

Semi-connected

Semi-detached



*Sustainable, community-living – a centre-piece of the Vorarlberger Baukunstler's early building years – is alive and well in a new collective project; Fruehlingsstrasse, in the sprawl village of Wolfurt. Vorarlberg writer **Robert Fabach**, showcases the project, it's architect **Christoph Kalb**, and the cultural context in which it has emerged.*

In the current debate around sustainable building, the interconnection and interdependence of architects, clients and contractors is again apparent when necessary developments in architecture are at stake. Since the theme of ecology was initiated and driven forward not least by architects in Vorarlberg in the 80s, the focus has been increasingly on innovations in design and typology. The threatened explosion of energy costs and the decreasing security of supply at present has forced a change in thinking in the political and scientific spheres the world over, and is now also putting pressure on clients and planners in Austria.

While in some regions ambitious administrators are supporting the construction of the passivhaus with high standards in building regulations, together with advanced architects who are taking on energy efficiency as a challenge of holistic architecture, they are both having to battle against the trend of 'cheap build, expensive

living', widespread amongst property developers and private clients. In Vorarlberg this new direction is taking place inconspicuously and on a different basis.

Over the years, technical designers and contractors in Vorarlberg have helped ecological innovations to achieve solid technical standards, which have been exported far beyond the region's borders. (The most famous architecture practice in Vorarlberg, Baumschlager & Erberle, are planning a residential skyscraper in Beijing.) When, in 2009, the passivhaus standard becomes mandatory for all multistorey dwellings, this leap seems acceptable and practically possible to implement for most architects. Those who have practised the technical realisation of these standards for years, are now already working on the next step, that of designing their integration. Thus it is not surprising that the central idea of one leading architect from Vorarlberg is that beside form, function and construction, sustainability will become the fourth fundamental constant of architecture. That this development cannot take place in isolation or doctrinaire, rather in dialogue or even in conflict with social trends, is shown by the example of a housing development in Rheintal, Vorarlberg.

The switch is labelled 'party' on the clearly set out switch box in the living room. 'Party' temporarily increases ventilation in order to be able to enjoy fresh air at a pleasant temperature using a heat exchanger even with a larger gathering of friends. Next to this one, there is another switch with a red light. This controls the two options for hot water and space heating: the centralised pellet heating system or the less expensive individual solar heating. In this way, the passivhaus standard for energy use for heating is achieved: down from approximately 22kWh/m²a to 12kWh/m²a. A