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# Building the Future: Integrating NEB values and principles in Heritage Regeneration under THRIVE

EUI Capacity Building Event in  
Limerick, Ireland  
12th & 13th November 2024

Event report prepared by EUI experts  
involved in the Irish event  
For the European Urban Initiative Capacity  
Building team

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



**01** Introduction

The 'What' of NEB: Aligning  
Projects with the NEB Vision

**02**

**03** The 'How' of NEB: Unlocking NEB  
Potential with Collaborative Tools

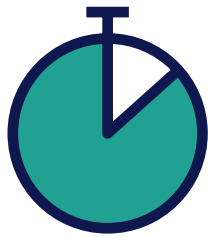
Study Visits

**04**

**05** Conclusion

# 01 Introduction

## *THE EVENTS' NUMBERS AT A GLANCE*



**2 DAY**  
DURATION



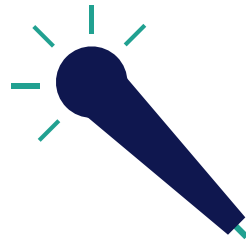
**120**  
PARTICIPANTS



**12**  
COUNTRIES  
REPRESENTED



**26**  
LOCAL  
AUTHORITIES



**27**  
SPEAKERS



**5**  
FACILITATORS



## SETTING THE SCENE

Over 100 city practitioners came together in Limerick on the 12th and 13th of November 2024 to build their capacities on the 'what' and the 'how' of the New European Bauhaus (NEB). The event addressed the Irish local authorities from accross the country, as potential applicants and beneficiaries of the Town Centre First Heritage Revival Scheme (THRIVE), an instrument funded via ERDF, aimed at renovating derelict heritage buildings in Irish town centres. The event was organised by the European Urban Initiative (EUI) Capacity Building team with the support of the Southern, Easter and Midland and North-Western Regional Assemblies and was hosted by the City of Limerick.

The participants came principally from Irish local authorities. EUI also invited representatives from 11 local authorities from abroad, to share their good practices and experiences through finalised, THRIVE-related projects that have all been acknowledged, awarded or funded through different European funding instruments and initiatives, for their succesful application of NEB values and principles. The programme was co-designed by Eileen Crowley and Eleni Feleki, EUI experts, to meet the identified learning

needs through a series of presentations, panels, presentations, panels, hands-on exercises, study visits as well as networking opportunities. The event was moderated by Eleni Feleki, EUI expert.

## KEY LEARNINGS

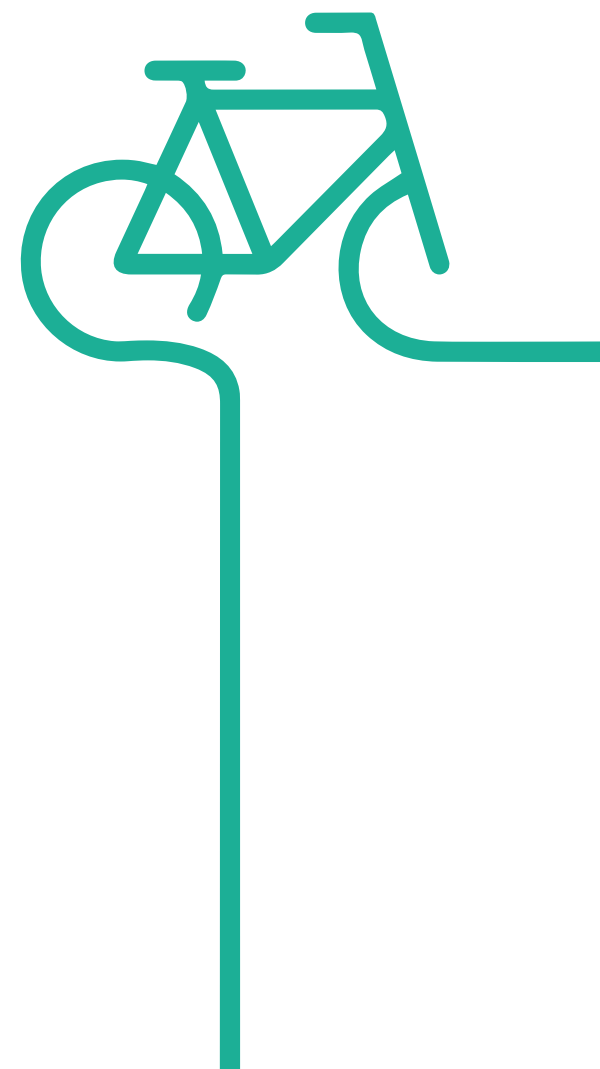
Key learnings revolved around what are the NEB values and principles, what value they bring to a project, what are the suite of openly accessible NEB support documents and how these can be practically applied in project design and implementation to embed NEB values and principles.

Participants commented on the inspiration and ideas emerging from exchange with peers across Europe, as well as the usefulness of the tools and methodologies shared.

This report documents the learning, including the do's, don'ts and calls to action for each of the topics addressed.

The following sections capture the main results of each session.

All of the materials are also described in the urban case study section of the [Portico Knowledge Hub](#). All of the cities cited are open to contact, partnership and city to city exchange with other European counterparts, via the [Portico community](#).



## ***INSPIRATIONAL KEY NOTE***

Natasa Christou, Director and Head of Operations, Gardens of the future, Nicosia, kindly accepted the invitation of EUI to give an inspirational key note speech. Natasa raised emotions through her presentation and managed to engage the audience from the very early start.

Her speech underpinned that in the unpredictable world we currently live in, our cities must reconnect with their heart — the pulse of community, creativity, and heritage. To navigate uncertainty and thrive, we need to recalibrate: shift from division to unity, from aloneness to oneness.

According to Natasa, the New European Bauhaus is not just a framework; it's a compass, guiding us to embrace the power of co-creation and local identity.

The neighborhood is our universal scale — the 'cell' in our planetary body — where we can manage the complexity of urban challenges, alchemize our way of being, and reboot. Grassroots initiatives show us the way forward: simple, tactile solutions that empower communities to lead sustainable urban transformations. Through small-scale, arts-based, and nature-driven approaches, we witness the magic of turning local knowledge into actionable strategies.

