

# European Community-led Housing Meeting

Brussels, 28/29<sup>th</sup> of May 2016



## Participant List

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## 1. Country Overview

### The Netherlands

There are several thousands of Intentional Communities in The Netherlands (in the late 1980s a study estimated that there were around 8,000 projects). The number depends on the definition; additionally, most communities are anonymous and therefore not counted. LVCW knows around 750 communities.

Open Door Days took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2016 for the 7<sup>th</sup> time (started in 2009).

Peter Bakker (LVCW) - The purpose of the open days is to spread the idea and to reinforce the existing communities.

*Actors:* LVCW (Dutch Co-housing Association), TU Delft, Vrijcoop, LVGO (Dutch Senior Cohousing Association).

### France

There are about 130 operational projects (projets d'habitat participatif), of which approximately 30 are part of the Eco-Habitat Movement. Projects are a mix of ownership, shared ownership and rental housing models. We talk about self-promotion. Since 2000, there is also a cooperative movement with a first built experience in Villeurbanne (Lyon).

Open Door Days took place in May 2016. Participating communities: 130

1,000 people living in cohousing today

Michel Broutin (Eco-Habitat Groupé, Coordin'action): For the past 3 years, Coordin'action has been organizing national encounters, publications, lobbying for "Habitat Participatif" at government level. The aim of the Open Door Days is to promote participative housing in France. Open Door Days and European movement can influence the application of the law on the national level. The 1<sup>st</sup> year of the Open Door Days was dedicated to raising public awareness on cohousing in France.

Coordin'action follows two approaches: the multiplication of projects in France, and the promotion of the model at the European level.

Rémi Bourgeon (Habicoop) – The Open Door days at European level, could be a means to share experience between countries, particularly between similar types of projects.

*“The Open Door days at European level, could be a means to share experience between countries, particularly between similar types of projects.” Rémi Bourgeon, Habicoop, France*

*Actors:* Coordin’action, Habicoop, Eco-Habitat Groupé, urbaMonde-France

## **Italy**

Open Door Days took first for the first time in May 2016. Participating communities: 34. More projects wanted to participate last minute, and will therefore be participating next year.

There is a variety of Intentional community developments: eco-villages, cohousings, supportive cohabitations.. very often related to militant voluntary associations. If we count the more structured communities, the ones with their website or included in a network of community-led housing, we are aware of about sixty. The number is quite small, although considerably increasing, also due to the fact that the cohousing in Italy is on sale.

Chiara Casotti (Casematte, CoAbitare) - helps the community to empower and promotes the cohousing model. Italian cohousing network consists of volunteers, activist of cohousing, collaborates with the eco-villages network. Open days are a good opportunity to get in touch with other inhabitants movements.

*Actors:* Casematte, CoAbitare, Rete Italiana Cohousing.

## **Belgium**

Open Door Days took place for the 6th time in Belgium. 30 projects participated in the Open Days in Brussels and Wallonia; 43 projects in Flanders. They Open Days took place at the same time in Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels.

‘Habitat Groupé’ is a term born in 1975, approximately 150 projects are registered in the Habitat Groupé Network, but there are more, since there is no obligation to register. The movement is also connected to ‘solidary’ housing solutions for people with special needs (handicapped people, social reinsertion, the elderly, migrants, etc.). There are approximately another 150 projects.

Only four cooperative projects in French-speaking Belgium. Associations and public actors also build cohousing (30 projects a year). In fact, 10 years ago, mayors would see cohousing as a ‘hippy’ movement - nowadays there is an increasing interest in cohousing as a solution for the problems faced by society.

In Flanders, many people share houses to live and a lot of new co-habitat initiatives. Of the 43 open days participating initiatives, 2/3 are new projects.

There are two regulations which include cohousing, at the regional level (Wallonia), never the federal level.

Laurent Vanderbeck (Habitat & Participation) - has to staff members dedicated to lobby at the state level.

*Actors:* Habitat&Participation, Samenhuizen, CLT Brussels, CLT Gent, CLT Wallonie

## **UK**

Community-led housing is not that big in the UK, but incoming legislation is expected to strengthen the movement.

