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Six case studies

Free Riga ; Horcynus Orca
La Cômérie ; Le Couvent
Minima ; Recyclart

- **Social urban regeneration**

- *Creating sustainable and inclusive spaces through the lens of NEB Compass, European assessment tool.*

- *Tools / Resources / Dissemination*

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Summary

- *Introduction*
- *The Spaces to Neb consortium*
 - *The NEB compass*
- *The 6 case studies evaluated in the Neb assessment*
 - *Analysis*
- *Conclusion*

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Introduction

In the face of ecological, social and demographic crises, social urban regeneration is a means of creating sustainable and inclusive spaces through the prism of the concepts of common spaces and the NEB Compass, a European assessment tool. The Spaces to NEB project Funded by the Erasmus+ programme, the Spaces to NEB project is part of this dynamic, bringing together organisations committed to social entrepreneurship and the revitalisation of our living spaces. Spaces to NEB aims to identify the key skills of social entrepreneurs working in space regeneration, develop dynamic and adaptable social enterprise models, and facilitate collaboration between European actors through the creation of support and dissemination and sharing tools.

This brochure

*This brochure presents six case studies of European shared spaces analysed using the **NEB Compass**, an assessment tool developed by the New European Bauhaus as part of the Spaces to Neb project.*

For professionals in the fields of culture, urban planning, social action and public policy, as well as organisations working in the social economy, local authorities, urban planners and entrepreneurs wishing to get involved in the regeneration of spaces and all citizens concerned with building a sustainable society of commons

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Introduction

6 Case studies for best practise resources

The consortium conducted six case studies across Europe based on interviews with entrepreneurs active in third places and shared urban regeneration spaces in order to identify the skills used in their practices and economic models

free Riga (Lv) ; Horcynus Orca (It) ; La Côme (Fr) ; Le Couvent (Fr)
Minima (Bxl) ; Recyclart (Bxl)

The case studies submitted for evaluation—EntreComp, GreenComp, and NEB Compass from NEB—led to the development of a skills mapping framework.

The results submitted to a discussion group identified the key skills and economic models needed to create and maintain shared spaces and transitional urban planning projects.

[Tools / Resources / Dissemination](#)



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The six case studies

LA COMERIE (Marseille, France)

Gradual renovation of a former convent into a cultural and community centre

LE COUVENT (Marseille, France)

Self-managed artistic space with horizontal governance and shared garden

MINIMA (Brussels, Belgium)

Hybrid space combining creativity, social action and support for vulnerable groups

RECYCLART (Brussels, Belgium)

Artistic, productive and social centre in a renovated building

FREE RIGA / HORCYNORCA (Riga, Latvia)

*Activation of heritage buildings in connection with local communities
Cultural, social and urban projects rooted locally and connected at European level.*

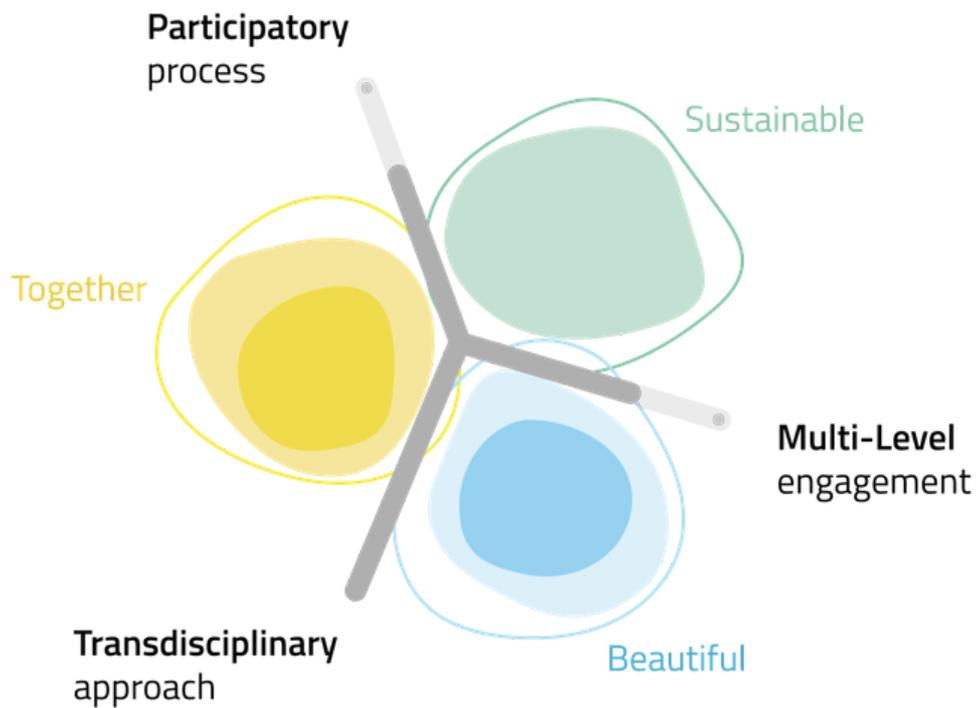
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BUSINESS MODEL AND SKILLS IN NEB ASSESSMENT