This process fosters ownership, amplifies marginalized voices, and preserves the tangible and intangible heritage that make places unique.

The lesson is clear: stop feeding our cities with the debris of disconnection, and instead nourish to optimal health both humans and the environment.

Let's alchemize the poison of fractured systems into the medicine, starting not in the mind, but in the heartbeat—our shared purpose and collective roots.



# 02 The 'What' of NEB

## ***NEB - A Buzzword or a Breakthrough?***

### **It is definitely not a Buzzword!**

The first panel of the event sought to provide a provocation as to whether the NEB was simply another EU Buzzword or whether it was a real breakthrough in policy and practice terms around heritage and regeneration. The panel included Laura Hagemann from the Joint Research Centre, Kieran McCarthy from the Committee of the Regions, Tatian Coelho de Oliveira from DG REGIO, and Nicki Matthews the Irish NEB Contact Point. We concluded that the NEB is definitely not a Buzzword because:

- The NEB is integral to realising the objectives of the EU New Deal.
- The NEB is very practical through its values and principles and these values and principles can be applied to any project.
- The NEB Compass and Toolkit is easy to use and can be utilised by both public authorities and stakeholders in the commercial and social sectors.
- The values and principles of NEB are aligned to how local authorities across Ireland are already beginning to undertake heritage and regeneration.
- There are a growing number of case study examples across the EU of where the NEB values and principles are being embedded in reality.
- The THRIVE Programme already has NEB values and principles at its heart and NEB will be a condition of future funding.
- The NEB promotes a sense of collectivism between public authorities and communities, with people close to decision-making as opposed to removed.

The NEB is very much a breakthrough and should shape heritage and regeneration activities long into the future in Ireland and across the EU.





## ***Guiding Frameworks for project owners, to apply the NEB principles and values***

### **NEB Compass & EIB Small Projects Checklist**

The first day of the event focused on operationalizing the New European Bauhaus (NEB) principles—Beautiful, Sustainable, Together—to transform heritage and urban regeneration projects across Europe.

Lorenzo de Simone from the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) outlined how these principles provide a comprehensive framework for promoting sustainability, cultural identity, and social inclusion within the built environment.

He introduced the NEB Compass which serves as a conceptual guide to align projects with NEB's core values and working principles. He also referred to the NEB Investment Guidelines, a practical guide on how to apply the New European Bauhaus core values and working principles in built environment projects, and in particular buildings, open spaces, and neighbourhoods.

Lorenzo walked participants through the workings of the NEB Small Project's Checklist, a user-friendly tool consisting of multiple-choice questions across each of the NEB values and working principles. Through a structured yet flexible approach, it enables a thorough (self) assessment of projects, in relation to their alignment with NEB values and principles. Scoring is based on predefined weights, with thresholds ensuring holistic alignment.

Following the presentation, attendees tried out the tool by assessing one of four parallel case studies using the checklist. This hands-on session provided insights into applying NEB principles in real-world scenarios.



## Nano Nagle Place

**Practical guidance on transforming urban spaces to reflect NEB's focus on sustainability, beauty, and inclusion.**

*John Smith, CEO, Nano Nagle Place*  
*Alan Macilwraith, JCA Architects*  
*Eileen Crowley, EUI Expert*

Nano Nagle Place is an unexpected oasis in the centre of bustling Cork City, a place that celebrates Nano Nagle's vision of empowerment through education, community inclusion and spiritual engagement for a contemporary world. The complex houses an award-winning museum, regenerated heritage buildings, walled gardens, a design shop & Cork focussed book shop and the wonderful Good Day Deli. The beautifully restored convent buildings are home to several community education projects.[1]

The architectural work that realised Nano Nagle Place today, demonstrates how large redundant building complexes can be sensitively transformed for a varied mix of uses, and creates an attractive destination that positively contributes to the surrounding area. The project serves as a model for heritage-driven urban regeneration, aligning New European Bauhaus (NEB) principles with real-world impact.



[1] [www.nanonagleplace.ie](http://www.nanonagleplace.ie)

## Do's

- ✓ **Collaborate Broadly:** Engage local authorities, heritage experts, and the community from the outset.
- ✓ **Align with Core Values:** Anchor projects in sustainability, inclusivity, and cultural significance.
- ✓ **Plan for Adaptability:** Design spaces that serve both historic preservation and current urban needs.
- ✓ **Use Education as a Tool:** Create programs that connect the site's legacy with modern learning opportunities.
- ✓ **Preserve and Adapt:** Invest in conservation efforts while making spaces functional for today.

## Don'ts

- ✗ **Neglect Stakeholder Input:** Avoid underestimating the value of public and expert consultation in planning.
- ✗ **Lose Hope or Rush Development:** Complex development projects take time. Each step, no matter how small is progress. Think phased, strategic steps.
- ✗ **Compromise Heritage:** Don't let modern requirements override the site's historical integrity.
- ✗ **Exclude Communities:** Avoid making decisions that fail to reflect the needs and identities of the local population.
- ✗ **Underestimate Maintenance:** Failing to plan for ongoing conservation and operational funding can jeopardize sustainability. An anchor tenant and multiple funding streams builds resilience.

# Key Learnings from Nano Nagle Place

01

## Integrating Heritage and Urban Development

Nano Nagle Place showcases how to merge historic preservation with modern urban needs, transforming a heritage site into a vibrant cultural and social hub. The project demonstrates the importance of respecting historical significance while adapting for contemporary use, ensuring inclusivity and sustainability.

02

## Community-Centric Development

Emphasis was placed on creating a space that fosters education, social justice, and engagement, aligning with the ethos of its founder, Nano Nagle. Outreach programmes, including work with the Cork Migrant Centre, men's groups and lifelong learning festivals, ensure broad and inclusive participation.

03

## Collaboration and Planning

A robust multi-stakeholder approach was critical, involving city planners, architects, the Presentation Sisters, and the community. Extensive planning over decades addressed legal, conservation, and architectural challenges, ensuring the project's alignment with heritage and urban development goals.

