
### REGULATION

Taking responsibility and the lead to **develop appropriate tools to improve the quality of procedures**, in terms of public procurement, conducting public competitions, etc.

## IMPLEMENTING THE QUALITY CRITERIA

The ladder of architectural culture symbolises the link between a quality living environment and greater emphasis on design quality in the early stages of development, overall giving architecture a more strategic position in placemaking culture and urban governance. The ladder of architectural culture consists of five steps.

## THE LADDER OF ARCHITECTURAL CULTURE



### STEP 1.

#### ARCHITECTURE AS AN ADD-ON

Built environment and placemaking projects are often implemented without architectural input and therefore also without the consideration of quality criteria in an all-encompassing and integrated way. Architecture is not an integral part of developing the built environment, and teams often do not involve trained architects. The solution is driven by the ideas and perceptions about good function, economic efficiency and sustainability of those involved. The context, sense of place, a comprehensive consideration of aesthetics and users' perspectives often plays a small role or does not feature at all in the process.

### STEP 2.

#### ARCHITECTURE IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Built environment and placemaking projects rely on architectural and design input, and its value is recognised by commissioners, developers, clients and the public. Design is viewed exclusively as the final form-giving stage, whether in relation to buildings or the (urban) landscape. Many decision-makers use the term 'styling' to describe this process. The task may be carried out by professional architects and designers but is typically handled by people with other professional backgrounds.

### STEP 3.

#### ARCHITECTURE AS AN INTEGRATED METHOD

Architecture and design are integrated into all stages of development and placemaking projects, such as planning, commissioning, public consultation, delivery and post-occupancy evaluation. The solution is driven by research into the problem, as well as by the users. It requires the involvement of a wide variety of skills and capacities, for example, engineers, technologists, sociologists, other consultants and public administration officials.

### STEP 4.

#### STRUCTURAL APPROACH TO ARCHITECTURE

Architecture and design are integrated more deeply into the procedures of public sector teams at national, regional and local government level. Deeper architectural skills and advice are needed to inform policies related to the built environment, such as housing, planning and adapting to climate change. Highly qualified architects work within public administrations to rethink the development of the living environment. Here, the key focus is on the design process in relation to political visions and desired areas of intervention with the future shape of the built environment in mind.

### STEP 5.

#### STRATEGIC APPROACH TO ARCHITECTURE

Architecture and design are an integral part of planning and the development of policies. Knowledge of architecture and design informs forecasting and strategic planning. Architecture and design are integrated into built environment procurement procedures by way of quality systems and design panels. Architecture and design are celebrated by both the public and the private sector.

High-quality architecture and *Baukultur* generate a long-term economic added value by improving the conditions that help commercial and social development to flourish. Societal benefits, such as a general improvement in wellbeing, lead to stability and promote social cohesion and integration, which in turn can improve economic productivity.

## QUALITY ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Best practices can be improved by using a quality assessment tool to make balanced decisions on alternative design for spaces and their use. The public sector can demonstrate leadership by implementing a quality assessment system in investments as part of planning processes – in weighing up investment and location alternatives, in property development and management, public procurement procedures, evaluation of funding proposals, preparing (e.g. spatial planning, design) briefs etc. Answering the quality assessment questions can improve sensitivity to and the recognition of places with high-quality *Baukultur* among all societal and functional groups (specialists and non-specialists) and build up knowledge and general awareness about quality issues relating to the built environment.

Such a quality system can be applied in many different scenarios and situations. For example, it can be used as a catalogue of quality when evaluating building and planning projects. But also for competitions, design advisory boards or as a guideline for citizens' workshops and in various consultations and debates. It can also be used to self-critically evaluate your own finished projects or to document the success of planning processes for places. In all of these cases, the potential of the quality assessment system lies in taking into account and making transparent the complete and balanced consideration of central qualitative issues of the built environment.

This evaluation tool consists of key questions that assessors, such as decision-makers, should ask themselves when evaluating the quality of proposed interventions with a potential impact on the built environment to determine whether such projects are worthy of public funding. There are different types of projects: small and large, public and private, expensive and low-cost, with direct and indirect impacts on the quality of a place. The quality principles of the evaluation tool are both design-based and process-related, and they should be considered by decision-makers responsible for the development of the built environment and those responsible for the overall design governance process and the finances. The tool may also be useful for civil society as well as local communities and other stakeholders.

The assessment methods depend on the available data. Quantitative and qualitative aspects can be assessed by different means and methods. Quantitative assessment methods consist of quantitative content analysis (data, structures, sources), standardised interviews, surveys, standardised observation, monitoring, mapping, observations, statistics, counts, estimates, etc. Qualitative assessment methods may include qualitative content analysis, interpretation, value judgements, individual interviews or focus groups, polls, monitoring, mapping, design competitions, data to be collected and concrete figures. Survey and interview results in all of these various forms can support the assessment.

The following checklist complies with both the Davos Baukultur Quality System and the *European quality principles for EU-funded interventions with potential impact upon cultural heritage* <sup>(82)</sup>. Professionals and experts who wish to assess more thoroughly the *Baukultur*-related quality of places based on evidence can use the more detailed Davos quality criteria, which offer additional indicators to answer certain assessment questions more thoroughly.

The following questions are presented as a non-exhaustive list as they are linked to the quality criteria described in earlier chapters. Further questions and indicators may be added. Those indicators have no defined minimum or intermediate or maximum benchmark values. If a concrete, specific place of a certain scale, typology, urban grain etc. is to be assessed, these values need to be determined specifically and in a differentiated manner by the assessor (for example, by asking whether it is a rural area in the mountains or a metropolitan one, what are the density values, diversity factors, public transport facilities? etc.). For instance, case study 19 – Clonakilty 400 shows that by moving beyond functionality and using design-led thinking, new public spaces that invigorated the historic town were created for the enjoyment of the community. Benchmark values may differ from one place to another, depending on the circumstances.

