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A Report on the Economic and Cultural Revitalisation of the Community of Tsamantas in Northwestern Greece

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Assessment and Summary of Policy Recommendations

1. The border community of Tsamantas, in Epirus, northwestern Greece, has seen a gradual decline in its prosperity since the middle of the twentieth century. Today the village has just 65 permanent residents, compared to 1,347 in 1940. Most of these people are elderly and retired, and only a very few families are now economically active (mainly in livestock farming). The economic viability of its traditional agricultural activities, which have so far been supported by EU subsidies, is now beginning to look uncertain. Attempts to promote other business activities in the area have foundered. Even the creation of its small but impressive folklore museum in the early 1980s failed to attract the visitors that could have revitalised the local economy and halted the decline and abandonment of the village. This museum, which was born of the desire to save a disappearing way of life, has been left to disintegrate, starved of financial resources and lacking an effective management structure and basic conservation expertise.

2. One positive side to this largely pessimistic picture of decline has been the influx to the village of Albanian immigrants (mostly ethnic Greeks), who are willing to undertake all kinds of jobs, even for low pay. Furthermore, a considerable number of emigrant *Tsamantiot*es return annually to their ancestral land during the summer holidays. Both of these groups have helped to stabilise the village's population, and their spending power contributes substantially to the local economy.

3. The convening of a workshop on the economic revitalisation of the community of Tsamantas in September 2005 thus coincided with a critical period in the long life of this historic village. The small but distinguished team of experts was faced with the formidable challenge of finding solutions to the regeneration of the economy of Tsamantas and to the future development of its folklore museum. Drawing from concrete examples of experiences in other regions, the panel put forward a number of recommendations, some of which call for an urgent response from the local administration:

- Protect and preserve the collection of the Folklore Museum of Tsamantas. The collection is valuable, both in material and symbolic terms, and the museum should be central to the economic and cultural regeneration of the area. There are strong indications that the desired reversal of fortunes of the Mourgana area will depend on tourism, and so the full potential of the museum in attracting visitors must be realised.
- Designate the Folklore Museum of Tsamantas as a centre for social, cultural and economic activities.
- Concentrate on agro- or eco-tourism, which could be a major source of employment and thus restore the socio-economic balance of the area. Tourism could also have a multiplier effect on other economic sectors, such as agriculture, agro-food production, construction, crafts, transport etc.

- Encourage counter-urbanization, drawing town-dwellers to the area from various parts of Greece, with the attraction of self-employment and other potential benefits, such as better quality of life.
- Similarly, encourage foreigners and ethnic Greeks from abroad to establish themselves in the area, enabling the locality to take advantage of their agglomeration effect, expertise and sophisticated networks.
- Embark on adding value to existing agricultural products and natural resources (meat, dairy produce, honey, herbs and spring water), increasing profitability. The production of premium foodstuffs could also attract visitors.
- Create new products for marketing. For example, the unusual flora in the Mourgana locality gives its honey a special taste, and this could be sold as a pure, organic product that could capture an export market.
- Support cross-border collaboration initiatives with the neighbouring Albanian communities, undertaken by the local administration or the region of Epirus in the context of a future *Euroregion*.
- Improve the skills of the area's social capital, and introduce the Internet. The education of the public is perhaps the most important instrument in stimulating economic development of rural communities.
- Promote conciliation amongst local people, and improve transparency and accountability.
- Draw up and implement a five-year plan of activities and set achievement targets for each year, against which performance can be monitored and measured.

Εκτίμηση του συνεδρίου και περίληψη των συστάσεων πολιτικής

4. Η μεθοριακή κοινότητα του Τσαμαντά, που βρίσκεται την περιφέρεια της Ηπείρου στην βορειοδυτική Ελλάδα, έχει γνωρίσει μια σταδιακή παρακμή από τα μέσα του εικοστού αιώνα. Σήμερα, το χωριό έχει μόλις 65 μονίμους κατοίκους, σε σύγκριση με 1.347 το 1940. Οι περισσότεροι κάτοικοι του είναι ηλικιωμένοι και συνταξιούχοι και μόνο πολύ λίγες οικογένειες είναι τώρα οικονομικώς ενεργοί, ενασχολούμενοι κυρίως με την κτηνοτροφία. Η οικονομική επιβίωση των παραδοσιακών γεωργικών απασχολήσεων, οι οποίες μέχρι τώρα έχουν υποστηριχθεί από επιδοτήσεις από την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση, αρχίζουν να φαίνεται αβέβαιη. Προσπάθειες για την προβολή άλλων μορφών ενασχόλησης στη περιοχή έχουν αποτύχει. Ακόμα η δημιουργία του μικρού αλλά εντυπωσιακού λαογραφικού μουσείου στις αρχές της δεκαετίας του 1980 απέτυχε να προσελκύσει επισκέπτες οι οποίοι θα μπορούσαν να αναζωογονήσουν την τοπική οικονομία και να ανατρέψουν την παρακμή και ερήμωση του χωριού. Αυτό το μουσείο, το οποίο έχει γεννηθεί από την επιθυμία να διασωθεί ένας εξαφανιζόμενος τρόπος ζωής, έχει αφηθεί να διαλυθεί, στερούμενο οικονομικών πόρων, μιας αποτελεσματικής διοικητικής υποδομής και μιας βασικής γνώση συντήρησης.

5. Μια θετική πλευρά αυτής της γενικά απαισιόδοξης εικόνας παρακμής είναι η εισροή στο χωριό Αλβανών μεταναστών (οι περισσότεροι Ελληνικής καταγωγής), οι οποίοι είναι

διατεθειμένοι να αναλάβουν κάθε είδους εργασία, ακόμα και εκείνες που είναι χαμηλόμισθες. Επιπλέον ένας σημαντικός αριθμός Τσαμανταίων γυρίζουν στην πατρική γη κατά την διάρκεια των θερινών διακοπών. Και οι δυο αυτές ομάδες έχουν βοηθήσει να σταθεροποιηθεί ο πληθυσμός του χωριού, ενώ η αγοραστική τους δύναμη συνεισφέρει σημαντικά εις την ανάκαμψη της τοπικής οικονομίας.

6. Η σύγκληση του συνεδρίου για την οικονομική αναζωογόνηση της κοινότητας του Τσαμαντά το Σεπτέμβριο του 2005 συμπίπτει με μια κρίσιμη περίοδο της μακρόχρονης ζωής αυτού του ιστορικού χωριού. Η μικρή αλλά διακεκριμένη ομάδα ειδικών ευρέθη αντιμέτωπος με την φοβερή πρόκληση να βρει λύσεις για την αναγέννηση της οικονομίας του Τσαμαντά και για την μελλοντική ανάπτυξη του λαογραφικού του μουσείου. Βασιζόμενοι σε σταθερά παραδείγματα από άλλες περιοχές οι ειδικοί εισηγούνται ένα αριθμό συστάσεων, από τις οποίες ένας αριθμός απαιτεί μια επείγουσα απάντηση από την τοπική διοίκηση.

