

DESIRE: New European Bauhaus project makes nature and vulnerable groups stakeholders in innovative design process for sustainable urban areas. The aim is to start an architectural movement based on cohesion and equality.

We're probably all familiar with the expression "getting dirt under your nails" when used metaphorically. But what if we were to take this literally and apply the principle in our daily lives? Would it, for example, change our perception of life, so we start to see ourselves as part of something bigger and connected to the challenges we face every day, including climate change, loss of biodiversity and a consumption of resources that puts pressure on the capacity of our planet? Would we be able to achieve a sense that we, as individuals, hold a little of both the past and future in our own hands, and could make a real difference through the choices we make?

Dirt under your nails is both a metaphorical and physical part of an innovative and inclusive design process in the EU project DESIRE - Designing the Irresistible Circular Society. Here is where our 24 partners from six European countries are experimenting with new ways to work with a holistic approach to urban development as we shape sustainable new urban areas and transform existing ones. We develop principles that connect the city with nature, create green transition through symbiotic communities, and include users in the process of transformation.

For although the world has started to implement the green transition, we have to admit that it's moving too slowly. The planet, nature and future generations need us to do more today - and in a different way. That's what we're doing in DESIRE. We incorporate art, architecture and design into the green transition, and connect nature with people as we create circular solutions based on cohesion and equality.

"Cities and nature are not each other's opposites, as cities include nature, which also needs a space. DESIRE is about creating a change in our perceptions so we become aware of how biodiversity contributes positively to making cities more sustainable and beautiful. When we see ourselves as people who have a place in the city and are aligned with nature - not above or below it - we give nature a voice, which makes it a stakeholder; we listen, and this allows us to make more holistic decisions relating to the green transition," says DESIRE project manager and MSc in Systems Thinking, Aase Højlund Nielsen from BLOXHUB.

Eight demonstration projects

DESIRE is one of six lighthouses in the European Commission's new Joint European identity formation initiative New European Bauhaus, which aims to involve citizens in the green transition locally and in respect of the original history and nature of the location.

DESIRE is based on eight demonstration projects in five countries and represents DESIRE's three social themes: inclusive housing, symbiotic communities, and connecting the city with nature. **In Herlev**, Denmark, selected artists take turns as garden hosts, and conduct research, set up exhibitions, arrange landscape walks, hold workshops etc. in a new residential area, with the aim of connecting people with the original nature of the site, which up until recently housed an asphalt factory. **In Milan**, Italy, a major new innovation district, MIND, will integrate companies into a symbiotic circular community, so that, e.g. one person's waste or surplus heat will become another person's raw material. **In Riga**, socially

vulnerable citizens are involved in the green renovation planning of a social housing block, updating the housing to modern living standards and making the area a safe and community-strengthening setting with restored nature.

NXT facilitates the design process at Herlev Asphalt Fabrik (Herlev asphalt factory) and has many years of experience in involving art in new contexts such as these, in which art plays a key role in the approach to a green transition.

"Art can open up a space for both corporeal and aesthetic reflection and awareness. Something that is incredibly important for us to be able to step out of the reproduced patterns that have created the climate and biodiversity crisis we find ourselves in, with both our bodies and our minds, so that we can act on it," says Madeleine Kate McGowan, an artist at NXT who developed the design concept together with the garden host.

In Latvia, the DESIRE project provides Riga with the opportunity to try out new processes of listening to unfamiliar groups, says landscape architect Arnita Verza of Riga City Council/Riga City Architect's Service:

"The strength of DESIRE is that we will have the opportunity to find a new approach to how, through the involvement of different stakeholders in residential renovation, it can positively affect living conditions and give a voice to groups such as the socially vulnerable and the landscape itself, which, these days, often goes unheard."

Digitisation as a building material

Along the way, DESIRE uses tools for digital user involvement in order to engage more stakeholders and target audiences in the development of urban areas.

"The new millennium has provided us with a new building material, namely everything that is 'digital'. We need this in order to create good and sustainable cities and neighbourhoods. But we shouldn't use it aimlessly. Just look at the problems that digitalisation also brings to our daily lives, when it doesn't work or becomes an obstacle instead of a help. DESIRE and New European Bauhaus will help us understand how we can do it better in practice," says Martin Brynskov, Senior Researcher at DTU Compute and Founding Director of the global city network Open & Agile Smart Cities.

