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I'm Noor Huitema-Hellemans. I'm one of the co-founders of Copper8 and we're working on the transition to a Circular Economy as well as in the Building Industry as broader than only buildings.

What drew you to circularity?

What drew me to circularity was a big fascination. So I was studying civil engineering and there were a lot of sunk costs and very little sustainability in the big building and construction projects. So I thought, okay, I think this has to change. And that made me come to circularity where you use all the stuff again.

So I thought maybe this could be a solution, not the only solution, but a little part of the solution about all the things that we're not doing really well with the environment and all the architectural and structural buildings.

Can you discuss one of your projects in terms of circularity?

That's the project Liander Westpoort. It's one of the buildings from a network company in Holland. That's a really big circular ambition, or sustainable ambition, that is located in Amsterdam.

And that's all about a wooden construction with steel as well, only when it's necessary, and a little

bit of concrete to make it stable. So they really thought about how can we make our footprint as less as possible with a construction that's modular, can be used again if we don't need it anymore, and where we can change the things that are in a building. Now it's an office building, but they can also change it to housing or other stuff that people need.

I think there are other aspects as well. The less materials you can use, the highest score you have on circularity, because if you don't need it, you don't use it. If you look at all the installation, you can see it, so it's not worked away, you don't have all the plasters, you don't have all the ceilings. So I think it's really reusable as well. You can get it out and you can put it somewhere else.

There were a lot of challenges, because first of all, it was COVID time. So everything that was in the architectural design phase was digital. And when we came out of COVID, we started building and there was the Ukraine war. So all the supplies were, yeah, pretty challenging to get it on time, but it worked out. So that was really cool.

And the opportunities were there as well, because there's not a lot of legislation to build in wood. And it was a new way of thinking. And they had a really cool design team to challenge each other and our role was as well, to challenge the design

team about what can we really make circular? How can we build with wood? How can we make it in a way that's necessary to make the revolution to a new kind of industry? And that made a really big opportunity as well, to focus on what's possible instead of what's not possible.

And also the time spent while constructing, because that was really short. Everything was really put in place right away. So there were not a lot of people in the building spot, in the construction spot. So that was really cool as well and a big opportunity.

The major lesson, I think, is always people. If you get the right people in the right place, then you can really change the world. And that's what really happened here. So it was from the industrial parties, the construction, the architects, but also from Alliander itself. Everybody wanted to play Euro league. It's really the highest opportunity ever. And that's what made everybody go a little bit further than what they were used to be. So I think that was the main thing, it's all about people and of course, you need all the right stuff as well. But if you look about all the opportunities, then it will, it can work. And that's what really worked out here as well.

How does the transition towards a circular built environment challenge the role of the consultant?

Yeah, I really love the word 'transition' because I really think that something is moving. I've been working in the field of Circular Construction for about 14 years now. And in the beginning, I was like a priest. Okay, what is it about? What are you telling?

And at the moment, people are really facing the opportunities and say, okay, it's not the only solution, but it can be a solution to some of the challenges we face. So that's what people are really moving forward. And before it was just, well, a story and now it's about all the numbers.

What doesn't work? How much does it cost? What will it say in carbon footprint, all that kind of stuff, so it's more in numbers than only in text. It's about working from a business case to a value case. So it's not about only financial numbers, but it's also about ecological numbers, about health numbers. It's more broad than what we used to do with only financials. And I think that's the transition we really need to make.

So a lot of design teams do have circular professionals and circular consultants. It's getting broader and people are really, yeah, thinking about should be there as well. Because everybody's got its own profession. And I hope that circular consultants will be over in a couple of years, because then all the architects and all the construction industry will be circular. So it's not a special profession anymore. That's my dream.