

New Governance Strategies for Urban Design

Urban Maestro

We should not underestimate the role of visions, narratives and images in the governance of urban design. Creating a common imaginary is an effective way for promoting the alignment of a large number of stakeholders towards the same objective. It acts as a soft coordination mechanism.

Frédéric Saliez
United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat

In cities we have regulations, planning laws and so on. They can help to avoid excesses and eliminate blunders, but they are not enough if we want to go for excellence. For that, we need ‘soft power’ mechanisms that promote interesting architecture and urban design in the cities.

Kristiaan Borret
Brussels Bouwmeester Maître Architecte

If a place returns economic, social, and environmental value to its citizens, then that to me is a high quality place, and design is a critical part of ensuring that this value is maximised.

Matthew Carmona
University College London

To ensure the sustainability of social innovation initiatives in the long-term, we need to combine bottom-up and top-down processes and go beyond traditional policies. This might help to create enabling environments and empower citizens’ initiatives while integrating the fundamental role of public authorities.

Cecilia Bertozzi
United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat

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BOUWMEESTERMAITREARCHITECTE



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What is Urban Maestro about?

The quality of the urban environment derives from various interventions and policy decisions over time and reflects the collective work of multiple stakeholders – public, private and community. While European cities have developed sophisticated laws and regulations ('hard power') to secure diverse public interest objectives through the governance of urban design, the quality of the resulting urban places can be disappointing. Often outcomes are not aligned with commonly shared objectives such as creating environmental sustainability, human scale, land use mix, conviviality, inclusivity, or supporting cultural meaning.

At its core, the coordination and support action Urban Maestro aims to understand and encourage innovation in the field of urban design governance through a better understanding of alternative non-regulatory ('soft

power’) approaches and their contribution to the quality of the built environment. Far from limiting themselves to be simple regulators or even direct investors, many European countries and cities have developed these alternative approaches in order to enhance their ability to intervene as enablers or brokers in urban development. Through these means, they have initiated strategies to promote a high-quality built environment, often combining different formal and more innovative informal tools to guide, encourage, and enable better design.

For instance, a city may decide to promote quality by supplementing its zoning-based planning system with non-mandatory guidance, by organising architectural competitions, by setting up a process of peer review for design proposals, by instigating temporary urban interventions to demonstrate the potential of particular spaces, or by creating financial incentives linked to achieving certain design or other social objectives. Of these various strategies, financial mechanisms and their relationship to informal tools of urban design governance represent a particular focus of the project. It is hypothesised that, for example, synergies between such tools have the potential to make both approaches

more effective in attaining their desired outcomes.

Urban Maestro aims to capture and highlight knowledge about how such initiatives are used in practice, with what purpose, and with what impact on delivering better-designed places. Ultimately, Urban Maestro expects to contribute to the global urban debate and the realisation of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by enhancing practices of urban design governance within Europe and beyond.

Urban Maestro was launched in 2019 and completed in 2021 by three partners: the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Brussels Bouwmeester Maître Architecte (BMA) and the University College London (UCL). It is funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme.

Urban Maestro's methodology

The Urban Maestro project used a set of research and learning approaches to gather and capture information about the diverse approaches to urban design governance across Europe:

- **Analytical framework:** to structure the analysis and build a common understanding, the Urban Maestro team developed an [analytical framework](#) that took a 'tools-based' approach in order to classify a range of informal urban design governance tools, allowing a better understanding of how urban design governance was constructed, tested, and refined. At the heart of this, is a European typology of urban design governance tools.

- **Survey:** using the analytical framework to structure the questions, a [Europe-wide survey](#) of informal urban design governance practices was conducted, primarily at the level of nation states, with a questionnaire sent to 124 governmental, arms-length bodies and non-governmental agencies across Europe with responsibility for design. The survey covered 32 European countries (EU and EFTA) and received a response rate of 51%, including from 31 national level departments, giving invaluable information about the tools used and the structure of provision in each territory.

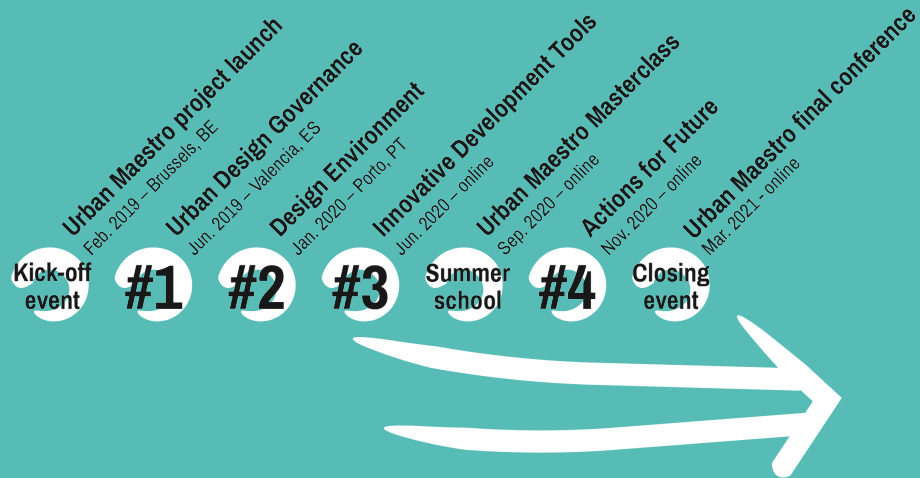
- **Panorama:** using the survey as a starting point and then supplementing it through a snowballing process, over 100 informal urban design governance practices were reviewed and in excess of 80 summarised in

