

Newsletter november 2007

CULTURAL VILLAGE of EUROPE

The first step

by Bert Kisjes

The first activity of 'Work in the Village' will be made on the 30th of November in Mellionec. We are already working on the project for over a year. And the network of Cultural Villages is an existing one. Mellionec preferred this autumn for its contribution. The application at Interreg has not been made yet but it is more important to do a project in the right time. That will give better results.

What is going to happen? Villagers will examine themselves in the field of economy. Do they know about such things? For sure they do not know about the overall issues as rates of interest, trade balance or inflation. But they know a lot about realities like jobs, net wages, work conditions and useful work in the own village. And the project will focus on these realities. It would be strange if there would be no good ideas about that.

We will bring together our knowledge, our experiences. We will not know everything better than the others. But we will bring in our knowledge. And we are sure that local knowledge plus professional knowledge are a healthy base for planning.

The usual reaction from people of the countryside and villagers may be a sceptical reaction. They are not used to the idea that their contribution will be seen as important. Does

not the experience of many years show just the opposite? I see a small change in the moment. In some countries central policy is not always effective. Some governors come to the solution that certain problems centrally cannot be solved. They are looking for so called bottom up processes. In the world of experts I see the same tendency. That creates a chance for small communities.

I hope we will find people in villages to be ready and share their local knowledge. In my own village Wijk aan Zee we will focus ourselves on entrepreneurship. We ask entrepreneurs to come and sit together and speak about the vitality of the village as a whole and about their contribution to it. Mostly everybody works on his/her own. It will always be possible and important to copy ideas from other places. But by working together it will become easier to develop local resources and to develop activities that really fit.



Local knowledge

by Bert Kisjes

One of the aims of the project Work in the Village is to bring local knowledge together on economical items. This should be done in fifteen workshops. What is local knowledge? You cannot learn at universities or in books. Local knowledge you find on a place in the heads of locals. Professionals that want to use local knowledge have to come into contact with local people to get this knowledge.

The only use of theoretical knowledge has raised many problems. Many plans have been extorted with the argument of higher interests. The small community is seen as standing for small interests and is pictured as a selfish community.

In 2005 Cultural Village organized a conference about local knowledge. There has born the idea of the high value of local knowledge. All plans, all things that happen in reality have a time and a place where it happens. And that time and that place do matter.

What is local knowledge?

It is the kind of knowledge that focuses on the immediate surroundings; the knowledge people

have of the landscape, of the people in their community, or of the history of the area they live in. Local knowledge can be a binding factor, adding to the social cohesion of a society. It can empower communities, because knowledge of yourself means that knowing what you're capable of. Even a tiny village with no professional producers or managers can be capable of organizing a festival, if the people in that village only know who to turn to, in order to get a certain job done.

In our time knowledge is written with capitals. In march 2000 the EU came together in Lisbon and decided knowledge to be a corner stone of economy. That is what is called the Lisbon strategy. Our contribution to this strategy is the knowledge we have, our local knowledge. Both professional knowledge and local knowledge are important for the development of economy. It is important to find and formulate the local knowledge. That will happen in the project Work in the Village.

Aim of the project

Cultural Village wants to start a cooperation project of the twelve villages of the Network to stop the exodus of people leaving the European countryside. The governments of the European member states consider the exodus a serious problem. The countryside has developed a scepticism towards the proposed solutions of their problems, because policies that were bad for the countryside have been repeatedly forced on it. The urbanising forces often proved stronger than the power of the countryside to translate those policies into policies (bene)fitting the countryside?

Therefore the Network of Cultural Village does not want to wait for a central policy.

In the project "Work in the Village" Cultural Village will start the search for employment opportunities in the European countryside. Governmental reports are frequently very positive about a bottom-up policy attest. It is, however, difficult for governments and central non-governmental organizations to execute such a policy.

Cultural Village considers itself as a piece of that bottom and is willing to start the search for solutions of the employment problem. It wants to contribute to a vital countryside counteracting the exodus. Cultural Village is looking for a healthy relation between city and countryside, in which both parts make good use of each other's different qualities.

Connection with experiences from Brandenburg

Orientation of Schachdorf Ströbeck

Preparing the Ströbeck contribution to the Work in the Village project Kathrin Baltzer and Rudi Krosch encountered an initiative of Kurt Krambach in Berlin. Kurt Krambach is an agro sociologist who is active in the countryside of Brandenburg around Berlin.

On the 6th of October the Ströbeck representatives took part in a Day of the Villages that they experienced as a promising way of more villages to work together on development in the region of Brandenburg. Ströbeck is thinking evaluating how to connect the Work in the Village project and this Brandenburg initiative.



Entrepreneurship

The Wijk aan Zee issue in the project

What kind of entrepreneurship is important for small communities? This is the issue Wijk aan Zee will focus on in the project 'Work in the Village'. There are several activities in the coming time.