Main providers of housing in the UK:

- Council housing (state provided housing) – exists in small numbers
- Housing associations /registered providers are part-funded by the state, and provide 2.5 million homes in England. They are increasingly dependent on private finance, so, while they are regulated by the government and provide so-called 'affordable housing', their rents are only around 20% lower than market rents. The sector is expected to diminish as the government is encouraging more tenants to buy their properties (home-ownership) and private-renting.
- Mass/private developers as providers of 'free-market' housing - becoming increasingly dominant even in the provision of social housing
- The co-operative movement in Britain is relatively old and well established (since the 1960s) - and the majority will be registered providers as the Housing Associations above.
- Alongside, there have always been small-scale community-led developments / co-housing. The term is a bit broader in meaning in the UK than it is in other European countries.

The term 'social housing' includes all of the above. Registered providers/cooperatives etc. are part of the third sector as they are not completely state funded, but nor are do they belong to the private sector. There is still a confusion between types of collective housing solutions /social housing.

Community-led housing: There are at least four different models in the UK - CLT, cohousing, community-led housing, cooperative housing. Movements are mostly not very well connected.

No Open Door days in the UK so far, but there is interest.

*Actors:* BSHF, UK Co-housing Network, National CLT Network, Locality, Confederation of Co-operative Housing, Radical Routes, ...

## **Spain**

Private property culture is dominant in Spain. Before the crisis, the construction of private housing was booming and an important factor in the economy. Therefore, community-led or cohousing solutions are still at the starting point. La Borda Housing Cooperative is initiating a movement in Catalonia and constitutes a first pilot experience, which is connected to social movements that demand the right to adequate housing and the creation of new models of access to housing.

Elba Mansilla (La Borda) - cooperative movement has a large tradition, but not in the housing sector. Therefore, there is a need for cooperative knowledge transfer to the housing sphere. In Spain, it is difficult to think of the European level, since there is – for the moment - no local coordination.

In Spain, we aim to push for adequate policies (for instance, collective property; contract assignment for cooperative projects). What we need is: legal knowhow, sustainable and affordable funding ideas

*Actors:* La Borda (pilot project), Trabensol (pilot project), Co-housing Verde, Sostre Civic

## **Switzerland**

140,000 apartments, over 1,000 cooperatives but vary a lot in scale. In Zurich: ¼ of all apartments; 40,000 apartments (no speculation on the land, affordable rent, every member owns a part of the community)

Claudia Thiesen (Mehr als Wohnen) – We are speaking of cooperative housing in CH, not cohousing. Language is a barrier, therefore we have good connection with Germany and Switzerland and France, but not with the rest of Europe. CH is not part of European community, which is inhibiting exchange.

Additionally, Swiss cooperatives consider usually they are at a higher level of development than the rest of the cooperative movements. Hence, interest in Open Door Days is maybe not so big, since there is already a lot of awareness on this topic.

Some cooperatives have paid employees to manage field visits and to present the cooperatives.

*Actors:* GCHG, SCHL / ABZ, Wohnbaugenossenschaften Schweiz Armoup, ...

## **Austria**

No Open Door Days.

A first database is being compiled at the national level, mainly by researchers. In Vienna, there are quite active groups and movements in the cohousing and cooperative housing sector.

*Actors:* Darinka offers to provide some information.

## **Germany**

Germany has an important cooperative housing tradition, with around 2.4 million dwellings, but not all of them are cohousing/community-led.

Mietshäusersyndikat is another model, particularly present in Hamburg and Berlin, was born out of the squatting movement is still strong. There are thousands of projects. The model is currently being expanded to the Netherlands and Austria.

Open Door Days – regional processes (usually in October), up to local projects –promoted by trias, FGW, Berlin, Id22 (ExperimentDays).

*Actors:* Id22 / Co-housing Berlin, trias Stiftung, Forum Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen e.V. (FGW), Wohnbund e.V., Mietshäusersyndikat, ...

## **Finland**

Two communities participated in the Open Door Days 2016.

*Actors?*

## **Sweden**

Well established, traditional cooperative housing sector; new cohousing movement integrating particularly intergenerational and environmental approaches.

*Actors:* HSB, Kollektivhus NU

## **Denmark?**

*Actors: ?*

## **Eastern Europe**

First cooperative and co-housing initiatives are starting to be organised in Czech Republic, Serbia, Hungary and Slovakia. Cooperative model is negatively perceived by the general population because of the past.

*Actors:* Metropolitan Research Institute Budapest, Cohousing CZ., Kogradigrad, ...