04

## Long-Term Vision

The project exemplifies the value of a phased, patient approach in realizing a master plan, as shown in its 20-year journey from concept to completion. Its vision prioritizes creating a place for contemplation and inspiration, connecting history with transformative action.

## Learn more from Nano Nagle Place!

This case study serves as a model for heritage-driven urban regeneration, aligning New European Bauhaus (NEB) principles with real-world impact. You can read more about the centre here: <https://nanonagleplace.ie/>

Remeber, the EUI [City-to-City Exchange](#) programme provides a simple and accessible pathway to support cities to overcome urban development challenges. It covers travel and accommodation costs and provides an expert facilitator to support a learning and exchange visit between cities on a specific topic related to sustainable urban development such as this one. Check it out and **consider an exchange with Cork to learn more.**



## Rediscovery Centre

### **Practical guidance on transforming urban spaces to reflect NEB's focus on sustainability, beauty, and inclusion.**

*Sarah Miller, CEO Rediscovery Centre*

*Matthew Baqueriza-Jackson, EUI Expert*

The Rediscovery Centre is the National Centre for the Circular Economy, based in Dublin. Since 2004, the centre has been leading Ireland's transition to a circular economy and low-carbon sustainable future. Based in Europe's first circular economy demonstration centre, Rediscovery Centre acts as an innovation hub, delivering education, providing research and enabling policy, citizen engagement and collaboration to support community action. Recognising that a just transition requires a social movement, Rediscovery Centre uses its skills and expertise to ensure that all people benefit from, and can participate in, the circular economy.

The Rediscovery Centre is located in the heart of the deprived neighbourhood of Ballymun in Dublin and in the repurposed Ballymun Boiler House. The renovation of the Boiler House, whilst prior to the advent of NEB used many of the values and principles of NEB including around sustainability, inclusion, and beauty. As Europe's first 3D textbook and demonstration centre on the circular economy, the Rediscovery Centre showcases from foundation to chimney, extraordinary examples of what can be done when waste is seen as an opportunity rather than a problem.



## Do's

- ✓ **Educate widely:** Lots of stakeholders need to know about the importance of the circular economy from local municipalities to residents.
- ✓ **Demonstrate activities:** the 3D textbook enables the Rediscovery Centre to practically demonstrate its activities.
- ✓ **Advocate and collaborate:** The Rediscovery Centre is part of a wider system for change around the circular economy - there is a need to advocate widely and collaborate to realise further systemic change.
- ✓ **Engage Social Enterprise:** The Rediscovery Centre is framed by the Social Economy - social enterprise is a key mechanism to enabling a circular approach
- ✓ **Invest in Research:** research programmes can provide evidence of impact and support the development of wider partnerships.

## Don'ts

- ✗ **Underestimate scale of contamination:** It took a huge amount of work to decontaminate the Rediscovery Centre site.
- ✗ **Forget this takes time:** it took 10 years from the formation of the Rediscovery Centre to the acquisition of the space.
- ✗ **forget to monitor:** it can be difficult to monitor environmental impact, in particular and mechanisms should be put in place to enable this to happen
- ✗ **Exclude Communities:** Avoid making decisions that fail to reflect the needs and identities of the local population.

# Key Learnings from the Rediscovery Centre

01

## **Think about circularity across everything**

The whole concept of the Rediscovery Centre is about the Circular Economy. Therefore this flows across how the organisation operates and how the building was designed, constructed and implemented

02

## **Social Enterprise at the forefront**

Whilst the development of the Rediscovery Centre has involved stakeholders across the public and commercial sectors, the role of the social economy and specifically social enterprise has been at the forefront. This has been both in its design and in the types of organisations that are provided circular activities from the Rediscovery Centre.

03

## **A Place Based Approach**

The development and operation of the Rediscovery Centre does not sit in isolation, instead it informs a component part of wider place based regeneration. The Rediscovery Centre has been a key part of the transformation of Ballymun.

04

## **Collaboration is key**

The approach of the Rediscovery Centre is framed by partnership working and collaboration. In particular strategic partnerships, research partnerships, communications partnerships, and partnerships with other Circular Economy Transition Networks have all been developed

## Learn more from Rediscovery Centre

This case study serves as a model for heritage-driven urban regeneration, aligning New European Bauhaus (NEB) principles with real-world impact. You can read more about the centre here: <https://www.rediscoverycentre.ie/>

Remeber, the EUI [City-to-City Exchange](#) programme provides a simple and accessible pathway to support cities to overcome urban development challenges. It covers travel and accommodation costs and provides an expert facilitator to support a learning and exchange visit between cities on a specific topic related to sustainable urban development such as this one. Check it out and **consider an exchange with Dublin to learn more.**

## Castleblaney Library & Market Square

**Practical guidance on transforming urban spaces to reflect NEB's focus on sustainability, beauty, and inclusion.**

**Deirdriu McQuaid** - County Librarian and Head of Cultural Services at Monaghan County Council  
**Liat Rogel** - EUI Expert

### Castleblaney Library Project Overview

The Castleblaney Library Project revitalized the historic Hope Castle Gate Lodge in Castleblaney, Monaghan County, Ireland, transforming it into a vibrant community library and cultural hub. This €4.87 million initiative, co-funded by the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund and Monaghan County Council, aligns with the Our Rural Future and Town Centre First strategies. Conservation work preserved the site's historic integrity while adding a contemporary extension designed for community engagement. The project also enhanced Market Square, linking the library with the town's architectural heritage and improving public spaces to foster cultural and social renewal.

### Community-Led Design with Sustainability at Its Core

Community input shaped the library's design and purpose, ensuring the preservation of its historical essence while meeting modern needs. Sustainable practices, such as reusing building materials and minimising embodied carbon, underline the project's environmental commitment. Since its opening, the library has become a cornerstone of community life, with visitor numbers increasing by 280%. Offering programs ranging from STEM workshops to arts and reading clubs, it is a vital part of Castleblaney's broader strategy to create a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive town center.





