

The Naturno model

Policies Made For Citizens Are Policies Made By Citizens

Adopting the slogan „We Have Ideas - We Have a Future“, the community of Naturno has dedicated itself to a Village Renewal programme.

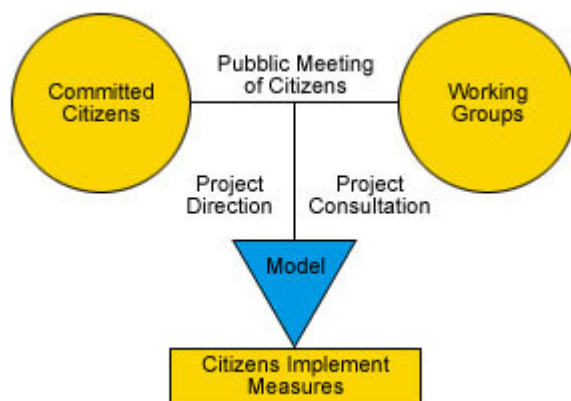
By giving citizen participation an integral role in the development and implementation of a community vision, the „The Naturno Model“ has aroused interest and admiration far beyond the boundaries of the South Tyrol region. As a unique departure in systematically involving citizens in key areas of community life, arranging for a citizens' question time at Community Council meetings, founding „Community Enterprise“ and operating a pilot „Green Bin“ project the Naturno initiative has gained widespread recognition.

A) Citizen Participation in the Past (1975-1995) - Project-Specific and Sporadic

1. Community and Council Hall (1975-1980): 23.000 m³, Council Hall - four meeting rooms, tourist office, two inns, four automated bowling alleys, eleven shooting ranges, club rooms for various associations. 400 citizens hold shares of Lire 200.000.-

2. Activity Baths (1980-1985) Construction of an open-air pool, (water slide 72 m, water mushroom, whirlpool, water canon ...). 100 citizens hold shares of Lire 200.000.- - in return for 1 free annual admission ticket per share.

3. Green Bin Project (1985-1995) Pioneering pilot project in South Tyrol for composting bio waste from kitchens and gardens. Achieved a 98% impact on citizen awareness. Sixty volunteers collected questionnaire forms. Reduction of waste volume and waste service charges by up to one-third. Beneficial effect on the environment.



B) Citizen Participation Today (Systematic Implementation) „The Naturno Model“

1. 18 committed citizens undertake a group initiative and convene a public meeting in order to enlist the support of all citizens.

2. 53 citizens are found willing to get involved in four working groups, which hold a total of 60 meetings, for the purpose of devising a model for the community. The result is endorsed jointly by the community council and the participating citizens.

3. 100 citizens pledge themselves to implement a total of 185 individual measures.

Development and Implementation of Community Model

I. Motivation

1. Needs Are Identified In past years one frequently heard negative remarks such as: „the pace of development in Naturno is too quick - it should be slowed down“; „too much industrialisation, tourism gets favoured treatment, too much is done for the mountain farmers“. „There is no future for us“. It seemed like a case of „us“ against „them“

2. The Idea of a Model Concept is Born The challenge posed by such remarks, the stimulation of study trips to events such as the European Village Renewal Congress in Bad Reichenbach and the Village Renewal Workshop in Michaelbeuren, Kirchberg and the fruits of discussions and expressions of views led to the conviction that Naturno should inform itself as to what kind of future it was heading for. The Mayor conveyed this concern to eleven concerned citizens and to the relevant committee of the Community Council. The response was unanimously enthusiastic, all sharing the conviction that Naturno needed to conceive a model for its future development.