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<sup>(82)</sup> International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) European Quality Principles, 2020: <https://www.icomos.org/en/about-icomos/committees/regional-activities-europe/90984-quality-principles-new-version-available>



## Assessment questions related to each quality criterion

### 1. Governance

- Are the intervention and design brief based on best available knowledge, and incorporate best practice guides for high-quality *Baukultur* and relevant case studies? Have appropriate research and surveys informed the composition of a design brief?
- Have all motivations and specific interests for the project been clearly acknowledged? (e.g. case study 18 – restoration works scheme for local councils in Malta)
- Is the design knowledge-based and has it generated new knowledge and skills?
- Is there a clear understanding of which *Baukultur* experts and local, regional and/or national authorities have to be included at each step of the process?
- Are the decisions balanced along the process with the help of competent (certified) experts and well-trained specialists in *Baukultur*? Do all professional actors and stakeholders involved have the necessary experience, skills and expertise for the tasks they are meant to deliver? Is there guidance on *Baukultur* and its quality through legal regulation, standards, norms and policies, through financial or procedural incentives?
- Is the process led by interdisciplinary teams? Does the project call upon knowledge from all relevant disciplines? Is it the result of a collective and transdisciplinary effort?
- Is it necessary to conduct a design competition?
- Are the procurement procedures value-based (rather than solely cost-based)?
- Does the process use design advisory boards? For instance, is there an expert design review in place?
- Is the process driven by design research?
- Is the decision-making process about the place participatory, accessible to all people concerned and transparent at all stages?
- Are community participation and co-creation inherent parts of the project's conception and implementation assessment? Is there a broad debate on the quality of the place?
- Is the project part of an integrated sustainable development strategy?
- Are risk assessment and mitigation, with the participation of *Baukultur* specialists, integral parts of the project?
- Will a monitoring system be in place during and after project implementation to measure the achievement of quality goals?

## 2. Functionality

- Is the project fit for purpose and tailor-made for this particular use or reuse?
- Does the intervention (or place) support the needs, aspirations and activities of all users?
- Does the design comply with planning, architectural and engineering rules and norms?
- Does the project reflect national, regional and local traditions, standards and particularities?
- Is the design solution functional over a long-term period, flexible for multiple uses and adaptable to changing conditions and needs, while at the same time preserving its core qualities and values? Can the solutions be adapted in the future, with positive impacts on the built environment?
- Are enough healthy urban open spaces, green spaces and landscapes of easy access available? Does the design encourage multifunctionality and adaptability to diverse uses of landscapes, urban open spaces and green spaces?
- Have alternative uses or adaptive reuse opportunities been thoroughly considered to support the sustainability of the intervention (or place)?
- Does the intervention (or place) support and promote wellbeing and healthy lifestyles? For instance, is the intervention (or place) healthy, safe and comfortable for its users in terms of design, materials, light, air, noise and other aspects? Does the intervention (or place) support a low traffic level, and is it walkable and bikeable?
- Does the solution provide universal access in various ways to people of all sizes and ages and with varying mobility requirements? Is the solution easily accessible and usable for everyone? Does the project respond to people's needs in terms of cognitive and physical accessibility?
- Does the project improve security, including resilience to natural hazards (including climate change), offering night lighting (bridges, underpasses, lifts etc.), orientation and visual permeability to lower the number of criminal incidents and to increase public safety for all?
- Does the project use an appropriate amount of (local) materials and craftsmanship? Does the project call upon local skills in the fields of planning, design, construction, engineering etc.? Are small- and medium-sized design offices encouraged and eligible to deliver the project?
- Have the proposed technical interventions been well tested? Can these interventions be described as state-of-the-art? Can technical approaches involving high risks or uncertainties be avoided, without excluding experimental approaches?

### 3. Environment

- How will the project impact the environment? How have climate-change adaptation, climate protection and carbon neutrality been taken into consideration? Is the solution environmentally friendly, and does it respect the natural environment as a valuable resource? Has an independent environmental impact assessment been carried out? Were the conclusions regarding energy efficiency, carbon footprint and sufficiency for the least-possible impact on the environment taken into account?
- Have residents and stakeholder communities been consulted and involved in the project and its development? How were their considerations taken into account?
- Does the project take future maintenance into account? Is there a strategy for maintenance (post-project) in place? Are local places maintained and sustainably developed by integrating and preserving the built heritage?
- Does a long-term sustainability strategy exist for the development, if its functionality changes in accordance to changing user needs? (An example of addressing long term sustainability is case study 25 – transformation of Cité du Grand Parc Bordeaux in France)
- Is the intervention (or place) based on the concepts of responsible land use and high occupancy <sup>(83)</sup>?
- Does the intervention support maintaining, developing and amplifying the natural components of the existing environment?
- Does the intervention (or place) provide (nature-based) solutions for the preservation and promotion of biodiversity (genetic, species and ecosystem diversity)?
- Does the intervention (or place) support sustainable mobility?
- Does the intervention use simple and therefore durable construction methods, long-lasting equipment and adequate maintenance needs in line with the five Rs: refuse, reduce, repair, reuse, recycle?
- Does the intervention include recyclable and/or recycled materials and structures without pollutants, and does it avoid the use of chemical products and other pollution (e.g. light), harmful to the environment and people's health?
- Are the used materials produced locally or nearby or were they transported over a long distance, harming the environment through transportation?

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<sup>(83)</sup> For instance, regarding floor space per occupant, population density – people per hectare, apartment density – number of apartments per hectare, building density – ratio of built surface per non-built surface.



▲  
**Transformation of 530 dwellings, Grand Parc Bordeaux, France, 2017.**

Architects Anne Lacaton, Jean-Philippe Vassal, Frédéric Druot, Christophe Hutin. Winner of the 2019 EU Mies Award.

© Philippe Ruault

#### 4. Economy

- Is the intervention (or place) economically viable in the long run? Does the intervention enhance the long-term attractiveness of a place as a space for living, working, leisure and/or tourism? Does it make the best use of resources in the long run, versus a short-term gain? (e.g. case studies 22 – design reviews, and 23 – the immersive residencies programmes)
- Does the intervention (or place) represent high quality in construction with adequate maintenance costs, aiming at a long life cycle, therefore increasing the value of the place?
- Have life-cycle costs been minimised without making concessions to spatial quality? Has an accurate and comprehensive assessment of all life-cycle processes been conducted prior to construction in order to achieve the best spatial quality under economically reasonable conditions?
- Does the project team have overspending under control?
- Has cost management for construction, operation and renovation been appropriately considered? Has a renovation cycle, in terms of the frequency of improving a broken, damaged or outdated structure been appropriately considered?
- Has a cumulative view of as many cost groups as possible been considered? Have all expenses relating to planning, designing, construction, use, maintenance and demolition, as well as indirect costs necessary to ensure mobility, energy and food production, education, healthcare and defence, and many other related costs been adequately taken into account?

- Have all relevant collaborative methods that support quality and efficiency been considered in the early stages of creating the space?
- Does the solution improve the proximity to diverse facilities (health, recreational, etc.), commodities, amenities and public services? Does the intervention take advantage of and improve access to green and open spaces?
- How does it contribute to property values (e.g. indicated by willingness to pay – WTP)?
- Does the economy of design, construction and operation add to the affordability of the place?



