

## **CULT-RURAL**

### **Promotion of a Cultural Area Common to European Rural Communities**

"Culture 2000"

Framework Programme in Support of Culture

1<sup>st</sup> Transnational Workshop

Stockholm November 2006

#### **I. Introduction**

##### **The Hungarian Open Air Museum**

###### **History of the Museum**

The central 'skanzen' of Hungary, the Hungarian Open Air Museum in Szentendre was founded on 1st February 1967. For a while it operated as the Village Museum Department of the Budapest Ethnographical Museum. As from 1972 it is an independent institution, a national museum. The purpose of the founders was to present the vernacular architecture, interior decoration in rural Hungary in original, transplanted buildings arranged according to the patterns of settlement, as well as the way of life and customs of the inhabitants through authentic objects from the second half of the 18th century to the II. World War.

The final scientific plan of the Museum envisaged the relocation of more than 300 buildings to the Museum for re-erection in 9 groups of buildings, representing 9 regional units. The houses and farm buildings within the groups follow the traditional order of the croft, and those sacral, industrial and public structures complete them, which used to form part of the traditional village. When the planned nine regional units (Upper Tisza Region, a Highland Market Town, Northern Hungary, Central Tisza Region, The Great Hungarian Plain, Southern Transdanubia, Balaton Highlands, Western Transdanubia and Kisalföld in Northern Hungary) are ready, they will preserve the architectural traditions of 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century Hungary as our historical inheritance.

###### **Scientific activity**

As of 1981 the Museum was declared an institution for scientific research. Today, the Museum is a research centre of Hungarian vernacular architecture and of the protection of historic vernacular buildings.

The collections, helping scientific research and the completion of the exhibitions, are ceaselessly enriched:

60 000 objects, more than 100 000 photos, and the Archives of Hungarian Folk Architecture with its thousands of pages of documentation on the subjects of ethnography, history of architecture, and related technical questions. Up to now 18 volumes have appeared of its yearbook entitled Ház és ember (House and Man). The series of international conferences held here and their volumes have become handbooks for the researchers into Hungarian vernacular architecture.

### **Ethnographical Study Collection**

The new office building was built in 2003 providing ideal work environment and the suitable technical infrastructure. The Ethnographical Study Collection on a surface of 2.015 m<sup>2</sup> is housed here.

### **Public Relations**

The Museum's PR activities aim at providing opportunities for education, studying, development of skills and leisure activities for the public. Our objective is to spread knowledge in an entertaining way, to offer spectacular, interactive, interesting and various programs.

In recent years a system of home craft and handicraft shows, activities and folklore programs completing exhibitions has developed. Each year we organise regular festivals (Easter, Whitsuntide, Vintage, New Wine) with two days programs.

As the number of visitors and of programs increased, buildings at the service of visitors (restaurant, beer-house, shops, grocery) have also been erected. Large areas have been converted into parks and a playground is there too. The open-air stage for 800 people was opened in 2002: the performances of the Skanzen-Amfiteátrum take place here.

**Indoor exhibition hall:** the Skanzen-Galéria opened in 2003. Its temporary exhibitions create contacts to the artists and artist's societies in Szentendre and intend to strengthen the ties with them. At the same time, the exhibitions are good opportunities to approach new visitor groups

The number of visitors during the seven months of opening has reached 200 000 in the past years, and allows the Museum to rank high among the most popular Hungarian museums.

### **Museum pedagogy**

Due to the museum pedagogy activities of the past decades, the Hungarian Open Air

Museum has become an educational centre of the school subject 'knowledge of the country'. The Educational Methodology and Information Centre, named after the ethnographer Klára Csilléry was inaugurated in the first quarter of 2004. Not only youth education but also further education in the fields of pedagogy and museum pedagogy will take place here. A large team of handicraft masters and pedagogues in the background supports the Museum's professional staff in drawing up material for methodology and in the practical training and activities.