## References

By Id22: The first European-wide platform for **CoHousing** presenting the great diversity of self-organized, community-oriented and sustainable housing. The **CoHousing Cultures** website and publication are intended to be a source of inspiration and advice for people interested in these ever more popular ways of building and living. <http://cohousing-cultures.net/?lang=en>

An inventory of co-operative and community housing in Europe with extensive information on different European countries by Wohnbund e.V. (ENG/GER): <https://www.jovis.de/de/buecher/details/europa.html>

A review of 11 Social production of habitat projects across the world by urbaMonde: [http://issuu.com/urbamonde/docs/urbabook\\_partner\\_review\\_small](http://issuu.com/urbamonde/docs/urbabook_partner_review_small)

## 2. Differences and convergences – Are we talking about the same thing?

Darinka Czischke (TU Delft) – Increasing number of academic and non-academic work to measure, characterize different forms of collaborative housing and community-led housing. Models differ, so does the vocabulary, but there is a lack of a common framework (as opposed to an increasing number of case studies) that helps understand the processes in Europe.

Needed: a clear framework to deliver a clear message to policy makers and to advocate for support at the governmental level. In this advocacy work, knowledge, definitions and numbers are important as well as are the arguments to defend collaborative housing solutions (refugee crises, affordable housing, social...). Most researchers are in fact committed to promoting collaborative housing.

The European Network of Housing Research (ENHR) consists of more than 20 thematic working groups but up until now, none was about collaborative housing. Hence, Dr. Claire Carriou from Nanterre La Defense University (France) and I have led the creation of a new ENHR thematic working group on “Collaborative Housing”, which brings together researchers working in this field across Europe. After several discussions about terminology, we decided to adopt “collaborative housing” as an umbrella term to encompass the wide variety of collective self-organised housing forms across Europe. At this year’s ENHR conference, which will take place in Belfast (June 28 – July 1), 20 papers on collaborative housing will be presented and discussed (research cases from Europe and beyond) in order to contribute to the debate about models, experiences and valuable knowledge sharing. Next year’s conference will be held in Tirana, Albania ([www.enhr.net](http://www.enhr.net)) The working group encourages not only academic researchers but also others doing research in this field to present their work.

Lidewij Tummers (TU Delft) - We can identify a few emerging topics – energy transition in housing (technical perspective, for instance, efficient heating systems); legal forms; decision-making processes; social inclusion/intergenerational topics.

Three “traditions” or “groups of countries”: countries with a long tradition in cohousing/cooperative housing (Denmark, Germany, Switzerland...); countries where these topics are re-merging because of the crisis (Spain, Italy, France, ...) and former communist countries, where cooperatives have been an organizational principle of society and cooperativism is perceived negatively.

Are we talking about the same thing?

Rémi Bourgeon (Habicoop) – We recognize that there are specific legal forms but our global idea is to bring people and projects together.

Joe MacFarrag (Granby4StreetsCLT) – needs vs. possibilities. Everything is relative: co-ownership as well (might be legal or just day-to-day practice), depends on the case.

Mariangela Veronesi (BSHF) – we have a programme on community-led housing in the UK, that has the idea to constructively look forward. Initiatives within the UK are very different but what brings them together is the fact that they are radically different from market solutions, and from ‘traditional’ public provision of housing. They constitute a third way, we could say?

Elba Mansilla (La Borda) – This approach was very important for our ideological struggle in Spain. The third way and the idea of providing and ‘alternative’ are art of the construction of the experience in Spain, part of the discursive struggle. Since there are no references in Spain, so we invited people from Mexico, Uruguay and Denmark.

Darinka Czischke (TU Delft) – discussion on definitions is essential to go forward since it is linked to our values. Do we care about sharing spaces or do we care about the legal/organizational dimensions of the project? – this is but one example of the discussions, resulting in different models and vocabulary - Intentional communities or cooperative housing, for instance.

Darinka Czischke (TU Delft) – I am not comfortable with the ‘third way’ approach. In The Netherlands, 32% of the housing is provided by non-state and non-market housing (housing associations), but by no means we can talk about community-led housing. In fact, third sector actors are not necessarily community-led but highly professionalized corporations that are merging and growing. Are they going to get involved with local groups/communities?

Peter Bakker (LVCW) – Co-housing communities have indeed been often built by housing associations or corporation, so we have to carefully distinguish and define what we mean by co-housing/community-led housing, etc., - The devil is in the detail, as we may say.

