



Shaping the future on wasteland and in disused buildings Sustainable urban development in Alpine towns and villages

AlpWeek 2016

Session 25

14/10/2017

8:30-10:00

Speakers:



Maria Lezzi,
Swiss federal Office for Spatial
Development



Arnold Hirschbühl,
mayor of Krumbach/
Bregenzwald/AT



Fred Frohofer, founder
member and member of the
board of the multifunctional
neighbourhood Neustart
Schweiz/CH

Many towns and villages in the Alpine region face challenges in terms of sustainable urban development; they are confronted with divergent interests as well as changing demographical, social, economic and environmental conditions. In most cases the crucial issue is to reduce the land consumption whilst offering good living conditions to the population, such as good quality housing as well as intact, attractive and lively town or village centres. In addition, many towns and villages face challenges regarding wasteland and disused buildings, like former military areas or abandoned industrial zones. They search for new and sustainable ways to use these spaces in order to strengthen the quality of life in their municipalities.

During this session, three experts presented this challenge at different levels, from the perspective of the State, in this case Switzerland, to the vision of an Austrian municipality and finally the level of neighbourhoods and the role of citizens. Guided by the experts, approximately 50 representatives of the Alpine towns of the year and AlpWeek participants, mostly coming from administration, discussed these three perspectives on land use and the requirements for sustainable urban planning from a social, cultural, political and architectural point of view. This subject met all three off the AlpWeek main topics: Alps & Demography, Alps & Culture and Alps & Quality of life.

After a short introduction by each speaker (see presentations), the group was divided into three thematic round tables with the speakers, guided by these core questions:

- Do you know which potential your city has for inner development?
- How do you use this potential?
- How do you involve the population?
- How does cooperation between population and municipality work?

Maria Lezzi explained measures put into practice by the Swiss federal Office for Spatial Development in order to provide assistance to Swiss cantons and municipalities to individuate their potential for inner densification. By the aid of law, regulations and planning processes, such as contracts with land-owners, the future of urban development and the housing sector can be influenced. Generally she stated that inner development must come before external urban development and there is a need to better use the existing building stock. Lezzi assesses that soil saving is important, but not at any cost, the focus must be set on quality.

Since 18 years Arnold Hirschbühl is the mayor of the 374 inhabitants-village Krumbach in Vorarlberg/Austria, which won the Austrian building culture award LandLuft in 2016 as well as a ConstructiveAlps Award in 2015. At the second thematic table, he showed how sprawl can be avoided and the vitality of town and village centres can be ensured. Soil is one of the most important resources and everyone has a responsibility to save and protect it for the future generations. To achieve this goal, awareness and acceptance among the citizens must be raised. That is why, says Hirschbühl, participation of the inhabitants is essential. Sustainable urban planning is a long process, but it's worth it.

Fred Frohofer is founding member of the Swiss multifunctional neighbourhood Neustart Schweiz. He himself is living in a multifunctional neighbourhood and presented the concept, which is based on the idea of Commons: different facilities are used, produced or/and consumed together with the whole neighbourhood. Everybody brings in, what he/she does well and receives what he/she needs. There are common spaces, such as kitchen, supermarket, laundry service, a children's playground or common vegetable fields or private spaces. Everybody is free to take part in the community life, nonetheless there are a few rules to respect. Frohofer is convinced that multifunctional neighbourhoods lead to a higher living quality and help to reduce soil consumption.

The session "Shaping the future on wasteland and in disused buildings", organised by the Alpine Town of the year association has been held in the framework of the project "Tour des Villes" where Alpine Towns undertake study trips to good examples of dealing with conversion areas, disused buildings and other challenging city planning aspects. The project lasts from October 2016 to October 2018.

Further reading:

Verein Neustart Schweiz (Hrsg.). 2016. Nach Hause kommen – Nachbarschaften als Commons. Verlag: Edition Volles Haus.

Margrit Hugentobler. Daniel Wiener (Hrsg.). 2016. ANANAS – Leitfaden und Checklisten zur nachhaltigen Arealentwicklung für Städte und Gemeinden. Verlag: vdf Hochschulverlag AG an der ETH Zürich.

Amt für Raumentwicklung und Geoinformation. 2015. Siedlungserneuerung im Kanton St. Gallen. www.areg.sg.ch (als PDF-Datei)

LandLuft – Baukulturgemeindepreis geht an Krumbach: http://www.landluft.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Medieninfo_LandLuft_Baukulturgemeinde-Preis_2016_Die_Preistraeger_160128.pdf

The Alpine Town of the year association

...is an association of alpine towns which have been awarded the title of "Alpine Town of the Year". The title commends an alpine town for its particular commitment to the implementation of the Alpine Convention and is awarded by an international Jury.

The principal concern of the Alpine Convention is to combine measures for the protection of the alpine region with a sustainable, trend-setting development of the regions themselves. The fact that the Alpine Convention draws on alpine towns for its contents is of key significance given that around two thirds of the population in the Alps live in urbanised regions, which in turn represent only around 40% of the total alpine area. So while the Alps are still clearly rural in terms of surface area, the population - and with it the economy - is already predominantly urban. Here nature and culture, ecology and economy collide head on, and it is the stated principal objective of the Alpine Town of the Year to communicate that idea to the population at large.