



## The garden concept

### A new concept for spatial planning

by Bert Kisjes

#### Countryside spatial planning, city style

City dwellers use all sorts of new words for the countryside. They call it the 'exterior' space or the 'green' space. The city is the inner space. Who leaves their house in the city will still be in a space with walls and a floor. The only thing usually missing is the roof, although many new and attractive malls provide the roof, too. The area outside the city gate is the exterior space, and that space should conform to the norms: quiet, green and a lovely view. The exterior space should be a nice, romantic picture. In Dutch spatial planning those areas are strictly separated. The city is the red area, with lots of buildings and people. The exterior space is green and has fewer buildings, few people and limited industry. Another much-used term in this context is 'landscape'. Several different types of landscapes are often distinguished.

From this point of view of the countryside planologists are sent into the countryside to make nice pictures, to realize a specific type of landscape. Nice rivers and meandering paths, without interfering construction but with suitable vegetation.

#### A different concept

In Kirchheim during the conference people kept mentioning 'Garten'. Gardens. Flower gardens, children's gardens, vegetable gardens, tree gardens. It seemed they saw everything exterior as a garden. In the middle of June a large garden feast is organized. People are invited to a large number of gardens. Owners open their garden to the public and people eat, dance, work, play music and talk there. And seeing the preparations they seem to be expecting a large number of people.

It appeals to me to see everything exterior as a 'garden'. The term garden has four elements that the concept 'landscape' is missing.

#### 1) The gardener

Without a gardener there is no garden. People are always working in gardens.

#### 2) The presence of people

People dwell in gardens. They are not on the opposite side of the vegetation in gardens. They are not just photographing the gardens, but are part of it. People often hang out in gardens, not just to work there but also to just be there.

#### 3) The process of growing

In gardens the recently sowed and planted always raises interest. The growth process is given full attention. In an urban concept of the landscape grown trees are preferred because a young sapling doesn't look nice enough.

#### 4) Shared responsibility

'Garden' brings to mind a shared responsibility of a multitude of land owners who all do their part. 'Landscape' brings to mind the (semi) government that does it all by itself. Ownership and maintenance is done by the government from a general policy. This fits a time in which people like a central system of checks with little faith in the individual citizen. Such a government has a preference for a uniform policy. The same trees and bushes everywhere. And if there is little money, the cheapest trees and bushes that are on sale.

It is worthwhile to develop the garden concept further as an alternative to thinking in landscapes, exterior areas and green areas. That can provide employment that remains in the countryside as well.



# Fruit trees

by Bert Kisjes

**It is not difficult to remember the first meeting with Kirchheim. The delegation bought me a delicious local liquor of pears. In Kirchheim they fully realize that the human being has a stomach and that the daily filling of this organ is a serious affair. When Hans Hartl, the mayor of Kirchheim, told me in March that a village should be aware of that, I understood his relation gifts: always something to drink or to eat. I told him that a sympathetic Chinese philosopher in the thirties wrote a remarkable book about human life. His definition of the human being was "An erect quadruped in search of potatoes".**

The earth generates food. Fruit belongs to the delicious things. It is a pity that the fruit trees are in peril. The standard fruit trees are too expensive to harvest, so the fruits are allowed to rot away or the trees are cut down. But to anybody who loves delicious things and is a fineschmecker this is a painful thing. In Kirchheim they did everything to find a new life for the fruit trees in the 21st century. They pick up the fruits to make products that are used. They call these local products. They

use it for marmalade, jam, compote, dried fruits and for drinks. You get local cider, juice, slivovice and wine. For people who do not have a farm it may be a welcomed extra source of income. In spring the whole region is in bloom, which makes it very attractive.

Some kilometres from Kirchheim, in Lohnsburg a piece of land is managed as an orchard for fruit trees. One hundred different fruit trees were planted there.. In a five years it will be used as an educative plot. Schools will go there and learn everything about trees and fruit and how fruit can be used. One hundred meters further along is a farmer's house from where the project is guided and where the schools will get additional information. Kirchheim and its neighbourhood have the creativity to use the means they have and finding a way to do what they desire. In many other places the trees have been cut down.



Juice, marmalade, schnaps



Juice, cider and schnaps

# The role of central government

In Kirchheim the central government from Bundesland Oberösterreich has played an important role. The Bundesland offered prizes. Kirchheim won the family prize. Kirchheim argued that family work is important in the community. That during events and village festivals a place and a role for the children will always be thought about. 'We are very glad to have in our Bundesland Oberösterreich also politicians to whom the countryside with its inhabitants is important. Almost every politician has a project in his/her region that he/she wants to be successful.