### **Environmental education**

Purpose of our Museum is the complete protection of our inheritance; therefore, exceeding its basic tasks, the preservation of Hungary's built environment, it promotes the protection of the natural environment too. Since the Museum is within the Duna-Ipoly National Park, the natural fauna and flora rich in specialities can be studied here. Pertaining parts of the exhibition units are the vegetable gardens and apiaries around the houses and the plough-lands presenting the traditional farming of the given region. Study paths, attaching programs and work sheets help students to learn about natural and planted flora in a more pleasant way. We keep traditional Hungarian breeds of domestic animals (racka sheep, mangalica pig, grey-cattle, mudi dog) in the detached farmstead of regional unit the Great Hungarian Plain.

The Hungarian Open Air Museum intends to be a public collection that – following its basic concept and answering today's scientific and social challenges – conveys cultural values for a large local and foreign public within the capacity of everybody.

## **II. Concepts and definitions**

### **II.1 The concept of *culture***

The concept of culture is diverse and has changed a lot in the previous decades. We use the 1982-definition of UNESCO as a basis for our work: "culture is what humanity has added to nature." So when defining this notion, we have to pay attention to values, family relations, moral norms, the different communal organisations, arts, traditions and lifestyle. Culture is a factor, determining identity, the expression of the relation between man and the surroundings.

The culture of a community is a tourist attraction at the same time. It has three forms:

- "Lifeless" culture (buildings, objects, works of art)
- Culture, expressed in everyday life (lifestyle, traditions, gastronomy)

- Animated culture (festivals, carnivals, events connected to preserving the traditions)

Inside the concept of culture, rural culture – in Hungary this is called vernacular/folk culture - has a determining and significant role. Defining folk culture has been an important part of Hungarian ethnography and other social sciences for centuries. According to a simplified version, culture is the complex of immaterial and material possessions of people, serving a basis for understanding and explaining the social and spiritual surrounding. That is why the way of existing, the lifestyle and the “lifeworld” are also parts of the concept of culture. So culture is the historically determined unit of different, organised sub-systems. Folk culture has its place both in national culture and in global and European culture.

## **II.2 The concept of *cultural heritage***

Cultural heritage is expressed, born and formed between two partners: the community, which inherits something and an institution, which does research concerning the topic and preserves it. We can talk about the heritage of a partly closed past on the one hand, and the remnants of this past, found in the present on the other hand. (Text, object, building, tune, ruin)

The concept of cultural heritage is open, constantly changing and can be always broadened. The research, preservation and the passing of the cultural heritage (see the triple tasks of museums) is the pillar for building the future and the heart of economy, as cultural tourism is an important segment of national economy.

A significant part of preserving and protecting local, cultural heritage in Hungary is the network of in situ preserved buildings, from which there are more than 600 in our country. (This means, that there is such an institution in every four settlement.) They are coordinated by the Association of In-situ Preserved Houses. The Hungarian Open Air Museum helped the emergence of the Association at the beginning and has organised lots of professional events and trainings for the curators of in-situ preserved houses since then. The success of the program is proved by the fact, that the government paid attention to it and invited applications centrally. The coordination of this has become the museum’s task.

## **II.3. The concept of *sustainable development***

The validation of the aspects of sustainable development as a requirement is present in every document of the European Union. In Göteborg, in 2001 the European Community decided upon the strategy of sustainable development, this is the most basic document of the kind. Its significance is proved by the fact, that in June, 2005 the European Community accepted that

the Lisbon strategy of competitiveness must be analysed in the context of sustainable development. The responsibility for future generations is put into the limelight in several countries of the world, as global changes are taking place, which basically threaten not just the lifestyle of present-day people but the flora and fauna of the Earth.

The first task concerning sustainable development is educating and learning, which can be connected to the system of life-long learning. The passing and teaching of cultural heritage and rural traditions are serving sustainable development.

The aim of sustainability is the continuous and uninterrupted quality of life. To be able to realise this, economy is a tool, the social and cultural surroundings are conditions. Culture does not exclusively have positive contents. Positive is the organic culture, the organic culture of a community; the complexity of right relations surviving history, which global culture always tries to overwrite.