*“The Devil is in the Detail” Peter Bakker, LVCW, The Netherlands*

UK – The same is true for England!

Julien Woessner (FPH) – We support different networks, for instance, organisations working in rural areas defending agro-ecology. They have very different approaches but what unites them is a model that is not industrial that is opposed to profit-making.

One concept that is emerging is the concept of the commons.

In my view, it is essential to connect with actors that denounce misbalances, profit-making and the current model of organisation.

Pascal Lanselle (Coordin’action) – In my view, an umbrella term could be collaborative housing: would you like to promote that terminology, could you adhere to that? We need the researchers to come up with an umbrella term that would suit every movement.

Darinka Czischke (TU Delft) – any definition has to be a co-production between researchers and the field. We researchers have the aim to help articulate different actors.

Peter Bakker (LVCW) – To me, it is about the connection between people, the community. That is the most important part.

Theresa Macfarraig (Granby4Streets) – community-led housing works for me.

Elba Mansilla (La Borda) – commons is a very useful term for talking about non-state/public sphere and SSE and feminist economy.

Geert De Pauw (CLT Brussels) – What unites us is a set of political values (non-speculation, affordability, inclusivity), and human values (sharing, participation).

Pierre Arnold – Social production of habitat (SPH) is a term used in Latin America, need to find a terminology to have a positive view on how people contribute to the construction of cities. SPH is an umbrella term (informal, formal processes). Some public policies are referring to these terms to promote self-help housing, collective social housing.

### **(Tentative) summary**

*Different legal forms, but common emerging topics:* demographic change (aging societies), environmental issues, energy transition, climate change, migration, refugees, social inclusion, participation, new democracies, etc.

### *Classification:*

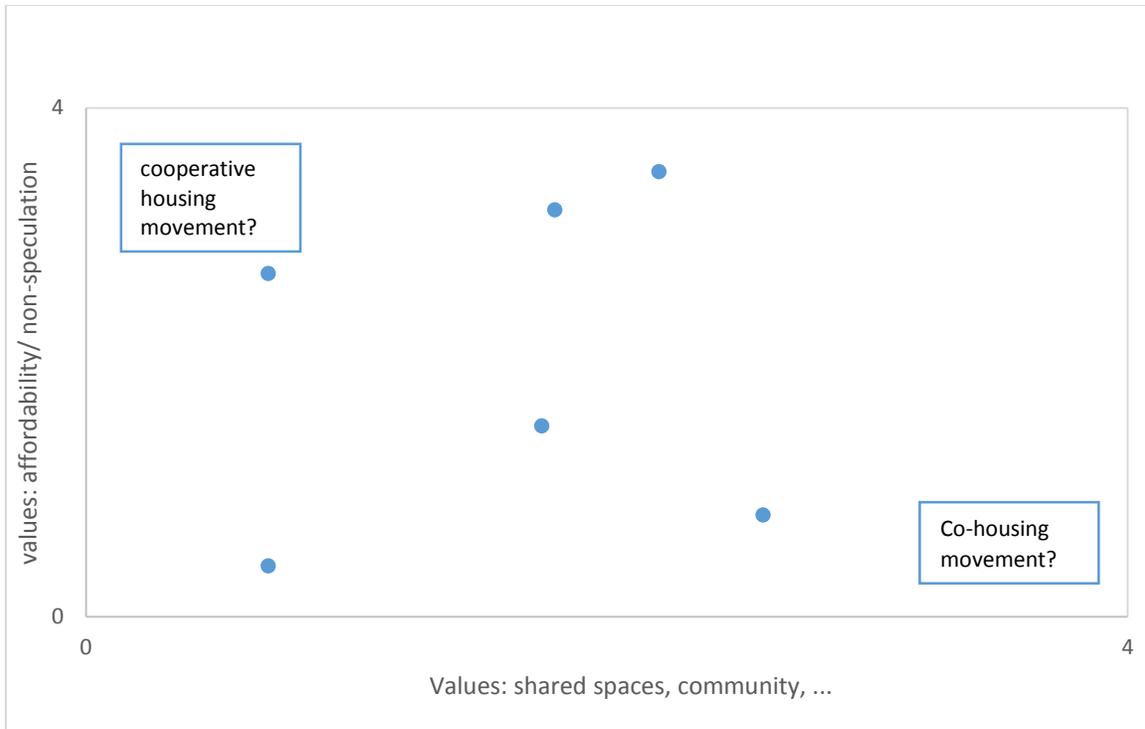
- a. Countries with a long community-led housing (mainly cooperative housing) tradition – Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, UK, ...
- b. Countries where there is a renewal of community-led housing, mainly in a context of crisis and austerity (Spain, Italy, France, UK, ...)
- c. Former communist countries, where cooperative and collaborative notions are negatively perceived but where small-scale initiatives are starting to pop up (Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia, ...)