## Do's

- ✓ **Engage the Community:** Conduct extensive consultations to ensure the project reflects local needs and aspirations.
- ✓ **Preserve Historical Integrity:** Retain original architectural elements and integrate them with modern features respectfully.
- ✓ **Prioritise Sustainability:** Use eco-friendly materials, minimise waste, and design for energy efficiency.
- ✓ **Design for Flexibility:** Include adaptable spaces that cater to various uses, such as workshops, exhibitions, and community events.
- ✓ **Ensure Accessibility:** Provide universal access to all spaces, including lifts and ramps, to accommodate all users.

## Don'ts

- ✗ **Sacrifice Functionality for Aesthetics:** Design should balance beauty with practicality to meet community needs effectively.
- ✗ **Overlook Stakeholder Communication:** Regular updates to stakeholders are vital to maintaining trust and alignment.
- ✗ **Ignore Long-Term Maintenance:** Choose durable materials and systems to reduce future upkeep costs.
- ✗ **Exclude Marginalised Groups:** Design and programming must ensure inclusivity for all, including marginalised and underrepresented populations.
- ✗ **Miss Opportunities for Integration:** Consider how the project can connect with and enhance surrounding public spaces.

# Key Learnings from Castleblaney Library & Market Square

01

## **Adaptive Reuse of Heritage Buildings is Transformative**

The Castleblaney Library Project demonstrates how repurposing a neglected historical structure can revitalize a community. By preserving the building's heritage while introducing modern functionality, the project created a dynamic space that enhances local identity and pride, breathing new life into the town center.

02

## **Flexible Spaces Encourage Broader Community Engagement**

The library's adaptable design has enabled it to serve as a multi-functional space for a diverse range of activities, from STEM workshops and art classes to cultural events and reading programs. This versatility has attracted visitors across all demographics, reinforcing its role as a community cornerstone.

03

## **Sustainability Strengthens Long-Term Viability**

Through thoughtful conservation of the original structure and integration of energy-efficient systems, the project minimized its environmental impact while creating a comfortable and inspiring space. Reusing materials and incorporating natural ventilation not only aligned with sustainability goals but also reduced operational costs and maintenance requirements.

04

## **Catalyst for Urban Renewal and Growth**

The library's transformation of a derelict "black hole" into a vibrant destination has redefined perceptions of the area. It has increased foot traffic, drawn attention to Castleblaney's historical and cultural assets, and set a precedent for further regeneration. Nearby buildings, inspired by the library's success, are now being revitalised, with plans underway to continue the evolution of this emerging cultural hub.

## Learn more from Castleblaney Library & Market Square

This case study exemplifies how community centred urban regeneration can successfully integrate New European Bauhaus (NEB) principles to deliver meaningful community impact. You can explore more about the Castleblaney Library project [here](https://monaghan.ie/library/castleblaney/):

<https://monaghan.ie/library/castleblaney/>

The [EUI City-to-City Exchange](#) programme offers cities a straightforward way to tackle urban development challenges. By covering travel and accommodation costs and providing expert facilitation, it supports learning visits between cities on topics like sustainable urban development. **Consider an exchange with Monaghan to discover more about this inspiring example!**

## Medieval Mile Museum, Kilkenny

**Practical guidance on transforming urban spaces to reflect NEB's focus on sustainability, beauty, and inclusion.**

***Francis Coady**, Architectural Conservation Officer,  
Kilkenny County Council*

***Eddy Adams**: EUI Expert*

### **Medieval Mile Museum overview**

The €7 million development of the Medieval Mile Museum involved the restoration, extension and conservation of St Marys Hall, a deconsecrated church in the heart of Kilkenny, into a thriving cultural and community asset. The building was once the parish church and cemetery of medieval Hightown, containing some of Ireland's most important Renaissance tombs. The project was part of a larger plan to enable the urban regeneration of the wider St Mary's Precinct and to conserve items of important social and cultural value.

### **Placing historic cultural assets at the heart of the sustainable city**

The repurposing of older buildings is at the core of the Kilkenny County Council's strategy. Citizens and visitors are being encouraged to walk the "Medieval Mile" from Kilkenny Castle to St. Canice's Cathedral, with a number of places of interest within a short walk of each other. The St. Mary's precinct is a key component of the Medieval Mile concept – which promotes the "walkable" city.



## Do's

- ✓ **Adopt a place-based approach:** Embed the project as part of a wider urban renewal strategy.
- ✓ **Promote multi-functional usage:** Establish the facility as a multi-purpose community asset.
- ✓ **Plan for Adaptability:** Design spaces that serve both historic preservation and current urban needs.
- ✓ **Utilise the educational potential:** Link the past and future through actively engaging with schools.
- ✓ **Prioritise financial sustainability:** Develop a flexible plan for future revenue generation.

## Don'ts

- ✗ **Underestimate the project complexity:** This work requires sensitivity and patience.
- ✗ **Compromise Heritage:** Retain focus on the core asset and don't allow contemporary requirements to lose sight of this.
- ✗ **Be afraid to mix old and new:** Creative design solutions can enhance heritage buildings with sensitive modern additions.
- ✗ **Exclude Communities:** Find ways to get communities on board throughout the project's development.
- ✗ **Limit the functionality of the asset:** Look beyond the core use of the facility to optimise its wider potential



## Key Learnings from the Medieval Mile Museum

01

### **Harnessing heritage to drive sustainable urban development**

The development of the Medieval Mile Museum provides a driver for the regeneration of previously run-down neighbourhood of city centre. This transformation has placed the building as a key asset in Limerick's strategic goal to be a sustainable walkable city.

02

### **Celebrate bold beautiful design**

The cultural and heritage significance of the building might have limited the scale of creative ambition within the renovation. Instead, the striking modern addition, entirely in keeping with the original edifice, has generated much praise and recognition.

03

### **Be prepared to engage flexibly with the community**

Complex projects like these always throw up surprises. In this case, citizens were fascinated by the medieval bodies that were exposed during the excavation phase. The Museum team cleverly exploited their curiosity by allowing access to the site, thus strengthening community engagement at a key stage.