►  
**The indoor market of Gennevilliers**  
– **La Halle de Gennevilliers, France**  
(case study 23 – the immersive  
residencies programmes, the 'Preuve  
par 7' project). Architects Louis  
Brossard and George Auzolle (1963),  
Claude Vasconi (1984).  
© La Preuve par 7, 2019

## 5. Diversity

- Does the intervention (or place) prevent segregation, gentrification and ghettoisation of specific groups in certain areas?
- Do ownership and/or investment models of the place contribute to vibrant and mixed-use neighbourhoods and help to prevent social division and segregation? Does the intervention, in that sense, encourage diverse ownership structures? (e.g. case study 29 – Kaapelitehdas creative hub in Finland)
- Does the intervention (or place) promote a mix of uses and users (such as gender, age, ability, cultural background etc.) and diverse communities in relation to its functions? Does the intervention (or place) contribute to vibrant and mixed-use neighbourhoods (e.g. housing, working, leisure, etc.) by its very nature?
- Have post-occupancy studies been planned to measure and monitor user satisfaction and interaction with the place, including interaction rates and residential quality in private and public spaces?
- Does it create user-friendly spaces, considering the comfort and functional needs related to the use of the space, and solutions that, for instance, can be linked with diverse exercise opportunities, interconnected cycle and pedestrian paths, recreation areas etc.? Are green and public spaces for diverse uses sufficiently available?
- Does the intervention (or place) promote and provide diverse, attractive and comfortable private and public spaces to connect people? Does the intervention (or place) demonstrate shared responsibility for private, but more importantly also for public spaces (e.g. through participatory processes, neighbourhood associations, etc.)?
- Does the intervention (or place) promote sustainable living conditions and strengthen social resilience by creating high-quality, available, affordable and accessible living spaces?
- Is the intervention based on universal design – accessibility for all – principles? Does it make appropriate use of barrier-free design?



## 6. Context

- Has the context of the place been studied and thoroughly analysed before it was built? Have local and regional particularities, including cultural heritage, been identified? Are natural and built heritage as well as regional particularities (e.g. the unity of built heritage, existing and contemporary qualities of creation and landscape) well recognised and preserved, adopted and integrated throughout the process? Does the project explicitly recognise cultural heritage as a common good and promote shared responsibility?
- Does the project fully comply with relevant heritage legislation and regulations? Or does it require exemptions in order to be approved? Does the project meet national and international cultural heritage standards and principles?
- Is it necessary to preserve the historic environment and its cultural heritage for future generations? Will future generations continue to have access to the full richness of the historic environment and its cultural heritage even after the intervention may no longer exist, or will some features be lost? If so, can this loss be justified in the public interest and for the benefit of the public, and how will it be perceived or judged by future generations?
- Does the intervention take into account only temporary needs, which may change over time and therefore may make the intervention redundant or unnecessary? Have opportunities for its preliminary use been considered?
- Have local and regional values and the history of communities and individuals been respected by the use of materials, the design, construction and management of the place and can this be passed on to future generations?
- Has the authenticity and integrity of the cultural heritage/landscape been upheld?
- How does the intervention take into account the existing density, building typology, infrastructure, topography and urban grain? Does the intervention correlate at all scales (from urban and landscape to architectural and detailed design) with the surrounding urban grain, open landscape, colour and materiality?
- Are continued use/adaptive reuse and good maintenance of the existing building stock and built heritage preferred over new construction? (e.g. case study 4 – ISOS from Switzerland)
- Does the solution support continued active use of, or find new uses for, objects of heritage value? Considering the historical context, have the nuances of the material as well as local lore and culture been utilised as important resources and tools?
- Will the intended use respect the characteristics, architectural composition and relevant elements of already existing values of the built environment, including cultural heritage? In other words, does the project respect the historic environment and its cultural heritage, in its setting sizes, proportions, spaces, features and materials, as well as (former) uses?

- Are new buildings well integrated into the historic fabric of nearby developments? Does contemporary design (including new constructions, infrastructure etc.) fit into the surroundings, preserving or enhancing the quality of the place? Is there a balance, harmony and/or controlled dialogue between the cultural heritage and the new elements?

## 7. Sense of place

- Does the intervention promote place identity, place attachment and therefore contribute to a sense of belonging? Does it carry and emphasise authentic local character, distinctiveness and specific identity?
- Is the use compatible with the capacity of the place, maintaining or improving the quality of space as well as the integrity of human life and biodiversity within it?
- Does the intervention (or place) contribute to spatial and social cohesion by creating or enhancing opportunities for social interaction, reinforcing a shared vision different identities and civic pride?
- Does the intervention create and support aspects of self-identity, which involve and are reflected in the environment and its social and personal meanings, consisting of memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings and conceptions of and for a place?
- Does the intervention (or place) emphasise the natural and planned or qualities of the cultural landscape, enhancing place attachment through a connection with nature and the landscape? Do the immediate surroundings of the place contain green spaces that are easily accessible and of high quality?
- Is the project focused on repair and conservation rather than heavy transformation (i.e. involving replacement of authentic materials)?
- Can the authenticity of the place be preserved, in particular when the project includes contemporary new design to accommodate (new) uses?

## 8. Beauty

- Does the design solution have an artistic dimension, in which spatial conformity, the perception of a suitable scale and the sensitive use of materials have a direct positive impact on users' quality of life? Does the solution's (or place's) beauty contribute to people's wellbeing and life satisfaction? Does the solution (or place) carry specific aesthetic values, with a balance between its formal qualities and the integration into its complex surroundings?
- Does the intervention (or place) have an aesthetic, spatial and atmospheric impact on the user (beholder)? Do the design solutions provide beauty, inspiration, enjoyment and satisfaction for users?

- Does the project reflect the designers' understanding of high quality in the built environment while also highlighting their creativity to find balanced solutions, their knowledge of materials and an attention to detail in their design?
- Does the intervention (or place) show sensible design and skilled construction?
- Have the aesthetics of public spaces been carefully considered?
- Does the design enhance the relationship between place, surroundings and people (users)?
- Does the intervention (or place) make people feel at ease?
- Has the sensory perception of the place been carefully taken into account, including the visual, acoustic, tactile and olfactory experiences? Have the aesthetic values been carefully considered, including balance, proportion, symmetry/asymmetry, simplicity/complexity, unity/variety, composition, rhythm, movement, emphasis/contrast, articulation, expression, alignment, materials, scale, transparency/opacity, openness/closedness and authenticity?
- Is there a monitoring process in place to study whether people perceive the solution (place) as beautiful? Is the monitoring process taking advantage of digital tools to explore people's perception of space (incl. mapping emotions, sensations, well-being, etc. in different neighbourhoods, areas, public space)? Is data management properly addressed?

