

MESSY FUTURES



FULLY

CIRCULAR

RENOVATION



Foreword

Living in 2050: not new, but better

Welcome to this issue on Edisonstraat, one of many neighbourhoods in the Netherlands that led the way in circular living at the start of this century. While circular construction is now the standard, back then there were fierce debates: demolish or preserve? Is new always better, or not? And what does “sustainable” really mean when you’re knee-deep in dust?

This zine looks back at that transitional period — the tipping point. You will read fragments of news reports, old interviews, and reactions from residents who took the leap at the time, sometimes hesitant, sometimes convinced.

What stands out in retrospect is how quickly our thinking changed. In just one generation, we moved from building to replace, to building to maintain. From depreciation, to care.

We publish this zine not only to remember, but to celebrate: that circularity is no longer a dream, but everyday reality. And that residents, like Gerda, helped make the future possible — often without even realising it.

Edited by Messy Futures 2050

The texts and images in this publication were developed with the help of ChatGPT.

Don't Demolish, Harvest Instead



Edisonstraat: the neighbourhood that chose circularity early

The circular renovation of Edisonstraat began in 2025 and is still cited as a turning point in the history of sustainable living in the Netherlands. At the time, it wasn't yet taken for granted to preserve homes, reuse materials, or actively involve residents in the process. Today, we know no other way.

The housing association Trudo chose not to demolish the existing homes, but to thoroughly renovate them using reclaimed materials: windows, frames, roofs — all sourced from other buildings or production chains. What started as an experiment grew into a model example of “doing more with fewer resources” — a trend that spread worldwide among architects and builders.

Neighbourhood identity as a starting point

What set Edisonstraat apart was that the project didn't begin with technology, but with people. Filmmaker Julio captured in his 2031 documentary how strongly residents felt connected to their community. That sense of home proved more compelling than the allure of a shiny new-build development.

was shown at the community centre, followed by a discussion with residents, designers, and policymakers. For many residents, it was their first introduction to circular thinking — nowadays these film nights are almost nostalgic: who even needs an explanation about reuse anymore?

Deciding together

Where participation is standard today, it was remarkable back then that Edisonstraat residents were allowed to decide for themselves on the future of their homes. During the process, they unanimously chose renovation over demolition. The discussions clearly explained the pros and cons — not just financially or ecologically, but socially and emotionally as well. Resident Gerda put it succinctly at the time: “You understand it, but you just have to live through it.”

Yet pride prevails. Trudo director Ada said then: “With this choice, we take a step towards a sustainable, circular world. Where residents feel truly at home in their neighbourhood.” Today it is clear: that step was taken — and Edisonstraat led the way.

Film night at the community centre

On 11 July 2031, the documentary

Woorden of the Past

Our language reveals much about the spirit of the times. As eras change, so does the way we speak. Here are some terms that were still common in 2025 — but that we now (almost) no longer use.

de-mol-ish-and-re-build (*noun*) Term for completely tearing down existing buildings and constructing new homes in the same location. Now largely replaced by redevelopment preservation or low-impact renovation.

de-pre-ci-a-tion val-ue (*noun; pl: values*) Previously, materials were considered “economically worthless” after a certain number of years. Today, the focus is on material health and reuse potential.

end-of-life waste con-tain-er (*noun; pl: containers*) Existed until around 2040 on nearly every street. Now replaced by neighbourhood hubs where material flows are redirected back into circular loops.

new-build ob-li-ga-tion (*noun; pl: new-build obligations*) Many municipalities once had fixed quotas for the construction of new homes. In 2030, this requirement was replaced by the spatial-balance assessment, prioritising reuse and landscape impact.

ren-tal pro-vid-er (*noun; pl: rental providers*) Ownership and management of housing was long centralised with housing associations or investors. Since the 2036 decentralisation agreement, residents have become co-owners of their housing collectives.

We have only one Earth. There is no infinite supply of materials, nor the capacity to keep producing them endlessly. With more people and growing demand, it is essential to make smart choices in material use and achieve high-quality circularity.



4 LESSONS

1. TIME = MENTAL SPACE

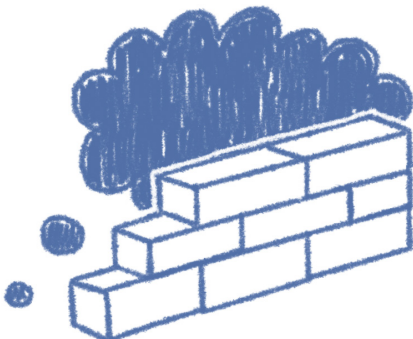
In 2025, residents were often swept along by a rapid construction pace. Now we know: people need time to say goodbye to old situations and to embrace new possibilities.

WHAT WE DO NOW:

We start from imagination, not demolition dates.



2. FROM THINKING TOGETHER TO BUILDING TOGETHER



Back then, residents were allowed to have a say — but the framework was often already set. Today, co-design is the norm: residents help design, manage, and restore.

WHAT WE DO NOW:

Resident groups have access to material data and can weigh choices as full partners.

SINCE 2025

3. ANIMALS COUNT

During renovations in the 2020s, little attention was paid to (domestic) animals. Stress, disturbances, and escape routes were often underestimated.

WHAT WE DO NOW:

We always build with an “inhabited scenario” in mind — including animal comfort.



4. FROM PILOT TO PRACTICE

Where Edisonstraat was once considered a “pilot project,” these kinds of processes are now standard. We are still learning, but the foundation is in place.