- Να προστατευθεί και να διατηρηθεί το Λαογραφικό Μουσείο του Τσαμαντά. Η μουσειακή συλλογή είναι πολύτιμη, έχοντας υλικό και συμβολικό χαρακτήρα, και θα μπορούσε να είναι το κέντρο της οικονομικής και πολιτιστικής αναγέννησης της περιοχής. Υπάρχουν έντονες ενδείξεις ότι η επιθυμούμενη αλλαγή της τύχης της περιοχής της Μουργκάνας θα εξαρτηθεί από τον τουρισμό, και γι αυτό η πλήρης δυνατότητα του μουσείου να προσελκύσει επισκέπτες πρέπει να υλοποιηθεί.
- Να σχεδιαστεί το Λαογραφικό Μουσείο του Τσαμαντά σαν κέντρο κοινωνικών, πολιτιστικών και οικονομικών ενεργειών.
- Να συγκεντρωθεί στον αγρο- ή στον οικολογικό τουρισμό, ο οποίος θα μπορούσε να γίνει μια σημαντική πηγή απασχόλησης και μέσω αυτού να επαναφέρει την κοινωνικό-οικονομική ισορροπία της περιοχής. Ο τουρισμός μπορεί να έχει πολλαπλασιαστική επίδραση στους οικονομικούς τομείς σαν αυτούς της γεωργίας, των αγροτικών προϊόντων, της οικοδομικής απασχόλησης, των παραδοσιακών ειδών, των μεταφορών κτλ.
- Να ενθαρρύνει την αντι-αστυφιλία, προσελκύοντας τους κατοίκους των αστικών περιοχών από διάφορα μέρη της Ελλάδος με την προοπτική της αυτοαπασχόλησης και άλλων σημαντικών ωφελειών, όπως μιας καλύτερης ποιότητας ζωής.
- Κατά τον ίδιο τρόπο να ενθαρρύνει ξένους και ομογενείς από το εξωτερικό να έλθουν να εγκατασταθούν στην περιοχή και να κάνουν την τοπική κοινωνία να επωφεληθεί από τις εμπειρίες των και των δικτύων γνωριμιών.
- Να επιχειρήσει να προσθέσει αξία στα υπάρχοντα αγροτικά προϊόντα και φυσικά αγαθά (κρεατικά, γαλακτερά, μέλι, βότανα και μεταλλικό νερό), αυξάνοντας τα επιχειρηματικά κέρδη. Η παραγωγή υψηλής αξίας αγροτικών τροφών μπορεί επίσης να προσελκύσει επισκέπτες.
- Να δημιουργήσει νέα προϊόντα για μάρκετινγκ. Παραδείγματος χάρη, τα σπάνια άνθη της Μουργκάνας δίνουν στο μέλι μια ειδική γεύση, και αυτό μπορεί να πουληθεί σαν ένα αγνό και βιολογικό προϊόν που μπορεί να κερδίσει μια σημαντική εξαγωγική αγορά.

- Να υποστηρίξει πρωτοβουλίες δια-συνοριακής συνεργασίας με τις γειτονικές κοινότητες της Αλβανίας, οι οποίες θα μπορούσαν να ενεργοποιηθούν από την τοπική διοίκηση και την Περιφέρεια της Ηπείρου στο πλαίσιο μιας μελλοντικής 'Ευρωπεριφέρειας'
- Να βελτιώσει τις ικανότητες του κοινωνικού κεφαλαίου της περιοχής και να εισηγηθεί τη χρήση του Ιντερνετ. Η εκπαίδευση του κοινού είναι πιθανόν το πιο σπουδαίο όργανο για μια ώθηση στην οικονομική ανάπτυξη των αγροτικών περιοχών
- Να προάγει την αβαστή συμβίωση μεταξύ του εντόπιου πληθυσμού και να βελτιώσει την διαχειριστική διαφάνεια και ευθύνη.
- Να σχεδιάσει και να εκπληρώσει ένα πενταετές σχέδιο πρωτοβουλιών και να θέσει στόχους εκπλήρωσης ανά έτος, έναντι των οποίων η εκτέλεση και ολοκλήρωσή τους θα μπορούσε να ελεγχθεί και να αξιολογηθεί.

Preface

7. The village of Tsamantas is close to the Greek-Albanian border in the prefecture of Thesprotia, part of the mountainous region of Epirus. A two-day round-table workshop took place in the grounds of its Folklore Museum of Tsamantas on 15-16 September 2005. The workshop's objective was to facilitate dialogue and understanding around specific cultural aspects of economic regeneration policies for border areas, within a broader social, economic, political and cultural context. The main aims of the workshop were firstly to carry out a fact-finding mission to the Folklore Museum of Tsamantas, and secondly to explore the use of museums in border areas to promote local economic development and cultural understanding and, in some circumstances, facilitate conflict resolution.

8. The workshop – entitled *'Common European Heritage: Museums, Borders, Intercultural Understanding and Increasing Communication between Border Communities'* – was built on the on-going activities of the Centre for European Studies (CES) at the University of the West of England, Bristol, with regard to: the socio-economic evolution of regional agglomerations at the micro level (Dimitrios Konstadakopoulos); European ethnology and cultural policy (Sarah Blowen); cross-border co-operation (Ann Kennard); and economic development of the Balkans (James Korovilas). A small but distinguished group of experts on local/regional development and museum development was invited, which included museum staff, policymakers, cultural development specialists, European and American scholars, journalists and local administrators, as well as officials from neighbouring southern Albania.



1. Preamble

1.1 During his fieldwork visit to the USA and Canada in June 2004, Dimitrios Konstadakopulos had the opportunity of making a presentation of his on-going research activity to the Board of Directors at the St. George's Hellenic Benefit Society of Tsamantas Inc. in Worcester, Massachusetts. The Board of Directors showed great interest in the applicant's work on *'The growth and decline of village micro-economies in Southern Europe during the twentieth century'*, which focuses on the case study of the Greek village of Tsamantas. The Board expressed a wish to provide financial support to this project.

1.2 In London, in August 2004, Dimitrios Konstadakopulos met Soterios Zoulas, Associate Professor at the *Eastern Nazarene College* in Quincy, Massachusetts, and a member of the Society. An action plan was considered for the organisation of a workshop to take place in the village of Tsamantas. Soon after, the applicant and his colleague Sarah Blowen put forward a detailed proposal for a round-table workshop, building on their own research, as well as the on-going research activities of other colleagues.

1.3 In September 2004 the applicant travelled to the village of Tsamantas in Greece and discussed the proposed workshop with the president of the Community of Tsamantas, the Mayor of Filiates, and other officials, all of whom overwhelmingly expressed their support for the proposed workshop. The following month, Dr Zoulas communicated to the applicant that the Board of Directors of the Society had unanimously approved a grant of US\$5,000 to support the realisation of the workshop, subject to the submission to the Society of a formal proposal.