►  
**'Hea avalik ruum'**  
**programme in Estonia**  
Võru town centre renewal,  
designed by Stuudio Tallinn, 2019.  
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## OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

This report is showing how the culture of quality architecture and living environment could be developed across Europe. Based on information sourced from a diverse range of initiatives and guiding documents, the report has compiled prevalent trends and best practices in the governance of contemporary spatial design in order to provide recommendations at multiple levels ensuring high-quality in architecture and the built environment for everyone. As this expert group was at work, the European Commission launched the New European Bauhaus initiative that aims to create a design movement integrating simultaneously three dimensions: sustainability, quality of experience (including aesthetics) and inclusion (also covering affordability and accessibility). Clearly, the momentum is here, and in that light, spatial design and architecture should not be seen as separate services or areas of expertise, but part of the multidisciplinary response to social demands and environmental challenges.

The report explains a comprehensive set of quality criteria to assess the different aspects of living environment. Building on the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System, the report offers eight fundamental quality criteria that each describes an aspect of high-quality *Baukultur*: governance, functionality, environment, economy, diversity, context, sense of place and beauty. Through a collection of case studies, this report introduces ideas on how to operationalise those quality criteria and how to put them into action at multiple governance levels. For this purpose, the report provides a checklist to assess achieving quality in planning processes. The quality principles relate to different aspects of the built environment, whereby each quality criterion is attributed with appropriate weight depending on the nature and level of the spatial intervention. All quality criteria should be applied to all spatial interventions, while each criterion is taken into account differently, for instance, at the landscape, building or interior scale.

Altogether, the recommendations target different scales, such as the level of EU policies and national frameworks, as well as the local level, private-sector stakeholders and the professional realm. The recommendations largely draw on the findings and observations from case studies, gathered across Europe and examined by the OMC expert group in 2020-2021. Most importantly, it is recommended that all future investments and relevant EU funding programmes (cohesion policy funds, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Horizon Europe and its relevant missions, creative Europe and Erasmus+, among others), as well as national, regional and local funding and investment opportunities contribute to the quality of the built environment, notably by integrating the Davos quality criteria in their relevant programmes, guidelines and calls. Since altering spaces is costly, the quality of the built environment is closely linked to its adaptability and future proofing. Regard-

ing the global shift in sustainability and climate goals, it is important to take into account how (at what cost) the spatial solutions can be adapted in future. Beyond highlighting the driving role of the public sector in advancing placemaking culture, the recommendations turn attention to raising spatial awareness, education and skills of the next generation.

This report shows how quality living space can not only meet functional, technical, ecological and economic requirements, but also fulfil design objectives when it comes to aesthetic, social and psychological aspects and cultural needs, such as a sense of place and of belonging. As evidenced by collected case studies and underlined by recommendations in this report, high-quality design and well-considered interventions can sustain the life and authenticity of cultural assets and avoid adverse loss of their cultural significance. Yet, beautiful, liveable and lovable towns, villages and landscapes with local identity can only be created if quality standards are met throughout the process of planning and building from ideation to completion and reuse. Quality projects can only emerge from interdisciplinary discourse, innovative funding schemes and with the active participation of informed citizens. New and effective models of participation can help civil society to organise itself with the aim of influencing the design of the built environment.

As such, this report aims to pave the way for comprehensive culture-centred approach to the built environment, demonstrating how to improve the design processes of the places in which to live, and to ensure that the legacy that society leaves not only fulfils functional, technical and economic demands, but also connects people and promotes social interaction.

►  
**'Explore Space!' ('Uuri ruumi!')**  
exhibition by Arhitektuurikool  
(case study 12) in the Estonian  
Museum of Architecture in Tallinn,  
2019. Courtesy of Arhitektuurikool



## ANNEX I: HOW WAS THE CONTENT CREATED?

Under the priority 'Cohesion and wellbeing' the Council's 2019-2022 work plan for culture established the creation of an Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group of Member States' experts focusing on high quality in architecture and the built environment for everyone. The open method of coordination (OMC) in the European Union may be described as a form of 'soft governance': it is a form of intergovernmental policymaking that does not result in binding EU legislative measures and it does not require EU countries to introduce or amend their laws. The OMC has provided a new framework for cooperation between EU countries, whose national policies can thus be directed towards certain common objectives.

Considering the wide-ranging nature of this OMC group and to ensure close synergies between architecture experts and experts dealing more broadly with the built environment, spatial planning or regional/sustainable development, Member States were given the opportunity to appoint two experts (coming from two different ministries/agencies). In the end, 39 experts were nominated by 23 Member States, plus Norway and Switzerland <sup>(84)</sup>. The first meeting of the group was held on 18-19 February 2020 in Brussels. The following meetings were held online on 27-28 May 2020, 16 September 2020, 19-20 November 2020, 1-2 March 2021 and 27 May 2021. The group was coordinated by Hughes Becquart (DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture) on the side of the European Commission.

At the first meeting Veronika Valk-Siska, adviser for architecture and design at the Estonian Ministry of Culture, was elected Chair of the experts' group. At the first meeting it was also decided to create sub-groups to focus on the following issues:

- (a) **Architecture quality criteria:** led by Oliver Martin (CH);
- (b) **Case studies:** led by Milou Joosten (NL), Freek Ingen Housz (NL) and Nicola Matthews (IE);
- (c) **Synergies with relevant EU initiatives:** led by Jan Schultheiß (DE).

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<sup>(84)</sup> The United Kingdom did not appoint any experts, so therefore is not covered in the report. However, relevant UK policies and good practices are referred to where useful.



To create synergies with relevant EU initiatives, the following programmes were presented by European Commission officers:

- EU strategy for a sustainable built environment – Ilektra Papadaki, DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs;
- Horizon Europe research and innovation partnership on people-centric sustainable built environment – Christof Marx, Senior Project Advisor, European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency;
- urban agenda for the EU: partnership on culture and cultural heritage – Laura Hagemann Arellano, DG Regional and Urban Policy;
- Horizon Europe mission for climate-neutral and smart cities – Giulia Facelli, Policy Officer (DG Research and Innovation – Innovating Cities);
- Horizon Europe mission on adaptation to climate change, including Societal Transformation – Philip Kessler, Policy Officer (DG Research and Innovation – Climate and Planetary Boundaries);
- buildings policy of the European Commission – Christiane Gerlach-Scheerer, Master Architect of the European Commission;
- EU renovation wave initiative – Paula Rey Garcia (DG Energy);
- New European Bauhaus – Xavier Troussard, Head of EU Policy Lab, Joint Research Centre;
- contribution of grass-roots initiatives, culture-led social innovation and co-creation towards a quality built environment – Barbara Stacher (DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture).