3. Committed Citizens Take the Initiative A decision was taken on 16 November 1992 by the 18 citizens involved to undertake a group initiative. The group then made preparations to convene a public meeting of all citizens on

26 January 1993.

II. Objectives

1. A Dynamic Model for the Future The Motto „We Have Ideas - We Have a Future“ was adopted and in keeping with this a dynamic model for the future of the village was worked out. This involved an assessment of the current situation, an analysis of strengths and weaknesses, formulation of objectives, compilation of a list of necessary measures, and steps to implement these measures.
2. Enlisting the Support of Everyone Affected At the public meeting, to which all citizens were invited, the project was presented and all those affected were called upon to offer their practical support. Four Working Groups, representative of the full cross-section of interests in the community, were formed. The decision to proceed in this way was based on the conviction that ideas for the development of the community would prove viable only to the extent that support came from the bottom up. If and when problems presented themselves, it was deemed far better to have them solved as far as possible by the people directly affected rather than being solved by others on their behalf.
3. Tackling the Problems Commitment to a model implies the will to tackle intervening problems. A model expresses where we are coming from and where we wish to go. A model is an orientation aid, a signpost, a plan, a leitmotif, a future pledge, a management tool for the community. A model is dynamic in nature, its conception and realisation depending to an important extent on constructive, positive contributions from interest groups and from the individual community members.

III. Target Groups

1. The Initiative Group Eleven concerned citizens from all walks of life together with the Council Committee headed by the Mayor took on the task of coordinating the initiative and of making the necessary preparations.
2. Public Meetings of All Citizens Three public meetings were held at which the citizens were presented with the relevant information and invited to lend their practical support. At the meeting on 25 January 1993 the theme „We Have Ideas“ was addressed. The next meeting on 7 June 1993 dealt with the subject „Our Way to Make Life Worth Living in Naturn“ and the third meeting, held on 17 January 1994, consisted of a ceremony to hail and celebrate the Naturns Model.
3. Working Groups The four Working Groups were organised around the following themes:
 - a) How we plan today determines how we live tomorrow; physical and amenity planning; infrastructure and communal facilities; building and living; transport.
 - b) Joining forces in enterprise and labour; stable economy and secure jobs; concern for others; cooperating with others; citizens' information and citizen participation; citizen-friendly public administration.
 - c) „Healthy living environment“ - a challenge to us all. Our natural landscape, our water and our air. Waste reduction. Accountability in our energy utilisation. Our health and our responsibilities.
 - d) Caring relationships - caring communities. The values we share determine the quality of our life - exemplified by the bonds between family, youth and senior citizens. Our day-to-day culture is the culture on which we build our lives. „Policies For Citizens“ implies „Policies by Citizens“

IV. Realisation:

- a) 100 citizens declare their willingness to implement 185 individual measures;
- b) 1995 sees the implementation of 52 measures;
- c) 1996 sees the implementation of 33 further measures;
- d) 1997 see the implementation of another 41 measures;
- e) 1998 sees 42 additional measures realised.

Concrete Examples of Measures Already Implemented

Village/Physical Planning:

- Initiative „Traffic By-Pass“
- Initiative „Vinschger Railway“
- Facade Colour Plan for the Main Street
- Founding of a local association for heritage conservation
- Measures to reduce individual car use - introduction of a bus for visitors

Commercial Life:

- Ecology seal of approval for 6 tourist enterprises
- Viewing of mountain farms - promotional survey of mountain farmers

- Production of calendar „The Mountain Farmers and their Customs“
- Arranging at suitable events to have stalls showing produce of mountain farms
- Inviting representatives of other vocational groups to annual general meeting
- Working out a model for tourist development

Ecology:

- Direct produce sales - introduction of farm produce market
- 2 courses on do-it-yourself installation of solar energy collectors
- Upgrading of drinking water supply system
- Community enrolled as member of climate alliance
- Production and distribution of a recycling calendar
- Providing alternative energy sources for public premises: wood chips and solar energy

Social and Cultural:

- Senior citizens' get-together - „Old People's Tales“ and oral tradition committed to writing in a special brochure
- „What Old Hands Can Do“ exhibition to mark occasion of the „Day of Our Village Model“
- Permanent appointment made in Youth Rendezvous
- New residents invited once a year to meet Mayor and be presented with a copy of the village Model
- Women's Regular Table - to stimulate women's interest in political matters.

Outstanding Projects - Awards - The Current Situation

I. Question Time at the Community Council Meeting

At its meeting in November 1996 the Community Council of Naturns decided to make provision for a citizens' question time at future Council meetings. This innovation is quite unique in South Tirol. Since its inception citizens have had an opportunity to attend as observers at the Council meetings and ask up to three questions or make proposals regarding problems in the community.