1.4 In May 2005 Dimitrios Konstadakopulos and Sarah Blowen undertook a pre-feasibility study in Tsamantas, preparing the ground with local officials and collecting research material. Both organisers prepared and presented academic papers on Tsamantas and its museum at two international conferences; Dimitrios Konstadakopulos at the University of Linköping, Sweden (March 2005) and Sarah Blowen at the University of the West of England, Bristol (June 2005).

1.5 The main aims of the workshop were to:

- carry out a fact-finding mission to the Folklore Museum of Tsamantas, on a consultation basis
- explore the use of museums in border areas for promoting local economic development and cultural understanding, and, in some circumstances, to facilitate conflict resolution
- assess how cross-border museums could reinforce their presence in contemporary society, and examine the way in which new information and communication technologies (ICTs) could link them with diasporic communities
- bring together experts (museum staff and other stakeholders) from different parts of Europe to discuss issues on exploiting cultural heritage

- establish best practice which can be used in other similar cultural institutions in border areas

1.6 The participants were mainly experts on local/regional development and museum management and included museum staff, policymakers, cultural development specialists, European and American scholars, journalists, and local administrators, including officials from neighbouring south Albania. Amongst them were: **Dr Katharina Eisch-Angus**, freelance European Ethnologist, Frauenau, Germany, involved in the development of the *Frauenau Glass Museum* on the border between Germany and the Czech republic; **Mark Angus**, a stained glass artist from Bath; **Dr Sarah Green**, an anthropologist from the University of Manchester, with extensive knowledge of the Pogoni area of Epirus; **Lynn Morrison**, Conservation Officer at the Saffron Walden Museum in England; **Vasilios Nitsiakos**, Professor of Folklore Studies at the University of Ioannina; **Annalisa Rellie** of London, a journalist and author with expertise in the Balkans; **Konstantinos Mantzos**, anthropologist from the University of Ioannina, with expertise in the Greek-Albanian border; **Dr Antonia Sagredo**, agriculturalist and historian from the *Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia* in Madrid; and **Soterios Zoulas**, Associate Professor in Communications and chair of the Communication Arts Department of the *Eastern Nazarene College* in Quincy, Massachusetts, USA.

1.7 The main outcome of the round-table workshop at Tsamantas is this report, which makes recommendations on the economic and cultural development of the village and its wider region.

2. Aspects of Economic Development of Tsamantas and the Mourgana Area

Background ¹

2.1 The depopulation and abandonment of mountainous and remote villages is a familiar scenario in the Mediterranean region. One such village is Tsamantas, a historic community situated near the Greek-Albanian border in the region of Epirus, northwestern Greece. From its origins as an insignificant settlement in pre-historic times, tucked away in one of the most sheltered areas of Epirus, it eventually became a thriving micro-economy based on local mixed subsistence farming, pastoralism, and male migrant labour. Its remoteness has helped preserve its strong cultural identity (derivatively Byzantine), as well as its folklorist traditions. The village's traditional culture, which evolved over the centuries in relative isolation, offers a rich microcosm of social, political, economic and cultural relations. Successive waves of major emigration in the 1920-30s and 1950s-60s reduced its working class, and led the remaining villagers to abandon agricultural and commercial activities and neglect local resources.

2.3 The restoration of democracy in Greece – which occurred in the 1970s, after a seven-year military dictatorship – and the subsequent accession in 1981 to the EEC (i.e. the European Economic Community, as the European Union (EU) was called at the time), heralded a new era of economic development for the borderland communities. Their economic and social problems were alleviated by substantial funding from the Community. During this period, some former residents of Tsamantas who were aware of the decline and abandonment of their village undertook the task of preserving its rich cultural heritage. They collected many cultural artefacts and established the diminutive but colourful folklore museum of Tsamantas. In addition, they recorded, catalogued and published some significant pieces of literary and scholarly work.

2.4 While the community of Tsamantas started to enjoy the benefits – in the form of higher living standards – of Greece's membership of the EEC, the nearby Albanian communities across the border endured unimaginable poverty and desperation. Eventually, during the last week of 1989 and the first of 1990, the draconian border-security system imposed by Enver Hoxha's regime collapsed, resulting in the massive exodus of hundreds of people into Epirus. These refugees were mostly ethnic Greeks. Lacking adequate clothing and food, and subjected to harsh weather conditions, they followed ancient routes and succeeded in reaching the border checkpoint at Tsamantas.

2.5 This first wave of penniless and destitute immigrants from Albania to Epirus developed into a trend that would change Greek-Albanian relations for ever. Depopulated villages like Tsamantas are now benefiting from the influx of skilled and unskilled

¹ This draws from the opening presentation by D. Konstadakopulos on '*The economic, social and cultural transformation of the community of Tsamantas during the twentieth century*'.

Albanians. Immigrants can be seen repairing Tsamantas's traditional houses and stone walls, and paving the village's roads and squares, thus conserving the rural landscape. They look after kitchen gardens and animals, work at the museum, and serve at the village's café.

2.6 Cross-border communication has grown substantially since the opening of the Ampelonas crossing in 1997. Increasingly, the people of southern Albania can be seen shopping at the supermarkets of Igoumenitsa and Filiates, using the medical facilities at Ioannina, travelling in coaches to Athens, and even visiting the folklore museum in Tsamantas. But the flow in the other direction has been minimal, as personal safety is sadly still perceived to be an issue for visitors to southern Albania. However, this situation might improve if Albania joins the European Union, as is forecasted for sometime between 2010 and 2015.

2.7 The village was at its peak between the first and second world wars, when its population reached an all-time high of 1,480 inhabitants. Today, however, there are just 65 permanent residents, mostly elderly and retired. This number does double during the summer, and at certain religious festivals, with the influx of a number of former residents. But many houses stand in ruins, the school has closed, and fields have overgrown. Only a very few families in Tsamantas are now economically active (mainly in animal husbandry).

2.8 So what does the future hold for the village of Tsamantas? Its fortunes have been influenced not only by its topography and socio-economic structure, but also by the new political geography of the last century and the historical events that have taken place in Greece, as well as in neighbouring Albania and other parts of the world.

2.9 The dramatic decline in the village's population suggests that interaction with the outside world is vital for its continued existence. In this respect, migrants from Tsamantas to other parts of the globe, as well as those now coming in to the village, are tremendously important, in being the major actors linking the locality to the world economy. Another key factor will be the improvement to the infrastructure on completion of the *Egnatia* highway, which ought to invigorate the economic development of this border area. And the arrival in Tsamantas of migrants from Albania has meant that for the first time a pre-school nursery has opened, albeit with only a handful of children. Without young people, of course, the village will surely struggle.