a series of published fact sheets, spanning across Europe. The work was largely carried out based on published materials, leading to the [publication of an online fact sheet](#) for each practice, covering 30 countries. In addition to the cases identified by the team, an [open call](#) was made through the project website, with the suggested practices added to the panorama if they met key criteria: informal, innovative, and not already covered.

- **Case studies:** building on the panorama and selecting practices that were both innovative and representative of different informal urban design governance practices, a range of more in-depth case studies was undertaken. Some of these were undertaken by the project research team on the basis of analysing secondary documentation backed by interviews, and others were commissioned from experts associated with particular practices or research subjects. The intention was to gather greater insight into important practices and to feed into the final element of the methodology, the workshops.

Discussing the project methodology and approach to selecting case studies with the project's Support & Advisory Group., during the session that followed the Workshop 1 in Valencia, 2019 (c) Urban Maestro





• **Workshops** consisted of a series of carefully curated conversations with a diverse range of audiences (practitioners, academics, specialists, and others) across seven separate events, some online and others in person. This [sequence of events](#) throughout the lifetime of the project allowed practices to be unpacked, compared and analysed, and led to both the sharing of knowledge and practices between the invitees and a better understanding of the practices by the research team.

Finally, the scope of Urban Maestro's investigation was captured and presented on the [project's website](#), which was structured to serve as a long-term knowledge platform that can be navigated and browsed in a variety of manners (tool-based approach, overall theme, free search by keywords, country-based list, alphabetical order, or a search by the type of documentation).

(next page) A snippet from the Workshop 2 session in Porto, 2020 (c) Urban Maestro

URBAN ENVIRONMENT

Challenge
INCREMENTAL
CHALLENGES
BY ARCHITECT
PUBLIC SPACES.

Possible
olutions

ts

John.howlin@...
CHAMP HOUSE
What are the opportunities? What are the risks?
What are the deliverables? What are the milestones?

How/when?
defining the scope, priorities, next steps...

Who?

Major
to the Urban
Plan
Core t

PUBLIC
AUTHORITIES
LAND/PROMPT
OWNERS

TEMPORARY
SOLUTIONS
FOR
CURRENT
ISSUES/
CHALLENGES

PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT
PHASE 2 PIC FIGURE

DEFINE
PURPOSE
OF TEMP
OCCUPATION
ANALYZING
THE
TERMINALIES

How
long?
Ability to
become permanent
allows
for
improving
infrastructure
to exist

What
FRAMEWORK?
What
FINANCIAL
STRATEGY
FOR TEMP OCCUPATION

Creating
self-sufficient
solutions

Public
Competitions?

IMPACT
MEASURES
Introduced
in
Urban
Development
Phases



Partners

RESIDENTS

PROFIT
ORGANIZATIONS

Stakeholders

URBAN PLANNERS

DECISION
MAKERS

URBAN
DEVELOPERS

? Unanswered qu

How to create a sustainable process in temporary urban interventions?

How should we keep the momentum created through a temporary urbanism process?

How to transfer a process of temporary urbanism to a permanent solution?

How to convince the investor?

Communicate clearly
the
TIMELINE &
PURPOSE OF
THE INTERVENTION

MAKE PEOPLE
AWARE OF THE
SCOPE, PRIORITIES
& FUTURE FUNCTION
OF THE URBAN
INTERVENTION

During temporary
occupation developing
infrastructure skills
for future use!

AVOID
GENERATION
CONTROLLING
THE AREA
OF IT

Temporary
space
↓
Space of
residents
(use - community)

Key messages
to your mayor, neighbour, city architect...



Towards a European typology of tools for urban design governance

Urban design governance can be defined as an intervention in the means and processes of designing and managing the built environment in order to shape both processes and outcomes in a defined public interest. It achieves this by intervening in the decision-making environment of development stakeholders (whether public or private) in order that their decisions have a clear place-based quality dimension.