Free Riga





La Cômérie

La Comerie (France) is a former heritage convent in Marseille that has been renovated and transformed into a cultural, social and community space

- **Public–civic partnership** turning a heritage site and park into a cultural and community hub.
- Focus on **co-design** with residents and local associations.
- Hybrid model – public start-up funds + catering/events income.
- Encourages participatory governance and social inclusion through **culture**.
- **Skills:** collaboration across departments, collective management, and listening.

Cecile Baranger and Suzanne Laquerre, coordinator of the project for YWC





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La Cômerie from the Neb assessment

Reusing a building to create a communal space

La Comerie is a project to renovate an existing building, a former convent, and transform it into a cultural, social and community space open to residents and local associations. A contemporary art association is resident there year-round, as is Yes We Camp, which manages and opens the space.

SUSTAINABLE - Ambition 1: Reuse

The project focuses on reusing an existing building and gradually increasing its uses. The simplicity of the work, the use of the park and the sharing of spaces reinforce the sustainable approach.

Concrete actions :

- Reuse and recreation of value instead of demolition
- Organisation of workshops to raise awareness of circular practices (sewing, clothing recycling)
- Creation of a building materials exchange to share resources

TOGETHER - Ambition 3: Transform

The aim is to open La Comerie to residents, local associations and neighbourhood residents by co-creating an accessible and diverse programme. A restaurant is planned, as well as spaces dedicated to collective initiatives. The venue will become a shared, open space, reclaimed by residents. It is privately and publicly managed, operating through room rentals, a café-restaurant and subsidies

BEAUTIFUL - Ambition 2: The network

The project showcases a heritage building by transforming it into an open cultural venue. It incorporates artistic interventions, pays particular attention to outdoor spaces and features a carefully designed programme. The progressive architectural approach allows for renovation in stages, adapted to the uses.

Concrete actions :

- Workshops and activities created according to local needs thanks to a thorough preliminary assessment
- Active and diverse involvement of residents and stakeholders (private sector, public sector, local community, universities, SMEs, vulnerable populations)



Le Couvent

Le Couvent (France)

- Former convent reused as a cultural and social experimentation site under temporary occupation.
- Combines artistic residencies, community gardens, and social engagement.
- **Mixed revenue:** 30 % subsidies, 70 % self-financing (events, rentals).
- Reflects tensions between artistic freedom and social mission.
- **Skills:** coordination, mediation, adaptability in fragile contexts.

Violette Ravon, administrative officer





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Le Couvent from the Neb assessment

A self-managed artistic space with horizontal governance

A former convent repurposed by artists and collectives, combining artistic creation, ecological practices and social engagement through horizontal governance.

SUSTAINABLE - Ambition 1: Reuse

The shared garden is co-managed by a collective (L'Hydre) with horizontal governance. Ecological and participatory practices (community gardens, open worksites) are implemented, but structural precariousness (short occupancy contracts, limited resources) compromises continuity. It is owned by the City Council.

Concrete actions:

- Growing importance given to sustainability in decision-making
- Ecological protocol implemented for an annual festival
- Recycling of materials for activities
- Organisation of training activities for schools

TOGETHER - Ambition 2: Consolidate

The project was initially poorly received by neighbourhood groups, as it was imposed without any real consultation. Gradually, links were forged with residents through projects such as La Grande Tablee and art workshops in social structures. However, social openness remains limited: the target audiences are often the same and a social divide persists between the project's promoters and the working-class neighbourhood.

Concrete actions:

- Free or symbolic access to activities
- Opening of a closed, abandoned and segregated space
- Integration of a TSR process to increase participation
- Transformation of the urban landscape by creating collaborative spaces where marginalised groups and local communities can interact on an equal footing

BEAUTIFUL - Ambition 3: Integrate

The centre welcomes artists and supports their creation and dissemination, including to an uninitiated audience. Particular attention is paid to the diversity of artistic backgrounds (with or without artistic training). However, institutional pressure to produce projects with high social value weighs heavily on artists and obscures their creative role.



Minima

Minima (Belgium) offers shared spaces for social, cultural, artistic, sporting and work projects, as well as collective accommodation.

