



Contribution from Wijk aan Zee



When we were speaking about Bystre Cultural Village of Europe for the first time, I saw something in the eyes of the Mayor of Bystre, Hana Sejkorova, is that possible ? Are we good enough? She was not sure.

I am very glad you did it.

Perhaps we do not know how things should be done.

Do not be to modest, sometimes it is dangerous when you meet others who are not. Logics tell me that experience with life you have the same as any other place with about 2000 inhabitants. And there happened a lot in your country in the last fifty years. So perhaps in some way you are more experienced than other places. It would be interesting to hear this experience.

On the wall of the townhall is written that two Czech poets came here to be inspired by Bystre. So I think, you know exactly your place in the world.

For the Cultural Villages it is an important moment.

In this weekend we want to consolidate our co-operation. There is some self-evidence to go on.

Yesterday we spoke about a lot of practical things. Like money. The preparation of common projects. How to prepare publications. How to organise the Expedition.

Now I would like to speak in more general terms. Because, we are expected to express ourselves. To articulate what we have in mind. And our message is not that easy.

Everywhere you eat spaghetti nowadays. It is not necessary to go to Pergine.

Since the Beatles in the sixties, the youth in all countries of the world is singing the same songs, everybody reads the same news on the frontpage of his newspaper. And when the best footballplayers playing against each other, millions of people in all countries look at the same time at the same screen.

In such a world speaking about people that are different, that they want different things, about the towns and the villages, you have to explain a lot.

When we tried to explain the differences between villages and big towns, we did not find a very interested audience. Only from the historical point of view perhaps. How things were done before. But for the real builders and commanders of a modern society the idea of differences between village and town did not sound very convincing.

That is something that belongs to the past.

BUT,

when we started Cultural Village of Europe, we recognised that there was a common feeling in the simple sentence: There are not only cities, there are also villages in this world. And when you say it in this way, you suggest differences.

Let me try to picture four contrasting starting positions:

- 1. The contrast between an anonymous world and a familiar world
- 2. The contrast between the individual and the mass
- 3. The contrast between the need of making culture and the need of consuming culture
- 4. The contrast between natural law and human law.

• 1. Modern world is an anonymous world. Do what you want and nobody should interfere. Nobody will interfere as long as you pay what you have to pay. Anything you can buy with money. Money is anonymous as well. Whoever has the money, he can buy. Nobody expects that you care. You pay and some institution will clean. You pay and some institution will put some flowers in the park. And when you want things to be done in another way, you go to the elections and anonymously vote somebody else. And the responsible people do not want you to do something, they try to make it impossible for you. They do not want your car to be there so they make it impossible for you to come there by car.

As we are sitting here and come from villages, we know that the world of the villages is another world. People are quite familiar with the place where they live. And automatically they are willing to do something. O.k., there are active and lazy people. The lazy people say what should be done and the active they do it.

In any new village that comes into existence will happen the same.

In 1989 my village was confronted with the plan to make a depot for rubbish on the beach. Our reaction was: you cannot do that. And after it we were criticised: we should not be so selfish, we should think about the bigger, the common interests. We could not understand this argument. Small communities should contribute to the actual discussions. They should not try to become anonymous. An anonymous village could be something dangerous and awful with big fences and a lot of electronic control. Besides the anonymous world should be recognised the need of familiar worlds. And the policy of governments should not be in favour of anonymity only.

• 2. The contrast between a living person and the mass.

In a mass there is a need to divide the people. In a big city there is a need to avoid people.

If there is an accident on the highway, you are curious whether they are dead or not. When happens something in my own village I want to know who was in the car and who is involved.

In this sense for me the world of a village is a world of people.

And the mass? The mass is connected with functions, functional groups.

It is quite normal to speak about average people, even if they do not exist. An average family in France had 2 ½ children. That is an abstraction. It does not really exist. According to this way of thinking they speak about you and me as consumers. But they can speak about me as a consumer, I will never be one. Only a part of me will be so. And if I read that the consumers want something, I do not feel concerned. It is only a part of me and perhaps there is another part of me that says the opposite.

In the mass registration is extremely important. Without registration you do not exist. It is even usual to speak about legal and illegal people. Imagine, somebody asks what you are and you can't say a son of John and Elisabeth, but you have to say: I am illegal.

- **3. Culture making and culture consuming.**

Village Culture is NOT a world of consume. No tickets, no art-products, no heroes. If we want to see the famous people we go to the city. No problem. We do not have the need to bring them into our own place. Sometimes, perhaps. Only sometimes.

Our culture is to do things ourselves, to sing together, making fun together, playing theatre together. If you see each other every day and many years, you get this idea. It is nice. You can't always talk. And only looking to what somebody else is doing, is so passive.

The problem is the quality of singing or acting or painting. If you compare it with the technically skilled professionals your work is not so good perhaps. People could laugh about you while performing.

The quality of villageculture is not this technical professionalism, but it is a social quality. If people are able to deal with each others in this way, if they are able not only to speak, but also to act, to organise or to sing together, it is another quality, for professional artists very difficult to reach at all. This quality should be aimed at in villages and it will be important for the whole society!

- **4. Natural law and human law**

The big success of the new times was peoples engineering. Through science we were able to change things. Techniques helped changing things. The human race made new laws. The sense of organisation was growing. Things that just used to happen, were organised. Schemes have been made and people had to act according these schemes. These schemes became new laws.

In the villages and especially in the farmers houses always was aware a sense for nature. Something you cannot change, you have to obey.

Not only the weather and the cows, but also the people. You cannot change human nature. You should accept.

I have the feeling that especially many farmers see governments as nature. As something that just happens.