### *Community-led housing = Third sector in housing production?*

Beyond market and state (public) actors, inhabitant groups (third sector organisations) produce and manage the city (housing). Although this vision may be adequate for some countries, in others the third sector cannot be considered to be “community-led” or “collaborative”.

### *Community-led housing: between affordability & community-living?*

Community-led housing projects are moving between different, at least, 2 axes – a preoccupation for achieving affordable housing and limiting speculation (and therefore the role that community-led housing actors adopt in city planning) and a preoccupation for sharing spaces and social values, and for building an “intentional community”. Each project defines its priorities according to subjective preferences, legal frameworks, socio-cultural tradition, economic options, etc.



### 3. Tools and constraints for coordination at the European level

- Resources and human capital: most organization and federations present at the meeting are operated on a voluntary basis. This is a serious constraint for not only organizing actions such as the Open Door Days but particularly for being able to collaborate across borders.
- Project documentation, online tools (website, email, etc.) for promoting events and campaigns are crucial. The French case shows that an online presence and public campaigning was able to support legal change at the national level.

Existing tools (non-exhaustive list!): <http://www.lvcw.nl/ic-day-on-the-map> ; [psh.urbamonde.org](http://psh.urbamonde.org) ; <http://www.cohousing-berlin.de/de> ; <http://www.wohnprojekte-portal.de/>; <http://www.habitatparticipatif.net/cartographie-de-lhabitat-participatif/>

Aim: build a (common) shared European database of community-led housing projects?

Peter Bakker (LVCW) - suggests creating a network-database: exchange and cross-reference existing data in a dynamic way without copying databases and multiplying work and effort (using existing standards – JSON, XML, KML). Meaning: When a visitor of one of our website opens a webpage for obtaining certain information (for example a page with all cohousing communities in Europe), this information is collected at the very same moment (dynamically) from our respective databases. The advantage of doing it this way are: we make use of already collected data; a centralized database is not needed; the update of data (addresses, texts, etc.) is done locally, as it already happened; each organization still presents information in its own way; each organization decides what kind of data it wants to share.

urbaMonde - A suggestion would be to establish a working group on this topic, including: Peter Bakker, Cyril Royez (+urbaMonde webmaster), trias Stiftung (+webmaster), Id22 (Germany). Others may of course join!

- Experience sharing as catalyzer: the aim is to federate legal frameworks and approaches, and to preserve at the same time preserve the diversity of backgrounds. Key to this: experience transfer as a good mean to develop knowledge, mutual understanding and respect.

*Example for this:* Open Door Days, European Community-led Housing HUB

- Collaboration at the international level seems to be secondary for local contexts that are in a pioneering and pilot project stage – first, pilot projects need to be implemented, then you may look for active collaboration with Europe. At the same time, since there are no local examples and good practices, pilot projects necessarily look for experiences from abroad and engage in a peer-to-peer exchange. In the case of La Borda, Spain, there was an active exchange with FUCVAM (Uruguay) and Mexico in the conception phase of the Housing Cooperative.

*“First comes first” Elba Mansilla, La Borda, Spain*

- In country contexts where community-led housing is very advanced and rooted (legally, financially, culturally), there might also be a reduced incentive for project representatives and umbrella organisations to collaborate at the European level. An example for this is Switzerland. Here, collaboration is motivated mainly (but not exclusively) by the willingness to expand the model, to help others initiate similar experiences.

#### **4. European Community-led Housing Award and HUB (European Social Production of Habitat Platform)**

Pascal Lanselle (Coordin’action) - Although the award-term is problematic, we recognize the importance of promoting interesting practices and being creative in that process. Coordin’action may or may not be part of this process in the future.