04

### **Focus on future sustainability**

Completing the physical redevelopment is not the end of the story; instead it's a new start. The Museum team developed a sophisticated flexible approach to ensure the facility is well-used, for example by local people who will only keep coming if the offer evolves.

## Learn more from the museum!

This case study serves as a model for heritage-driven urban regeneration, aligning New European Bauhaus (NEB) principles with real-world impact. You can read more about the centre here: <https://www.medievalmilemuseum.ie/>

Remember, the EUI [City-to-City Exchange](#) programme provides a simple and accessible pathway to support cities to overcome urban development challenges. It covers travel and accommodation costs and provides an expert facilitator to support a learning and exchange visit between cities on a specific topic related to sustainable urban development such as this one. Check it out and **consider an exchange with Kilkenny to learn more.**



## ***Conclusion***

### Key Learnings on the Application of the NEB Checklist

Participants highlighted several insights and feedback based on their use of the NEB project checklist:

#### **Clarity and Practicality of Questions:**

- The majority of participants found the questions clear and useful for breaking down NEB values into practical terms.
- Challenges arose with technical and highly specific questions, particularly those related to construction details, heritage constraints, and aesthetic evaluations. Undertaking the checklist with a multi-disciplinary team is recommended.

#### **Insights Gained:**

- Using the checklist facilitated new considerations and perspectives on NEB principles, with unanimous or high agreement on its ability to generate fresh insights.

#### **Usefulness and Adaptability:**

- The checklist was rated highly useful, with participants viewing it as a critical tool in supporting the preparation of THRIVE applications.
- It was deemed adaptable to various project contexts, though some suggested the need for more flexibility in its application to specific site types or project scales.

# 03 The 'How' of NEB

## *Introduction*

### How to undertake urban development, implegrating NEB values and principles

Having addressed the 'what' of NEB during the opening day of the event, the second day of the capacity-building event focused on the 'how' of NEB. It aimed to deepen the understanding and practical application of New European Bauhaus (NEB) values and principles.

Framed around addressing the "how" of NEB, this session emerged from the recognition that integrating NEB values and principles comes with challenges. These include balancing heritage preservation with modern needs, engaging diverse stakeholders, and achieving financial sustainability.

However, as demonstrated through case studies and panel discussions, cities across Europe have successfully overcome such barriers by leveraging innovative tools and collaborative approaches.

At the heart of these successes lies the NEB Toolbox—a collection of practical resources designed to guide cities through the phases of project development, from initial exploration to refinement. Participants learned how tools such as stakeholder mapping and NEB compass-guided questions can help align project objectives with local community needs and values.

By showcasing real-world examples from cities like Valetta, Piatra Neamt, Dobeles, and Santo Tirso, the event highlighted the transformative potential of the NEB approach when applied thoughtfully and creatively. These case studies underscored the adaptability of NEB principles across varied contexts, shared their challenges and how they were overcoming and provided a foundation of tried and tested methodologies for participants to emulate in their own practice.

## Challenges to Design NEB Projects & Solutions

### Overcoming Barriers with Creativity, Collaboration, and Community Engagement

The panel focused on the challenges and solutions in implementing New European Bauhaus (NEB) projects, showcasing case studies from Spain, Croatia, and Hungary. Panelists discussed their experiences with community engagement, sustainability, and integrating multidisciplinary approaches, offering practical insights for urban practitioners.

#### Challenges

- Legal and financial complexities, such as ownership models (SHARE) and funding stability (TUP, Krypton House).
- Community integration, ensuring local participation and addressing stakeholder concerns.
- Environmental challenges in balancing sustainability goals with heritage preservation.

#### Elements of Success

- Collaborative partnerships with local organizations, universities, and international networks.
- Phased implementation, allowing for gradual activation of spaces and testing approaches.
- Creative engagement strategies, such as intergenerational housing, storytelling, and temporary exhibitions.
- Mixed-use designs to ensure both cultural and economic sustainability.



## *How to Address Challenges*

### Introducing the NEB Toolbox

Cristina Garzillo, Head of the Built Environment, Culture and Heritage at ICLEI introduced participants to the NEB toolbox, which is a collection of practical tools that can be used for planning and designing NEB aligned projects.

The toolbox provides practical tools, workshops and good examples of how to implement NEB values effectively and covers the three main phases of the project development process including identification, exploration and refinement.

While the toolbox tailors tools to specific phases, they can be used flexibly. They are practical guides to refine ideas and turn them into concrete results, such as fully developed projects, detailed action plans, strategic roadmaps, or investment proposals.

Robust stakeholder engagement is critical throughout all phases of NEB project development, and this was highlighted by each of the European case studies following Cristina's presentation. Cristina consequently brought attention to the stakeholder mapping tool.

Following the presentation, participants got to try out this tool, focusing on one of their own local projects. In a series of hands-on exercises, project owners benefitted from peer reflection in the stakeholder mapping process and they were supported by a series of guiding questions inspired by the NEB compass.





# The Valetta Design Cluster

## UNLOCKING NEB POTENTIAL WITH COLLABORATIVE TOOLS

*Francesca Cassar, Communities & Projects Executive  
Eileen Crowley, EUI Expert*

The Valletta Design Cluster is a regeneration project of a 17th Century abbatoir, abandoned for the last 30 years and rehabilitated. Today it focuses on design, entrepreneurship, and social impact, while supporting and promoting user-centred design as a catalyst for innovation and as a multi-disciplinary approach that can create positive impacts for communities and individuals.

The project revitalized the building, saving it from obsolescence while also rejuvenating an entire neglected area of the city. Additionally, it introduced a rooftop garden, offering a pleasant space for both the building's occupants and the general public to enjoy.



## Do's

- ✓ **Prioritize Inclusive Engagement:** Involve diverse stakeholder groups from project inception, including sceptics and underrepresented voices. Meet people where they are, using methods such as 'street meetings' within the neighbourhood.
- ✓ **Adopt Collaborative Tools:** Use stakeholder mapping and brainstorming exercises to align objectives with community needs.
- ✓ **Embrace Flexibility:** Adapt project approaches to reflect local dynamics and challenges.
- ✓ **Invest in Heritage-Driven Modernization:** Utilize historical sites creatively, preserving their legacy while adapting them for contemporary purposes, as with the transformation of the Old Abattoir into a vibrant cultural hub
- ✓ **Incorporate Local Identity:** Ensure that development respects and enhances the unique character of the site.