Cultural Village is involved in a project of EIM (research institute of the national organization for Small and Middle Size Companies). EIM started a project about small entrepreneurs. And they were focused on city quarters. Wijk aan Zee is interested in small communities. The initiatives came together in a pilot research for entrepreneurship in a city quarter in Rotterdam and the small community Wijk aan Zee. The results should be ready before the end of 2007.

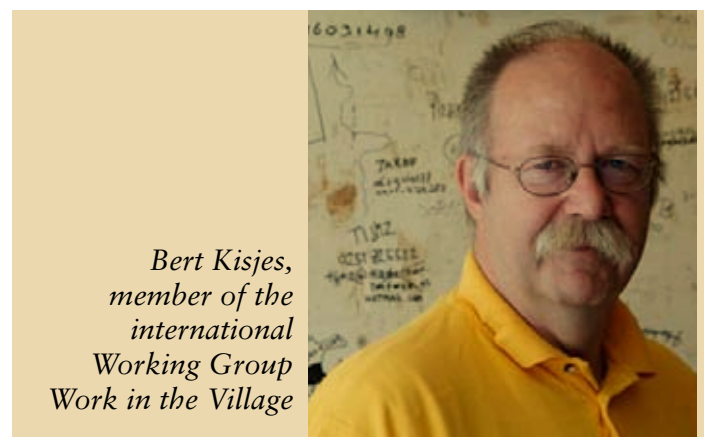
The second activity will be a study of best practices of entrepreneurship in small communities. Carin Giesen, a psychologist who wrote about farmers, will start describing best practices, examples that promote vitality of small communities.

The workshop that will be part of 'Work of the Village' is dedicated to the conditions for entrepreneurship. On low level – the local entrepreneurs plus civil servants of the municipality and of local institutes as police, fire brigade – will figure out what are the conditions for entrepreneurship. This workshop will be prepared intensely. An expert will work out the results.

We are looking for an expert to do this. In this moment Innovation network, an organization of the Ministry of Agriculture – is interested to do this job. This study should be interesting for small communities and city quarters and for entrepreneurs of course.

In autumn 2009 the whole project will be ready. The results will be published. That will happen in Tommerup in Denmark.

In the municipality Beverwijk entrepreneurship has played an important role in the last century. Therefore it is a good place to reflect on it and the results may be of importance for the future of the region.



Focus on cooperation and solidarity in Mellionnec

by Anne Hauvespre



Anne Hauvespre from Mellionnec and Mari Cris from Porrúa, members of the international Working Group

In France employment is mainly viewed as a problem that only governments can solve. Even in our local board of the cultural village organisation, when we first talked about starting a cooperation on this subject many members were hesitant. It was like self-censorship. Nevertheless a small group of 4 people start to work on it, supported by the european working group (Bert, Faye and Kathrin). Nearly one year later, we are now able to present the project in a way that convince our local board that we may be able to do something at the village level. More than the time we spend on it, I think that two encounters and books made the difference: The first one was with Bert at the congress of Rural Sociologists in Wageningen in august 2007. We had dinner with David Groenfeldt from the United States who told us about the “Appreciative inquiry”. This method is designed to help local people identify their achievements. By focusing on their strengths they can use the “positive present” to build a shared vision of a better future, one that is grounded in reality. It is described in the book : “Locating the Energy for Change: An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry” Charles Elliott, IISD, 1999.

The second one was on the way to Palkonya in September. We stopped to meet my sister in the east of France. She is working in a farm who is member of a network who exchange on alternative and united practical experiences. All the members are firms

which since 10, 15, 20 years prove that cooperation and solidarity can be embodied in business and that profit is not necessarily the driving force of a firm. Since 1997, they propose young people to do a period of work experience in their firms not to learn a trade but to hand down values of cooperative projects. They described the project in a book : “quand l’entreprise apprend à vivre”, Béatrice Barras and al. , Charles Leopold Mayer, 2002.

These are the red line of the workshop “Present-day villages, villages of the future : selfemployment and collective initiatives” we will organise on the 30th November and 1st December in Mellionnec.

The first day will be dedicated to a short presentation of the participants and the visits of two local initiatives to introduce the debate. The second day, the workshops and speeches will make the participants explore two items: the self-employment opportunities and the asset of cooperation in business that are both unvalued in our area.

We hope that this workshop will be the starting point of a local initiative where people with a plan can come and find human resources.

The two books:

<http://www.iisd.org/pdf/appreciativeinquiry.pdf>

<http://www.eclm.fr/source/pdf/originaux/253.pdf>

Your future

Research of the Youngsters

by Mark Groeneveld

As you probably know the European Union is worrying about the future of the countryside. The EU has especially concerns about employment opportunities in the villages and about young people which seem to look for their future in the cities. What do we, as villagers, think about these concerns? Do we worry about our young people? And do we ask them for their future plans?