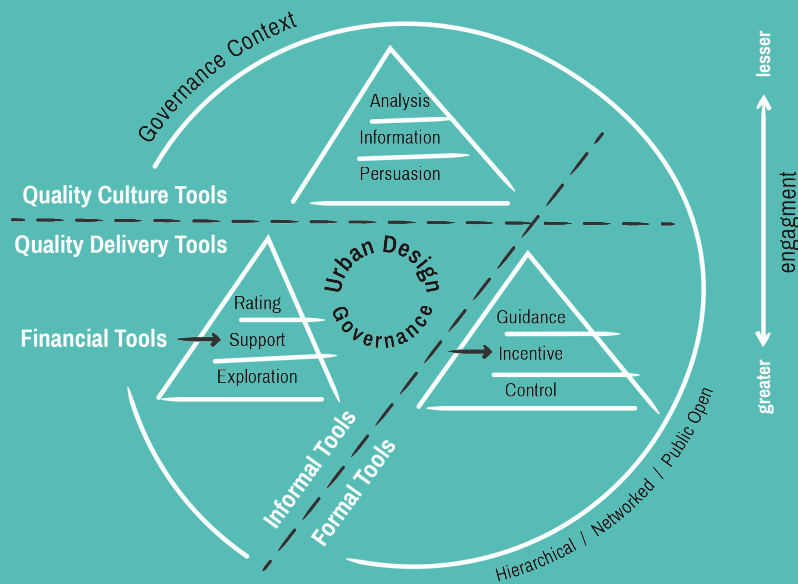
Shaping the decision-making

Throughout Europe, local, regional and national administrations have established sophisticated urban development control systems that are meant to ensure the compliance of urban development with basic urban design qualities. Underpinning these are a wide range of motivations ranging from protection of the historic built fabric to the promotion of urban areas to attract investment, and encompassing a wide range of societal, environmental and aesthetic motivations between. The systems define the rules through which development interests can express their aspirations and protect their interests through urban design. This is the realm of urban design governance and will vary across the continent just as the motivations (values) and local processes will also vary.

For every built environment intervention, the line-up of stakeholders, the leadership, and the power relationships are different, although the design remains a common and constant means through which the built environment is negotiated and renegotiated over time. It is not, however, universally prioritised. Within this context, the governance of design is primarily concerned with establishing and shaping the decision-making environment within which choices about the design of particular projects (large or small) are later made. In other words, it is not concerned with actually designing projects, but instead with setting the parameters within which others design. Normatively this would imply establishing a culture where the quality of place is routinely prioritised.

Influencing processes and outcomes

Globally, a wide range of tools and processes are deployed to steer public and private actors towards specific outcomes in terms of the design of the built environment. The choice of which tools to use is not politically neutral but instead reflects the diversity of the political spectrum, from ultra-liberal uncontrolled abdication to the private sector, to centrally-planned detailed guidance and control. Many European states sit somewhere in between. Not only do nation-states have their processes of urban design governance, but so (often) do individual regions, cities, and municipalities within each country.



We can divide the tools of design governance in 2 key ways:

• Quality culture vs. Quality delivery tools

Some tools focus primarily on influencing the broad culture in which the quality of design is prioritised whilst others concentrate on shaping actual projects and places. The former seek to establish a positive decision-making environment in which consensus gradually builds that a better quality built environment delivers place value and is worth striving for. The latter steer those decision-making processes in a more focused manner, helping to ensure that from intervention to intervention, design quality is delivered.

• Formal vs. Informal tools

The most widely used tools focus on formally ‘directing’ decision-making processes relating to the design of projects and places. In doing so, they use the hard powers of the state, which are generally obligatory to use and to follow. Others informally ‘influence’ decision-making from the broad culture of design to the specifics of projects. These use the soft powers of the state to encourage and cajole development actors, but in a discretionary (non-obligatory) manner.

These classifications create three categorisations of tools:

- I) informal quality culture tools,
- II) informal quality delivery tools,
- III) formal quality delivery tools.

A fourth – formal quality culture tools – can be envisaged encompassing the inclusion of the built environment as a mandatory topic for children in schools, but is omitted here as formal educational policy is seen as beyond the remit of built environment policy-makers and professionals.

In total, this leads to 9 tool types, of which 6 are informal, although it is important not to be overly rigid in how the classification is used. In reality, many tools have both culture and delivery implications, and the division between the formal and informal tools of the state are not hard and fast. A classification is instead a relational tool, designed to understand and relate broad types, rather than to strictly classify.

Within each category, there is also a transition from lesser to greater engagement, from more passive to more active engagement with stakeholders and/or the specifics of projects and places. This implies that tools at the base of each category are more hands-on (and often more forceful) in their application. Again, whilst this may generally be the case, it will not always be so as the transition will not always be as clear-cut as the diagram on the left suggests.

The 6 types of Informal urban design governance tools identified by Urban Maestro are outlined in the following pages.

Analysis

Analysis tools help us understand how the built environment is shaped, through which processes and with what consequences. This evidence can then be used to underpin policy and guidance, to monitor design outcomes from the development process, or to evaluate the state of the built environment more widely.

