

Round Table Palkonya
26th of May 2007



Cultural Village since the Charter 1999-2007

"We need to feel that we are not the end of the world". Palkonya

"Fifty years already we know tourism. But receiving friends is something totally different." / Paxos

"We started to feel safe with foreigners" / Tommerup

"Fear disappeared in communication in international contacts." / Pergine Valdarno

"The cooperation with the neighbouring villages that started with cultural village is functioning now in the commune des communes" / Mellionec

The organizing of cultural village brought a lot of people together. We started with a few people. It worked like a snowball. At the end many people were active and involved. / Bystré

"We got a folkloristic group" / Pergine

"We learned how easy it can be together with different cultures. Some Chinese people were interested in our activity and suggested to make world villages." / Schachdorf Ströbeck

"In eight years Cultural Village self consciousness has born and we got an identity" / Wijk aan Zee

"The interest for cultural village started slowly. The former mayor did not believe in the action. But when he got into contact he became an enthusiastic promoter" / Kirchheim

"In Trpin were people able not even greeting their neighbour. But at the moment the Palkonyans arrived, my people did anything for them" / The Mayor of Trpin

Since Cultural Village we have a 'building group' and a 'cooking group', groups of volunteers who work on, in and for the village./ Wijk aan Zee

"Young people are involved" / Bystré

The round table in Palkonya, May 2007

Introduction

On the 26th of May 2007 the mayors of Cultural Village came together in Palkonya. The Hungarian village will be Cultural Village of Europe in 2007.

Cultural Village has three years more to go and all members of the network will have been once Cultural Village of Europe. Time for a first evaluation of Cultural Village.

So it became the first time that the Mayors were asked to think about Cultural Village itself. What are the fruits.

At the beginning in 1999 a Charter has been written and signed. by all participants. What has happened with the ideas of December. That was the question on the Round table meeting of the mayors in Palkonya.

With this document we offer the results of this meeting.

In this document will be elaborated again some chapters of this Charter.

A special Chapter will be dedicated to Village economy and the role of the entrepreneur. In 2008 the project Work in the Village will collect local knowledge for employment and room for young people in the countryside.

A special Chapter will also be dedicated to Village democracy. The Mayor conference in Killingi Nomme has been dedicated to this as well. The remarks on this Round Table conference could motivate us to come with further evaluations in the next two years before 2010.

Bert Kisjes

In the Charter of the Villages has been written about the position of the world, what is the village, how it looks at the world, how the village wants to be seen, what the village is. Many statements during the Round table witnessed of the grown consciousness

Killingi Nomme: The 2005 experience for us was exciting. Not less important than the 1990 revolution. Now it's the question how to keep it alive.

Pergine: The Anchise project was important. It is now in the whole region. In or region Cultural Village is famous on behalf of this project.

Pergine: Fear disappeared in the communication in international contacts.

Palkonya: The countryside is still alive. We recognised that the different villages have the same problems. I feel the strength of the association..

*We started to think differently since Wijk aan Zee in 1999. So many similarities and only small differences. The people feel proud to be Palkonyan now.
We need to feel that we are not the end of the world.*

The Wijk aan Zee delegation declared that the village got an identity and became self-consciousness. This they see as the most important result of the years since 1999

Ströbeck learned "how easy it can be together with different cultures. Some Chinese people were interested in our activity and suggested to make world villages".

Another issue of the Charter of the villages concerned the character of village society. About village society have been made different statements.

In 2001 Bystré was Cultural Village of Europe. Bystré invited her neighbouring villages for hosting the European villages in 2001. So Trpín got the guests from Palkonya. The mayor of Trpín said: In Trpín we were used that the people did not greet their neighbours before. But that changed since Trpín by Bystré was involved in the action of Cultural Village of Europe. By lot the villages were distributed to the neighbouring villages. We got Palkonya. And at the moment the Palkonyans arrived my people did anything for them. And we became friends. I did not believe that a mentality could change so fast.

Paxos has over fifty years of experience with people from other countries. Every year many foreigners are going as tourists. But, they recognised that receiving friends is something totally different. With Cultural Village foreigners came into your house. Now we start to discover that tourists also may be interesting people. We start to look in another way towards them.

And from Tommerup: the international meetings are very important. We started to feel safe with foreigners. That is important in a world of mistrust.

We are hosting friends. Friends do not take everything. The good visitor brings something (Palkonya)

The youth camp is an important part of Cultural Village. It brings the young people of the villages together. Young people of these twelve villages live in a place with eleven windows into the

European world. Bystré, Palkonya and Pergine mentioned the youth camps specifically.

Some villages were involved in exchanges of elderly people. These exchanges were very interesting. More villages are interested to be involved in this kind of work.

On the issue how to manage a village have been made the following statements. In the second part of the Round Table this point has been elaborated.