## Don'ts

- ✗ **Undervalue Public Engagement:** Avoid minimal outreach. Robust community participation is essential for long-term success and relevance, as shown in the cluster's collaborative projects and public programs
- ✗ **Overcomplicate Processes:** While tools are valuable, simplicity ensures wider participation and understanding.
- ✗ **Exclude Key Stakeholders:** Avoid overlooking community members or stakeholders who may resist change but provide valuable perspectives.
- ✗ **Encourage Knowledge Sharing:** Foster an environment of collaboration through events, networking, and residency programs. The cluster's model of enabling designers, students, and entrepreneurs to co-create solutions exemplifies this approach.

## Key learnings from the Valetta Design Cluster

01

### Community-Led Urban Regeneration

The Valetta Design Cluster exemplifies the transformation of underutilized urban spaces into hubs of creativity, collaboration, and innovation. It leverages inclusive design principles, fostering diverse stakeholder engagement across policymakers, civil society, and the private sector.

02

### Strategic Stakeholder Involvement

The project highlights the importance of thorough stakeholder mapping to ensure representation of all voices, particularly marginalized groups. A process for identifying, engaging, and aligning stakeholders ensures shared ownership of outcomes.

03

### Embedding NEB Principles

By focusing on sustainability, beauty, and inclusivity, the cluster aligns with the NEB vision to create spaces that reflect local realities and values.

04

### Practical Tools for Collaboration

Stakeholder mapping provides actionable insights for identifying overlooked groups and fostering partnerships. Meeting key stakeholders in their own community was critical in the project design and success.

## Learn more with the Valetta Design Cluster!

The Valetta Design Cluster serves as a model for sustainable and inclusive urban regeneration, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and local engagement in realizing NEB-aligned projects. It offers unique insights into community-driven urban regeneration and creativity-focused development.

If you want to exchange and benefit from their experience, the EUI [City-to-City Exchange](#) programme provides a great opportunity to do so.

## ROD - Creative & Learning Space, Piatra Neamt, Romania

### UNLOCKING NEB POTENTIAL WITH COLLABORATIVE TOOLS

*Valentin Toc, ROD*

*Matthew Baqueriza-Jackson, EUI Expert*

The ROD Creative and Learning Space is a community space repurposed from an old heating station into a creative and learning centre. It spans 300 square metres with 8 rooms dedicated to specific activities including a children's room, library, workshop, training spaces, and event halls. The project combines design, natural materials, local expertise, and educational resources to create a safe context for creativity, learning and community building.

The ROD Space has been operating since 2020 and provides a range of activities for the local community focused upon making better humans, and including: the school of good deeds, an indoor festival, a role-model programme, and a local artisans festival.



## Do's

- ✓ **Think about how space can be used differently:** The ROD Space has transformed a disused heating station into a vibrant community space at relatively low cost (240,000 Euros).
- ✓ **Think across the values of NEB:** The development of the ROD Space has been framed by a blend and balance of the NEB principles of sustainability, inclusion and aesthetic quality
- ✓ **Engage a range of stakeholders:** The development and continued operation of the ROD Space has included a range of public, commercial, and social sector stakeholders. Of particular importance has been the role of volunteers.
- ✓ **Offer a mix of activities:** The activities of the ROD Space appeal to a range of audiences and are enabling intergenerational engagement

## Don'ts

- Underestimate the time taken:** The ROD Space recognises that it takes time to transform a previously industrial space into a catchy and engaging community centre
- ✗ **Forget that funding is required for operations too:** The ROD Space was redeveloped at a relatively low cost, but resource is also required to maintain operations.
- ✗ **Exclude Key Stakeholders:** The ROD Space has engaged a range of stakeholders but recognises that there will always be unheard voices. Don't forget to engage with these groups and target them for engagement.
- ✗ **Think about engagement in isolation:** The ROD space has engaged across stakeholders in a participatory way, at different levels, and in a multidisciplinary way.

## Key learnings from ROD Creative & Learning Space

01

### **Leadership and Engagement is key**

The success of the ROD Space has been shaped by strong leadership and continuous engagement across stakeholders. The initiators of the project have had a long term vision and mission for the project and have committed to supporting the ongoing engagement of stakeholders.

02

### **The important role of the Municipality**

The role of the local Municipality is incredibly important in any NEB project, whether that be in political engagement, the role of planners and architects, or in the provision of funding. The local Municipality has played a key role in the evolution of the ROD Space

03

### **Community engagement and direct involvement**

The ROD Space recognises that whilst it is important to engage the local community in project design, it is imperative to directly involve them in project delivery and to ensure activities meet community needs.

04

### **The importance of monitoring**

The initiators of the ROD Creative and Learning Space are keen to scale the concept and apply it in other places in Romania. However, they recognise it is important to document impacts and validate successes before doing so.

## **Learn more with the ROD Creative and Learning Space!**

The ROD Creative and Learning Space serves as a model for sustainable and inclusive urban regeneration, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and local engagement in realizing NEB-aligned projects. It offers unique insights into community-driven urban regeneration and creativity-focused development.

If you want to exchange and benefit from their experience, the EUI [City-to-City Exchange](#) programme provides a great opportunity to do so.



## Fábrica de Santo Thyrsó, Portugal

### UNLOCKING NEB POTENTIAL WITH COLLABORATIVE TOOLS

*Vera Araujo - Head of Division INVEST Santo Tirso*

*Liat Rogel - EUI Expert*

#### **Fábrica de Santo Thyrsó: A Cultural and Creative Hub**

The Fábrica de Santo Thyrsó project, located in Santo Tirso, Portugal, revitalized a historic textile factory into a dynamic cultural and creative quarter. This €9.5 million initiative combines urban regeneration with a focus on innovation and entrepreneurship in fashion, design, and creative industries. Developed by the Municipality of Santo Tirso with support from European funds and local investments, the project preserves the industrial heritage of the Ave Valley while offering a range of multifunctional spaces. From a fashion and design incubator to the Alberto Carneiro Art Center, this vibrant hub brings together business, culture, education, and leisure in a cohesive environment.

