

The importance of the village is here to stay

Plan for the next eight years is ready

Bert Kisjes

It has been three years since we published the last newsletter of Cultural Village. It is now time to continue the publication. In January 2000 we thought we had left the activities of Cultural Village behind us. But that was a mistake. Because the process we initiated in 1999 is unstoppable. In the year 2000 the village from Brittany, Mellionec, became cultural village of Europe. Mellionec involved some nearby villages. In 2001 the initiative moved to the Czech Bystré which also involved neighbouring villages. In the past year the centre was Pergine Valdarno in Tuscany. And in 2003 the English village of Aldeburgh will take its turn.

The eleven villages are increasingly realising that a village in this century can contribute to modern society. They are remarkably interested in Europe. Even the handicap of eleven different languages is not impossible to surmount. No one talks in small print, and that makes conversation easier. Each of the eleven villages adds something to the movement of villages. The cultural differences between Northern, Southern, Western and Eastern Europe are seen as exciting. In the past four years many people travelled back and forth, and the visitors photographed not the houses but the people who were their hosts.

This all was reason for me to decide in 2000 to leave Hotel Sonnevank to other people and continue with Cultural Village. In 2001 an organisation was formed. The workgroup that arranged the visits of the various villages in 1999 is now functioning as a group that keeps in touch with the foreign villages.

Much has happened in the period between 1999 and now. An eight-year plan was made for the near future. It is an agreement on who will be Cultural Village in which year.

In June of 2000 we have visited the European Parliament with the mayors of the eleven villages. We also presented the Charter of the Villages. At every contact with Europe we found out that they appreciate the initiative but they cannot support it. The administration is too rigid. To support an initiative it needs to fit into the normal European politics and governmental terminology. That is the problem.

The province of North Holland has realised the importance of the continuation of the initiative and supports it with a contribution to the office and travelling costs for the next three years.

Because of that, the past three years we have been able to work, in addition to the activities in Pergine Valdarno and specific activities in Wijk aan Zee, on a few realizable plans.

• In 2003 we will publish a book with our story

about what has happened in the context of Cultural Village in Europe since 1996 (see page 4).

• August 30th 2003 there will be a Day of the European Village in Castle Svojanov in the Czech Republic for villages that have signed the Charter. Interested villages can send a delegation.

• In Wijk aan Zee the project 'Proeflokaal' is in preparation, which is to seek a better way to connect the functions, tasks and rules of the informal village and the larger community in which the village must function.

• For the Ministry of Agriculture we are working on an essay that aims to get a discussion going in political, social and governmental circles about the possibilities of the village in the 21st century and the importance of the small community to the whole of society.

• We are working on an exhibit.

• We are trying to conduct a number of case studies and research programmes, among other things into the importance of the small entrepreneur.

This newsletter will, together with the website www.cultural-village.com, report our proceedings four times a year. Whoever would like to contribute and stay informed we ask to become a supporter of the Foundation for at least € 15,- a year.

Science recognises Cultural Village

Closing conference in Pergine Valdarno

Jacky de Vries

The villages joined in Cultural Village have an important task, and science now also seems to have grasped this fact. "You are the future of Europe", professor Enrico Chelu, sociologist at the University of Sienna, said. Cheli spoke those words during the mayor's conference on the 23rd of November 2002 in Pergine Valdarno.

That weekend the representatives of the twelve villages closed the year in which Pergine Valdarno could call itself Cultural Village of Europe. Most representatives arrived Friday and ate at a local restaurant.

The day after, the closing conference was held,



Pergine Valdarno making a clear statement being Cultural Village.

Photo: Riet Molenaar

in which local produce was the central theme. Each village showed its own product. Jan Buding spoke for Wijk aan Zee. He emphasized the abstract products of Wijk aan Zee. The heritage, for example, the natural environment, and the pride of its inhabitants who keep and protect this wealth. The conference included an excursion to a small factory in Pergine where olive oil was successfully produced in a traditional way.

One of the guest speakers was professor Chelli; the sociologist has followed the activities that took place in Pergine Valdarno last year.

In the spring he already spoke to the representatives about what village and city can mean to each other, in November he drew his conclu-

sions. Cultural Village should continue and involve other villages.

Cheli: "Cultural Village is now a child of four that is growing up. We need to realise that the child really can grow up. Your ideas are the future; not only for Europe, but for the whole planet. We saw a French revolution, an industrial and a cultural revolution. This is also a revolution, one from the inside."