2.10 The future is still uncertain. But Tsamantas is a remarkable and resilient place, and its vibrant culture, as well as the strength that lies in its diasporic communities, could well secure its place in the new millennium. But what it needs is purpose and determination, and of course investment of many different kinds. And so it is up to us, who care about borderland communities, to focus the attention of key decision makers on the issues that need to be addressed – and in the case of Tsamantas, the survival of its museum could well be one of the decisive factors.

Development Strategy for Tsamantas and its Immediate Areas: Prospects and Possibilities

2.11 Tsamantas faces considerable development challenges in relation to economic growth, social-economic cohesion and governance. The Mourgana area in general depends heavily on traditional agricultural activities, mainly animal husbandry. The local economy has benefited in the past from the EU's Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), especially to the few economically active farming families, in the form of various subsidies. However, in the 2003-4 CAP the EU makes clear that it is preparing to abolish direct agricultural subsidies for production, and is determined to allow farmers to focus on meeting consumer needs.

2.12 The EU is keen to continue providing funds for rural development, especially for promoting new agro-food businesses and agro-tourism in rural communities, including distinctive high-quality products. It also wants to provide broadband internet access at the village level. It is clear that incentives in the past have only been partially successful, and the promotion of other businesses in rural communities in Thesprotia is problematic. The mentality of the local population is still geared to old survival habits, and the entrepreneurial spirit found in other Epirote communities is absent.

2.13 The aim of the economic development group at the workshop was to provide a forward-looking view of the development prospects for Tsamantas and its immediate areas. The panel of experts comprised Dr Sarah Green, Dr Dimitrios Konstadakopoulos, James Korovilas, Annalisa Rellie, Konstantinos Mantzos, Dr Antonia Sagredo, Ilias Spyropoulos, and Associate Professor Soterios Zoulas. This panel, drawing on the previous background work of Dimitrios Konstadakopoulos on the economic, social and cultural transformation of the community of Tsamantas, identified the various strengths and weaknesses of the locality of Tsamantas, the opportunities it presents and the threats it faces.

Strengths

- A pristine natural environment and a pleasant mountain climate
- The production of raw agricultural natural products (meat, dairy products, honey, herbs, spring water)
- A unique cultural heritage (centred on its folklore museum, meta-Byzantine churches and its people)
- The area is the hinterland for the thriving port of Igoumenitsa and other coastal resorts (e.g. Syvotas)
- An enlightened diaspora in the main urban centres of Greece and in cities overseas (Worcester, USA and Melbourne, Australia)
- Its own interactive website (www.Tsamantas.com)

Weaknesses

- Physical decay – many traditional stone houses are in ruins
- Declining and ageing population
- Peripherality – distance from large urban centres (Ioannina, Corfu)
- Lack of visitors, tourist accommodation and Internet infrastructure
- Extreme poverty across the border in Albania
- The dilemma of what type of tourism to encourage; conflicting interests in terms of what the locals want to offer and what visitors are seeking

Opportunities

- The completion of the new Egnatia motorway and the upgraded port of Igoumenitsa will reduce peripherality
- Developing a positive and proactive approach to agro-, eco- or cultural tourism, as distinct from the mass tourism in other parts of Greece; local people must be involved, displaying pride, individualism, enjoyment and responsibility
- Developing a series of agro-tourism projects where visitors can stay in restored village houses and take part in special interest activities: climbing, horse riding, walking, mountain biking and cycling, bird watching, local flora and fauna, etc.; working holidays for paying guests to learn traditional skills (dry stone walling) and help restore old buildings; an international summer university school
- Developing cultural tourism in Thesprotia and southern Albania, covering a number of archaeological sites, museums, traditional settlements etc. and highlighting the common culture of the wider region
- Paying attention to the environment; environmental sustainability and long-term development; renewal of natural resources and conservation; alternative energy generation by renovating abandoned water mills; developing other forms of energy generation at a micro-scale
- Environmental management (promoting environmentally conscious local inhabitants)
- Obtaining national recognition as a traditional village and gaining publicity – register the name ‘Tsamantas’ and ‘St. George of Kamitseni’
- Designating a tourist route (such as a ‘Byron trail’ or ‘Edward Lear trail’), linked to their visits to the region in the eighteenth century), which could draw visitors to the region’s remote mountainous scenery and cultural sites
- Extending the tourist season to winter, spring and autumn – especially for the Easter and St. George’s festivities, and to take advantage of the flowering of unique local plants
- Promoting and developing the Tsamantas folklore museum
- Further developing local apiculture and animal husbandry to provide more employment opportunities
- Using some of the Bellos legacy (a substantial amount of money left to the community by a former resident who migrated to Worcester, MA) as seed capital for private initiatives in a responsible and transparent way

Threats

- Powerful competition for tourists, such as from Zagoria, Syvotas and Parga
- Insufficient financial resources, expertise, and access to channels of communication
- Lack of an outside critical view of the area's economic development and of practical policy advice
- Governance deficiency under the Kapodistrias systems (who owns the village resources?); problems in the dissemination of information by the municipality, prefecture or region
- Infighting, wrangling, disagreement and litigious attitude
- Hardly any successful initiatives up to now

Local endowments and amenities

Natural resources

2.14 One of the most important resources in Tsamantas is its high-quality and abundant spring water, originating from the snow-covered slopes of Mount Mourgana. This could be exploited (after undertaking an environmental impact assessment) in the form of bottled mineral water, bearing the brand name of '*Tsamantas*'. Another possibility is to use the local water for the production of local beer, bearing the brand '*Tsamantas*' or '*St. George's of Kamitseni*'. A micro-brewery entails relatively low initial cost compared to a water bottling plant. Many micro-breweries in other parts of Europe are doing well. By offering some incentives, expertise could be easily obtained from Germany or Britain.

2.15 The local stream could also generate electricity via small hydroelectric projects that could also welcome visitors – for instance, the stream that is used for the public washing facility (*nerotrouvia*) could power small but technologically advanced generators.

Amenities

2.16 The natural environment of Tsamantas is outstanding. It includes high and wild mountains, forests, gorges, springs, waterfalls, caves, and a remarkable flora and fauna. The area is also rich in cultural heritage, which includes many meta-Byzantine monuments, such as St. George's monastery, the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin and many other churches and chapels, as well as ancient sites, arched bridges and a number of settlements of architectural value. Workshop participants were impressed by the attractiveness of these places, highlighting the potential for tourism development. The village is also renowned for its religious festivals in honour of local saints. The festivities of the 15th of August (the Assumption of the Virgin) include an important fair (*Panigiri*) attracting a considerable number of emigrant *Tsamantiotes*. Another fair just recently inaugurated (on the first weekend of October 2005), and celebrating cattle – so important to the pastoral people of Tsamantas – looks to have a promising future.

