

## NCPP - Northern Clay Plaster Project

Professional Qualification for Working with Natural and Sustainable Building Materials

FRAMEWORK ANALYZIS  
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### COUNTRY ANALYZIS, CURRENT SITUATION IN SWEDEN

#### General awareness

*General awareness of protagonists from the building and public sector for the significance of sustainable and ecologic building materials.*

Generally, there is a movement towards sustainable building materials and the building sector is well aware that words like "sustainable", "green", "environmentally friendly" etc. are important in advertisements and are good selling arguments. Many people working in the public sector are also trained in the importance of moving towards a more sustainable society. However, what that would mean in practice is maybe a bit uncertain. And that is not surprising, being aware of the environment and making choices that support a sustainable society is not evident. There are no 100% right answers and the answer you get depends on the point of view of the speaker. Nevertheless, awareness is growing, questions are being asked and media is surveying both the building sector and the public sector.

The turning point was somewhere around 2006 when discussions about the environment and about sustainability were raised to a general level and not only talked about in certain communities. Still, for most people environmental awareness stays superficial and is required on a professional base - but it doesn't mean that the persons have the same opinions in private life.

The building sector is said to be conservative but steps are taken to reduce emissions, waste, energy consumption and chemicals. Even the concept of building passive houses has spread to relatively conventional building companies and among politicians on local level. Alternative building materials are slowly getting more and more available on the market but are for the time being mainly imported to Sweden. A lot more must, can – and will with time – be done.

Traders selling ecological building materials are either traditional and focusing on conservation and maintenance of local heritage, or new and planning to surf the wave of environmental awareness. All in all in Sweden there are still no more than a handful traders altogether with this kind of material in stock.

#### Qualification possibilities

*Qualification possibilities for people working with ecological and sustainable building materials.*

There are two associations that come in mind regarding earth building training for workers. First the Swedish Earth Building Association (Lerbyggeföreningen) that organises workshops on irregular basis all over the country and second the Swedish Association for Building Conservation (Svenska Byggnadsvårdsföreningen) which offers summer courses for both professionals and interested public. The Earth Building Association also hosts a biannual training on earth building in collaboration with the Gothenburg University, aiming to attract professionals.

For ecological and sustainable building materials in general the following could be mentioned: The log building education at Sjövik (2 years) and "Sustainable construction for a sustainable society" (Bärkraftigt byggande i ett hållbart samhälle) at Högskolan Dalarna.

Shorter courses on specific building techniques or materials for the general public and sometimes for

professionals are also given by regional centers and associations like: Byggnadsvård Qvarnarp, Byggnadsvård Näs, BEVIS, Skansen, Kulturen i Lund. There is also courses in permaculture in various parts of the country on irregular basis.

For more theoretical knowledge there are university courses with different aspects of sustainability, both as part of a program and as separate courses for anyone to apply for. A professional training with high level teaching both in theoretical and practical subjects regarding sustainable building is yet to be created. Unfortunately, the qualification possibilities offered in Sweden today attract more self builders than professionals.

A good way to learn more is to participate on building sites and work as a trainee with a builder doing ecological projects. As always, meeting many different people and then making your own conclusions is the best thing to do. In this case it would be advisable to also travel abroad and participate in international workshops and attend conferences as the eco building community in Sweden is limited.

Craftsmen would probably need training in earth building over time to be able to take on this type of jobs, and presently they are only offered shorter workshops. However, there are craftsmen working with earth within their conservation area and they may by time get relatively good knowledge in restoration and repair on earth works (mainly plaster). But still, seen from an earth building point of view, their knowledge would be limited as they have no exchange with others.

Producers of building materials have of course more possibilities to market their proper products as they are able to produce information leaflets and workshops using their budget. A natural building material has no such budget and relies on traders and processors to advertise it, unless there is an association that manages to do it.

### **Recognition of qualification**

*How is the situation concerning recognition of qualification for these activities?*

At the end of a course a certificate can be granted and if the course is at university level, university credits will be granted when the exams are passed. But none of the courses mentioned above would have any kind of recognition outside the small circle of eco builders. There is no training certificate a craftsman can use when marketing him/herself, no stamp or accreditation that would mean anything to the customer.

### **Stakeholders**

*Who are the stakeholders? - Organisations and companies that have some kind of interest in earth building in a broad meaning, an incomplete list...*

The School of Crafts in Mariestad, part of the Gothenburg University, [www.conservation.gu.se](http://www.conservation.gu.se)

Swedish Earth Building Association (Lerbyggeföreningen i Sverige), [www.lerbygge.se](http://www.lerbygge.se)

Svenska Byggnadsvårdsföreningen, [www.byggnadsvard.se](http://www.byggnadsvard.se)

Högskolan Dalarna /Stjärnsund

Ekologiska byggvaruhuset, Trosa. [www.ekologiskabyggvaruhuset.se](http://www.ekologiskabyggvaruhuset.se)

Classons trätjära, Göteborg. [www.claessons.com](http://www.claessons.com)

Gysinge centrum för byggnadsvård, [www.gysinge.nu](http://www.gysinge.nu)

Svenska Jordhus/Johannes Riesterer

Eko-Ulf/Ulf Henningsson

Gamla Hus/Hans Bulhuis

Terra Husbyggnadsteknik/Eva-Rut Lindberg

BARA mineraler, Skåne

Sten Nilsson, Laholm

...



## **Trends**

*What are medium and long term trends?*

Building material and building technique in the mainstream building business will become more and more green and sustainable. Clients ask for this and are also getting more interested in using earth for building. Apart from this general comment it is very difficult to define any trend.

More environmentally friendly materials will be developed by time. As earth already is such a material it needs to be presented to the client as such and be presented as a modern, reliable, good looking quality material. This means that if earth should have a chance competing with other building materials it must be pushed, packed and sold like them.

## **Legislation**

At the time being legislation prevents massive earth building without additional insulation as the calculated energy consumption is too high. However, practical experience shows that the heat storage capacity of massive materials compensate for the lesser insulation capacity. Until now there are unfortunately no calculations that can take this into consideration.

Although a very old building material, earth often makes building inspectors worried as they rarely have any experience with this. Tedious contacts with the authorities dis-encourage many potential earth builders. Building regulations for earth, like the German Lehmbau Regeln, would facilitate a lot, both for authorities, commissioners of building projects and contractors.

For the Crafts Lab, Sweden  
//Jenny Andersson, November 2012  
& Linda Lindblad, January 2013