

CREATIVE VILLAGES CONFERENCES

| Bled | Hinterstoder | Illingen | Marianka | Moosburg |
| Munderfing | Nenzing | Săliște | Zwischenwasser

CVC5 | Vienna | 13 – 15 June 2014

Public Involvement and Participation

The fifth and last Creative Villages Conference took place in Vienna from 13th to 15th June 2014. The focus of this last event lay on people committed to innovative processes in rural areas: involved citizens.

Civic Participation - Best Practice

Those dedicated people of the *Zukunftsorte* and *Creative Villages* presented their own projects and inspired the audience with their experience on civic participation processes. Zwischenwasser, Vorarlberg, established for example an annual Volunteers´ Day, where about 120 inhabitants work together to clean hiking trails, keep parks in good condition and care for other tasks in the municipality. Săliște, Rumania, started an exchange project with teachers in Austria. Hinterstoder, Upper Austria, launched a two-day village festival (“Dorffest”) with the help of the initiative *upgrade*. Furthermore they organized dance classes, a ball as well as monthly meetings to maintain the village community. In Nenzing, Vorarlberg, new settlement models were designed and the local outdoor pool along with the leisure facility modified, all by using citizen participation. Moreover they engaged trainees from the village to design a local roundabout and provided pupils of the local school with a budget of 5.000 Euro to realize their ideas – as a result, a beach volleyball court will be built this summer.

Public Involvement Experts

Five lectures at the Vienna University of Technology covered a wide range of participation-related issues like the psychological effects of the occupancy of one’s living environment or different forms of participation processes in municipalities. Best practice examples concerning participation in construction projects and regional development processes, self-empowerment of young people (so-called “Jugendräte”) as well as examples from small interventions in Saarland, characterised by little effort and great outcome, were presented and helped gaining a deeper understanding of the topic. Key element of all lectures was the fact that all municipalities should encourage and support participation to benefit from the results: when citizens are able to participate actively and take part in

decisions that concern themselves, they automatically take over responsibility for a project, building or festival. As a consequence, activity and motivation of the citizens to participate rises and lasts. For the participation process it is much better that many people help a little than few people help a lot. Furthermore participation processes must have a clear goal and a limited duration. Moreover citizens need to be actively approached, they need incentive and appreciation.

Open Space Workshops

Subsequently, participants worked in small groups to find solutions for various fields of interest and actual problems: “How can we motivate people to actively participate?”, “How do innovative processes work in a non-innovative milieu?”, “How can I convince the local council? As an essential condition to motivate citizens it was stated that the presence of those responsible, honest communication at eye level, appreciation of all people involved, celebration of intermediate targets and success as well as open exchange of information is important. A key element is not just activating pragmatists but especially visionary and creative people, citizens, who think different and desire to change society. When various opinions in the municipality encounter each other, e.g. between conservative and progressive work groups, it is important to find a consent, not only a compromise. Another crucial aspect is the bond between the citizens and their village. The easiest way to cultivate this bond is as early as in the childhood through the local school, leisure facilities or training and development. “When someone feels connected to their hometown, they want to stay there and enjoy it. And they take a stand for it.”

Celebrations

Besides the challenging content-related work throughout the weekend there was also time to celebrate: the opening of the communal consulate (*Kommunalkonsulat*), the last closing event of the conference series and the presence of so many committed citizens.



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