Examples include:

- Research projects focused on aspects of the design process or on understanding particular design-based problems
- Audits of the state of the built environment, in order to understand the quality of the designed built environment and the challenges it presents



Information

Information tools act to disseminate knowledge about the nature of good (or poor) design practices and processes, as well as related development practices, and why it matters. They help to raise design awareness and understanding amongst stakeholders.

Examples include:

- Detached and passive learning tools such as practice guides and case study libraries
- Hands-on and active training tools involving the direct engagement of participants

Persuasion

Persuasion tools actively make the case for particular design responses in a proactive manner. Instead of waiting for organisations and individuals to seek out knowledge (for example, in research or guidance), these tools take the knowledge to them physically or through the media; seeking to package key messages in a manner that engages attention and persuades.

Examples include:

- Awareness-raising initiatives such as design awards schemes or structured campaigns focused on changing perceptions and practices in key areas
- Targeted influence through direct advocacy to shape policies and programmes and partnership working across key actor groups



Rating

Rating tools allow judgments to be made about the quality of design in a systematic and structured manner, usually by parties (e.g. other professionals or community groups) external to, and therefore independent from, the particular design process being evaluated.

Examples include:

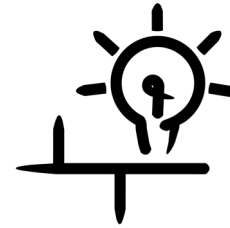
- Formative evaluation tools such as indicators or informal design review process which evaluate projects during the design development phase
- Summative evaluation tools such as certification schemes or competitions which allow design proposals to be evaluated prior to their development

Support

Support tools are more directive within the design process itself as they involve directly assisting or enabling design / development teams with particular projects, or with the commissioning of projects or the preparation of design guidance and other tools. They potentially encompass a range of financial means that can be used to encourage better design outcomes, providing financial support to key initiatives / delivery organisations, or the raising / steering / transferring of funding for better design.

Examples include:

- Indirect support tools, notably financial support to key delivery organisations (e.g. arm's-length agencies or centres with a design remit) tied to the delivery of defined quality / quality culture objectives
- Direct support tools include the provision of hands-on professional enabling, negotiation or advice



Exploration

Exploration tools engage directly in the design process through mechanisms that investigate, test out and involve the community in particular design approaches. They are hands on but exploratory in nature, either utilising temporary interventions or inputting into larger project or place-shaping processes.

Examples include:

- Proactive engagement tools such as design led community participation
- Professional investigation tools such as research by design and testing and on-site experimentation

One of the challenges is the disparity that can result from chasing only economic value. For this reason, it is important to be able to demonstrate, through research, that the small-scale investments can lead to better design outcomes without massive costs, and that ‘value’ is not just economic, but is also social and environmental too.

James White
Senior Lecturer in Urban Design in Urban Studies at the University of Glasgow

I feel that people don’t realise the importance of design even in the conversation of economic equality or in terms of sustainability, so for me, one of the first things to do is to show how fundamentally linked design is to inequality and sustainability. We actually need to be in the room as designers, architects, and planners when these conversations are happening at the policy level.

Pooja Agrawal
Assistant Director of Service Strategy at Homes England, Co-founder of Public Practice

I believe that once we have a generation that is able to better link the ecological agenda to spatial thinking and start to envision new future strategies spatially, we can really make progress in co-creation and collective decision-making.

Veronika Valk-Siska
Counselor for Architecture and Design at the Ministry of Culture of Estonia

Something that we as cities can directly work with, has to do with architectural education in local schools rather than in professional education, to raise awareness on the value of good design in the general population. I really believe that it will have a positive impact on the way we design and perceive cities in the future.

Hanna Harris
Chief Design Officer, City of Helsinki

Key recommendations

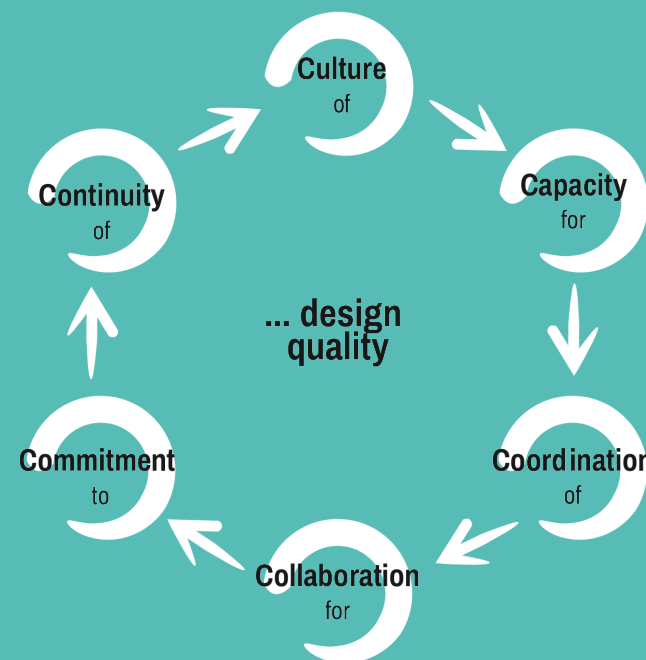
Over the past two years, Urban Maestro has taken a deep dive into the governance of urban design across Europe. It has examined interventions in the means and processes of designing the built environment put in place by public authorities and other stakeholders across the continent in order to shape both those processes and outcomes in a defined public interest. In particular, the focus has been on the use of soft powers to influence design quality, with the aim of understanding the scope, use and effectiveness of the range of informal (non-regulatory) urban design governance tools that governments, municipalities, and others have at their disposal.