Charlotte Jacquot (urbaMonde-France, SCET) – any knowledge sharing/data sharing process is voluntary. Necessity to share objectives: not a competition but to help leverage experiences, process of capitalization. Solution-oriented dynamics.

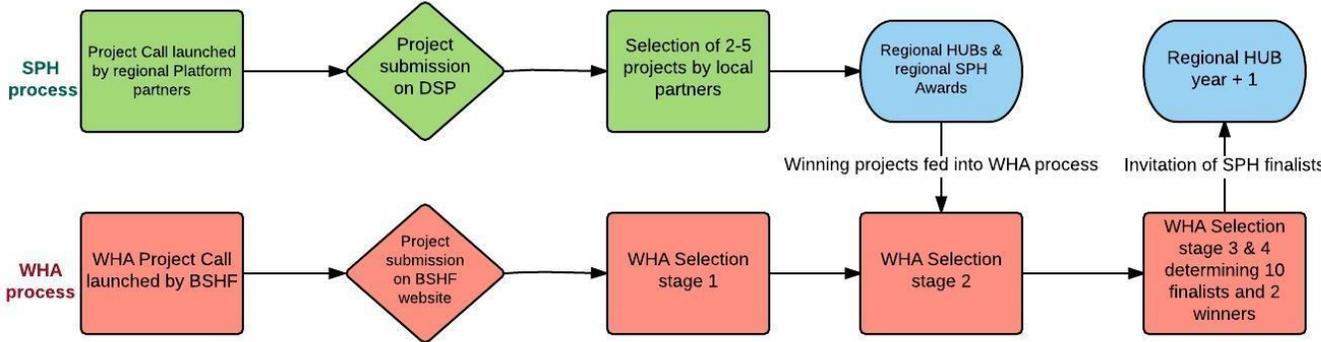
Joe MacFarrag (Granby4StreetsCLT) – like-minded networks/organisations put forward the process; I understand how it can benefit projects, if it is voted for by the members.

Elba Mansilla (La Borda) – For us the award is an important step, since we can use it for political lobbying. It’s the first recognition of our project and oftentimes public recognition of local innovation comes first from abroad, and then from within a country.

Pierre Arnold (urbaMonde-France; Habitat en Mouvement) – there shouldn’t be a closed list of criteria that defines whether a project can participate or not.

Robin Spaetling (Spreefeld) – The impact of the award, for us, is the experience-sharing component on day-to-day issues. To us, the award is a reason or rather an excuse to meet. The big question is: how can we share experiences on a daily basis, throughout the year?

**Integration of the Community-led housing (social production of habitat) award and the World Habitat Awards, coordinated by Building and Social Housing Foundation:**



Timeline	HUB – 5 months	HUB – 2 months	HUB – 1.5 months	HUB	HUB + n months
Activity	Call	Vote	Selection	HUB meeting	WHA Call
Digital Social Platform	Project documentation and mapping, online exchanges -----				
Actor					
Projects	Submit projects, document and update their experiences			Selected projects participate in HUB meeting	Selected projects submit their initiatives to the World Habitat Awards process (selection phase 2)
National networks and federations	Disseminate information	Recommend 2-3 projects in their region	May integrate the selection committee		
	Share information and project databases -----				
Selection committee		Selection committee is constituted of 1 host organisation, 1 representative of urbaMonde, 1 representative of BSHF, representatives of other interested networks/federations		Project review Decision-taking	
Max. number of members: XX (rotating)					
General Public	Vote for projects online, disseminate information -----				

## 5. Emerging ideas and next steps:

- Sharing and coordinating existing (national/regional) databases
- Continue and expand the Open Door Days in 2017
- Organise European coordination meetings and HUB meetings (once a year?). Who would like to host the next meeting? Fundraising?
- Develop a community-led housing “couchsurfing” – facilitate field visits between projects. The digital platform [psh.urbamonde.org](http://psh.urbamonde.org) could provide a space for this.
- Share documents and references (you have received a dropbox invitation for this. If you did not receive the link or would like to be added, please email to: [beavarnai@gmail.com](mailto:beavarnai@gmail.com) )
- Other ideas?

## Field Visit

L'Espoir, CLT L'Ecluse, CLT Arc-en-Ciel, Commons Josaphat  
28<sup>th</sup> of May, Molenbeek, Brussels



## Community-led Housing Hub

29<sup>th</sup> of May, Salon de l'Habitat Groupé, Louvain-la-Neuve