- Temporary occupation of a municipal building turned into a mixed-use social economy and housing space.
- **Shared governance** with residents; activities span culture, workshops, and community support.
- **Hybrid funding** (municipal subsidies + donations + low-cost rent).
- Values reuse, cooperation, and inclusion; links social innovation with ecological transition.
- Skills: adaptability, community engagement, and linking real estate with social projects.

Amelie Allegret, Communication and Community Manager of the project for Communa





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Minima from the Neb assessment

An accessible and participatory hybrid space, a hybrid space combining creation, social action and welcoming vulnerable audiences. The project is based on high financial accessibility and collective decision-making. Solidarity pricing — Horizontal governance — Collective appropriation

SUSTAINABLE — Ambition 1: Reuse

Minima conscientiously strives to adapt services and resources, such as food recovery and the reuse of tools from previous projects. The project develops sustainable activities and actions for its employees and the local community.

Concrete actions:

- Participation in a network of local partners committed to the reuse of materials
- Raising user awareness of energy issues in housing
- Support for the promotion of reuse and rehabilitation of existing buildings

TOGETHER - Ambition 1: Include

The venue is financially accessible to as many people as possible; stakeholders from different backgrounds are involved in decision-making; tasks are distributed fairly among all participants.

Concrete actions:

- Contribution system with different prices depending on individual means
- Free access to the premises and most activities are free or low-cost
- All users assume roles and responsibilities in the running of the space

BEAUTIFUL - Ambition 3: Integrate

New values integrated by participants, such as horizontal governance and sharing of space. Decisions and transformations are made collaboratively according to needs, strengthening the decision-making power of participants.

Concrete actions:

- Choice of name and type of activities at the start of the project by participants
- Regular organisation of collective workshops to adapt the space to needs
- Particular care taken with collective spaces (kitchen, shared workspace)

PARTICIPATORY PROCESS - Ambition 2: Co-develop

The project invites all participants to its events and meetings. Responsibilities are shared, ideas are heard, and rules evolve according to future needs.

Concrete actions:

- Management by staff via horizontal governance
- Participation of the public, occupants and neighbours in the strategy through various assemblies
- Purchase of part of the property (the shelter) by several stakeholders who have co-developed a sustainability strategy



Recyclart

Recyclart (Belgium) is a multidisciplinary urban project composed of an ARTS CENTRE and two socio-professional integration projects.

- Urban regeneration through culture and inclusion
- **Hybrid social–economic model** (public and self-generated income)
- Social and professional integration
- **Municipality collaboration:** Located within a wider ecosystem of municipality regeneration
- **Main challenges:** Engaging vulnerable populations in decision-making and managing complex subsidy frameworks

Thibault Ector, Infrastructure & Urban Development coordinator for the Mayor of Territorial Development, Public works and Municipal properties of Molenbeek

Marion Descamps, Workshop's Coordinator of Recyclart





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Recyclart from the Neb assessment

A vacant building to develop an artistic, productive and social centre, combining manufacturing workshops, a restaurant and professional integration.

SUSTAINABLE - Ambition 1: Reuse

The project aims to reuse a previously empty building to give it new functions. It focuses on a carpentry workshop and a metalworking workshop where people experiment with techniques for recovering and reassembling materials.

Concrete actions:

- Raising awareness among workers and the public about sustainability, reuse and environmental impact
- Support for emerging professions related to the reuse and rehabilitation of materials

TOGETHER - Ambition 2: Consolidate

The project arose from the need to connect two unconnected parts of the city. From the outset, this required a commitment to inclusion and relationship building. Today, the project aims to promote diversity through its three activities.

Concrete actions:

- Social and professional integration generating a high degree of diversity
- Restaurant designed as a place for meeting and sharing
- Art centre showcasing artists with different visions and backgrounds

BEAUTIFUL - Ambition 3: Integrate

Concrete actions:

- Fabriek has been active for 30 years in urban planning projects throughout Brussels
- Annual work to beautify the street and entrance in collaboration with residents
- Workers can propose and adapt the project's identity to their vision

PARTICIPATORY PROCESS - Ambition 2: Co-develop

Recyclart is committed to the project in its territory for the long term. Involvement and commitment are based on trust between stakeholders.

Concrete actions:

- Creating links between all stakeholders (authorities, public, cultural centres, neighbours)
- Testing future uses of the site through organised activities

TRANSDISCIPLINARY - Ambition 2

Thanks to its three activities, three areas of expertise and the diversity of objectives aimed at diversifying support, the project is interdisciplinary. This is also evident in the transitional urban planning measures and the commitment to a significant long-term impact on the neighbourhood.



Horcynus Orca

Horcynus Orca (Italy) is an interdisciplinary cultural and research foundation based around the **Parco Horcynus Orca** in the Strait of Messina, dedicated to fostering scientific, artistic, educational and sustainable development of the area.