The role of the Bundesland consisted of financing the moderator, the printing work and support for an event. The project of the gas station with shop was also supported by the government Oberösterreich. Oberösterreich launched a project 'Land lebt auf'. This project of the Bundesstat was very important for the realisation of the new gas station. In Kirchheim it is visible that the 'higher' levels of politics can be useful for the small communities.

## The Maypole

In Kirchheim Mayor Hans Hartl suggested planting a Maypole in Brussels and in European villages in 2010. As a symbol of fertility and vitality in this century. Villages make their own Maypole and we make the Maypole in Brussels together. The symbol is clear and therefore persisted for so many centuries.



Kirchheim is an example of a village where a busy road is the centre of the village. It is the main road connecting Ried and Braunau. With the increasing traffic the road has split the village. And the former centre of the village is a piece of asphalt that isn't useful anymore for people to meet, but only for cars passing by.

Since the Kirchheimers started concentrating on their future they discovered this reality. The village lost its central place, the natural place for the villagers to meet. They came to the conclusion that such a central place is important for common actions and manifestations. And they started searching for a spot for a new central place.

But how can you find the right place, on which side of the road? In the end a decision was made in favour of the people who always play an important role in village activities: the Musik Kapelle! Kirchheim has a big Musikkapelle. Many families are or were involved in this music group. It has 45 members

and is able to play many music styles. All the styles that are needed for the village events, for weddings, funerals and regular concerts. The Kapelle is the very heart of village-life. It needs another room for rehearsals. That new room will be a part of the new central place. If you just remove one wall of the room they will be playing on the central place itself. Kirchheim follows the energy of the villagers. I expect that this place will be used as intended. We will see in 2010.

As so many villages Kirchheim lost its shop. The village is situated on a main road. The village council decided to use a piece of land at the road for a new gas station combined with a shop for the village. At the end of 2007 this Station has been opened. In the Gas station is a small meeting place for coffee and a piece of bread, a shop with foodstuffs for the people of Kirchheim and fuel for the cars.

# Eight years of cooperation in Kirchheim

by Kathrin Baltzer

**Cooperation is an important condition to cope with big tasks. In Mellionec we saw how dedicated entrepreneurs succeeded to realize together their imagination of an ecological agriculture. During the second workshop of “Work in the Village” on 7th of March 2008 in Kirchheim we could experience how cooperation of villagers with one another could work.**

In 2000 Kirchheim the project „future of Kirchheim“ started. In those days Kirchheim won the family prize of the state Upper Austria and they plan to continue the efforts of being a community for families by way of a “future signpost” . This signpost is a systematic collection of goals that shall improve the life in Kirchheim. The list was preceded by an analysis of strengths and weakness of the community. The state government supported the elaboration of such a village agenda for example by taking over the cost of a professional moderator who led the development of a future concept. Together with a group of active inhabitants of Kirchheim he organized village evenings and did inquiries to discover problems in village life and the wishes of the community members. The community council was also included. Everybody should cooperate and contribute. From this intensive cooperation the common „future signpost“ was developed which directed attention to quality of life in the village and to the preservation of village structure. A working group of active inhabitants has been formed to realize the goals.

The content of the “future signpost” hasn’t been dictated from the top. The villagers themselves have discovered weaknesses and strengths using their local knowledge and set tasks for the future of their village. Each household has a signpost.

Through the years the active group sticks to an open communication with the other village inhabitants by village evenings, information and on-on-one talks. Impulses from within the village stayed important and everybody has always had the opportunity to join the active people. In this way they kept the support of community for change.

During the workshop in March in Kirchheim we could experience this kind of cooperation within the village. Even the invitation to the event was combined with solving a riddle. 100 residents of 740 attended. The workshop was opened by



a brass band. Following the band a retrospect of what the group “future of Kirchheim” has achieved since 2000 was presented. The new tasks have been discussed at the respectively themed tables. Every 20 minutes the musicians signalled the table changes. By this rotating system everybody could join the talks of each theme. Not only new ideas of the villagers were collected, but many as well seized the opportunity to get information and ask questions. Their opinion was important this evening and they used their influence. This way of combining seriousness and fun - like raffle and brass group - was impressive. The tone during discussions was quiet and factual.

In a village something can only be changed if there are active people and all inhabitants pull together. For the preservation of such a village culture the most important thing is communication.

## Colofon

On this edition worked together Kathrin Baltzer, Mari Cris, Ivan and Bert Kisjes. Photos Hans Hartl. Lay out Peter Neijenhoff