DTU Compute, together with the Danish Architecture Centre and the Confederation of Danish Industry, leads the work of bringing its experience into a larger context in the green-digital transition both in Denmark and in the EU, e.g. in the form of so-called data spaces and digital twins.

DESIRE specifically contributes to the EU's mission of 'Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities'. The partners will share the experience gained from DESIRE via an electronic learning platform so that others can draw inspiration from it. Learn more on <https://www.irresistiblecircularsociety.eu/>

Contact:

Aase Højlund Nielsen, Project Manager, BLOXHUB, M: +45 3161 6709, E: aho@bloxhub.org

Hanne Kokkegård, Communications Officer, DTU Compute, M: +45 9351 1304, E: hanko@dtu.dk

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- DESIRE is supported by the European Commission (granting authority CINEA), Horizon Europe
- Total budget: €4,754,000 - 100% from the EU
- Project period: Two years, 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2024
- The three Danish DESIRE cases have also received DKK 3 million from the Ministry of Culture

24 partners: Confederation of Danish Industry, BLOXHUB, Design Society Fund - DDC, Danish Architecture Centre, Aalborg University, DTU, Politecnico Di Milano, Knowledge Hub Zealand, Domea.dk, Danish Association of Architectural Firms, CER Partnerstvo (CER Sustainable Business Network), GXN AS, Riga City Council, NXT Aps, Fonden Chart, Kairos Consorzio Di Cooperative Sociali - Societa Cooperativa Sociale O.N.L.U.S, Comune Di Torino, Plusvalue Italy Srl Societa Benefit, Stichting Samenwonen-Samenleven, Stichting The Beach, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Schools of Architecture, Design and Conservation, BTC d.d., The Really Regenerative Centre CiC, Dark Matter Laboratories Limited.

Eight DESIRE project cases divided into three themes

Nature closer to people

BTC City in Ljubljana, Slovenia: BTC City Centre - a hybrid shopping centre - will be transformed to become a regionally leading green, climate-resilient and attractive symbiotic business city with a shared value for different stakeholders (users, businesses, city, local communities) by integrating nature and biodiversity more directly into strategies for future investments.

"DESIRE is firmly rooted in the New European Bauhaus initiative. It is also multidisciplinary, engages different stakeholders, and its principles and knowledge can be applied worldwide," says Andrej Janko, Head of Sustainable Development at BTC. Contact: Andrej.Janko@btc.si

Herlev Asfalt Fabrik (Herlev Asphalt Factory), Denmark: The work in Herlev will contribute to DESIRE with a heightened sensitivity to the multi-species perspective through artistic practices in a new residential area. Studies are being carried out into what happens if you listen to a place before you develop it. NXT will activate the knowledge of the historical topsoil and nature's variability by populating the site for one year. A droplet, designed by architect Kristoffer Tejlgaard at the construction site, creates a space from which selected artists in the role of 'garden host' can carry out research, set up exhibitions, conduct landscape walks and hold workshops etc. The physical presence at the site means that one can listen to hidden voices that are otherwise ignored.

"The strength of the DESIRE project is that it opens up the possibility for the arts to play a key role in the so-called green transition. Art can open up a space for both corporeal and aesthetic reflection and awareness. Something that is incredibly important for us to be able to step out of the reproduced patterns that have created the climate and biodiversity crisis we find ourselves in, with both our bodies and our minds, so that we can act on it," says Madeleine Kate McGowan, an artist at NXT who developed the design concept together with the garden host. Contact: madeleinekate@otherstory.dk

Cascina Falchera in Turin, Italy: Cascina Falchera on the outskirts of Turin is home to an older type of urban farming with educational activities. The site is part of an innovative urban renewal initiative to support the local community and strengthen the relationship between people (especially young people) and nature/site biodiversity. Residents and visitors will also be able to learn about historical and environmental values.