The following external stakeholders were also invited to contribute to the work of the experts' group:

- Georg Pendl, President of the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE);
- Anna Ramos, Director of Mies van der Rohe Foundation (organiser of EU Mies Award);
- João Bento, from partner University College London, and Frédéric Saliez, UN-Habitat coordinator of the Horizon 2020 project Urban Maestro on urban design governance;
- Bolette Lehn Petersen, Chief Senior Advisor, Agency for Culture and Palaces (to present the Danish architectural policy).

To follow up on the synergy-mapping carried out by the ‘synergies’ sub-group and to establish dialogue with the most relevant EU stakeholders and policies, the following meetings were held.

- Horizon Europe: meeting with Deputy Head of Unit D.3 in DG Research and Innovation, Maria Kayamanidou, and her colleagues, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture colleague Mariachiara Esposito to discuss the New European Bauhaus/ architecture topic to be added to the 2022 work programme of Cluster 2.
- DG Regional and Urban Policy: meeting with Iulia-Mirela Serban (assistant to the director-general), Laura Hagemann Arellano and Aleksandra Jankovska to discuss architectural quality criteria and how to reflect/ mainstream them in cohesion policy documents and guidelines. The draft Davos Quality System Tool was then shared with them.
- New European Bauhaus: meeting with Xavier Troussard and his team to discuss:
  - the Davos Baukultur Quality System Tool (presented by Oliver Martin);
  - the role of state architects/*bouwmeesters* in presence of the Irish (Ciaran O'Connor) and Swedish (Helena Bjarnegård) state architects, the Dutch (Floris Alkemade), Flemish (Eric Wieërs) and Brussels (Kristiaan Borret) *bouwmeesters*, a representative of the city of Vienna (Bettina Nezval), the Master Architect of the European Commission (Christiane Gerlach-Scheerer) and the OMC Chair.

## DRAFTING THE REPORT

The core drafting team was made up of the Chair, the subgroup leaders and Evane Brou. Regular editorial meetings were held in presence of the Commission from March 2021 onwards. A substantial contribution to the report was also made by Estanislau Vidal-Foch de Balanz.

The drafting team could count on the support of an expert from the European Experts Network on Culture (EENC), Martin Steinmetz, who reviewed the publication and helped to ensure clear and consistent language while also facilitating the online publication and communication strategy.

## **PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF THE REPORT**

The OMC group opted for an online publication to ensure an attractive, more environmentally friendly and flexible dissemination of the report findings. A website was set up by the Publications Office of the European Union. A PDF version of the report and of the executive summaries in English, French and German also exist.

The OMC closing conference entitled 'Building Europe, towards a Culture of High-Quality Architecture and Built Environment for Everyone' was organised by the Austrian Ministry of Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport in Graz on 6 October 2021. It was held back-to-back with the European Conference on Architectural Policies organised by the Slovenian Association of Architects in Maribor on 8 October 2021.

To reach out to local and regional decision-makers across Europe, the OMC report and relevant case studies were presented at a workshop during the European Week of Regions and Cities on 12 October 2021, jointly with the Architects' Council of Europe and the Spanish region of Navarra.

The report was also presented at a number of national and regional (architectural) events.

## **POLICY FOLLOW-UP**

In terms of policy, the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2021 built on the OMC process and report to propose Council conclusions on high quality in architecture and the built environment in the context of the New European Bauhaus (to be adopted on 30 November 2021). This will ensure a lasting legacy of the work carried out by the OMC group, helping Member States to take ownership of the results and follow up on the recommendations.

The European Parliament's proposal for the year 2022 to be designated 'European Year of Greener Cities' <sup>(85)</sup> may also be an opportunity to promote sustainable and inclusive urban development in the European Union.

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<sup>(85)</sup> Further information: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0241\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0241_EN.html)

## LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE OMC GROUP

	Organisation
AT	Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport
	Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Regions and Tourism
BE	Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Directorate General for Infrastructures, Architecture Department
	Flemish Government, Department of Culture, Youth and Media
	Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft
CZ	Ministry of Regional Development
	Ministry of Culture, EU Affairs Department
DE	Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community
DE (Länder)	Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing
ES	Delegation of the Spanish Government in Catalonia
	Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda
EE	Estonian Ministry of Culture
FI	Ministry of Education and Culture
	Ministry of the Environment
FR	Ministry of Culture, Architecture Department
GR	Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports
HR	University of Zagreb, Faculty of Architecture
	Ministry of Culture and Media, Conservation Departments and Inspection Sector
	Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction and State Assets
IE	Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
IT	Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism
LU	Ministry of Culture
LV	The Latvian Association of Architects
	Art centre ZUZEUM
LT	Ministry of Culture
	Ministry of Environment
MT	Restoration Directorate

Organisation	
NL	Board of Government Advisors
	Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
PL	Ministry of Culture and National Heritage
PT	Ministry of Culture, Directorate General of Cultural Heritage
RO	Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration
	Ministry of Culture
SK	Ministry of Culture
SI	Ministry of Culture, Cultural Heritage Directorate
	Chamber of Architecture and Spatial Planning of Slovenia
SE	The Swedish centre for architecture and design (ArkDes)
	The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning
CH	Federal Office for Culture
NO	Royal Norwegian Ministry of Culture

## ANNEX II: GLOSSARY

### A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Different terms are used in the various European languages for the same all-encompassing concept. The Davos Declaration 2018 introduced the German term *Baukultur*. This report refers to it as ‘high-quality architecture and built environment’, in line with the mandate of the OMC group. Others have translated *Baukultur* as ‘building culture’. Furthermore, a variety of terms is used all over Europe, namely in national policies, often linked to architecture or urban planning (or development), to express the notion of a comprehensive, quality-driven way of shaping our built environment.

#### Bauhaus

The Bauhaus was an innovative art school founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar, Germany, in 1919. It existed until 1933, promoting a comprehensive understanding of art and craft, and architecture as *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or *complete artwork*. The Bauhaus movement strongly influenced the discourse about modern architecture and is still regarded worldwide as the home of the avant-garde classical modernism in all areas of liberal and applied arts and architecture.