#### **Catalyst for Economic and Social Growth**

Since its opening, the quarter has attracted diverse stakeholders, including universities, local businesses, and cultural organizations, to foster collaboration and innovation. The project not only preserves historical integrity but also meets modern needs, with facilities like coworking spaces, a business incubator, and areas for cultural events. Located along the River Ave, the hub integrates leisure spaces with urban renewal efforts, creating a sustainable and inclusive environment. This transformation has invigorated the local economy, drawing in tourists, creating jobs, and inspiring new urban development projects across Santo Tirso.



## Do's

- ✓ **Leverage Partnerships:** Collaborate with universities, vocational schools, and businesses to create a strong ecosystem for education, culture, and entrepreneurship.
- ✓ **Preserve Historical Identity:** Ensure the renovation highlights the site's industrial heritage while adapting it for modern use.
- ✓ **Promote Sustainability:** Integrate energy-efficient technologies and sustainable practices, such as water reuse and circular economy initiatives.
- ✓ **Design for Multifunctionality:** Develop spaces that cater to diverse needs, including coworking, cultural programming, and leisure activities.
- ✓ **Engage the Community:** Involve local stakeholders and residents in planning and programming to ensure the project aligns with regional aspirations.

## Don'ts

- ✗ **Overlook Accessibility:** Design spaces that are inclusive for people with disabilities and offer seamless access to all facilities.
- ✗ **Disregard Long-Term Maintenance:** Use durable materials and plan for the upkeep of both modern and heritage components.
- ✗ **Focus Solely on Culture:** Balance cultural activities with business opportunities to ensure long-term financial sustainability.
- ✗ **Underestimate Economic Potential:** Actively promote the hub's potential to attract investment and tourism.

## Key learnings from Fábrica de Santo Thyrsó

01

### **Phased Development Enables Success**

The project's approach of renovating one building at a time allowed for a test-and-learn process. This method ensured continuous improvement, secured adequate funding for each phase, and built momentum by confirming stakeholders' interest at every step. This incremental strategy not only mitigated risks but also fostered sustained engagement from partners and the community.

02

### **Adaptive Reuse Revitalizes Heritage**

Transforming the derelict textile factory into a multifunctional hub preserved the industrial identity of Santo Tirso while reinvigorating the site with contemporary relevance. This adaptive reuse has strengthened community pride and created a space for innovation.

03

### **Collaboration Drives Success**

Partnerships with universities, local businesses, and international networks were crucial to the project's impact. These collaborations brought in expertise, funding, and new opportunities for education and cultural exchange.

## **Learn more with the Fábrica de Santo Thyrsó**

The Fábrica de Santo Thyrsó stands as a prime example of sustainable and inclusive urban regeneration, highlighting the significance of collaboration and local involvement in executing projects aligned with the New European Bauhaus (NEB). It provides valuable perspectives on community-led urban renewal and development centered around creativity.

The [EUI City-to-City Exchange](#) program offers an excellent opportunity for you to share and gain insights from their experiences.

## Dobele's Castle Reconstruction , Latvia

### UNLOCKING NEB POTENTIAL WITH COLLABORATIVE TOOLS

*Nadežda Čerpaka- Dobele District Municipality*  
*Eddy Adams-EUI Expert*

#### **Dobele Castle: heritage restoration as a local regeneration driver**

The mound and ruins of Dobele Castle were abandoned for many years, despite being of great historical and cultural interest. After a lengthy gestation process, an ambitious project was implemented to revitalise this historic building to become, once again, a functioning focal point of the local community. The restoration work was sensitive and complex, not helped by the advent of Covid 19, but the completed work reflects the values of NEB and provides an excellent case study in a very small city context.

#### **A dynamic multi-purpose local facility**

The restored Dobele Castle is not just a historic relic. The beautifully renovated building operates as a museum and also a flexible facility whose uses include weddings and musical events. It is fully restored as the cultural hub of Dobele.



## Do's

- ✓ **Actively manage expectations:** Many local people expected a fully restored medieval castle, which was not the concept. Proactive engagement with the community helped manage these expectations.
- ✓ **Identify and engage with the key stakeholder groups:** For example, disabled access was a big consideration here, so local disability groups were brought on board early
- ✓ **Invest in Heritage-Driven Modernization:** Use the opportunity to showcase modern design solutions and techniques, in keeping with the context of the heritage asset
- ✓ **Be bold:** Have confidence in your completed project and imagine its full potential - in this case as a draw for tourists at the national and international level.

## Don'ts

- Be over-reliant on public funding:** a sustainable funding model is likely to include a mix of income streams - in this case through commercial use such as weddings and events.
- ✗ **Be deterred by obstacles:** Ambitious complex projects will always face challenges, so anticipate risks and develop a plan that is flexible enough to overcome bumps in the road.
- ✗ **Worry about the size of your city:** If you're good enough you're big enough. Dobeles has around 9,000 citizens, but its small scale didn't confine its ambitions.
- ✗ **Underestimate the power of local cultural pride:** The right project can unlock a reservoir of local pride and support. Dobeles Castle recognised and tapped into this.

## Key learnings from Dobeles Castle Reconstruction

01

### **The power of big picture visioning**

The starting point for this project was inauspicious, located in a small city with significant obstacles facing its development. Initially driven by the vision of a few key individuals - including the architect - it gathered momentum and was eventually completed against the odds.

02

### **Placing heritage at the heart of urban development**

Successful cities know their best assets and how to mobilise them. In this case, Dobeles was able to position this key heritage restoration project within wider plans to energise the local economy.

03

### **Embedding NEB Principles**

By focusing on sustainability, beauty, and inclusivity, Dobeles Castle ruins align with the NEB vision to create spaces that reflect local realities and values.

04

### **Root heritage projects in the realities of today**

Dobeles Castle's future is more financially sustainable because the model identified the market for this niche product, which includes community events like weddings and music concerts, as well as its function as a tourist attraction.