"The Municipality of Turin is very interested in participating in the DESIRE project in order to improve knowledge of the New European Bauhaus. It is a huge opportunity for us to promote and create new policies for the future of our city and our neighbourhoods based on the experience we will gain through our demo case, Cascina Falchera. The best way to achieve these goals is to take advantage of the valuable exchange of knowledge within the DESIRE consortium, where one of the strengths is the diversity of the partners involved," says Fabrizio Barbiero, Public Manager for the Innovation European Funds Department at the Municipality of Turin. Contact: fabrizio.barbiero@comune.torino.it

Inclusion

Ziepju (Riga), Latvia: In Riga, the council is involving socially vulnerable citizens in the green renovation plan of a social housing block so that the housing is updated to modern living standards and the area is made into a safe and community-strengthening setting with restored nature.

"Through the involvement of different stakeholders in residential renovation, DESIRE provides us with the opportunity to find a new approach to how positively to influence living conditions and give a voice to groups like the socially vulnerable and the landscape itself, which are often ignored these days," says landscape architect Arnita Verza from Riga City Council/Riga City Architect's Service. Contact: arnita.verza@riga.lv

Gadehavegaard in Høje-Taastrup, Denmark: Gadehavegaard is a large social housing area from the 1970s with 986 apartments. Towards 2030, the housing area will undergo a major transformation, during which homes will be demolished, renovated and new ones built. The aim is to open it up to the outside world by situating institutions on the site, so that people from outside will use it. The surrounding landscape will be transformed through experimental public participation in order to bring nature closer to residents, and work is being done on circular principles with regard to the reuse and recycling of materials.

"Being part of the DESIRE project and an EU movement towards a more sustainable Europe provides us with the opportunity to involve and listen to the residents and try out ideas, so we can conclude by implementing a large green biodiverse outdoor area for the satisfaction and benefit of both the social housing residents and the new private residents, as well as the future teachers and students of the area," says Mette Mogensen, Urban and Housing Development Manager at Domea. Contact: mem@domea.dk

Wildemanbuurt in Amsterdam, Holland: A social housing area with approx. 5,000 inhabitants in Amsterdam will undergo an urban renewal scheme. The area is characterised by great cultural diversity and a high proportion of young and older people. The transformation of the area will be carried out together with the residents, so that the changes represent the residents' wishes for a good habitat with green areas and vegetable gardens - while respecting the cultural heritage of the area.

"The DESIRE project will provide the residents at the Wildemanbuurt site with the space to create their own city. By co-creating with residents from all walks of life, we can create visions for an equitable and sustainable future; one that is not just for the few, but includes everyone," says Hans Krikke, Director of STICHTING SAMENWONEN-SAMENLEVEN. Contact: h.krikke@sw-sl.nl

Symbiotic community

Kalundborg Circular Campus, Denmark: The project is working on the establishment of a campus for a new architectural education in Kalundborg, Denmark. Five locations are in the pipeline and, where possible, DESIRE will test the sites by setting up temporary classes in empty rooms and allowing students to work here as part of their education. In the process, they will examine which solutions are most sustainable based on parameters such as study environment, urban development, economy, resources, accessibility and energy consumption. The Royal Danish Academy and Knowledge Hub Zealand hope to contribute with knowledge on how and why it pays off to allow time for research and experimentation with different stakeholders before major decisions are made.

"DESIRE has added a processing time in which it is permitted to make errors, while at the same time there are resources to experiment with new forms of collaboration and untested possibilities. There is

room to go beyond what you would 'normally' do," says Project Manager Pernille Bech, Knowledge Hub Zealand. Contact: pebe@kalundborg.dk

MIND in Milan, Italy: Companies in a new innovation district, MIND in Milan, will cooperate on a symbiotic circular community; so that one person's waste or surplus heat is will become another person's raw material. The 1 million m2 site, which is located 15 minutes from the centre of Milan, will also be transformed into a green public space in partnership with local communities and stakeholders.

"The DESIRE project will provide the opportunity to explore and develop design solutions for good habitats in the large area of MIND (Milan Innovation District), while rethinking more inclusive and sustainable urban spaces from the initial stages of the building process. The MIND area is thus a unique opportunity to test innovative methods and practices on a large scale and in a complex context with many stakeholders," says Valeria Soliano, Project and Communication Officer at PlusValue. Contact: valeria.soliano@plusvalue.org