

How to start a collective project. The beginnings of Arterra Bizimodu- ABM.

Diverse beliefs coexist in the collective imagination about what is necessary or essential to start a collective project.

There are those who believe that it is important to know each other well and create a cohesive group before undertaking something together;

There are those who believe that it is better to be a group of friends: it's not possible to create a collective project with strangers.

And this last option is actually what Arterra Bizimodu undertook: starting a project with people who did not know each other.

In order to do this it has been important to put out a "call" to the outline of a project already framed. The beginning of this project is strongly marked by the physical place . We can also say that there was a place in search of a project.

And for this place, a person created a first "draft" of the project; which was then sent to the public through an open call: those who are interested in co-creating this project in this place are invited to start meeting.



It is important to pay attention to the process on how to call new participants. The call should contain a clear and concrete framework: in ABM's case, the first draft of the project clearly named several key issues.

- Co-housing model as spaces where personal intimacy and collective spaces coexist.
- Being an Ecovillage: not just living together, rather creating joint projects towards sustainability and regeneration, participating in already existing collective connections, knowledge, references.
- A specific place, which in itself provides a strong level of concreteness as well as a space which offers many achievable options and possibilities.
- Mixed economies. the economic support is the own responsibility of each person or family as well as developing a common economy with the voluntary work of all.
- Implement the project by using the sociocratic model of governance, as a social experiment.

Once the meeting process started, a group of people interested in the project got formed. This group started a new process of collective appropriation of the initial project design. New enriching elements were therefore added to the initial project.

The first meeting was in October 2013. The first inhabitants were settling in February 2014, the group gained more strength in spring.

Three key points of the process:

- Facilitation: all meetings were facilitated from the beginning, so that in the group culture a spirit of respectful and collaborative participation got created.
- Sociocracy: this governance model facilitated a distributed implementation: different styles of leading and doing can be expressed.
- Leadership: from the beginning, value the importance of leadership and pick up this role, the energy which keeps the project on track; always using this energy from a collaborative and inclusive model, something which is at the essence and in the practice of Sociocracy.

This is the way in which the group was created, and now it inhabits a space and a living project, where the community building has been taking place step by step, hand in hand with the rest of the processes: Fine-tuning of the mission and vision, development of the structure, and people growth.