The next day the official closing took place in city hall. The ideas of Cultural Village have quite a few echoes in Italy, to which the great number of dignitaries and representatives of the national media that visited the closing conference testified. The governor of Tuscany, for example, was present, and a camera crew of Rai Uno. Bert Kisjes as ambassador of Cultural Village praised the way in which the inhabitants of Pergine Valdarno had organised the activities. At the end the mayor of Aldeburgh was presented the banner; this English village can call itself Cultural Village of Europe in 2003.



José Ostendorf having a conversation with an inhabitant of Pergine. Photo: Riet Molenaar

Seven years cultural village in book form

In 1996 the inhabitants of the Danish village Tommerup proclaimed themselves Cultural Village of Europe. Many miles away a similar initiative was being prepared. Wijk aan Zee wanted to do the same thing in 1999. Now, seven years later, Cultural Village is a covenant of twelve villages as well as the subject of a book about to be published.

In the book *Vital Villages* we do not only look back on seven years Cultural Village of Europe, attention is also directed towards the future. Not just in text, also in many unique photos. The book will be presented in April of 2003 during the mayor's conference in the English village of Aldeburgh, Cultural Village of 2003.

Vital Villages is also about themes important to villages in the future. The historic Charter of the Villages was also included and all this makes *Vital Villages* a special book.

The book has 112 pages, will appear in Dutch, German and English and will be printed in a limited number. Who does not want to miss this collectors item can order a copy now, mentioning the language and the number of copies desired. The store price will be € 30,-. Those who order a copy in advance will pay only € 20,- plus shipping. To pay, transfer money to bank account number 3080 13 743 of Foundation Cultural Village of Europe in Wijk aan Zee, mentioning 'book *Vital Villages*'. Or you can order through village@cultural-village.com.

Become a supporter of the Foundation Cultural Village of Europe. For a minimum of € 15,- a year you can support our work. You will receive our newsletter and will be advised of our activities.

Rabobank 3080 13 743 of
Foundation Cultural Village of
Europe in Wijk aan Zee.

Paxos has a new mayor

Els van den Bosch

Paxos, the Greek island that will act as a host village for Cultural Village in 2004, has chosen Spyros Bogdanos as their new mayor. Many people know him: Spyros is the usual representative of the island to CV-manifestations and he is an enthusiastic supporter of the movement.

In Greece the mayor is chosen directly and the Paxiotic population of 2400 people voted with a large majority for this widely known person.

Until the 1st of January 2003 he can still be found daily in his shop in Gaios, a hardware, wood and related articles store. At the same time he runs a branch for the Greek National Bank there. However, Spyros is especially well known with respect to culture. He is Paxiot with all his heart, and after his studies of economy and

sociology in Athens returned as fast as possible to the island in order to build a life for himself there and to explore its rich history. He wrote a number of books, among other things about the past of the island and he also published poems. He is very active in the cultural club and when the choir of Paxos performs Spyros can be found among the tenors.

From the 1st of January Spyros will devote himself entirely to his mayor hood, in contrast to his predecessor who continued his private job on the side.

"There is more than enough to do", he says, "and I want to focus on it."

Paxos went through a rapid development from isolated agrarian island to resort for tourists. That involved rigorous changes that affected its authentic character. Spyros is glad with the

economic progress that drove off poverty and the rough existence of earlier days. But he also sees unwanted side effects such as pollution, neglect of old values, indifference for the identity of the island.

"I will clean the island", he says. "The thrash must be cleared, the strand must be clean, we should get rid of the car wrecks. I will also commit myself to an efficient water supply in the villages and we need a good sewer system".

The olive-tree culture, that for centuries was the only source of income, also has his attention.

"Now that we no longer completely depend on it to live, it may not be neglected. We must continue to maintain it, like the ancient architecture. Some houses here date from the Venetian times. We cannot neglect it, and we must have respect for the past." >

One of his plans is setting up an archive with books from the 16th century, and the restoration of the splendid Ipapanti church built in 1600. But he also looks ahead. He for example also plans to build winter houses for tourists. "Now they only come in the summertime. But



Spyros Bogdanos signing the Charter of the Villages on December 10th 1999 in Wijk aan Zee. Photo: Riet Molenaar

in the winter it is also beautiful here and it is worthwhile to come then. You just need a house fit for the winter climate".

From the start Spyros has been an enthusiastic advocate for Cultural Village.

"Especially for Paxos as an island is it important to learn from others, to exchange thoughts and ideas, to experience the other cultures from up close. Thus we will not become isolated, we understand more of the people who visit us as tourists and we can show ourselves as we really are. It is also very important that because of this movement the governments will value the villages more and no longer ignore them."

