



*Globally Integrated Village Environment*

*Vienna*

## **STEINSCHALERDORF GLOBAL VILLAGE PROJECT BRIEF**

DEVELOPING A BOLD VISION FROM A UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCE



draft version 0.1 (introduction only)

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# Introduction



This Project emerged from a meeting between two people that can both be considered bold dreamers.

Hans Weiss, born 1948, right in the above picture, stems from a farmers family in the Lower Austrian **Pielachtal** Valley. He grew up in a small seven hectares farm that his family had run for 5 generations - in a poor area that required the farmers to be very self-supporting and frugal. So he was introduced to subsistence economy and sustainable development already in the 1950ies. He studied in Vienna and later started the career of a highly skilled technical engineer. Worked at Siemens and at Technical University of Vienna. In the Nineties he decided to go back to the roots and use his manifold connections to corporations to provide them with a family type seminar house. Around the year 2000 he conceived the idea of a second hotel, a dedicated high - end „Green Spot“ for Seminars, far away from traffic and noise, still easily reachable from the city. The idea grew in several phases until today - but it was always conceptualized around the idea of a village shape. The decision to concentrate infrastructure (wellness area, water, energy) and built space (more than 100 rooms, 1600 sqm seminar space) in 2 large buildings instead 35 small ones was a tough but necessary one. Costs and sustainability aspects (energy costs, infrastructure costs)

Franz Nahrada, born 1954, left in the picture above, met Hans Weiss once in 2002 and was invited in late 2009 to discuss the possibility to host a proposed conference on „the Village Principle“ in Steinschalerdörf. Franz had conceived a long - term project long ago in 1990 - 1992 which led to the emergence of the GIVE lab and its manifold activities. This personal lifetime project is about the study and development of a new type of peripheral or rural habitat (called „Global Village“ in agreement with Corinne McLuhan) , characterised by the fruitful merging of traditional village dwellers like farmers or craftspeople with a „global“ population of professionals who are able to choose their workplace freely because their real workplace is the global electronic networks. The concept emerged out of the personal experience of the positive but also traumatic and stressful impacts the advent of tourism had on villages on the Greek island of Samos. The village environment that had a great deal of authenticity, beauty, healing, nourishing qualities was abandoned by the young people because of the attraction of the tourists lifestyles. The conclusion was that *the decisive factor in social change is attraction*: if a real living model can be built that is at least as attractive as our unsustainable lifestyle, then the chance is there to succeed. The only chance for the rebirth of the Greek village is to develop it further so that people with urban needs feel attracted to live there and do not feel left out.

Attraction emerges from tangible, plausible, transparent pilot cases that are easily replicable. But these pilot cases are also the experimental prototypes for a development that we can hardly foresee in detail. Douglas Engelbart calls for „Bootstrap Communities“ that can represent and unfold the many conflicting and complex energies that are in a field and find optimal patterns in a balance - seeking process. In a way, the Steinschalerdörf Global Village Project seeks to constitute such a bootstrap community in a process of several years.

## The project

Steinschalerdörfel is a hotel village mainly built in the years 2002 - 2003, but still in the process of completion. The ambivalent branding as „village“ leads to the question: what if this hotel decided to really become the centerpiece and incubator of a surrounding village?

From the original concept of building 35 houses there is unused building permits for roughly 2 hectares of land. So there is an option to expand the hotel and create housing structures and other facilities.



View of Steinschalervillage in Winter



The „Mayors House“ at the village plaza



view from below

### Evolutionary development towards a Global Village

Of course this is currently not the main issue for the hotel and its development. The complex was planned as a location for seminar and incentive tourism, offering infrastructure that even satisfy the needs of large clients, up to conferences with 300 participants or social functions of similar size. The restaurant is located in the historical center as is the Mayors house above, and this central plaza can facilitate even more visitors (500), allowing networking with local and regional partners and guests.

The current economic downturn can be seen as an opportunity to diversify the business and create a broader portfolio of activities. It is the wish of the owner to create deeper links between the sustainability principles that guided the development of the Doerfl and the actual clients and guests and activities in the Doerfl.

It was suggested that the future identity and mission of the Doerfl should rest on three pillars:

- \* Meaningful Vacation, which refers to recreation and enriching encounters (rendering true the old promise of the vacation with friends)
- \* Learning - which refers to Seminars and intellectually stimulating offers like a library, possibly also the presence of a scientific institution like GIVE
- \* Working, which means that the hotel village could be the ideal place to find a nurturing and stimulating, enabling environment to start, pursue and finish extraordinary projects that require a deep focus. Contact was established by GIVE with promoters of the „Holiwork“ approach like Georg Gasteiger and Klaus Rebernig.

These three approaches should not only guarantee the economic sustainability of the Doerfl, but also, in the long run, provide the base for real village development. The idea is to offer to knowledge workers „long term lease“ opportunities or even create a framework for people to co-invest in a place of living and working for themselves built and designed according to their needs.

The idea is to build and stimulate a local village economy by an ever increasing cluster of support activities to guests and visitors of the Hotel Doerfl. So there is a duality of income sources: Teleworking on one side and personal services and interaction on the other. The old „Lone Eagle“ dilemma of the telematic diaspora painfully experienced by so many teleworkers could be elegantly avoided.



### **A series of practical steps**

In order to realize that vision a double approach should be taken. On one side, the Doerfl should engage itself in various concrete steps enhancing the infrastructure for the three activities mentioned above.

1. Engage in a common effort of several „thinking hotels“ to promote together the diversity of goals and places that can be offered for finding a suitable place to work and learn. The hotel is not an „empty shell“, but it entertains several activities and infrastructures that attract visitors:

office space and office support center with secretarial and printing services, videoconferencing room etc.

thinker - in - residence projects to stimulate events and encounters

library and institute as „theme providers“ for ongoing work.

services and support for effective and meaningful vacations

2. Create an online community around the hotel theme

3. Engage regional players (individuals and businesses) to optimally cooperate with the hotel and cocreating offers

These are just some steps out of a larger portfolio.



View of Entrance Area

### **The planning process**

It is crucial even in this very early phase of the village evolution to create a common vision of what the end result could look like. This is the reason why although there is not yet an existing group of villagers „at the door“, a process of village design should be initiated. The approach to village building should be a process of broad and early foresight, so that issues that might be literally relevant in 7 generations should be able to influence our current decisions.

This is the reason this project brief is issued in the first place, and we are addressing the people that we have been most successfully been working with in the past.

The goal is to create a students design semester led by Karin Stiedorf (<http://www.h1arch.tuwien.ac.at/stiedorf/>) and a connected professional workshop with the community of designers and developers around the Clear Village Foundation led by Thomas Ugo Ermacora that were assembling for the first time in Barcelonas Calatanian Center for Advanced Architecture in 2009. (<http://www.clear-village.org/network>)

The goal is to build the most effective connection between a short, intensive meeting of experts and a semester-long students work.

The process should result in a multitude of well-conceived designs that nevertheless have more inspirational than practical character, that can help us to illustrate and promote the village-building process in the coming years.



plan of existing facilities; new village developments would happen on the western side of the existing structure.

Annex

Data about Steinschalerdoerfl

735 m above sea level - and most of the year also above fog level

less than 100 km from Vienna center

86 hectares private land

next village: Frankenfels