



The Austrian collective *holzbau_kunst* brings together the forestry, construction and design sectors to promote modern timber buildings. **Stefanie Kaiser** reports.

In June last year, I reported on the collective of small forest owners (*Waldverband*) in Vorarlberg, a small mountainous region in West Austria. *Waldverband* itself is a member of *holzbau_kunst*, a network which brings together all sectors with an interest in promoting the use of timber in construction.

Vorarlberg receives about 30,000 international visitors a year, mostly architects and students but also representatives of forward-thinking municipalities who are interested in promoting timber buildings in their villages and towns. What attracts them?

Holistic concept + joining of forces
= success

The region prides itself of being one of the pioneers of the modern timber building scene.

Their concept is simple:

- Architecture
- Craft
- Innovation
- Ecology

However, it takes more than just buzzwords and a good concept for market success. How did timber houses in Vorarlberg make the step from niche lifestyle products to preference option for local planners and public contractors? Why do mayors in rural villages crave to get their town halls, social housings, school gyms and even waste processing facilities built in the latest timber fashion?

Vorarlberg's success in timber housing lies in the fact that the whole supply chain has come together



with one common goal: to create demand for modern timber buildings.

It takes a visionary

Dr. Matthias Ammann (above), originally a solicitor, used to manage the carpenters guild in Vorarlberg from within the Chamber of Commerce. It was from this position, that he started an impressive marketing crusade to promote the use of timber in modern buildings – he brought to life the collective *holzbau_kunst*. A professional “organization / collective manager”, as he calls himself, he is also involved in strategic planning, marketing and project management for Timber Construction Europe, Vorarlberg Tourism, Timber Construction Austria, among other projects. He also owns a rare breed of mountain sheep, plays in a band and claims to have cooking skills.

holzbau

Success factors at a glance

- The realisation of everyone in the supply chain that they have a common business interest
- The openness and courage of politicians and planners in small municipalities allowed for new architecture concepts to take root
- The well-known regional pride in Vorarlberg is a big motivator to strive for excellence in sustainability
- Pre-existing organisation of subsector in collectives
- A traditional timber building trade that could be inspired to use their skills in innovative ways
- A traditional wood culture that could be recovered using “back to the roots” marketing
- Passionate people who drive the campaign

A charming man with a sense of humour that makes every conversation enjoyable, he has used his people skills and management talent to bring the stakeholders of the timber construction supply chain together – one by one and holding their hand whenever support was needed.

From Trees to Timber Homes - how to get everyone to pull in the same direction. It all started in the 70ies, when a bunch of innovative architects tried to break with entrenched traditions and experimented with new concepts for building with timber. However, in Vorarlberg, it was the carpenters who presented the first important barrier to this kind of evolution. Carpentry is an old trade, and it was hard to find craftsmen who would be willing to execute the 'crazy' ideas those architects suggested. They argued that timber had to be used in very specific ways in construction projects. They were right that at this point; a lot had to be learnt by trial and error. But carpenters were the key people in the supply chain that needed to be brought on board, if modern timber buildings were ever to take off as a trend. In the 80ies, pioneer architects managed to convince the younger and more risk-friendly carpenters to rebel against the 'establishment' and carry out their unconventional designs.

Matthias had come across examples of modern timber constructions and loved the idea of re-inventing the tradition of building with wood. He presented his vision to the carpenters in a very straight-forward way: if timber buildings become more common, there will be more business for carpenters, and they will become the centerpieces of >>



kunst or The Art of Working Together

Activities

- Lobbying
- Stand at trade show Messestand (see overleaf)
- Annual lobbying event for politicians and architects
- Biennial timber award *Holzbaupreis*
- Highly advertised 'Open House' events targeted at general public
- Advertising in newspapers, Internet, social media, neighbouring countries





From Forest to Home: Annual holzbau_kunst trade show stand

*Timber construction
award winner 2017*

Starting with freshly felled fir trees the tour around and through the stand (left) shows the visitor the evolution from tree, to raw sawmill products, to finished components of modern timber houses to neatly fitted windows. Along the circuit, additional information on the timber-to-home process is provided and emphasised with further sensorial inputs (smell, touch) to deepen the experience.

Visit the stand at
com:bau 08-11 March
2018, Dornbirn, Austria

**www.combau.
messedornbirn.at**

>> the value chain.

After a lot of brainstorming on the carpenters' side, the first wood awards (*Holzbaupreis*) were brought into being in 1997. Builders and architects were invited to submit information and pictures of their existing timber buildings. The awards provided the perfect stage for a budding trend, and the collective *holzbau_kunst* was founded, initially funded by carpenter firms through membership fees.

At the same time, Matthias began to personally lobby to bring wood suppliers on board, too. Working downstream, he talked to collectives and individuals in the processing sector, the wholesale sector for construction materials, and further downstream, the collective of landowners (*Waldverband*, see FTN June 2017).

"It was important to get the whole supply chain committed before launching a powerful marketing campaign". Matthias stressed that it was crucial to target different companies or individuals in a way that was relevant to them, but using the main argument that more timber building means more business/market for everybody.