## **Learn more from the Dobeles Castle experience!**

The renovation of the Dobeles Castle ruins provides an exemplary case of a small city maximising its local heritage assets. This ambitious and challenging project illustrates how a neglected historical building can be transformed into a key local driver for sustainable urban development.

If you want to exchange and benefit from their experience, the EUI [City-to-City Exchange](#) programme provides a great opportunity to do so.



## *Conclusion*

### Key Learnings on the application of tools to support integration of NEB values & principles

Participant reflections underscored the value and practicality of the NEB tools in fostering more thoughtful, considered and community-aligned urban development. Participants appreciated the framework and process for stakeholder mapping provided by the interest/influence grid. They particularly appreciated its use in enabling the facilitation of interdisciplinary team reflection, breaking silos, bringing together a variety of valuable perspectives and knowledge on diverse and multi-level stakeholders.

The guiding questions from the NEB compass were praised for their ability to break down NEB principles into actionable insights, fostering new considerations about the diversity of stakeholders across levels that need to be engaged to ensure the integration of sustainability, inclusivity, and aesthetic value in their projects. The variety and adaptability of the tools within the toolbox were also recognised.

This session also highlighted the critical role of capacity building and expert facilitation in supporting the collaborative development process. Integrating NEB principles into urban development represents a significant shift in traditional practice, requiring not only new tools but also a new mindset. Expert and impartial facilitators play a vital role in navigating this transformation, helping diverse stakeholders align on shared goals and ensuring that the collaborative process yields the best outcomes. Their guidance can bridge gaps in understanding, mediate conflicting perspectives, and maintain focus on NEB's core values.

By equipping practitioners with these tools and insights, reinforcing the importance of facilitation, the event not only demystified the "how" of NEB but also empowered participants to drive urban regeneration that reflects both community identity and NEB values. This holistic support is essential for ensuring the success and scalability of NEB-aligned projects across Europe.

# 04 Study visits

## Aim of the study visits

The aim of the site visits is to investigate whether and how the sites are relevant to the values (beautiful, sustainability, inclusion) and the working principles (participatory process, multilevel engagement, transdisciplinary approach) of the NEB concept, at their different stages, from the design to implementation and restoration.

### Cleeves Riverside Quarter and the role of Limerick Twenty Thirty

The iconic 10-acre former Cleeves factory site has been in industrial use since the mid-nineteenth century and retains some of its historic and characterful old buildings including the landmark red brick chimney. The ambition of Limerick Twenty Thirty (LTT) is to revitalise the Cleeves site and surrounding area. Once fully developed, the site has the potential to accommodate future population growth through residential unit provision and to further promote a strong local economy through the creation of employment and new local attractions, thereby encouraging and facilitating new business investment. In response to the requirements of the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028, a masterplan has been prepared to present design solutions that are both sustainable and innovative, that integrate the historic buildings and industrial heritage within the proposed development and include a public realm space that relates both to the urban core and the River Shannon. To inform the preparation and design of the Masterplan, Limerick Twenty Thirty undertook a stakeholder engagement and public consultation process



### The Opera Square

The 3.7 acre Opera Square project will be a landmark commercial development in a regional and national context and one that will reflect Limerick's status as a leading city in sustainability and innovation. Opera Sq. is targeting internationally recognised certification of LEED platinum and WELL platinum making it one of the most sustainable workspaces in the world. This building is also EU Taxonomy compliant.



### Saint Mary's Cathedral

The Cathedral is one of the oldest buildings in Limerick. Saint Mary's is an extraordinarily complex building representing developments from the mid-twelfth century to the later twentieth century. It is open to and engaging with society as a whole and offering support for those needing help.



### Nicholas street

The revival of Nicholas Street is a holistic project that incorporates efforts to preserve historically significant sites, such as 'The Fireplace Site' maintaining the street's unique character and cultural heritage, and enhancing its aesthetic appeal while also seeking to promote employment, drive footfall, and find new uses for underutilized locations, fostering a more inclusive and vibrant community.

# 05 Conclusions



## ***THRIVE AND THE NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS***

As Irish local authorities prepare to apply for the Strand 2 Call in January 2025, which allocates €25 million to the Northern and Western Region and €60 million to the Southern and Eastern Midland Regions, the Managing Authorities invited the audience to review the NEB Compass and Toolbox, and to evaluate their projects using the Small Project Checklist.

This process is intended to ensure that projects align with the values and principles of the New European Bauhaus prior to submitting funding applications.

The Managing Authorities also outlined their vision of developing a THRIVE community to foster knowledge exchange, mutual learning, and maximise the impact of insights gained from the capacity-building event held in Limerick.

In addition, the Managing Authorities encouraged the Irish local authorities to use this approach beyond the THRIVE Projects.

As citizens and stakeholders would be now engaged, they may expect this level of participation and co-creation for future projects.

In their concluding words, the Managing Authorities stressed that using a transdisciplinary approach with multi-level engagement and a participatory process will lead to more sustainable, more inclusive and more beautiful strategies, plans and projects into the future.





## ***SUMMARY***

Participants shared key reflections and enthusiastic feedback during the final wrap-up session. Several noted the high levels of energy and collaboration that had been evident over these two days. Humour had also been in key factor in a good-humoured learning environment.

The overall structure of the event was singled out for praise, with an excellent mix of plenary, break-out and exhibition sessions. The high quality and relevance of the case studies – Irish and international – was identified as being especially helpful. Many in the room mentioned the momentum that had been created and the potential for follow up through tools like the EUI city to city exchanges.

Participants acknowledged the value of testing new tools in the breakout spaces, such as the stakeholder mapping activity, which many felt they would be able to use in their local context.

The good timing of this event, linked to the new THRIVE call, meant that participants were well placed to prepare and submit stronger applications.

The European Urban Initiative funds City-to-City Exchanges, Peer Reviews and Innovative Actions. It also hosts Portico, with information on good practices, partners and other EU funds. Irish city participants are now better placed to use EUI and NEB instruments to support their THRIVE projects and proposals.



