

SUSTAINABILITY

URBAN MINING - A CIRCULAR BUSINESS MODEL **WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN GOLD**



In the circular economy, buildings aren't torn down when they're old, but are 'harvested'. Materials are disassembled, 'up-cycled' and re-used in new buildings, significantly lowering their environmental footprint. This is the principle behind 'urban mining' – using the built environment as a sustainable goldmine. Michel Baars is the owner and founder of New Horizon, a company active in urban mining. Terms like 'demolition' and 'waste' don't exist in his world. He strives to show the world that circularity can be beneficial at every level, for both planet and budget: demolition with a mission!

What do you see as the main reason to embrace circularity?

'For me, the circular economy is the economic model that brings together apparent opposites: ecology and economy united in harmony. And personally, as an entrepreneur, I think my role in society is to persuade people who don't yet understand the added value and necessity of a circular economy.'

Why would a company choose to be circular?

'All companies are concerned with the continuity of their business. Matters like scarcity and availability, as well as environmental and social impact, directly influence this continuity. Though the

linear economy may not break down in the short term, a circular economy is not only better, but also inevitable. Inevitable because negative environmental impacts will be taxed; so I consider circularity to be the only winning strategy.'

Can you give an example of how urban mining creates impact?

'We hear a lot of great stories in our business. Like about the bar of the Top Oss football club that was incorporated into the floor of Circl here in Zuidas. It's really nice, and it's good for our image. But imagine how much more we can do for the environment by turning old concrete into new concrete. Together with our partner Rutte Groep, we're the first company in the world to do this successfully. Not only are we preventing tonnes of demolition waste, it's also good for the climate, as the concrete industry is a huge producer of carbon emissions.'

Can you compete with non-circular competitors?

'If you include the costs of the environmental and climate impact, we're competitive on all fronts. But we're not there yet. Despite the extra work our approach entails, New Horizon is already competitive in certain materials, such as ceramics, brick, concrete and bitumen. And we'll only become more competitive once a CO2 tax is introduced.'

How is the circular construction market doing?

'Demand is high and very much on the rise. In fact, we're consistently sold out. There are far too few donor buildings, and that's no good. Nobody will close the cycle on their own, so we're all dependent on one another. That's why I now tell project developers that I'll deliver circular concrete for their construction projects, but they'll have to donate a building as well.'

What's next for urban mining?

'We're at the dawn of a new phase where we're going to quantify the value of materials used in existing property. Based on our user data and experiences in the past, we can predict the "harvest" present in an existing building. This value has never been recognised. What's more, the value is now negative because it costs money to demolish it. We demonstrate that in a highly developed urban mining culture, very valuable components of a building emerge, increasing the building's commercial value by several percent.'



Michel Baars



Curious to learn how much value is retained in your building?

Do the Urban Mining Scan



Want to read the extended interview with Michel Baars?

Check out the article in 'Verschilmakers'

New Horizon provides construction companies with high-quality building materials extracted through urban mining. In essence, this means the built environment is the main source of building materials and resources for new buildings. By harvesting instead of demolishing, construction companies re-use materials, capitalizing on the intrinsic value of a building. This allows New Horizon to compete with the traditional 'linear approach'.