This is the reason why Cultural Villages wants to start up a new research project executed by young people themselves. It is called "Your future? Inside or Outside the village?". We want to gather insights, opportunities, new ideas, concerns about employment in the rural areas. This is very necessary to give the European Union the right information about what is really going on in our villages.

The "your future" project is looking for young people in the age of 16 till 24 years which would like to get involved in a research project. Especially students from studies economy, social work, agriculture and rural development are most welcomed to join the project. Young people who want to experiment with interviewing, organising small kitchen-table discussions and debates are very welcome to join this project.

After this first phase, we will continue with small studies, interviews and discussions in each participating village. During autumn 2008 we will join with the participating youngsters to evaluate and have a second weekend to exchange the first experiences.

In 2009 we want to present a nice report which is not boring but is meant to be an inspiring booklet about the sparkling future of our villages!! Therefore creative young talents are also very welcome to join in the project.



The "young future" project is kicked off in a special weekend at Wijk aan Zee in spring 2008. Participants can get a free ticket to Wijk aan Zee to join a nice training weekend in which the project will be explained. During this weekend we will discuss about the employment-theme, we will get experience with interviewing and asking questions. We will think about how to start a small research project in your own village with other young people.

Of course there is also enough time to walk by the North Sea, have a chat, drink and party!

We would be really glad if we could welcome 24 young people from different villages from the cultural village network. You can help us by stimulating young people in your village to join this special project!

Do you want more information about the project?

Just send an email to:

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Economy on an island

Paxos *By Faye Lychnou*

Faye Lychnou from Paxos, member of the international Working Group Work in the Village



In the near past (20-30 years ago) by the end of October islanders on Paxos had already picked most of their olives and the oil mills were busy with olive oil production. Soil under the olive trees was swept clean since mid August and the olive groves sparkled in the sun surrounded by beautiful dry stone walls. Fishermen took their wooden boats out of the Lakka, Loggos or Gaios ports fishing around Paxos and Antipaxos. Locals gathered early every morning by each port to buy the best fresh fish, straight from the fishing boats. The remaining fish was carried to the mainland stacked with enormous blocks of ice. Goats and sheep were left free to eat fresh grass and wild flowers, while their huts were being mended and prepared for the winter months.

Nowadays things are different. Tourist season officially ends the last week of October. Local and foreign land owners make new deals with large British tour operators for the next summer season or with contractors for their future luxurious new villas (swimming pools included) or both. Sheep are scarce. They have been replaced by trucks carrying construction material in the most remote places of the island. Olive oil mills are silent until the end of November and even then work lasts for just a few months. Thick bush and cypress trees are overtaking the olive groves. Albanians work in the olive groves and in construction sites. Only one Paxiot can officially be called a farmer. Only two large wooden fishing boats remain and they sell their best fish to the famous tavernas in Loggos and Gaios, who stock them preparing for their rich Italian customers. The rest of the “kaikes” have been destroyed under EEC orders. Amateur fishing with nets has been forbidden.

Most of the locals simply sit around and spend the money they earned over the summer season waiting for the next one to arrive.

Would those locals be interested in the “Work in the village” project? Probably, if it was made clear to them, that through this project, solutions to an even economic growth, friendly to their own pockets and to the island’s character, could be found. The mayor believes in the idea but is afraid to stir the “surface” of a financial growth exclusively concerning tourism. When last spring I gave away more than 100 questionnaires prepared by myself as member of the “Work in the village” committee and by Makis Anemogiannis, financial advisor to the Mayor’s office, I managed to get back not more than 15 answers. Everyone was interested in them, wanted to take part in the survey but somehow neglected to bring the answered questionnaires back to us.

Sociologists and financial experts are being approached on behalf of the Mayor’s office but there is no certainty yet that anyone would be interested to take part in the project on behalf of Paxos. Various development researches have also been ordered but no one has seen any results yet.

A first contact has also been made with Panagiotis Patras, member of the European Rural Alliance and president of KENAKAP from 1992 until recently. KENAKAP could act as one of the positive models for our project, since as a development center of the area of Kalabaka in Trikala, in the center of mainland rural Greece, it has managed to unite all the local Municipalities, the Trikala prefecture, many socio-economic partners, like the Technical State Association or the Chamber of Commerce, many unions of farmers and forest workers, labor centers, a unions’ local bank and many professionals’ associations like the federation of tourist enterprises into achieving a common plan for local economic development using local initiative and manpower along with “Leader” funding, boosting local small businesses on the way.