II. The Community as an Enterprise

One of the essential objectives of the Naturns model is to create a citizen-friendly public administration. A special working group has devoted itself to realisation of this objective for the past two years. A variety of improvements have been brought about: the hours of public access to offices have been extended; the work programme of the different offices has been described in the local paper. An annual „open day“ has been established and a suggestion box has been provided at the Council premises to signal that citizens are very welcome to make suggestions or offer criticism. Things have also changed for the Council employees. Job specifications were drawn up, job targets were agreed upon, and a performance assessment scheme introduced. Two years later an opinion poll was held in order to find out whether the public administration was actually found to be exercising greater customer care and to be user-friendly. The results of the poll indicated that 95 percent of citizens transacting business with the public servants felt that they were treated in a friendly fashion by them. 87 percent of those surveyed considered that the advice received from public servants was adequate and 92 percent felt that their concerns had been dealt with within a reasonable time.

III. Awards

1. The „Most Environment-Friendly“ Tourism Centre in Italy

Naturns was one of five Italian centres nominated in 1995 for the „European Grand Prix for Tourism and the Environment“. In the eliminating rounds the South Tirol community left the other Italian centres far behind. In November 1995 the Mayor of Naturns, Dr. Walter Weiss, received the prize on behalf of his community from the president of the jury, Mario Falcone, at a ceremony held in Forte dei Marmi near Viareggio. The award-giving ceremony was held on the occasion of the congress of Italian tourist communities. The jury indicated that its choice of Naturns for the award was based on its joint initiatives such as the „Green Bin“, the nature park house and the numerous nature trails.

2. Village Renewal Prize At a ceremony in Munich, Naturns, in common with other communities from nine European countries, was awarded the European Village Renewal Prize for outstanding achievement. Naturns can be proud of being selected as the first South Tirol community to receive this award.

The citation for the awards states that, in relation to the two major fields

a) the harnessing of new technical, economic, ecological and social developments, and
 b) care for the harmonious integration of new developments and cultural heritage Naturns had focused on the following three points of emphasis:

1. Transforming the combined Community and Council Hall into the centre of gravity for the community;
2. Innovation of the „Green Bin“ (bio bin) as a pilot project for all of South Tirol;
3. Creation of a village model as a development and management tool for the community. The common element

running through all of these initiatives was the integration of the village residents into a joint endeavour.

IV. The Current Situation

1. Effectiveness: The greatest advance was made in terms of the „political culture“ of the community, i.e. in getting on well with one another. This can be looked upon as a major contribution towards enhancing the well-being of the population.

2. Citizen Participation: The message has reached all 5,000 residents. Over 100 citizens participate actively and give a hand in the implementation of the various projects and individual measures.

3. Inter-Linking: A great deal of importance is attached to inter-linking, both within the community and beyond its boundaries. For example, invitations to be in attendance at the annual general meetings of the various associations are extended not only to chairpersons from the next highest level of the same associations but also to chairpersons of other associations at the same level. As an expression of external liaison Naturns has joined the „Alliance in the Alps“, a network of similarly situated communities.

4. Funding:

a) Creation of the Village Model: 100 Mio Lire was contributed in three equal shares by the South Tirol State Government, the Raiffeisen Bank in Naturns and the Naturns Community Council.

b) The recurring expenditure is funded by the Community Council with the financial support of the Raiffeisen Bank in Naturns.

V. Summary Concluding Remarks

Active participation of citizens in the life of a community will come about if individuals show a personal concern, combined with a willingness and an ability to get involved. Anyone who takes the concerns and interests of citizens seriously will inevitably end up harnessing their goodwill and spirit of cooperation. It is a short step from being concerned to being involved and it brings with it a readiness to shoulder responsibility and to participate actively in the life of the community. A vision of the direction in which the village should be evolving that is shared by political representatives and by citizens alike is a prerequisite for an enhanced political culture among the village residents.

„A sustained enhancement of the quality of life requires planning and an action programme that link people together in the pursuit of a shared long-term vision.“