Tourism

2.17 Tourism is not well developed in the area. Many of the workshop participants commented on how the pristine natural environment could attract tourists, whether domestic or from overseas. The richness of the local cultural and natural heritage could

attract a specific type of tourism, for those interested in walking, horse-riding, climbing, mountaineering, or simply enjoying the isolation, remoteness and ecological wealth of the mountains. Walking in particular has great potential for the village and its surrounding area. It appeals to a more mature and wealthier type of tourist, who might also be interested in the area's cultural heritage.

2.18 Unfortunately, this type of tourism appeals to a limited number of people. In addition, the village lacks even basic tourist accommodation and catering facilities. A traditional inn with a capacity of 15 beds does operate in the picturesque village of Lias (associated with the poignant story of 'Eleni' written by Nicholas Gage), 7 kilometres east of Tsamantas, and rooms for rent can be found in the town of Filiates, further afield, but the general dearth of accommodation means that visitors often stay at hotels in Igoumenitsa, Ioannina, or even Corfu, from where they visit Tsamantas on a day-trip basis only.

2.19 At present, visitors to the village mostly come from its diasporic community. Members of extended families, now living in Greece's major urban centres and abroad, return to Tsamantas during religious festivities, especially at Easter and, of course, in August, the traditional month in Greece for taking holidays. Many of them have renovated old family houses, while others have built holiday or retirement homes in Tsamantas. Their contribution to the local economy is substantial, and their presence during the summer months brings life to an otherwise slow-paced and sleepy community. During the Christmas and New Year festivities, however, the village becomes almost deserted, since many of the older permanent residents of Tsamantas spend the festivities in comfort with their families in Athens, Igoumenitsa or Ioannina, away from the harsh winter weather.

2.20 Access by road to Tsamantas is problematic during the winter, and this is a barrier to broadening the tourist season. Furthermore, the village may not be provided with a direct link to the new Egnatia motorway planned for the region. Nevertheless, the motorway should make it easier for tourists to get there.

2.21 Despite its rich natural and cultural endowments, Tsamantas faces stiff competition from the Zagori villages to the north east and the Tzoumerka area to the south east, both of which offer better tourist facilities and, arguably, an even more impressive natural and cultural environment. The low-key promotion of the village and its museum, and the unavailability of any printed material or tourist information, also work against attracting tourists from the booming coastal resorts of Syvota, Parga and Corfu.

2.22 Accommodation units for tourists in Tsamantas could be created through European Union programmes that support agro-tourism, which is becoming a popular type of activity in southern Europe. Such units could provide additional income to a farming family currently engaged solely in agriculture. The village has an empty traditional building owned by the parish of St. Nicholas, as well as the undeveloped first floor of the museum (or even the now empty barracks of Tsamantas border post), all of which could be used as visitors' accommodation. Given the fact that Tsamantas has some financial

resources from the Bellos legacy, a mortgage could be obtained for development of the latter. The creation of a non-profit entity owning a ‘*Xenonas Tsamantas*’, along similar lines to the inn at Lias, could be a success.

2.23 The village also has the potential to attract individuals or families from abroad willing to take up permanent residence. Similar mountainous villages in Spain (the Alpujarras region of the Sierra Nevada), in Italy (Puglia) and in France (Dordogne) have been revitalised by the influx of Germans, Britons and Scandinavians, who have bought properties and opened small inns, restaurants, shops and other types of business. Such people, tired of the fast pace of life in northern Europe, bring with them the experience, skills and networks that could make local businesses successful. Moreover, they attract their fellow countrymen, so that a sizeable foreign community develops. At present, the locals are suspicious of foreigners, and are unlikely to sell their houses because they are jointly owned by members of the extended family, scattered around the globe. A change of attitude is needed, acknowledging the benefits that newcomers can bring. There is evidence enough already: the many diasporic Greeks, from Australia in particular, who have come to rural areas and islands and set up small businesses have been the best agents of regeneration for local economies.

2.24 The development of tourism must not be detrimental to the environmental capital of Tsamantas. The impact of any projected activity should always be carefully considered, and must promote sustainable development. Animal husbandry must be allowed to continue; if the village abandons grazing, erosion will increase, land will be engulfed by rampant vegetation, and ancient paths will disappear. Most of the village’s terraced fields have already been abandoned; further loss could be disastrous. The community must incorporate environmental management principles promoting sustainable development, and must be seen to be doing so. The village has already attracted negative publicity from environmentalists for the ‘blocking off’ of the waterfall of *Rufliakas*.

2.25 On the matter of hunting and its incompatibility with tourism, a lengthy debate by participants was inconclusive. Hunting is an important activity in Thesprotia, as evidenced by the many hunting associations and businesses catering to those who hunt.

2.26 In the long term, joint ventures with businesses or individuals in southern Albania could be important for the promotion of cultural tourism. For instance, a one-day round-trip starting in Igoumenitsa and touring southern Albania (especially visiting the Butrint archaeological site) and Thesprotia could be possible. Such cross-border collaboration could become a reality within the context of a *Euroregion*, in which the prefecture of Thesprotia could take the initiative in setting up joint ventures with the neighbouring Albanian provinces. In such a framework, wildlife sanctuaries could be created, straddling the Greek-Albanian border on Mount Mourgana and thus protecting its unique flora and fauna. Anecdotal sources suggest the existence of a rare species of butterflies near a spring on the Mourgana slopes, and this could attract a considerable number of tourists.

Agro-food products

2.27 Tsamantas has a long tradition in food production and preparation. Many of its men, forced to migrate, became bakers, cooks and restaurateurs in other communities, and the women of the village are still renowned for their culinary skills, especially in pie-making. Today's agricultural produce, such as meat, milk, herbal tea, herbs and honey, is mostly distributed to the nearest urban centres (Filiates, Igoumenitsa and Corfu). Produced in small quantities, it is nevertheless of high quality. Tsamantas is well known for its tasty organic meat (beef, lamb and goat), as well as the milk from two or three large flocks and herds grazing on the slopes of Mount Mourgana, owned by families still active in animal husbandry. The milk is largely sold to the dairy in Filiates (*Dodoni*), and is mainly used for the mass production of *feta* cheese. A small quantity of mostly sheep and goat's milk is used by a few households in the village to make *feta* and cottage cheese locally. Despite this tradition of cheese-making, local farmers have not explored the possibility of applying for origin-labelled products and quality certification, similar to the '*Denominación de Origen*' found on many agro-food products in Spain. The main obstacle has been the cost of complying with the necessary hygiene standards, although EU financial support and training is available.

2.28 EU agricultural subsidies for the production of certain meats and dairy products, which are substantial at present, will eventually disappear, reducing the income of the village's farmers and shepherds. One means of revitalising the Tsamantas economy is to add value to its meat, dairy produce, honey and herbs – for instance, by processing some of its meat to high-quality sausages and hams, or its creamy and aromatic milk into refined cheeses, perhaps branded as '*Tsamantas*' or '*Mount Mourgana*'. (There is a tradition of cheese-making in Epirus, and in particular in Metsovo, which the village could usefully draw on.) The lack of local marketing experience is a constraint on this potential, but local chambers of commerce, the prefecture of Thesprotia and the region of Epirus could be instrumental in providing support. Promotional leaflets and samples of value-added agro-food products could be distributed in hotels in Corfu and Ioannina, thereby advertising the bounty of the village and its wider region.