WHAT WE DO NOW:

Every neighbourhood has its own materials coach, timeline, and social playbook.



Note: LinkedIn was used as a social media platform focused on maintaining professional social connections from 2003 to 2039. During this period, the platform was used to showcase work online. Professional achievements were often highlighted in posts, frequently accompanied by emojis and hashtags. With the decline of the hyper-productivity culture came the realisation that true impact is local, relational, and collective. Since LinkedIn ended in 2039, results are primarily shared through neighbourhood archives, cooperative networks, and the Samenraad.

(The post shown here is an archival piece from 2030.)

TRUDO

Trudo

6,700 followers

5 d · Edited ·

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🔧 Circular renovation of Edisonstraat completed! ♻️

120 ageing homes on Edisonstraat are now ready for the future — without a single one being demolished. Instead of new-builds, we opted for a fully circular renovation, taking the environment, materials, and people into account.

What does that look like in practice?



'New' old window frames — sourced from a demolished office building



Wall insulation made from recycled jeans



Roof panels from former agricultural barns



Maximising value from existing structures

Even though we work with reclaimed materials, the homes now feel brand new — comfortable, energy-efficient, and future-proof.



We are proud of what has been achieved here: not just a renovation, but a shift in mindset.

Thanks to all involved residents, makers, installers, material experts, and planners. Together we show: circular really works.

#circularity #renovation #reuse #collaboration #sustainablebuilding #Edisonstraat #housing #futureproof



Jorik Hepworth and 44 others

4 reposts

👍 Like

💬 Comment

🔄 Repost

➦ Send

Review

DOCUMENTARIES



GREEN LIVING

Balancing ideals and reality



2DOC: CIRCULARITY UNLEASHED

Circular Public Broadcasting

Friday 22 July 2050 at 20:20 on NPO2

The new documentary *Circularity Unleashed* explores the balance between ideals and reality.

In this film, director Samira El Khouri, in collaboration with Circular Public Broadcasting, examines the successes — and tensions — of 25 years of circular building in the Netherlands. What began as a necessary shift in approach has become the standard in housing — but not without friction. Samira takes viewers through projects realised almost entirely with circular methods, including the latest complex by housing association Cirkeltje Rond. Staff demonstrate how materials, stories, and communities come together in buildings that not only reduce impact but also create greater value.

At the same time, Samira speaks with


residents grappling with the social and economic realities. She returns to Gerda, who in 2025 raised critical questions about the renovation of her Edisonstraat home. Now, 25 years later, Gerda shares how she has experienced these developments — and whether her concerns have been resolved or confirmed.

The documentary asks sharp questions: Who bears the burdens of circularity — and who reaps the rewards? How can we remain socially just within ecological buildings? And are we sometimes so convinced of our principles that we become blind to practical realities? A must-watch for anyone involved in housing, construction, policy, or community life.

Jeroen Dromer

Future Testimonials

What do residents in 2050 say about life in a circularly renovated neighbourhood?



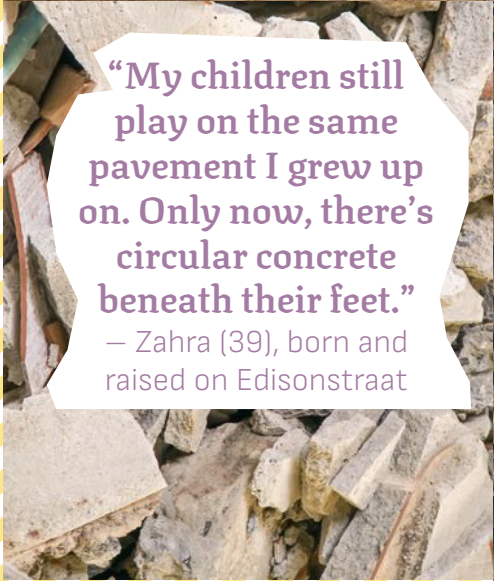
“People now find it normal that my kitchen is older than my son. Everything works, everything fits. Why would we replace it?”

— Chris (58), resident since 2041




“We don’t call it an ‘old block’ anymore. It’s our heritage — and it carries our memories.”

— Lotte (66), member of the residents’ collective



“My children still play on the same pavement I grew up on. Only now, there’s circular concrete beneath their feet.”

— Zahra (39), born and raised on Edisonstraat



“In the past, we went to the hardware store for new planks. Now we first ask: what’s still in the depot?”

— Maeve (29), resident and materials manager at Edison hub

Resident Gerda on the renovation of her home in 2025



Gerda (then 62) had lived in her flat on Edisonstraat for ten years when the circular renovation began. She stayed in her

home while the work was carried out — something now standard, but then still new. We delve into the archive and republish this interview from that year.

You would have preferred new-build, right?

“Yes, at first. I thought: knock these old buildings down and put something new up. But they came with plans to reuse everything. Window frames, kitchens, even roof tiles. I thought: how?”

What was the renovation like for you?

“A lot of noise. My pets were completely unsettled. And you stay living there, right? That’s tough. The neighbours got annoyed too. But they always explained things well.”

And the reuse of materials — what did you think?

“At first, I thought it was just old junk. My kitchen was 15 years old and, according to them, still good enough. But I just wanted something new. Looking back, I realise I had the same mindset — throw away, replace, new is better. Now I know better.”

What would you say now, 25 years later?

“I’m glad they went through with it. I see what it has done for the neighbourhood and the environment. But most of all: that I could simply stay here. All that hassle was worth it.”

“
It took some
adjusting.
But look at
us now



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