

A digital inventory for more circular demolition

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The Forum for reuse and demolition inventories took place on 24th November at Greenbizz in Brussels. An event organised by Buildwise, the new BBRI, as part of the Digital Deconstruction project. On the agenda, no long presentations, but instead, there were a great many opportunities to network and discover digital tools. This is the driver for the world of circular demolition: partners finding each other in their shared aims of giving materials a second life.

Circular demolition is all about setting the right priorities. When wanting to deal with buildings more sustainably, the first thing to do is to try to avoid demolition in the first place and renovate instead. Only then should we examine which elements are still suitable for reuse and what can be recycled at a high value. Drawing up an inventory of what is valuable in the building to be demolished is therefore the start of any circular demolition process. “Inventories help to make informed decisions for better demolition”, as Eléonore de Roissart from Buildwise sums up. “Right now, multiple digital solutions exist or are under development to



Buildwise (the new BBRI) hosted the Forum for reuse and demolition inventories.

make these types of inventories in a more effective way.”

BECOMING A PRODUCER OF RAW MATERIALS

The Forum was the opportunity to discover in detail many of these services and digital tools. In total, nine companies were present: B²ASC, BatiRIM, Circonflexe, Cirdax, Diag it /Cycle up, Inspectr, LIST (which presented the Digital Deconstruction platform), ROTOR and Skop. “Reuse inventories are certainly not yet the standard in today’s business, but a momentum is starting to pick up”, said Steven Meersman from the design bureau, B²ASC. “Property

developers in Brussels, for example, are increasingly being asked by the public authorities to include these inventories in their specifications. We think it will become mandatory at some stage, precisely because it’s a necessary tool for moving towards more circularity and sustainability. The fact that Brussels is a pioneer in this matter should come as no surprise. By focusing on circular demolition, the city itself can become a producer of raw materials.”

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AN INVESTMENT FOR WHICH INTEREST SPIKES UP

With 80 participants, clearly this topic is up to date. From architects to construction and demolition companies, to administrations, large private building owners and developers ... what could bring all these actors together? It's the search for more information about how they can get results. "Reuse and recycling are increasingly present in specifications," agree Caro van Lysebeth and

Jonathan De Paepe from the demolition company, De Meuter. "And with price fluctuations for new materials, it is also more rewarding to invest in them. When customers request it, we search for the right buyers for the recovered materials. This Forum enables us to get to know the tools for working on this issue more efficiently in future projects."

"This Forum enables us to get to know the tools for working on circular demolition more efficiently in future projects."

DISCOVERING NEW TOOLS AND PARTNERS

"We have already learnt from previous projects how important digitalisation is for facilitating the reuse of building materials. I myself was only familiar with ROTOR", says Carole Toledano from Embuild Brussels. "The fact that I have discovered here today that there are many more players offering similar services for inventories already makes my visit more than worthwhile. Better still, the technology is right on point. It is now up to us to find the right applications to help put it into practice." It's no surprise that ROTOR is already well-known. For more than a decade – way before circularity was in everyone's sights – the company has been looking for the best way to establish reuse inventories. Lionel Billiet from ROTOR explains: "It's not enough to document elements, you also have to put things into practice. For example, by testing how easily it is to dismantle the materials you want to



Eléonore de Roissart (Buildwise), presenting circular deconstruction at Hof Ter Laken, a pilot project for the Interreg Digital Deconstruction project.

reuse and where to use them. But you can see that change is underway. In our early days, there was a lot of scepticism. It was even suggested that what we wanted to achieve with circular demolition was illegal. But today we are truly contributing to the reuse culture."

BECOMING THE STANDARD AGAIN

By the way, did you know that reuse has been around for ages? A study at the VUB is trying to chart the history of reuse. "It was only in the 1960s and 1970s, with the advent of mass consumption, that reuse fell somewhat into oblivion. Before that, it was actually a standard way of work-

ing", says researcher, Ine Wouters. "With rising energy prices, it is now becoming expensive to bake new bricks and we are going back towards reuse. A good thing, too, because reuse also fits in perfectly with the changing mindset." It is that particular state of mind that inspired Jérôme Col-



Over 80 participants came to network, learn and share experiences at the Forum for reuse and demolition inventories on 24th November at Greenbizz Brussels.

lette and Lionel Delatte at Circonflexe to do things differently – and better. “Only when we have all the necessary data can we make the right decisions. That is the premise behind the platform we have designed.

After all, a mere Excel list is not enough. The data has to be there for every phase to create the right analysis and to bring the right partners together.”

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DIGITAL TOOLS FOR CONNECTING CIRCULAR INITIATIVES

The many animated conversations between attendees and exhibitors and between attendees themselves proved just how necessary these kinds of events are for enabling people to find each other. “These reuse inventories are actually meant to be matchmakers. Interest is starting to build everywhere. What is important now is to

connect these initiatives and find the right buyer and project for each material so that we can create as much value as possible. Without digitalisation, this is impossible to start. The materials must also be of the right quality and have the necessary certifications to get a second life”, concluded Maarten Stadhoudens from Cirdax.