The former Mayor of Mellionec and now a députée of the council of Bretagne called the cooperation with the neighbouring villages the most important result for Mellionec. It is functioning now in the Commune des Communes

In Bystré the cooperation of 2001 has been continued. Bystré also formulated something that counts for almost all villages: it brought a lot of people together organizing the manifestation. We started with a few people being active. At the end many people were active and involved. It was like a snowball.

One of the results of organizing Cultural Village in 1999 was for Wijk aan Zee the new association SaW&Z. In 1999 has been formed a building group and a cooking group to make Cultural Village happen. After 1999 these groups founded an association.

The people that organized Cultural Village in Pergine Valdarno in 2006 formed a folkloristic dance group.

About village democracy

Participants delegates from Tommerup, Killingi Nömme, Porrua, Mellionec, Ströbeckandn Wijk aan Zee

The overall impression is that the distances for decision making from the villages to the higher levels has grown. By the scaling up process and the combination of municipalities.

The people are conscious about the fact that a village is mainly a network based on personal relations. So the process of decision making in a village is informal. The formal quality is low.

On the local level political parties almost do not come through.

The involvement of people in the development of the village is rather big.

Cultural Village-activities are an important stepping stone for commitment in village affairs.

Everywhere is a special commitment with the own, direct surroundings. But in Estonia and the former DDR it is difficult to appeal on everybody's responsibility. People are used to collective responsibility.

The participation in elections is very different.. In Denmark and Estonia this participation is high.

Ströbeck, Mellionec and Porrua kennen have formal responsibilities for limited local task. That is also the case in Killingi

Nomme that has the advantage being also a centre village with more tasks.

Having an own budget is not always an advantage. The financial means are always lower than the ambitions. If you really want something te budget is not tje most important.

A village needs a good diplomacy for its affairs. They should be able to receive ministers and other authorities to get the attention that is needed. The profit of such contacts is high compared with the formal competences..

Special attention deserves the cooperative structure of a village society in Denmark rooted in old traditions. This structure forms the local network that is compensating the long distance to local government.

About economy and the project Work in the Village

Participants in this discussion are Paxos, Palkonya, Wijk aan Zee, Kirchheim and Bystré.

About employment

None of the villages that take part in this discussion are Paxos, Kirchheim, Wijk aan Zee, palkonya and Bystré. has a direct employment problem. In Bystré the unemployment rate is 6%. In Kirchheim 2%.

About entrepreneurship

The law makes it difficult to make an own company and to be an entrepreneur. Bystré wants to specialize in service.

“In the Czech Republic entrepreneurship did not exist for more than fifty years. In the communist area entrepreneurship was forbidden. Entrepreneurship was the big evil.” (statement of Trpín).

Wijk aan Zee makes clear what will be their contribution to the project Work in the Village. They want to work on conditions for work and the entrepreneur that fits into the village.

Youth

“Young people are not really leaving the place. We have different places for work: the institute for mental handicapped persons, three schools, the agricultural cooperation with its 1800 ha. land and on a cooperation based bakery. (Bystré and Trpín).

Tourism

Milos, the mayor of Trpín is agronom..”We have capacity for tourism but we do not know how to do it”.

Young winemakers want to open their cellars all year long. That is attractive for tourists. We do not have restaurants. But tourists can dinner with the families. (Palkonya)

We have three pensions now. And two are on way to be open soon. (Palkonya)

Shops

Kirchheim has no shops. But the village is situated on a highway that is frequented. The village council has a piece of land. That will be given for nothing for 50 years for a gas station on the condition that in this gas station will be a shop for the village. And in an edge of this station they want articles from the 12 villages

Selling at the farm is popular in Mellionec.

The “multi companies” with their low prices cause that there is no pig any more in the stable and no chicken.. There is a problem of too cheap products. (Palkonya)

We want to keep an own shop. We want the quality of the local products.(Palkonya)

Farming

Bert saw in Kirchheim a lot of ‘part-time farmers’, farmers that become a part of their money from farming. And some of them saw that it is important for farmers to look around and not to be closed into their farms and to feel isolated. A woman-farmer very seriously promoted this kind of farming. Many farmers live an isolated life.

Kirchheim is using the fruits of the trees. They use it for fruit juice and for strong drinks. They live in a country where making of strong drinks is not forbidden.

Material infrastructure

In Kirchheim each house will be very soon connected with the glass fibre net. They get it for half of the price. During the making or repairing of roads in the last years has been counted with the coming of this new cable. There is place reserved in the earth so that there has not to be dug again on these places (costs 50 euro one metre). The costs of one metre glass fibre without digging is only 4 euro.

Problems

Kirchheim and Bystre: Envy is a major problem. How to overcome envy? You will meet this problem in the size of tractors.

Policy of authorities

Kirchheim: "Die Beamten sollten ermöglichen und nicht verhindern. Nicht Nein, Ja, aber!".
(The civil servants should facilitate and not prevent. They should not say NO, but YES, but..").

General about economy of the villages

Paxos has two economies. One from March till October, That is the economy of tourism. The other is the economy of olive oil.

We do not want to wait any more. We do it our selves. (Mellionec)

We need a mixed population (Mellionec)