

Dirk van den Tillaar – Area

The power of collaboration and decisiveness in circularity

During the roundtable meeting on circularity in property maintenance, it became clear that the desire to become more sustainable is widely shared. Not just by improving insulation in homes, but especially by constructing buildings with the right materials. According to speaker Dirk van den Tillaar from Area, the main question is how we are going to make things more sustainable. “Everyone wants to, but we’re still searching for the right approach,” he says. “We need practical examples, something that can be applied immediately. Only then can you really make an impact.”

The BCI Gebouw tool was frequently mentioned in the discussions as a means to make circularity measurable. Dirk sees its value, but also adds a note of caution. “It’s a powerful instrument, but it also raises questions. How do you steer effectively when there are so many different indicators? You have MKI, CO₂ equivalents, material data and more. It’s difficult to filter out the right choices, so it helps to also use your common sense.”

What Dirk appreciated about the meeting was the openness of the participants. “There was little criticism or negativity, but a lot of recognition. For example, about how difficult it is to make the value of real estate concrete. When something new comes along, it often takes a long time before there is trust that it actually works better. You really have to start with the trust that the right choices are being made, even if the evidence isn’t fully there yet.”

According to Dirk, there is a clear shift within the housing corporation sector: from an energy label approach to a heat load approach. “There is an increasing need for substantiation: why do you choose a certain material or technique? You have to be able to explain that well. But also: are you speaking the right language with your partners? If you don’t understand each other, you won’t get anywhere.”

To anchor circularity, Dirk likes to work with regular partners in a so-called Sprint Team, where they learn with and from each other. “We want to collaborate openly and transparently, so that we can all learn. What we have already learned is that you need to make good agreements in advance. Get to know each other’s level of ambition, address each other if someone falls behind and be honest about money.”

Dirk speaks enthusiastically about Area’s approach. “We have opened up the financial conversation. We are clear about what is and isn’t possible, which helps enormously. In the brainstorming phase, you shouldn’t shoot down everything immediately, but rather look at what is possible. Start where you can and make a logical plan.”

The most important message Dirk takes from the session is clear: “Stop with pilot projects, just do it and implement the successes directly in your next projects. Stand fully behind your choices, not: ‘let’s just try it and see what happens.’ Make clear agreements about task division and costs and be willing to take financial risks.”

Dirk points to a smart approach at Area: “We have created a kind of financial reserve, so that a project isn’t immediately under pressure if it turns out to be a bit more expensive. That gives room to experiment without it hurting right away. But discuss this together, because these kinds of things can change every week.”

Finally, Dirk emphasizes the importance of decisiveness and collaboration: “Consciously make the right choice and step in together. Together, only then can we really make progress towards structural circularity.”