#### **Baukultur** – *culture du bâti* – *cultura della costruzione* – *Baukultur*

General description of all human activity that changes spaces and the living environment in a positive way. It includes existing buildings, including monuments and other elements of built heritage, as well as the design and construction of contemporary buildings, infrastructure, public spaces and landscapes embedded in and relating to the natural environment. In addition to architectural, structural and landscape design and its real-life manifestation, *Baukultur* also refers to sensible and forward-thinking planning procedures for building projects, infrastructures, cities, villages and open landscapes. Essential to the success of a long-term building culture are inclusive public consultations and plans for maintaining, changing and reusing developments of all kinds. *Baukultur* refers to procedures and ways of planning on the one hand and intricate methods of construction, reuse and repurposing, embracing traditional and local building skills as well as innovative techniques.



**Bio-digital**

Combining both the biological as well as digital aspects and content. Bio-digital platforms can be understood, for example, as the digital reflection of the living environment, which includes data not only about the built environment as an artefact but also about human behaviour (for example mobility, the perceived qualities of the environment) as well as the natural circumstances of our living environment.

**Building stock** – *bâti existant* – *sostanza edilizia esistente* – *Baubestand*

Built structures of the past that exist in today's spaces, some of which may be, but not all of them, important built heritage.

**Built environment** – *environment bâti* – *ambiente costruito* – *gebaute Umwelt*

The existing space that surrounds people, which they actively shape and which in turn impacts on people's life and behaviour.

**Built heritage** – *patrimoine bâti* – *patrimonio costruito* – *baukulturelles Erbe*

Includes immovable objects which are part of the physical objects that people perceive as a reflection and expression of their dynamic and evolving relationship with time and space, including monuments and built archaeological sites in their relation to people. They can give evidence of the many types of human activity, historic events and evolutions, artistic creations, social institutions and technical achievements. Built heritage is a part of cultural heritage (see cultural heritage).

**Creative practice research**

Research in the workings of creative practice. It is a form of academic research which incorporates an element of practice in the methodology and research output. Three key objectives of creative practice research are: developing knowledge of creative practice (and creativity); integrating spatial and systemic propositions through creative and explorative practice of diverse disciplines in the making of material; and material, spatial and system transformations that contribute to a shared knowledge and practice of 'belonging' which is essential for personal wellbeing, social harmony, prosperity and health.

**Cultural heritage** – *patrimoine culturel* – *patrimonio culturale* – *Kulturerbe*

A set of resources inherited from the past which people perceive as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. Cultural heritage includes, physical, non-physical and digital objects, expressions or knowledge, and attaching significance to the processes associated with their creation, use, preservation, maintenance, appropriation and transmission; cultural heritage includes everything that stems from the interaction between people and places through time; cultural heritage is inherently interdependent as it is continuously re-defined through human activity and therefore not a static, unchanging entity, emphasising the relationship to the spatial environment (see CoE, Faro Convention, 2005, Article 2).

### **Davos *Baukultur* Quality System**

A set of instruments that enables the definition and assessment of *Baukultur* qualities in places incorporating and weighing up social, emotional and cultural values equally to technical and functional aspects, with the help of the following eight criteria: governance, functionality, environment, economy, diversity, context, sense of place and beauty.

### **Design governance**

Focuses on the processes of regulation and management and the role of public authorities in shaping the built environment, as a distinct and important field of urban planning.

### **Design research**

Originally constituted as primary research into the process of design, but the concept has been expanded to include research embedded within the process of design, including work concerned with the context of designing and research-based design practice. It is aimed at understanding and improving design processes and practices rather than developing domain-specific knowledge within any professional field of design. There has been the acceptance in architecture and architectural education over the past decade that design is a legitimate research area in its own right. Design research is the part of design that you might describe as being experimental – that is to say, the kind of designing that changes the way we think about our world and the ways in which we practice designing on its own.

### **Landscape – *paysage* – *paesaggio* – *Landschaft***

The entire space as people perceive and experience it (e.g. landscape quality, beauty, protection, management and planning). With its natural and cultural values, it is the spatial basis of life, i.e. living, residential housing, working, recreational, movement, cultural and economic space for people. Landscapes are dynamic systems and are constantly evolving due to natural factors, human use, planning and design.

### **Life-centric approach**

Brings into focus both people and their physical and psychological wellbeing as well as all other life forms in terms of biodiversity. The natural ecosystem has to be holistically considered to create an inclusive, healthy and functioning place to live for the community, respecting ethical principles and providing a sustainable and resilient living environment.

### **Living environment**

A balanced composition of the artificial and natural environments, which include both outdoor and indoor spaces. The planning and creation of a sustainable and integrated living environment (urban or, more broadly, spatial design) include planning and designing activities (including spatial planning, architecture, landscape architecture), construction activities and the spatial coordination of other space-related

decisions (such as traffic and mobility possibilities, utility services, agriculture etc.), with the goal of improving the living environment for as many people as possible in the long term through spatial decisions. Well-considered spatial development choices or influential governance decisions are a prerequisite for high-quality spatial solutions.

**Monument** – *monument historique* – *monument storico* – *Denkmal*

Immovable objects which bear witness to the past. They give evidence of manifold human activity, historic events and evolutions, artistic creations, social institutions and technical achievements. They are part of the built heritage (see built heritage). This testimonial value is allocated by society through cognitive perception, defined and listed in inventories and other forms of record.

**Place** – *lieu* – *luogo* – *Ort*

Refers to a section of space which varies in scale, size and typology. It spans interiors, single and multipart buildings, urban fabric, neighbourhoods: a part of a village or city, a region, infrastructures, public places, green spaces and cultural landscapes, all including their respective setting and context. It contains all spaces with a physical dimension, consisting of one or several chronological layers (planned or existing), visible or hidden, and created as a result of human activities and experiences. Place is perceived also as a socio-physical concept, attaching meaning and triggering emotions, being continuously constructed and reconstructed and relational in nature. It embodies a materialised form of social and political structure with a reciprocal impact on socio-political processes.

**Space** – *espace* – *spazio* – *Raum*

The environment in which people live, move and spend time, in which they are active, which they actively shape and which in turn impacts on people's life and behaviour.

**Spatial awareness**, spatial learning and spatial education

Spatial learning helps us understand the natural, built and cultural worlds. The learning and education about and with space can occur both informally and in formal educational settings, from kindergarten to university to lifelong learning.

**Spatial challenges**

Spaces may be confronted with social, economic, environmental and other challenges and risks. To address them, strategies can use methodological approaches and operational tools to increase the awareness and skills necessary to face and counteract these obstacles. Adaptive, interdisciplinary approaches that actively engage citizens can translate challenges into potentials, respond to the space's vulnerability and fragility and increase its resilience.