### **III. The research**

#### **III.1. Basis**

An important basis of the program is the method of researching, preserving and mediating the rural cultural heritage in the confines of an interdisciplinary system. The way of passing over of information must be placed in the system of educational processes; the life-long learning must serve sustainable development. This all has to represent European and not particular interests. How can we apply this in the dimension of regions and a common Europe?

It is significant to find which kind of European dimension the peculiar (local, national, regional) cultural heritage exists in. We have to find the common traits and the way they can represent the idea of a common Europe.

In the project, we can contribute to this idea with the specific, Hungarian heritage. We cannot forget that some part of the Hungarian population live outside the border, as a minority. Because of their cultural identity, we are connected.

In the life of the Hungarian, local communities the democratic change of 1989/1990 opened new ways and possibilities. The demand for a bottom-up organised civil society is emphasised more and more and expressed in several forms. The inner longing for a common festivity and entertainment, the strengthening of local patriotism, the increasing of rural, local tourism have become the motivation for several local initiations and programs. This has also contributed to the analysis and mediating of the cultural heritage, culture and traditions of these communities.

## **III.2. Thems**

### 1. Architecture

The most significant dimension of the analysis of folk/rural architecture is the ecological point of view. How can we make use of natural building materials (adobe bricks, timber-framed structures, wickerwork walls, roofing and heating devices); how can the historic eco-system prevail in today's architecture? Naturally, besides the eco-point of view the question of aestheticism may also be the target of research.

### 2. Animal husbandry, farming, eco-gardening

The examining of the traditions of eco-farming can be seen throughout Europe. The research and representation of old techniques and technologies serve the basis for present day eco-farming. These are the heart of the economies. Its parts are:

- Eco-gardening (making compost, natural plant protection)
- Home-chemistry (collecting, drying, using)
- Spices in the garden and in the kitchen
- Viniculture
- Husbandry: the natural ways of preparing dairy products

### 3. Crafts

The significance of researching, preserving and representing the traditional knowledge of different crafts is high. It is evident to collect the different tools of the crafts and display them in the museums. The research of the knowledge and technologies is also important in helping the crafts to survive and the techniques to outlive the masters. (Shoemakers, joiners, potters, tailors)

### 4. Cuisine

The change of cuisine is a relevant topic. It is a necessary phenomenon in a man's life not just in a biological but in a cultural sense. The technologies of preparing a dish, the raw materials, the change of conservation processes, the enlarging possibilities show the duality of modernisation and tradition.

## **IV. Methodology**

The research methods of the Hungarian Open Air Museum are based on the different, but systematic methods of ethnography, its root is the field work.

The most important is the direct observation, carried out in the field. It can be a longer period, during which the researcher observes the community or several, shorter periods of analysis. The following techniques play an important role during the research:

- Survey
- Making interviews
- Observation-description
- Taking photos
- Recording sounds
- Shooting films

During the research, we use the documents of the museum's archives and the collections of other partner institutions. (National and local museums) The craftsmen, working for the museum also play an important role; they make use of the pieces of information, the elements of traditional knowledge during their everyday work.

The results of the research can be used by the following methods, parallel to the basic activity of the institution:

Preserving it in the archives, making it public through digital format

Objects are displayed in exhibitions

The different elements of the traditional knowledge are used in museum programs (way of life, music, dance, music, traditions, tales...)

This knowledge can be also used in the museum's education program. (From children-programs to adult trainings, life-long learning)

### **List of objects**

In the Hungarian Open Air Museum the following collections bear significance

The elements and raw materials of traditional architecture

The heating devices of dwelling houses

Types of furniture

The objects of preparing and conserving food

The objects and tools of crafts

### **Exhibition topics**

Folk architecture and eco-architecture

The warmness of dwellings (stoves, ovens)

The conservation of food

A European craft (e.g. shoemaking)

## **V. Conclusions**

The most important mission of the museum is the preservation and representation of the material and immaterial relics of the traditional, rural culture, the cultural heritage. The mediating of this information is also of high importance, serving the development of modern society, using the most modern technical appliances, addressing every age group and social layer.

The CULT-RURAL project places these factors and tasks into a European context, highlighting the common heritage and tasks as well.

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