He is looking forward to 2004, when Paxos will be the host village for Cultural Village. The preparations have already started. A book will appear about the history of water in Paxos. And the singers and dancers of the island practise regularly to perform well in 2004. The guests from all over Europe will be given a tour and will be informed about the history and life on the island.

Spyros is enthusiastic and will have little time for writing.

"Now I am busy writing a dictionary. I am collecting words and expressions that used to be used here but are becoming extinct. But it seems I will have to leave set that on ice for a while."

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The harbour of Loggos, Paxos.

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Short notices

Aldeburgh Cultural Village of Europe in 2003

The programme

April 25-27 Opening conference ‘The impact or tourism on small towns and villages’

July 20-25 ‘What makes us WHO we are... a digital portrait or us’? The participants (4 per village) are asked to collect materials that represent daily life in their own village.

These may be film, photograph, music or other kinds of objects. During the meeting in July everything will be collected and joined, with the help of some artists from Aldeburgh, on a CD-Rom or DVD that will be taken home.



Moothouse, Aldeburgh.

Week for Woodcutters in Bystré

Czech Bystré organizes a week for woodcutters, following the ‘Easels and Brushes’ initiative. Bystré writes: ‘We live in a region with wonderful forests. A lot of wood is used for industry and for heating. We know that every tree is unique and unrepeatable. It has its own soul and life and its growing charge more than a human’s life. It is possible to give it a new life and a new shape. Its value will be conserved and its beauty emphasized.’ For a restricted number of people meals and lodgings can be provided. To enter contact ivana.strilkova@worldmail.cz or the source of this newsletter.

Juttersfestival Wijk aan Zee.

Wijk aan Zee annually organizes a music festival that is also open to musicians from the eleven European villages. The dates are the 4th through the 6th July 2003. For a restricted number of musicians meals and lodgings can be provided. Let us know well in advance who will come. village@cultural-village.com

Christmas CD for Mellionec

Lacking other tangible products 40 musicians from Wijk aan Zee made a Christmas CD for the Christmas market in Brittany, where products from most of the eleven villages were either exhibited or for sale.

Neighbour’s Ball

In November Bystré organized a ‘neighbour’s ball’, intended for inhabitants of Ketinsk Triangl, the village that helped provide for a lot of guests from all over Europe during the village festival in 2001. The cooperation that started in 2001 is continued. That is also the case with Mellionec where after the year 2000 the cooperation in Kreiz Breizh became more involved.

New times for the villages

This is the title of an essay soon to appear written by Bert Kisjes and Carin Giesen. This essay is written as an assignment of ‘Innovatienetwerk’, an independent organization concerned with sustainable development in the ‘green space’. In this organization governments and social organizations cooperate. One of the projects of ‘Innovatienetwerk’ concerns habitation. Vinex-locations do not appear to be the ideal way. People indicate that they want to live in a village. Is it possible to build new villages? In this context the essay is written from the perspective of a village as community of people. The essay will appear this spring in Dutch and will also be translated into English and German. Interested people can learn more by writing to village@cultural-village.com

Corus chess tournament

Schachdorf Ströbeck was also represented once more this year at the Corus Chess Tournament in Wijk aan Zee. 18-20 January Ströbeck played in a tournament against Wijk aan Zee. Ströbeck won the match at an equal number of points.

The role of woman in the village

In 2006 Schachdorf Ströbeck will be Cultural Village of Europe. Mayor Krosch announced during the chess tournament in Wijk aan Zee that Ströbeck chose the role of woman in the village as the topic of the conference. In Ströbeck that role is very important.

Easels and Brushes in Wijk aan Zee

From the 15th through the 22nd of may, during the Week of the Sea, in Wijk aan Zee a symposium will be held for painters and draughtsmen. For a limited number of artists from far away we can arrange lodging with families. The theme of the symposium will be ‘Wind force 10’. The symposium will end with an exhibition and an auction where the works can be sold. Information at village@cultural-village.com or the address indicated on this newsletter.



Help!

In this year we expect the activities of Cultural Village will be extended. We need people to help out with all sorts of activities. From journalists who helps us tell our tale and artists who would like to assist setting up an exhibit to administrative people who are willing to maintain address files or who can work a website. Even financial people who can help us find money. That is a professional’s task. Please write to the editors.

CULTURAL VILLAGE of EUROPE

Colophon:

This newsletter is published by Cultural Village of Europe in Wijk aan Zee, Julianaweg 35, 1949 AN Wijk aan Zee
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E-mail: villages@cultural-village.com
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Layout: Peter Neijenhoff - www.hvbx.nl
Printing: Pantheon printers