**Spatial coherence**

The coherence of urban form that describes the logic of complex interacting systems. Urban spaces are multipart large-scale units and consist of tightly interacting and delicately balanced subunits at many different levels and scales. For the large urban scale to be coherent, a variety of connected elements and functions at the small scale is necessary. In contrast, dysfunctional urban and suburban spaces may lack this coherence. Often, the spatial coherence of historic spaces can serve as models for current projects.

**Spatial competence**

The capacity to comprehend, analyse and ponder the spatial relations among objects or spaces.

**Spatial context** – *genius loci*, spatial identity

The *genius loci* goes beyond the nature of the soil, the size of an area and other measurable factors and contains the distinct atmosphere, character and aura of a place. In this sense, the *genius loci* is a construct in which knowledge, memory, perception and interpretation merge as an interpretive performance of the human mind.

**Spatial development**

Delivers appropriate answers to specific design challenges concerned with spaces and refers to the methods and instruments used to influence the distribution of people and activities in spaces of various scales.

**Spatial governance**

How the built and natural environment is planned, financed and managed by governments on all levels, as well as by other stakeholders. It consists of planning systems and policy processes for urban and rural development. Spatial governance considers the impact of the decisions on the built environment across all dimensions, including the economic, social, environmental and cultural aspects. Spatial governance consists of 'formal' regulation, within which tasks are carried out by public authorities and the civil society, and the supporting 'informal' measures that stand for public interest and personal liberties. Spatial governance involves the development of planning instruments and policies, setting the framework for spatial investment strategies, public-private partnerships, public participation and co-creation in place-making, assessing impact on land use, or collective use of space, among others.

**Spatial impact**

The design of spaces impacts and reacts to changing contexts, from natural catastrophes and the climate crisis to a global pandemic and social unrest. With contextual designs, architects, builders and communities can enable, shape and impact these shared experiences, e.g. by providing shelter and by creating spaces that support freedom of expression.

**Spatial planning**, spatial solutions (or outcomes), spatial design

The planning process is part of a building's or space's life cycle, and the planning stage is when the most effective decisions are made, both in terms of time and financial resources. Spatial planning includes all levels of land use planning at the urban and regional scale, as well as spatial plans at Member States, EU and international levels.

**Spatial quality**

Applies to buildings, landscapes and infrastructure and influences how we accept and use them. Effective design helps to increase spatial quality by supporting how it functions, how intensively it is used and how it meets a variety of users' needs. For instance, qualities related to street design, pedestrian environment, safety features and adjacent land uses can improve walking conditions and increase walking activity. Spatial relationships describe how spaces relate to and interact with one another, for instance whether they are connected or spatially segregated, or whether they offer an intuitive guidance system that connects different spaces for different uses and leads its users accordingly.

**Spatial research**

Helps us better understand the way spaces, cities and urban environments work, and to develop appropriate planning and policy approaches to design and manage urban settlements, e.g. with regard to land use, population change, urban design, transport and housing.

## ANNEX III: BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING

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## DECLARATIONS, PAPERS FROM PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS

ACE recommendations for Architectural Design Contests (2016), [https://www.ace-cae.eu/fileadmin/New\\_Upload/5\\_Policies/UPDATED\\_Policy\\_2017/GA2-17/EN/6.1.1\\_GA2\\_17\\_Compert-Rules.pdf](https://www.ace-cae.eu/fileadmin/New_Upload/5_Policies/UPDATED_Policy_2017/GA2-17/EN/6.1.1_GA2_17_Compert-Rules.pdf)

ACE and UIA Declaration on 'Architectural Design Competitions: A key tool to ensure quality in the built environment' (2019), [https://www.ace-cae.eu/uploads/tx\\_jidocumentsview/ACE-UIADeclaration\\_30October\\_FINAL\\_01.pdf](https://www.ace-cae.eu/uploads/tx_jidocumentsview/ACE-UIADeclaration_30October_FINAL_01.pdf)

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## EU PUBLICATIONS ON RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FOR CITIES

### **Investing in European Success: Innovating Cities in Europe and Worldwide**

The booklet describes outcomes from EU investment in research and innovation (R & I) for cities and with cities. It showcases EU-funded projects that are transforming cities into living laboratories to solve the problems of their own making. Their success can inspire public debate on the kind of cities we want, and will help the development of future R & I programmes and related urban policies.

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/research\\_and\\_innovation/research\\_by\\_area/documents/ec\\_rtd\\_investing-in-european-success\\_032019.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/research_and_innovation/research_by_area/documents/ec_rtd_investing-in-european-success_032019.pdf)

### **The Human-centred city: opportunities for citizens through research and innovation**

This High-Level Expert Group report provides a vision for European cities of the future and recommends how EU-funded research and innovation can assist cities in their transition towards a resilient, climate-neutral, smart, inclusive, prosperous and sustainable future. Across its four core chapters, 'People', 'Place', 'Prosperity' and 'Resilience', and its two cross-cutting ones on 'Governance' and 'Measurement', the report emphasises the need for citizens to be involved in the conceptualisation, design and execution and dissemination of any research and innovation action.

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research\\_and\\_innovation/research\\_by\\_area/documents/ec\\_rtd\\_investing-in-european-success\\_032019.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research_and_innovation/research_by_area/documents/ec_rtd_investing-in-european-success_032019.pdf)

### **Innovating cities policy report for EU R&I sustainable urban development: Cities P4P-Project for Policy: policy review report from EU DG R&I funded urban projects under framework programme seven (FP7)**

This report capitalises on 30 years of successful EU-funded research on sustainable urban development. It relies on the analysis of a critical mass of inspiring knowledge, ideas and best practices coming from 41 projects funded under the seventh research framework programme (FP7) across the different thematic priorities. It showcases and provides an EU-wide evidence base of the outstanding contributions of EU funded research and innovation in meeting urban societal challenges, notably those of the urban ecosystem.

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0e0d-ff00-cc8b-11ea-adf7-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

### **What nature-based solutions can do for us**

Between November 2019 and May 2020, six independent experts undertook the analysis of EU-funded projects in the area of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) in order to assess their impact and valorise their results. Their work highlights the added value and policy relevance of EU-funded NBS projects. An in-depth analysis of FP7/Horizon 2020 NBS relevant projects, including city projects, has been made: Nature-based solutions. State of the art in EU-funded projects

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8bb07125-4518-11eb-b59f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-183008165>

### **Report on 'Nature-based Solutions to Promote Climate Change Resilience in Urban Areas – developing an impact evaluation framework'**

The report addresses three objectives: 1) To develop an impact evaluation framework with a list of criteria for assessing the performance of NBS in dealing with challenges related to climate resilience in urban areas; 2) to prepare an application guide for measuring how NBS projects fare against the identified indicators in delivering multiple environmental, economic and societal benefits; 3) to make recommendations to improve the assessment of the effectiveness of NBS projects, including the identification of knowledge gaps according to the criteria presented in the impact evaluation framework.