The Paxos working group which will attend the first work shop on the “work in the village” project in Mellionec is still not quite fixed. Our goal is to form a team of representatives of the most important sectors of traditional or modern local financial life. The equivalent youth team is ready and it consists of 6 young people ranging from 16 to 30 years of age. They all live on Paxos, speak more than one foreign language, have the will to work for the project for the next 2-3 years and two of them have experienced the joy of taking part in one of the Youth Camps within the Cultural Villages Organization.

We are looking forward to taking part in the Mellionec workshop hoping to be able to contribute in its success, so as to use it as the main basis on which we shall build preparation works for a Paxos workshop in the near future.

Search for interesting experiences from abroad to change Porrúa

Porrúa (Spain) is organising the events of Cultural Village of Europe for next year 2008. The programme is having a lot of success despite our human and material limits. It is interesting to the people that make up those twelve villages that we participate in the programme, which is founded on the theme “exchange and mutual knowledge”.

As there are only three villages left that will have to organise the program until 2010, we feel that we are in the final stretch and that part of the success is the significant number of participants from our village in the exchanges, because they have established a rotation between themselves.

That's why we have a large demand from people of the village that would like to participate and help in the programme. They don't only want to host and help in the September exchange but they also ask for an effective participation with their presence in the activities that we are organising May 10th to 12th.

Porrúa is a small village that depends on the municipality Llanes. The Cultural Village of Europe programme is developed by the cultural association Llacín. The municipality participates in an important way in the patronage of the project. There are 400 inhabitants in the village and a certain level of ageing. The principal occupation has historically been raising cattle, but presently that has been reduced drastically. This provokes social and economical problems, and affects the environment with the change of use of the territory. Now, complementary occupations are growing and employment is getting diversified. Touristy activities and services are an important economical segment. That's why it is interesting to know concrete experiences that exist in other European communities like ours.

Our proposal for the opening meeting 2008 in Porrúa was born after this analysis. We would like to organize something practical. The opening conference should be profitable and have a lot of participation.

The principal objective is that there should be an effective participation of people from Porrúa, which does not require large numbers of people to participate to have success. Our proposal is to work in workshops about concrete subjects, on concrete and interesting experiences that are done in other European villages and should be useful for us. The profile could change, and the number of participants too.



The fundamental shaft or the reason of each workshop is the interest for our community. Besides the people who are going to present the workshop (we can call it “experience” or “action”) and the people from of Porrúa, an expert that we judge appropriate can participate in it.

As the conference is going to take two days, the workshops are going to be done in the morning of the first day. The afternoon is reserved for visits or other actions. The workshops will be done in two sessions of 60/90 minutes with a break in the middle. The second day will have two parts in the morning too. The first part is going to be for the majors of the villages to expose in a determinate time (necessary short) their approach and conclusions about the day before and to debate about the situation, the perspectives and future actions of Cultural Village of Europe on its tenth year. The second part will be the protocol act with the local and regional political representatives that are going to be present. The work shops can have a variable profile that we will concrete with each village participating. These are possible subjects to work on:

- Tourism. Organization. For people from hotels and restaurants or working in active tourism.
- Public transport. Public services. For third age people or people with public responsibilities.
- Forest and wood. Situation of the forest. The reforestation necessity. Our concrete case.
- Chess. Children are learning to play chess at school. Work shop with an expert.
- Gardening. Incidence in the public decoration. Garden designs for private or public areas. For women and youth.
- Agro alimentation. Cider. Wine. Cheese. Production and small packaging factories. Possibilities in our region. Family workshops.
- Other possibilities: Cleanness, environment, cattle raising, cultural actions, music... or ever other subject that should be offered by the villages.

About financing

The project is not only focussed on the twelve villages that do the project. It should have results that are important for the countryside and small communities in general.

The network of Cultural Village will use their experience and willingness for cooperation and good relations to make a contribution that is of importance in general.

Therefore the working committee is looking for financing from an European fund. They will apply at the EU Interreg programme that focuses on interregional cooperation. The project is focused on the development of knowledge and economy that have a high priority in the Interreg Programme, formulated in the Lisbon Agenda.

Next to the European funding co financing will be asked in the regions. It is needed to find the interest of the regions, not only for financing but also later for the dissemination of the results. The working committee hopes that the regional authorities are interested in what is happening in their region.

For what money is needed?

Money is needed for the (1) international organization and (2) for international participation at workshops. (3) For publishing results.(4) And especially for expertise. Expertise mostly has to be bought. Normally small communities do not have

money for expertise. By bringing together of the efforts of more small communities, these communities will have the opportunity to find experts to look in their direction. And that for sure could be profitable for these communities.

The application has to be made before the 15th of January. And within five months the results will be known.

The Dutch Ministry Vrom will be asked to cover the costs of the preparation period in 2007. The Workshop in Mellionnec gets support from the Europe for Citizens Programme. For the first Youth meeting, in order to start the project Your future has been asked a contribution from Youth in Action.

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