2.29 Identifying opportunities such as these for the economic development of Tsamantas would be a futile exercise without recommendations also being made on capability building. The main objective here is to encourage decision-makers and local administrators in developing the capability of the inhabitants in terms of training and education. A characteristic weakness of the prefecture of Thesprotia is the relatively low level of human capital, combined with low educational attainments and the lack of an **entrepreneurial spirit**, a vital ingredient in fostering its economic development. As the Prefect pointed out in the round-table discussion, during the first session of the workshop, there are very few entrepreneurs in Thesprotia. This is a paradox, given that the region's itinerant workers and migrants have been adaptable and entrepreneurial in their host environments. The low level of human capital also implies that the villagers of Tsamantas will need considerable external help and assistance. Experienced businessmen from its diasporic community or elsewhere must share their skills with local people. At the same time, the local administration must provide the appropriate support services critical to the

success of the proposed projects. The local authorities must also provide and deliver training and technical support to the area's human capital, including that of Tsamantas.

3. The Folklore Museum of Tsamantas

3.1 The aim of the museum experts' group was to provide a forward-looking view of the development prospects for the Folklore Museum of Tsamantas. The group (comprising Sarah Blowen, Dr Katharina Eisch-Angus, Mark Angus, Lynn Morrison and Professor Vassilios Nitsiakos) drew on the background work of Sarah Blowen concerning the role played by museums in facilitating cultural understanding. In similar fashion to the economic experts' group, the museum experts identified the various strengths and weaknesses of the museum, and the opportunities and threats it faces, as well as making a number of concrete proposals for its immediate survival and long-term development.

Background

3.2 The creation of the Folklore Museum of Tsamantas was essentially the work of one man's collecting fervour in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Kostas Zoulas, a native of the village living in Athens and known as a folklorist and writer, began to collect together donated objects which could tell the story of village life: domestic items and tools of trade; religious and folk-belief regalia; objects attesting to the various regimes and historical events – most notably military and political conflict, and immigration overseas – which had impacted upon life in the Mourgana mountains.

3.3 It should be noted that this is far from unique: many community museums and heritage centres in the developed world owe their existence to such personal initiatives dating from around the same time. Post-war developments such as industrialisation, rural exodus, and then economic downturn following the oil crises of the 1970s were threatening so-called 'traditional' ways of life and acted as a call to arms for many wishing to preserve them in some way. Those initiatives that have survived and evolved to become thriving centres of community development and historical learning can offer useful pointers as to how the Folklore Museum of Tsamantas can do the same. Until September 2005 the museum was run as a non-profit organisation, a private legal entity managed by a committee called the Society of the Folklore Museum of Tsamantas. It is recognised as a museum by the Greek Ministry of Culture.

3.4 The museum first opened in 1983, in the former village primary school, an imposing and solidly built stone structure in the valley bottom. Originally financed in 1928 by contributions from the diaspora community in Worcester, Massachusetts, the single-storey neo-classical building was extended in the 1990s to include an upper storey which has never been completed. The collection is housed in five rooms of varying sizes on the main floor of the building. The shape and 'ideology' of the museum are those established by Kostas Zoulas. There is a general thematic logic to the different rooms, as outlined below, but this has become confused over time as objects have been moved and new ones added with seemingly no over-arching focus.

- The first room retains the feel of the schoolroom it once was, with educational paraphernalia. A variety of wall maps attest to Greece's place in the world. Photographic portraits of former schoolmasters and village priests line the walls upon entry. Other photographs document the opening of the museum, and visits by dignitaries, etc. A large central display table mixes school objects, guns, church decoration and other assorted items.
- A second rear room shows what could loosely be called domestic life, with a mock-up of a typical hearth, the heart of the home; family pictures grace the walls, and objects mainly associated with women's lives are included – dowry chests and dowry blankets; a weaving loom; a bread oven.
- A small room contains wall cases displaying priests' vestments, Orthodox Church plate and liturgical items, mainly from the church of St. George in Kamitseni.
- This leads to the large rear side-room which has wall cases full of folkloric and everyday clothes, two display cases with figures in wedding costume, and trade and craft items associated with tinkering, shoemaking, tailoring, woodwork and metal crafts. A display table shows a collection of mostly foreign coins and bank notes, which locate Tsamantas at the heart of a worldwide community forged through immigration and displacement.
- A large front side-room has more wall display cases for clothing and textiles, as well as cases with objects relating to the work of shepherds and flax-spinners; there are other agricultural and forestry implements here. A central display table shows paper artefacts including some in Arabic attesting to the Turkish presence in the area until 1913. Further glass cases display various metal objects (tinker's tools, oil lamps, tin helmets and hand grenades...). One case shows the '*fustanella*' and other clothes belonging to *Tzavelas*, a national hero of the Greek independence, and has regional and national resonance and significance.

The Folklore Museum of Tsamantas today

3.5 Of those museums born of the desire to save a disappearing way of life, some have managed to become vectors for development, but many others have ceased to exist, their collections dispersed or left to disintegrate. The Folklore Museum of Tsamantas is facing the fate of the latter, having become "stuck" for a variety of reasons. The most damaging of these reasons is a lack of clear and dynamic management structure, and of the understanding of conservation issues. Responses to these and other features of its sclerosis as an institution will be discussed below.

3.6 A visitor to the village today might be prompted to ask two questions:

- **Should a museum be a priority in a remote area such as this?**

3.7 The museum is certainly of significance and indeed should be central to the economic and cultural regeneration of the area. The international panel of experts convened for the workshop confirmed the value of the collection, both in material and symbolic terms, and stated that the objects should be protected, preserved and displayed in situ. It is clear that

the economic development of the Mourgana area will depend in some way upon tourism, and the full potential of the museum to this end has not, thus far, been realised. The geographical remoteness of the area is actually an attractive pull to many prospective visitors. But the area is certainly not as remote as it once was, with charter flights arriving at Corfu and Preveza, and a new trans-Balkan highway, the Egnatia Way, currently being built. Significantly, the reopening of crossings into neighbouring Albania has created a whole new potential source of visitors, as well as potential new partners for future developments.

- **How can a village with a winter population of just over sixty sustain such an institution?**

3.8 The village does not have to sustain the institution unaided, and indeed it never really has. There is a role for local, municipal, prefectural, regional and national administrations, as well as for the diasporic community in Greece and beyond. International links, such as those forged by this workshop, will play their part too, as will encouraging families from across the Albanian border to move to the area. All these relationships will, however, need to be carefully negotiated and clearly monitored, in order to avoid the potential pitfalls which can accompany such a project.