- Hybrid – Participatory foundation (public + private, profit + non-profit)
- Collaborative cluster model
 - **“Parks of Beauty and Science” network**
 - **Roccavaldina initiative**
- Community and authority engagement
- Workshops on sustainable practices
 - **Interconnected approach**
- Pilot projects tested locally before scaling

Lino Monteleone, Direzione Organizzativa





Free Riga

Free Riga (Latvia) is a public benefit NGO founded in 2013 to address the growing number of vacant buildings in Riga.

- **Little legislative or financial support from the public sector and restrictive Latvian legislation**
 - Funding through different angles
- **In-depth assessments**
 - Sustainability and circular economy
 - Horizontal and participatory governance
 - Bottom-up, community-led business model
 - Mobilizing community resources



Regīta Zeiļa, Director, Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia
Nika Kotoviča, City of Riga | RMA “Riga Energy Agency”, Coordinator of International Projects & Urban Planning Expert





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Free Riga / Horcynus Orca from the Neb assessment

Activating heritage in connection with local areas. These initiatives activate vacant and heritage buildings in close connection with local communities, while being part of European cooperation networks.

BEAUTIFUL - Ambition 1: Activate

Concrete actions:

- Preservation and restoration of cultural and local heritage and architecture
- Reconnecting residents with their ancestral territory
- Developing art museums, creative workshops and research centres to generate scientific progress

PARTICIPATORY PROCESS - Ambition 2: Co-develop

Decision-making is open to the local community and is an ongoing process; workshops and activities are created as needed. When a new space is opened, everyone is welcome and volunteers are actively involved on a daily basis.

Stakeholders (scientific committee, educational organisations, local and institutional actors) are involved in decision-making and activity planning through spaces for dialogue and cooperation. The aim is to develop the project into sustainable processes.

COMMITMENT AT SEVERAL LEVELS - Ambition 2

Deeply rooted in the local context, residents are encouraged to apply for municipal, national and European funding related to community development. They respond to public policies, paving the way for benchmark solutions for urban regeneration.

They are part of the "Parks of Beauty and Science" network and collaborate with European projects, while remaining anchored in local cultural practices. Stakeholders from different backgrounds are involved in the board of directors and activities.

TRANSDISCIPLINARY - Ambition 3

Residents come from different sectors and knowledge systems, where artists, community members, academics and minorities co-create new realities of life and collective projects. They use informal relationships and formal engagement with stakeholders.

The holistic approach, from artistic residencies to scientific research, also integrates for-profit institutions, but with strong social and environmental values. The common goal is to rehabilitate an area by strengthening the local territory.



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Analysis

PARTICIPARY PROCESSES AT THE HEART OF PROJECTS

All the projects analysed are based on:

- Ongoing consultation with stakeholders
- Co-construction of uses with residents
- Direct involvement of users in governance
- Constant adaptability to emerging needs

These processes are not a preliminary step but an integral part of these projects, which are constantly evolving thanks to the commitment of the communities.

KEYS LESSONS

Reuse as an ecological and social lever

The five projects demonstrate that transforming existing structures can both reduce environmental impact and create social value. Gradual rehabilitation adapts to needs and available resources.

The importance of the long term

These initiatives require time to build trust, co-develop uses and anchor projects in their territories. The precarious nature of occupancy contracts remains a major obstacle to sustainability.

Shared governance as a driver of inclusion

Horizontal and participatory governance models promote the inclusion of diverse audiences and enable genuine collective ownership of spaces.

The central role of culture in the transition

Culture is not just a "bonus": it is the vehicle that connects environmental sustainability, social inclusion and quality experiences. It activates places, creates connections and transforms imaginations.

Interdisciplinarity as a source of richness

The intersection of skills (artistic, social, technical, ecological) and audiences generates innovative solutions and strengthens the resilience of projects.

WHAT THESE PROJECTS TEACH US

These case studies offer concrete benchmarks for designing, evaluating and supporting projects aligned with the values of the New European Bauhaus:

- For project leaders: participatory methodologies and hybrid economic models
- For local authorities: the benefits of supporting temporary occupations and gradual rehabilitation
- For funders: the need for long-term support and acceptance of experimentation

For everyone: proof that sustainable, inclusive and beautiful alternatives are possible



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Conclusion

Reusing existing structures, including communities and activating culture are effective levers for transforming territories in a sustainable way.

These five European projects show that another way of building cities is possible: more collaborative, more sustainable, more beautiful. They are living laboratories from which inspiring practices for urban and cultural regeneration are emerging.

The NEB Compass provides a common analytical framework for documenting, evaluating and sharing these experiences at European level, thereby helping to build a network of knowledge and solidarity between actors involved in territorial transformation.