

Icelandic workshop

The Icelandic workshop focused on the specific Icelandic dimension to the challenge:

Buildings supporting personal development and enhancing quality of life

The impression was that most people focused their social life on relatives and friends while the more casual meeting with neighbours and strangers are limited by the weather. Compared to warmer climates there is no place to meet, little street life, no gardens, few outdoor cafés etc. Actually the candy shops has become the social meeting points for kids.

One specific challenge to cold climates including north of Norway, Sweden and Finland could be to construct semi-climatic areas between the houses. This is particularly attractive in Iceland where volcanic heat is plentiful, and there are no trees for natural protection.

Another specific challenge is the limited natural daylight in the winter. This challenge is also shared with other high north areas. Large south and southwest facing windows are getting more popular in Icelandic architecture, but also roof windows could be useful, particular as Iceland is often covered by clouds blocking direct sunlight. The tendency is however to built multi story buildings where roof lights are only possible on top floors and (glazed) balconies. Glazed balconies are yet strangely unusual in Iceland.

Balconies are very popular and they are used for sunbathing and BarBQ whenever possible (temperature above 10 centigrade)

Iceland has a long history of buildings made from stone and with grass on the roof. There is however little other architectural tradition. Iceland was very poor when modern building technology was introduced and that lead to extended use of corrugated steel plate in many bright colours for roofs and walls. Nowadays the colours are more like the surrounding landscape: White and gray.

Like in other Nordic countries, Iceland has a strong tradition for building codes and town planning regulating the architecture and design of buildings. Particularly the town planning regulations could limit development of new architecture.

Iceland is blessed with plenty of water and especially plenty of hot water. There is already a growing offering of volcanic heated spa bath and one of Iceland's tourist attractions is the thermal pool at "Blue lagoon". This could be an Icelandic dimension to future architecture.

Icelandic families has a growing number of cars, snow scooters, and stuff making the garage the fast growing area of the buildings.

Among the paradoxes of Iceland architecture is that:

- Houses are built of timber even though there is no forest
- Plenty of space yet houses are built floors high

Why is the natural material on Iceland, volcanic stone, not used (in fact it is at the Blue Lagoon building)

Among the interesting potentials are:

- Working with the indoor-outdoor relation
- Bringing the nature into the architecture instead of isolating from it.
- Unique humour

The issue of expressing yourself through architecture and indoor architecture was debated. One of the interesting views was expression a very personal storytelling is for interior only as self expression in the exterior would be too exhibitivie. Your personal history is private

Of course, building indoor or at a factory is even more important in artic weather conditions

Potential partners in new Nordic projects:

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