



Contribution from WIJK AAN ZEE



It is the second time that we contribute to the item of tourism. In the last year, in Aldeburgh, we discussed the item. The outcome was something in between two very different point of views. One was represented by Kilingi Nomme: 'there has not been born or murdered in Kilingi Nomme even one single king' told Kalle Kiipus us, 'so, who will be interested to spend his time in our place'. The other point of view was represented by Mr Britten, president of the British Board of Tourism and chairman of the conference on tourism in Aldeburgh: 'tourism it's a duty for all of us'.

The trend of the conference was in the direction of Mr Britten.

Our contribution held by Ton Kroezen was a survey of the actual situation in Wijk aan Zee. Our village is partly a resort for tourists. Partly I say, because it is limited by the presence of heavy industry.

At the end of the 19th century the need for recreation started. The first hotels have been built and people came from Amsterdam to spend their free days on the beach. Many hotels have been built in the first half of the 20th century.

In the twenties another development started: the development of a steelfactory on the border of the North Sea Canal. In the seventies both developments met each other. They seemed to exclude each other. Some hotels disappeared again. Other hotels used their capacity not for tourists but for the workers in the factory. Tourism did not grow out to a real tourism industry. But tourists did not disappear. The German from the Ruhrgebiet disappeared. They themselves live in a landscape of steelfactories. In their holidays they wished other surroundings. In their place came people who wanted to be at the sea and who wanted to avoid mass tourism.

Slowly our village started to understand that it can use its realities. The landscape of the steelfactory, the sea and the dunes is full of contrasts. By making a sculpture park it made the best of it. This integration of even contradictual forces can be attractive.

We want to continue the line set out by Mr Britten. He told us 'Tourism is an imperative' All local governments should convince their people that you have to do it.

We see two reasons for the imperative:

1. The economical reason. In a money economy where the economical structure is believed to be the most import structure, everybody needs to have a job. Earlier a big part of the people in the countryside could live of the fruits of the land. But the grass, the potatoes, the wine and the wheat do not generate enough money to provide for all people in the countryside a job. But there has grown another interest for the countryside. The people got another kind of interest in the countryside. They like the countryside how it looks like. The fresh air, the landscape, nature. The use of the countryside, in staying there for a while, is a strong need for the town dwellers. You may assume that they need it. That it otherwise is not possible to live in a city with over one million people.

2. The second reason for the imperative of working on tourism is the need for a better connection between town and countryside. The urban culture is walking on its own. This was one of our conclusions as Cultural Village. Villages and countryside did not have a choice. For a village to be taken serious, you had to use the same terminology and to take over the culture of the town people. By extending hospitality to the people of the cities in their spare time may grow the contact with them, the contact that the farmers lost. Farmers get slowly aware of the fact that they lost this contact. Too many town dwellers do not have any idea under what circumstances farmers live and work. For them an animal is a home animal: a dog or a cat or a bird in a cage; or the lion, the dolphins and the sharks you see on the television. Tourism may bring this contact if it is no mass tourism. Cultural Village of Europe has born on a bridge between town and countryside. In a hotel where foreigner and autochton meet each other every day.

These are the two reasons why you can call tourism a necessity to the villages. Now the question of what to do to get that tourist into your village. How do you organise that? 5 factors are important:

- ♣ Knowledge of your own village.
- ♣ Awareness of the needs of city people.
- ♣ Infrastructure: beds, toilet facilities
- ♣ 'working'space.
- ♣ advertising

Knowledge of your own village

It is very important to know your own environment and your own fellow-villagers. What there is and who there lives. In our case we have a sea. That is exceptionally attractive. We also have a steel factory. Visiting a steel factory can be very interesting. In such a steel factory they make things out of steel. Maybe you can do something with that. In the past we have made steel sculptures together. That resulted in a sculpture part for visitors from outside. Space is often attractive for sculptures. Sculptors look for space to place their sculptures. And the people. You may want to sell anything, but without a good salesman you will not sell anything. Condition number one for the development of tourism is knowledge of the people and the environment of the own village.

Knowledge of the needs of a city person.

For tourism in your village it is important to have an idea of the recreation needs of the city person. Does he want to read a book, swim, sport, work, discover, paint or learn something?

They certainly want more than just a holiday. They also want a place to study together for a weekend or a week. The price matters a lot. Luxury is redundant.

Painters like to work in a different environment for a while.

To musicians and theatre groups it can be very attractive to have room and shelter to rehearse for a long weekend or even a week.

The factor: Which investments should be made?

Of course you need beds and showers. You need space. You need food, cooking facilities or a restaurant. In Wijk aan Zee people rent out their own home. They themselves moved into the shed behind the house, the so-called 'summer house'. After many years that has turned around. The summer house is now being rented. If you want to do something with music a piano is a great help of course.

Working space

Is there a space where people can sculpt? A room where you can paint when the weather is bad outside? Is there a room where an orchestra can rehearse? Often they will want to show what they have been rehearsing the last night of their stay.

Myself I have a lot of experience running an old tower with a very simple room to sleep in and a room where you could do anything. A whole student orchestra could rehearse there. And these orchestras and choirs came. The secret, and the fun, of such an event was always at the end: the public recital for which we rallied people. Most rehearsals ended in a public recital.

For painters it can be very nice to paint in a different environment for a while. To a community it can be very attractive to have a number of paintings or drawings of their own surroundings. Is there a place the artist can exhibit his work?

Advertising

You will want people to use the facilities that you provide. For advertising you will likely need help from outside. Because this is about reaching the people you want to come.

These five factors are important to get tourism going.

Let me summarize:

Tourism is important because the inhabitants can live off it.

Tourism is also important as a bridge between the countryside and the urban world.

How to promote tourism? Besides a detailed knowledge of your own place and your neighbours, you will need outsiders as well.

And remember: tourism does not need to be mass tourism!