[https://www.eklipse-mechanism.eu/nbs\\_report](https://www.eklipse-mechanism.eu/nbs_report)

### **Handbook of sustainable urban development strategies**

The Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies provides valuable knowledge on how to implement integrated and place-based urban strategies under cohesion policy. It aims to serve local authorities, managing authorities and all other relevant stakeholders. The Handbook is conceived as a policy learning tool, responding to the needs of different territorial and administrative contexts. It does not provide a 'quick fix', but rather, it offers suggestions on how to tackle key challenges during the process of strategy design and implementation, by giving concrete examples, and referring to existing studies and guidelines.

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/43b8d548-49bb-11ea-8aa5-01aa75ed71a1>

### **The future of cities – Opportunities, challenges and the way forward**

The report highlights drivers shaping the urban future, identifying both the key challenges cities will have to address and the strengths they can capitalise on to proactively build their desired futures. Its main aim is to raise open questions and steer discussions on what the future of cities can, and should be, both within the scientific and policymaker communities. While addressing mainly European cities, examples from other world regions are also given since many challenges and solutions have a global relevance.

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a55c1af0-8e52-11e9-9369-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-145274811>

### **European handbook for SDG voluntary local reviews**

The European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews offers policymakers, researchers and practitioners an inspirational framework to set up Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). VLRs are a fundamental instrument to monitor progresses and sustain the transformative and inclusive action of local actors towards the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in general, and competitive sustainability in particular.

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7199c232-49bd-11ea-8aa5-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-145274686>

### **Who owns the city? Exploratory research activity on the financialisation of housing in EU cities**

This report resumes the main findings from an exploratory research activity on the financialisation of housing in EU cities. The study follows indications that over the past years' investors have been increasingly active on urban housing markets, using housing as a vehicle for wealth and investment, rather than considering it a social good. The study applies a mixed-method research approach, combining city case studies, with descriptive and inferential statistics. Most findings confirm the assumption that housing financialisation negatively impacts housing affordability. At the same time, it becomes clear that causality is complex, pointing to the housing system as a complex myriad of factors that either directly or indirectly influence and reinforce each other.

[https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC120776/jrc120776\\_citown\\_report\\_2020\\_06\\_24.pdf](https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC120776/jrc120776_citown_report_2020_06_24.pdf)

### **Ageing in regions and cities: high resolution projections for Europe in 2030**

This report presents an experimental exercise in which the LUISA population distribution method has been extended to break down its local population distribution outcomes by broad age class.

<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/ageing-regions-and-cities-high-resolution-projections-europe-2030>

### **Yearly Urban Mapping – EU research & innovation for and with cities (June 2021)**

This report provides an overview of the main EU research and innovation (R & I) actions for and with cities to help them accelerate their transition towards sustainability and climate neutrality.

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/9a58ddbf-ef4c-11eb-a71c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search>



## USEFUL WEBSITES

Architects Council of Europe – ACE, <http://ace-cae.eu>

Cohesion policy 2021-2027, [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/2021\\_2027](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/2021_2027)

European Climate Law – Climate Action,  
[https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/eu-climate-action/law\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/eu-climate-action/law_en)

A European Green Deal, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)

Horizon Europe, <https://www.horizon-eu.eu>

New European Bauhaus: beautiful, sustainable, together,  
[https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/index\\_en](https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/index_en)

UN – THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Urbact, <https://urbact.eu>

Urban Innovative Actions, <https://uia-initiative.eu/en>

European urban initiative, <https://uia-initiative.eu/en/news/next-call-proposals>

European Territorial Observatory Network – ESPON,  
<https://www.espon.eu/programme/espon/espon-2020-cooperation-programme>

The Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning – CEMAT,  
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/conference-ministers-spatial-planning/home>

## ANNEX IV: MANDATE

### Open Method of Coordination group of Member States' experts on High-quality architecture and built environment for everyone

#### – mandate –

- (1) The work plan for culture 2019-2022, under priority B 'Cohesion and well-being', provides for the creation of an Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group of Member States' experts focusing on High-quality architecture and built environment for everyone.
- (2) In line with the Davos Declaration 'Towards a high-quality Baukultur for Europe' adopted by the European Ministers of Culture in January 2018, which highlights the central role of culture in the built environment, the OMC group will work in an integrated and balanced approach to the built environment while focusing on the specific contributions made by architectural policies and practices. 'Quality architecture' in this context is not only defined by aesthetics and functionality but also by its contribution to people's quality of life and to the sustainable development of our cities and rural areas.
- (3) The OMC group will have the following tasks.
  - Present and discuss existing policies and tools aiming at achieving a high-quality architecture and built environment in Europe;
  - Identify the main drivers and obstacles to citizens' well-being in the built environment as well as the processes needed to ensure well-being through quality architecture;
  - Analyse multidisciplinary and participatory governance models contributing to social inclusion and the sustainable development of neighbourhoods, including climate change adaptation;
  - Identify best practice and innovative actions leading to high-quality architecture and built environment for everyone, including activities to raise public awareness;
  - Highlight the contribution of grass-roots initiatives, (temporary) adaptive reuse, culture-led social innovation and co-creation towards a quality built environment.

- (4) The group may decide to involve external experts, in particular representatives of local/regional authorities, professional bodies and civil society. Synergies with relevant EU initiatives will be ensured.
- (5) Based on the findings resulting from the activities mentioned above, the OMC Working Group will prepare a report providing at least the following chapters: the role of public policies in ensuring high-quality architecture and built environment for everyone; analysis of best practices; policy recommendations.
- (6) The recommendations will be addressed to the relevant public entities – in particular those in charge of architecture and the built environment, culture and heritage, spatial planning and sustainable development at local, regional, national and European levels – but also to clients, professionals and other relevant stakeholders.











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<https://op.europa.eu/en/web/general-publications/publications>.

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### EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1952 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>

### Open data from the EU

The EU Open Data Portal (<http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en>) provides access to datasets from the EU.

Data can be downloaded and reused for free, for both commercial and non-commercial purposes.

The full report with more resources (detailed presentation of the case studies and podcasts) will also be available at <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/high-quality-built-environment/en/> by the end of 2021.



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