Apart from the separate in-depth studies of the highlighted case studies, some prevailing observations can confidently be advanced:

- Place quality is not produced by accident or overnight but requires ongoing determination and investment from all stakeholders to deliver better places for people
- Informal tools and processes of urban design governance play a critical role in helping to establish a local culture of good design and the sorts of delivery tools that can help to improve the ways we shape places, projects, and processes for the better
- 'Soft powers' can be harnessed quickly and cost-effectively, and can be successfully linked to formal tools and investment processes in a manner that focuses and enhances efforts to deliver design quality
- It is always better to do something than nothing, although there is no simple 'recipe' of design governance approaches that will be appropriate everywhere - the context is critical and establishing the right mix of tools will depend on local circumstances, resources and practices

Whilst it acts with, for and amongst other stakeholders, the public sector nevertheless has a special responsibility for creating the conditions within which a high quality built environment can flourish. It seems that many of the most enlightened administrations across the continent are taking this role seriously and have been setting up dedicated actors, institutes and initiatives to drive forward a culture of design. The use of a varied palette of informal tools of urban design governance are central to this drive.

Whatever the local circumstances, the extensive discussions, sharing of practices and analyses that were underpinned, Urban Maestro suggests that governments – national and local – might begin by reviewing 6 fundamental factors for improving the quality culture and delivery in their contexts:





Culture

The full value and potential of cities can be released by committing to build a culture of urban design quality

- The quality of the built environment profoundly affects on the social and economic opportunities available to citizens as well as the health of the environment and local populations. Nurturing a shared commitment to high quality architecture, streets and public spaces that support an inclusive urban life requires long-term political commitment, sufficient and predictable funding, a willingness to engage actively in shaping places, and an ability to persuade investors and citizens that such a commitment is worthwhile.¹

- Producing a high-quality urban environment is a long-term endeavour requiring a culture change across the many people and institutions that together shape places. Cities that have achieved it have worked hard to create a widely shared culture of quality, but such a leap forward is made of many small steps encompassed in numerous decisions associated with the delivery of individual plans, projects and spaces. It requires long-term commitment – well beyond the duration of any political mandate – and short-term action.²

1. Panorama Lokaal. Urban competition on urban-rural fringe visions (NL)
Image: Site visit (c) College van Rijksadviseurs
[More info](#)

2. Warsaw city architect. Innovative governance models at the city scale (PL)
Image: Zodiak Pavillion
[More info](#)



Capacity

Putting in place the right structures and people is a key step to realising design quality ambitions

- The most sophisticated governance of urban design starts with the public sector recognising its own huge potential to decisively shape new development and existing places for the better. A first key step is to put in place the necessary administrative structures or organisations to deliver on the ambitions, and to invest in people with the right capabilities and commitment to command trust and wield authority when negotiating design outcomes.³

- This may involve enhancing the function of existing structures and arrangements or creating new ones, but any arrangements need to be suitably empowered in order to challenge existing practices and bureaucratic processes, particularly if they are leading to substandard outcomes. In doing so, it may be wise to start small and build from there, selecting a single tool (e.g. design review, design competitions, citizens juries, awards schemes, etc.) and adding others as and when resources allow. Leadership is key, and determining from who or where that is coming is critical.⁴

3. Oslo waterfront regeneration. Governing high-quality urban design in the long-term (NO)
Image: The harbour promenade between the public library opening in 2020 and the Opera House (c) Bjørvika Utvikling/Vibeke Hermanrud
[More info](#)

4. Urban Design London. Advocating for well-designed spaces and places (UK)
Image: Event Takeaway - Introduction to Urban Design (c) Susan May
[More info](#)



Coordination

Bringing tools together across hard and soft power categories can be particularly effective for influencing the delivery of design quality

A culture of quality is underpinned by having the right tools in place that will enable city authorities to consistently encourage and require design quality. Formal regulatory instruments are important, but so too are the sorts of informal and flexible tools e.g. design guidance, professional enabling, on site experimentation, etc. that can leverage on the expertise and creativity of motivated individuals and utilise the soft powers of the public sector to inform and actively engage key parties in the delivery of design quality ambitions.⁵