Shortly after the first *Holzbaupreis*, Matthias and his carpenters were confronted with a new barrier. They realised that something had to be done to make construction rules / laws more timber-friendly. This was something that had to be addressed at a National level. He therefore organised a promotional tour to each of the other regions in Austria, where he presented the Vorarlberger concept to the carpenter guilds. Some years later, each region had its own *Holzbaupreis*.

Regional resource

Promoting the use of timber helps to consolidate demand for timber. However, at the moment, the regional timber resource doesn't lack a market; only 20% of wood from the region stays there, the rest is fed into larger National or international markets.

holzbau_kunst aims to increasingly focus on lobbying for an increased use of regional timber for regional timber buildings. In particular, to help the network of small sawmills to survive in the future.

www.holzbau_kunst.at

Funding sources

- Carpenters: €100 000 (Firms pay a membership fee to *holzbau_kunst*, €700-3500 per year)
- Timber and construction material wholesale: €80,000 (Percentage of sales to carpenters who are members of *holzbau_kunst*)
- Regional government: €30,000 (from commerce and agriculture budget)
- Regional forest owner collective: €15,000 - 20,000 (€0.03/m³ of timber sold)
- Regional bank sponsorship: €20,000 (bank with focus on rural clients, incl foresters, sawmills, but also carpenters and other traders)
- Regional collective of small sawmills: €7000
- Architects: €350 individual membership fee
- Plus project sponsorships

Timber structures in Vorarlberg

In Vorarlberg, you can find a 610,000m³ volume of pine, spruce and hardwood that has made the region renowned for its exemplary tradition of timber construction.

Vorarlberg has been setting standards worldwide in the architectural design and hand-crafted quality of wooden buildings. Their use of wood is characterised by an inspired innovative creativity. Projects from Vorarlberg are bold: multiple storeys, prefabrication, urban housing, industrial buildings are all matters of course and reveal an impressively wide-ranging vision of 'traditional' timber construction.

English/German
SBN: 978-3-95553-381-6
€39.99 plus shipping

https://shop.detail.de/eu_e/holzbauten-in-vorarlberg.html



Dawn of a new age for timber

Christiane Lellig on the work of Wood for Good, the timber industry's campaign to promote use of wood in design and construction

For some, it's the dawn of the timber age. Shortlists for all major architecture awards are featuring timber buildings and the awards keep coming. The prestigious Stirling Prize went to Hastings Pier, a community-led timber building that showcases the versatility of wood as a design and construction material. Wood building solutions are more common than ever; and yet we need to keep talking about the opportunity this presents for future housing – and for the timber sector.

Factory made affordable quality homes

The need for more affordable housing is greater than ever and the sustainable solution now makes good economic sense over 'traditional' build.

The timber industry is central to modern methods of construction; speeding up housing delivery with the development of new technical solutions that can increase the quality of homes as well as their affordability. As offsite construction moves into the mainstream, pressure is mounting to get it right. Whether the solution is flatpack or volumetric, the wider benefits of using timber systems are being recognised both in commercial property development as well as in social housing. Now is the time to get them built. Together with partner organisations, we will help promote quality solutions to architects and social and affordable housing developers. Engineered timber will be a key theme for 2018. In a joint project with leading architects we will help to move the discussion on from initial interest to lessons learned, challenges encountered, and future solutions required.

New markets for millennials and baby boomers

A new generation of young professionals are looking for attractive private rental



Hannibal Road Gardens

schemes that accommodate a trendy lifestyle; universities use high quality student accommodation as part of their USP and more and more downsizers are interested in 'Retirement for Rent'. This emerging 'Build to Rent' sector requires appealing high-quality materials that are low-maintenance and cost-efficient; a clear case for timber, from structural solutions to joinery and decorative surfaces, from homegrown spruce to tropical merbau. Wood for Good will engage with key players in this emerging market and provide the arguments for using wood.

The Right to Build – a call for beautiful design

Since 2016, all local authorities in England have a legal duty to create Right to Build demand registers for people in their area who want to commission their own home. Local authorities must also grant planning permission for sufficient 'shovel ready' plots to meet the demand within three years. The timber industry is well positioned to provide the choice and type of sustainable housing models this market is looking for. Wood for Good has teamed up with NaCSBA and the Right to Build Taskforce to deliver a range of regional custom build events to advance this market.

Health and wellbeing

The focus on health, wellbeing and biophilia is becoming increasingly important. This doesn't come as a surprise, given the statistics of allergies and mental health illnesses. As a natural material, wood offers

many benefits and meets the requirements of a healthy building material. We will continue to push the message out about the various health benefits of wood products.

More on the Modern Timber House in the UK

Building on the highly successful launch of Peter Wilson's book, 'The Modern Timber House in the UK,' we are planning a series of exhibitions and presentations showcasing a broad range of structural timber solutions and their application in different settings.

Awarding timber excellence

Timber excellence should be awarded. Wood for Good supports the Housing Design Awards, RIAS awards and the Wood Awards, and helps promote industry awards such as the Structural Timber Awards and Offsite Awards.

Christiane Lellig is Campaign Director, Wood for Good.

Wood for Good is co-owned by Confor and Swedish Wood; and funded by timber businesses and organisations.

[@wood_for_good](https://www.woodforgood.com)

RESOURCES

For more information and to receive the Wood for Good newsletter, contact Christiane.Lellig@woodforgood.com or 020 7291 5374
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