

COMMUNITY LEARNING IN A LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

Example of a Study Circle “School of natural building”

KEYWORDS:

- Building culture
- Construction
- Closed loops
- Governance
- Planning Tools
- Ecology
- Energy efficiency
- Indicators
- Mobility
- Technology transfer

TARGET GROUP:

- Architects
- Builders
- Citizens
- Craftsmen
- Home Owners
- Planners
- Politicians
- Policy Makers



Results and outcomes (use cases):

Study circle is a form/method of free volunteer education of adults. The participants of a study circle independently decide on what, where and how will they learn and set up a working method inside the study circle. They study as long and as intensive as they desire. Exchange of knowledge, skills and experience helps them stimulate their intellectual growth and create and strengthen the ties between people. At the end of a study circle they share their newly acquired knowledge with the general public through exhibitions, publications, etc..

School of Green Building (carried out in 2008) had ten participants: 6 men and 4 women, aged between 20 and 60. The participants attended weekly meetings supervised by a mentor. Study circle also collaborated with a natural building expert. Even though, local building materials in general construction were replaced with inorganic and synthetic materials, the participants of the study circle found them most interesting.

They were certain that materials which defined the cultural landscape and architectural details of the Upper Soča Valley (limestone, marl, travertine, clay, wood, straw, flax, res-

in, oils, wax, etc.) would be interesting for all those who are eco-conscious and have a dignified attitude towards heritage. The participants got to know the advantage of natural materials, and test their use value. With the acquired knowledge the study circle successfully applied to the call of the Ministry of the environment of Slovenia with a project titled "A Step forward in the quality of living and obtained financial funds to set up an outdoor photo exhibition, titled Green Building Today and in the Past, which was displayed in Tolmin, Kobarid and Bovec, and in 2011 also in Ljubljana at the Nature-Health Fair. Some of the participants were able to incorporate their new knowledge into their work, enriching their offer with new services, for example: selling natural flaxes and oils for wood protection, painting living surfaces with natural colours, stone craft, etc. Others used natural materials in the renovation of their homes.

Description:

With the exhibition, which opened in Tolmin during the Architectural Week in 2008, the participants of the Study Circle presented the role of architecture in shaping a quality living environment to the general public, indirectly contributing to a greater awareness of the general public on the topic of quality living and on the common responsibility in future spatial planning. The participants presented the possibility of a harmonic intertwining of natural materials with modern eco-friendly technologies and the traditional use of natural building materials in the Upper Soča Valley.

The exhibition encompassed 7 topic panels:

Building Tradition of the Upper Soča Valley, Architectural Heritage of the Upper Soča Valley, Wood as an Earthquake Resistant Modern and Autochthon Building Material, Plant Fibres as Heat Isolation from the Slovene Fields and Meadows, Clay-Building and Natural Fire-Safety Material, Lime – a Traditional Building Material and Protection from the Weather, and Biopassive House and Eco Building Technique. The exhibition was complemented by specimens of natural building materials and an expert consultation on building materials, ecology and earthquake safety took place at the opening.

Relevance for inter-municipal planning (AlpBC):

The methodology of Study Circles is recognised on a European level and represents an innovative learning approach, which encourages an active participation of citizens. The study circle model can be used in solving different problems that one comes across in different areas. Local communities play an important role in this, especially in smaller, peripheral areas. Study circles enable networking, exchange of knowledge and cooperation between different subjects. In accordance with the principles of endogenous development the circles consider the role of the social capital. People and relations between them are crucial for encouraging and transmitting innovations and for the circulation of knowledge between different sub-

jects in a certain area. With the mentioned exhibition the participants of the study circle wanted to remember the general public that we express our attitude towards nature also through how we build – which building materials we use, how much carbon dioxide we emit into the environment with our heating, how do we use sources, like water and electricity, how much and what kind of waste do our households produce, etc. Not every housing technique is healthy and eco friendly and the number of aware consumers, who are interested in the environmental and health aspects of products, services and the possibilities of accessing them in the environment in which they live in, gets higher every year.

Relevance for policy goals (Alpine Space, Europe and the region):

Study circles are a method which enables the participants to gain new knowledge and evaluate the competences they already have. This can have a positive effect on the personal growth of an individual, one aspect being also the ability to adapt to changes. The methodology of study circles is coordinated with the strategic goals of Europe 2020 Strategy and the development of key competences of lifelong learning that enables personal growth of an individual, a greater social inclusion and employability. The participants collaborate with the local community, which means that they draw from the local environ-

ment and give back results. As far as they remain focused on the topics of environment or sustainable development they participate and at the same time encourage the rest of the citizens to actively contribute or help solve environmental questions in the context of improving our living environment of improving our living environment.