The most sophisticated and successful approaches result from a continuity in approaches and a mix of tools aligned towards the same quality objectives. Traditional regulatory tools (spatial development plans, construction regulations, local taxation, etc.) can be given a quality dimension through combining them with softer approaches across the six categories of informal tools of urban design governance: analysis, information, rating, persuasion, support, and exploration. If used in combination with financial mechanisms, informal tools can help to maximise value from public resources by encouraging more informed and effective public spending.⁶

5. BMA Brussels Bouwmeester Maître Architecte. Promoting spatial quality in urban development projects (BE)
Image: Team BMA (c) Jonathan Ortegat
[More info](#)

6. Concept tendering procedures. Prioritising design quality (DE)
Image: Metropolenhaus am Jüdischen Museum, architecture: bfstudio-architekten (c) Robert Temel
[More info](#)



Collaboration

Developers, investors and citizens should be engaged in an ongoing conversation about design quality

A feature of much contemporary development is an imbalance of power in development processes. Informal tools of urban design governance can be particularly effective at garnering and amplifying community voices, as well as motivating private interests to both engage in a conversation about the future of place, and to commit to playing a role in delivering public design quality ambitions and long-term visions. The quality of these conversations is critical for enriching understanding and mutual learning.⁷

For example, urban design processes can often be seen as political or developer-led processes leaving residents feeling sidelined. Here, soft power tools such as co-creation and collaborative management can help to legitimise processes and inspire better outcomes. Similarly, economic resources and incentives can best be integrated with design objectives when languages and methods are fully aligned. Demonstrating leadership on design is essential and soft powers can facilitate this but it requires listening, garnering support and recognising diverse private and public interests.⁸

7. Community Land Trust Brussels. Providing affordable qualitative housing (BE)
Image: The courtyard of the project Arc-en-Ciel (c) Tim Van de Velde
[More info](#)

8. Co-City Torino. Collaborative management of urban commons (IT)
Image: A community lunch in the street of the Barriera di Milano neighbourhood (c) Co-City Torino
[More info](#)



Commitment

It is essential to consider how to tie design quality aspirations to financial incentivisation mechanisms and to private sector know-how

Too often design quality is considered in a bubble, separated from the economics of development. There is huge potential to incentivise the delivery of urban design quality, while saving on public funding, through linking any direct or indirect public sector financial contribution – land, loans, remediation, infrastructure, knowhow, partnership, etc. – to the use of informal urban design governance mechanisms. Land value capture and Public-Private Partnerships have particular potential to make this link.⁹

These tools offer tried and tested means to fill the public funding gap and align private actions to community-wide quality objectives. They are not just concerned with capturing private sector finance, but also private expertise to compliment public and community knowledge and resources. Tying design strings to such financial commitment can help to ensure that outcomes meet public quality aspirations and deliver long-term place value for all concerned.¹⁰

9. By & Havn. Model for holistic city development (DK)
Image: Park'n'Play in Copenhagen by JAJA architects (c) Rasmus Hjortshøj - COAST Studio
[More info](#)

10. Citymaker-Fund. Matchmakers between placemakers and investors (NL)
Image: Hof van Cartesius in Utrecht, the first case funded by the Stadmakersfonds
[More info](#)



Continuity

Learning and refining practices in the light of best practices and changing local circumstances is a continuous process

Everywhere is different, and practices that might be right for one municipality won't be right for another. As the Urban Maestro project has shown, there is great potential to learn from practices in cities that have made the transition to a culture of urban design quality. In this respect, it is easier to transfer practices that use the soft powers of the state because they usually they work independently of defined legislative and governance regimes, and can be adapted to diverse and changing local contexts.¹¹

As part of this, there is a need to create space (and time) for experimentation, incorporating continuous learning and refining of practices. Soft powers can facilitate innovation, to allow adjustment when outcomes are disappointing, or the commitment of more resources and political capital when practices succeed. Such local scale innovations – both inside and outside administrations – can then be scaled up to inform more general and formal policies.¹²

11. International Building Exhibition IBA. An instrument for visionary urban development (DE, NL, AU, CH)
Image: IBA Heidelberg project, Gadamerplatz (c) Thilo Ross
[More info](#)

12. Les Grands Voisins. Temporary urbanism and solidarity housing in Paris (FR)
Image: Point of view: festive weekend around the construction site organised with PM&A (c) Retouramont
[More info](#)

It is not the time of “ivory towers” anymore, we need to become more environmentally friendly and support healthy life in cities. And often the places that are struck with financial difficulties might offer the best and most innovative approaches that are perhaps not so commercially attractive in terms of looks but are nevertheless valuable with regard to urban dynamics.