The Future Museum: Management, Legal and Financial Issues

3.9 The details of the management, administration and financing of the museum are opaque. The museum has been the victim of much political wrangling over the years of its existence: this is one of the reasons that its development has been hampered. Indeed, unless the museum is placed – legally and managerially – beyond the control of opposing political interests, it will disappear, and an opportunity for regeneration will have been missed.

3.10 In September 2005 the museum passed into the control of the Municipality of Filiates. This does not appear to have been a unanimous decision when put to vote by the Museum Society. The details of the transfer are very unclear, and the legal standing of the museum building and collection are in doubt. Although this agreement should afford more structural security to the museum, the group of experts was concerned that the situation is harmful: those who voted for the transfer of control to Filiates did so in the hope that the municipality would take over all decision-making and financial outlay, but now the municipality is approaching those same people to run the museum on their behalf.

3.11 The group urges the major stakeholders² in the museum to arrive at some important decisions as a matter of urgency. Open dialogue and clarification of the museum's

² Stakeholders are those entities that have administrative and financial power over the museum and those individuals whose story the museum seeks to tell. The definition can – and should – also encompass those who are well placed to offer constructive technical expertise or financial backing. The stakeholders include: the municipality of Filiates, the community of Tsamantas, the prefecture of Thesprotia, the region of Epirus, the Greek Ministry of Culture (and Education), the Society of the Folklore Museum of Tsamantas,

standing is imperative. For example, the collection is in need of urgent conservation care (see below) and the museum building in need of maintenance, and a number of questions need to be answered in this respect:

- who gives the go-ahead for this work to be carried out?
- who will decide which specialists to call upon?
- who will pay?
- who will insure the collection?
- is the collection at risk of transfer elsewhere?
- who actually owns the building?

3.12 It is urgently required that:

- the **memorandum of transfer** and its details **be made public**, in the interests of accountability
- the **legal status of the museum be made clear** and a legal document be written, clarifying who has **ownership** of the collections and the building, and who has **financial responsibility** for their upkeep. Examples of such a document should exist for other museums in the region.
- a **Museum Committee and Board of Advisors be established**. The Committee will oversee the day-to-day running of the museum. The Municipality of Filiates and the community of Tsamantas will obviously be represented, but **the Chair of the Committee and the Head of the Community/Municipality should not be the same person, for the sake of impartiality, transparency and continuity**. Committee membership should be restricted to a sensible number, and the members should elect a Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. The museum would benefit from a **Board of Advisors** to scrutinise the work of the Committee. This should be made up of representatives of all museum stakeholders, and could include international advisors, curators from other museums, etc.
- a **Museum Constitution be drawn up and adhered to**; this can be a simple document which can follow examples collected from other museums. Usually, a Mission Statement or Service Objective will outline a **5-year plan of activities** to be undertaken. This should be implemented by the Museum Committee on behalf of the Municipality, in partnership with any other appropriate bodies. The Board of Advisors will scrutinise progress.
- an **urgent survey** of the condition of the collection and building be undertaken, and immediate work sanctioned where necessary.
- the issue of **payment and training of a member of staff** be addressed. A semi-permanent custodian is needed, with on-site access to a computer. The current post-holder seems to display an aptitude for languages and a willingness to learn basic museum conservation and building maintenance skills. It is suggested that over the winter he be sent on a course to improve his English and to learn IT skills.

the St. George's Hellenic Society (Worcester, MA), the St. Dimitrios Society of Tsamantas (Athens), the St. Nicholas Society (Melbourne), the University of Ioannina, and potentially any other institutions expressing an interest in the project (e.g. those represented by the experts convened for the workshop).

The Future Museum: Conservation and Collections Management

3.13 The collection is **now at risk** – there is a real possibility that many of the objects, particularly those that are organic, will be unsalvageable by the spring. Pest infestation and water damage is already evident. Many of the unique textile artefacts are in urgent need of attention.

3.14 For this reason, the immediate creation of a Museum Committee and Board of Advisors, constituted along the lines given above, is absolutely essential. Their work over the next few months should prioritise:

- carrying out building checks and any necessary work
- conservation and collection care
- controlling environmental factors within the museum
- repairing and renewing displays which are harmful to other artefacts or to visitors.

3.15 A detailed conservation report, prepared by Lynn Morrison, an experienced conservator, is attached in the Appendix. This can be used to direct the urgent work needed over the winter months.

Regular Housekeeping

3.16 As this urgent work is being carried out, the permanent staff member/custodian should be given basic training in DIY and conservation monitoring, so that housekeeping can be carried out on a regular basis and another crisis point averted.

Cataloguing and documenting the collection

3.17 When objects were donated to the museum, receipts were given by Kostas Zoulas and details of the items noted. However, this information was rather summary and cannot be seen to constitute a true accession register of the museum's contents (for example, notes refer to bundles of items, rather than individual pieces). It is therefore vital that:

- a complete computerised catalogue should be undertaken as a priority, in conjunction with a collection condition survey. This should rapidly reveal which objects are most at risk and which conservation measures need to be taken.
- computerised catalogue **database packages** exist and can be easily obtained. Volunteers could be called upon to collate the catalogue: these could be student conservators or, possibly, students from the University of Ioannina Folklore Studies programme, under supervision. However, the cataloguing **must be done in partnership with individuals from the local area** who can supply the context for the objects, and this should also be recorded: who made the object, who used it, how and when. These intangibles are the first part of any artefact to disappear, and need to be recorded.

- the Museum has the offer of a computer from the UK and basic training for this purpose: how will the Committee respond? Is there funding for a cataloguing package?

3.18 Thereafter a collections management policy can be put in place: it is recommended that the museum borrows and implements a collections plan from another institution. Many examples exist and can be provided.

The Future Museum: Interpretation and Development of the Collection

3.19 Conservation works in order to improve access to collections, but this is pointless if visitors are unable to understand the stories and significance of the artefacts. It is recommended that:

- once the urgent conservation work has been done, the **basic organisation of the displays should be retained**. It might be useful to consider the collection as **one object** – the way in which it has been put together speaks as much about the village community as do the individual artefacts themselves
- **labelling** of artefacts be improved
- some **professionally prepared interpretation panels** be placed in the first room to offer basic information to ‘set the scene’ for the visitor upon entry: history, traditions, trades, natural environment, etc.
- **guidebooks and leaflets** be available to provide more detailed information about the artefacts than labelling allows
- throughout, **text should be present in Greek, English and Albanian**, the latter two prepared by someone with both excellent language skills and subject-specific knowledge. A **German text** might also be envisaged.
- the **English-language ‘identity’** of the museum be carefully thought out. Folk Museum has some negative connotations as a name – might Tsamantas Rural Life Museum be better?

