

European Forum for Architectural Policies

Working Group 'Public Awareness'

Initial position

Essential partners for the efforts of a better formed environment are mature citizens. Hence, their strengthening is a central aspect for all considerations for architectural quality.

In addition to the supplier's side – architects and builder-owners who provide for projects full of quality – as well as the creation of legal basic conditions and processes which allow and strengthen quality, quality recognizing and demanding users are important actors for a general improvement of the architecture and the building culture.

As a first step it is necessary that people, learn to see' and to recognize their environment as designed and therefore changeable. This refers not only to buildings, but also to streets, bridges, places and free rooms. These are looked normally as given and qualities (or also non-qualities) are not noted at all.

So it is necessary to help people 'eyes to open' and to make the formed environment deliberate to them. Beside the visual capacity also the verbal capacity is an essential aspect, to find a vocabulary that allows a notification between the architecture experts and the laymans. A common language which guarantees a communication on the same eye level without doubting nevertheless the competence of the experts. Since in design-questions everybody finds itself as expert there is the danger that the discussion is reduced very quickly to the level 'nicely – nastily'.

A purpose of the efforts are citizens who can introduce themselves by decisions in the matter of formed environment, certifiedly and formulate their needs adequately. The fact that this is not only an important social task, but also has a sturdy economic background, makes clear the fact, that most 'life money' (the sum of gained money in the course of a life supply) is spent on living and construction.

Educational institutions as a partner

A quite **central partner** to strengthen the efforts of understanding of the formed environment **are the educational institutions of the different levels**. This reaches from the kindergarten about the schools of the different education levels and school types to institutions of the adult's education up to senior's institutions. In nearly every discussion on the subject – as well as with many other subjects - the central meaning of the educational sector is put in the foreground and is sworn even often as the only chance of Europe in the process of the globalization. (The reality not always holds step with these wholehearted announcements, however.)

Beside the classical educational institutions **the architecture mediation institutions are also important partners** for the strengthening of the architectural understanding in the population: particularly the architectural houses and architectural museums, which has been arisen in the last decades in many European lands as well as many small associations and engaged private individuals who are active in this area (often in an honorary capacity) perform very noteworthy work.

Mediation

Since the 1970's art mediation and cultural mediation has set up as an important way to the strengthening of the civil education. Museums did the beginning mostly, as they recognized that the objects (objects of the historical development, but also pictures and sculptures) do not speak enough for themselves.

Similarly it also behaves with the building culture – as a collective term under one understands the production of built environment and the contact and use of it. This is a classical cross section matter which encloses artistic aspects but also technical, economic, social and political are touched with it. Hence, **the subject concerns not only the professional planners, but all people who are confronted with the built environment** and so the responsibility for the quality of the built environment lies not only with the experts, but is a whole-social and concerns everybody.

A building culture full of quality creates and protects quality of life, forms us and we influence them again. Building culture is a variety and comprehensively – economy, ecology, lastingness, engineer's science, scenery planning, regional planning

So that everybody can perceive the own responsibility, suitable education is necessary – public Awareness.

Methods:

In the first step existing models – throughout Europe – should be raised and be collected and the main focus on architecture mediation models should lie for young people's models.

Within the scope of the Working Group should be collected, be discussed and evaluated and Best-practice models should be made available.

The study group will collaborate nearly with the two other working groups.

1. Step - at short notice:

Collection of existing models

Existing models should be collected and also the structures lying in each case behind it should be arisen.

2. Step - in the medium term:

Common discussion and evaluation

The accumulated data will be discussed and evaluated together and it should be taken in particular to find those models which could be applied throughout Europe.

3. Step - in the long term:

Production of a catalogue of Best-practice models

These models should be processed easy-understandably to allow thus to a wide circle to interested access to the already done experience and the accumulated knowledge.

Purposes

Within the scope of the Working group 'public Awareness' different ways which involve the citizens as mature partners in the planning and construction process should be indicated.

In addition, an important purpose is the mutual knowledge – then at many places is performed by very much engaged people very much deserving and trendsetting work which has it, nevertheless, often very hard to find a suitable general public.

Important is a wide dialog with all persons engaged in this topic.