Thomas Kraubitz
Associate Director, BuroHappold Cities Europe

We really try to speak a lot not about the formal qualities of architecture, but the stories behind them (...) so that non-architects would feel engaged in the conversation.

Anna Ramos
Director of Fundació Mies van der Rohe

As we were looking at how the city sets up the building standards, we figured out that there was no methodology for project briefs that would serve as a base for negotiation on building quality between different stakeholders.

Lukas Houser
Architect, Prague Institute of Planning and Development

I can think of a series of rather interesting developments where groups of people started an urban debate with the city on the future of the unoccupied buildings and spaces. They somehow manage to gather around them a large group of supporters and initiate something that the planning authorities themselves cannot do.

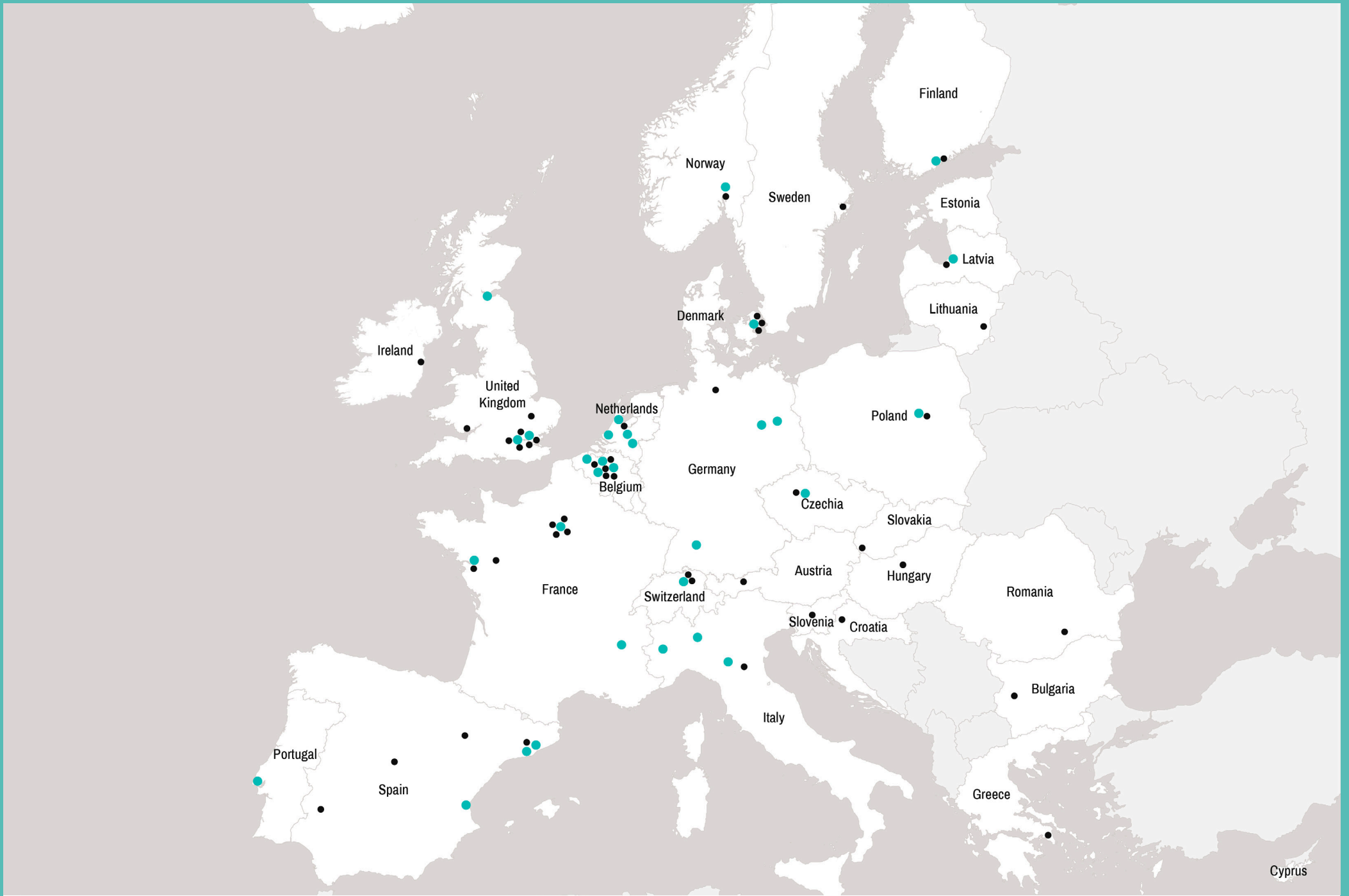
Christoph Grafe
Deputy Dean of Research at Bergische Universität Wuppertal

We try to find the local agents and local grassroots that actually are willing to do something and use their knowledge to start an urban process of regeneration or design. We call this the “creative bureaucracy” - a process that enables new kinds of engagements.

Roland Krebs
Urban Planner, Director of superwien architecture & urbanism

Panorama of innovative practices

The application of informal quality culture and quality delivery tools can be illustrated through a selection of innovative examples from across Europe and beyond. Urban Maestro's knowledge platform aims to serve as a resource for the identification, mapping, sharing, dissemination and promotion of examples of best practice in urban design governance that is accessible to everyone.



● Full case study ● Example

Panorama of innovative practices

AUSTRIA

- [Innsbruck design advisory board](#)

BELGIUM

- [Be.exemplary Programme](#)
- [Brussels Bouwmeester Maître Architecte](#)
- [Community Land Trust Brussels](#)
- [Petite Île / CityGate II](#)
- [Plateforme Réemploi](#)
- [Practical Guide to Architectural Contracting](#)
- [Prix MOP](#)
- [Pyblik platform](#)
- [Vlaams Bouwmeester](#)

BULGARIA

- [Sofia City Architect](#)

CROATIA

- [State of the Territory Report](#)

CZECH REPUBLIC

- [IPR Praha / CAMP](#)
- [Prague Public Space Design Manual](#)
- [Subsidies for architectural and urban competitions](#)

DENMARK

- [Applying land value capture tools + Germany](#)
- [Architecture Guide to the 17 UN SDGs + International](#)

- [By & Havn](#)
- [Danish Architecture Centre \(DAC\)](#)

ESTONIA

- [Estonian Centre for Architecture](#)

FINLAND

- [Arkki + International](#)
- [Design Helsinki](#)

FRANCE

- [Councils of Architecture, Urbanism and the Environment \(CAUE\)](#)
- [Grenoble Public Space Programme](#)
- [Les Grands Voisins](#)
- [Les Parisculteurs](#)
- [Nantes Dialogue Citoyen](#)
- [Rives Vivantes](#)
- [Samoa Île de Nantes](#)
- [SNCF transitional urban development](#)

GERMANY

- [Biennial Baukultur Reports](#)
- [Concept tendering procedures](#)
- [HafenCity Hamburg](#)
- [International Building Exhibition \(IBA\) + Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland](#)

GREECE

- [Biennale of Young Greek Architects](#)

HUNGARY

- [Budapest City Architect](#)

IRELAND

- [RIAI Town and Village Toolkit](#)
- [Shaping Space educational resource](#)

ITALY

- [Co-City Torino](#)
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www.urbanmaestro.org

The discussion on high quality urban development cannot be left in the hands of the public sector and the civil society only, it is fundamental to involve the real estate sector to make sure that the discourse and the ‘reality on the ground’ stick together. For this conversation to be productive, it is crucial that designers and real estate professions learn to speak the same language.

Frederik Serroen
Brussels Bouwmeester Maître Architecte team

Innovating the ways we design cities requires a new sort of sensitivity, courage, and freedom to experiment, and is key to linking today’s actions to future goals.

Simona Paplauskaite
Brussels Bouwmeester Maître Architecte team

The behavioural concepts of nudging and intrinsically motivated agents’ incentives helped us to understand that informal tools can be very effective where good design ideas already exist, even without explicit financial incentives attached.

Tommaso Gabrieli
University College London (UCL) - Bartlett School of Planning

Future living and working will require continuously evolving places which is why experimentation and indetermined, adaptive development processes will be central. Hence, we need to remain open for rethinking current planning practices, and embracing new ones.

Emilia Syvajarvi
United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat

The workshops have proven that the best way of convincing public authorities who are unfamiliar with and sceptical of experimental approaches is to introduce them to successful examples that they can learn from and be inspired by.

Colm mac Aoidh
Brussels Bouwmeester Maître Architecte team

Acknowledging that the state is one of the major clients of the construction industry and one of the largest property owners, it should set an example by promoting good practices as owner, developer and user of public buildings.

Joao Bento
University College London (UCL) - Bartlett School of Planning

Innovation is, to a certain extent, context-dependent; we saw cases of very simple tools bringing fresh air to otherwise dysfunctional urban governance contexts. Similarly, transferability is tricky but certainly possible on a much wider level than currently practiced – but for that, it is essential to figure out the key elements of success, and not simply copy-paste a format or structure as is from one place to another.

Terpsi Laopoulou
University College London (UCL) - Bartlett School of Planning

The quality of urban environments derives from various projects, interventions, and policy decisions over time. They are the collective work of multiple stakeholders – public, private, and community – but are not always of a quality that we would aspire to see.

Urban Maestro examines how the soft (non-regulatory) powers of the state can shape the decisions that help to deliver better-designed places. These approaches often combine different, informal tools in order to guide, encourage, and enable better design.

European countries and cities apply these informal tools often in innovative ways; therefore, Urban Maestro aims to capture how these tools are put into practice, with what purpose, and what impact they have on real-life solutions.