3.20 A museum constitution should establish a policy for developing the collection, either in terms of gap-filling or for the collection of more recent artefacts. However it is recommended that:

- an **oral history project** be set up to begin within the next year, as a way of gathering information about local life past and present and getting some of the valuable **immaterial culture** of the area into the museum (folksong, storytelling, personal testimony etc.). This would **allow for a plurality of views and voices to be heard**, in an area where the past will remain disputed so long as the Civil War is still a living scar for the community. Students from the University of Ioannina’s Folklore Studies Programme could be involved as interviewers. Interviews should also be conducted within the major diaspora communities.
- An **ethnographic documentary film** of local life and landscape could also be made and shown in the museum.

The Future Museum: Promoting Usage and ‘Ownership’ of the Museum

3.21 Visitor figures are very difficult to ascertain, and irregular opening hours hamper maximum usage. It is recommended that:

- **regular opening hours** be agreed and adhered to, and a key to the museum be held locally (it appears that this is already being considered)
- these opening hours be **advertised** locally and in appropriate publications at municipal, prefectural and regional level
- the museum becomes a **regular destination for school visits**. This would need some planning by the Municipality of Filiates, the Prefecture of Thesprotia, education authorities and the Museum Committee. Museum quizzes, activities, etc. should be fairly straightforward to prepare.
- a **Friends of Tsamantas Folklore Museum organisation be established**. Many former inhabitants or people with family links to the village take an active interest in the museum, and this interest has not been harnessed. A simple subscription-based membership could be set up and would not necessarily need to be run from the village itself
- the **web presence** of the Museum be extended. This can be based on the excellent initiative *www.tsamantas.com*

The Future Museum: a Hub for Ancillary Activity

3.22 As a visitor attraction and community resource, any museum needs to offer more than a basic visit of the collections. Often it is the presence of a museum or heritage site which is the initial draw for the visitor, but they will expect this to be part of a wider experience. “No one attraction is an island,” comments Lynn Morrison.

3.23 It is known that every euro spent in a museum or heritage site in France generates a further ten euros for the local economy. The Folklore Museum of Tsamantas is in an excellent position in this respect, as many potential resources to extend the visitor experience are already present. It is ideally placed to become a focus for cultural activity and tourism (most notably agro- or eco-tourism) in the Mourgana area.

3.24 The group recommends the following:

- **clearance of the former terraced field systems** on the opposite side of the stone bridge, to be used to **demonstrate traditional farming techniques**
- **demonstrations of the various crafts and trades** represented in the museum, using ‘authentic’ tools and methods: tinkering and metal craft, woodworking, spinning, weaving

- both of these activities could be run daily or weekly over the summer or as **week-long activity courses**
- **links** should be made with houses and other locations in local villages where objects in the museum might be observed in situ, by agreement with the owners: painted mantelpieces, traditional low tables and stools, outside ovens, neighbourhood churches
- similarly, the **links with the monastery of St. George** should be made more explicit in the museum, and **transport** between the two, with various drop-off points in between, should be available in season
- if visitors make it as far as the museum, they should be offered **decent toilet facilities!**
- similarly, **refreshments** should be served, showcasing local seasonal produce. This, and other **locally made and sourced products**, should be **available for sale** in the museum (also for sale via the Internet)
- a **variety of accommodation** should be offered to visitors: self-catering, bunk-house, camping, bed and breakfast. This has been addressed at greater length elsewhere in the report.
- the nearest **postcards** are currently at Giromeri monastery, a half-hour car-drive away. The museum should have its own selection for sale. Ditto **maps**.
- **museum publications**, such as a guidebook and history of the village, should be available. An **album of quality photographs** of the area, including photographs from the museum collection, would be a good product to commission (also for sale via the Internet).
- the museum should have a **series of events** linked to the festive calendar of the region
- similarly, the museum and its grounds lend themselves very well to **staging festivals**: the possibilities of running **folk music and dance or storytelling** festivals should be explored
- if a few computers were installed, the museum could have a **second role as an Internet café and community advice centre**. Such initiatives have been successful in the more remote and impoverished Welsh valleys.

The Future Museum: Cultural Understanding and Conflict Resolution

3.25 Situated on a border which has seen so much conflict and dislocation, the community of Tsamantas is ideally placed to explore how its past can be used to bring about cultural cooperation and conflict resolution in the present. There is some experience from reconciliation centres in Germany (i.e. Holocaust memorials). However, the workshop revealed so many internal tensions that it is apparent that the community itself is in need of conflict resolution! Realising this objective for the museum will therefore necessarily take some time. A research centre on interethnic and cross-border culture could be a long term aspiration.

3.26 That aside, the fact that dialogue with the communities of southern Albania has now begun is very promising. We understand that the municipality of Filiates, the prefecture of Thesprotia and the region of Epirus are all working with their opposite numbers

immediately over the border and looking to form strategic partnerships. It is hoped that the museum, now that it is administratively under municipal control, might feature in some of this strategic thinking.

3.27 With many Albanian museums having been closed for ideological ‘cleansing’, or despoiled of their collections, a common museum development plan could be envisaged. A cross-border collections policy could be implemented, conservation expertise gained and shared, and oral history projects take place on both sides of what is a political rather than a cultural border.

3.28 We were very pleased to welcome three representatives of the neighbouring Albanian communities to the workshop, and hope that cross-border dialogue at the micro-level will develop from this contact.

The Future Museum: International Cooperation

3.29 International cooperation and cross-border relationships/partnerships will be crucial to the cultural, social and economic regeneration of the area. More specifically, the museum can look to other museums worldwide to gain insights into best practice.

3.30 The group recommends that:

- municipal, prefectural and regional authorities look to **create a Euroregion** with southern Albania, in order to bid for funding more effectively.
- opportunities for **European Union funding** be explored, such as **Leader Plus** (dedicated to the regeneration of rural areas) for bottom-up community projects, **Interreg 3A** (supporting cross-border cooperation) or **Culture 2000**. Both Interreg 3A and Culture 2000 have been used to establish museums in border areas elsewhere in Europe.
- because both Leader Plus and Interreg 3A fund 50% of a project, **potential private/public partners for match-funding** need to be identified
- **relationships with existing partners**, such as the **St. George’s Hellenic Society (Worcester, MA)** and the **St. Dimitrios Society of Tsamantas (Athens)**, be clarified for mutual benefit
- based on the success of this workshop, the **museum be used as a venue for international conferences** in the future, to raise its profile and bring in potential partners to see the possibilities available in the area

3.31 To sum up, the museum’s future role as a social, cultural and economic resource can be assured by a network of partners working in cooperation. The objects in the museum speak of a community created by a web of intimate links across international borders, and voyages between cultures and territories. Now the museum, and those who have it in their power to shape its future, must do the same.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The communities of Mount Mourgana are faced with serious problems of economic and population decline. The once-thriving and proud village of Tsamantas, with its extensive diasporic community and unique culture, is under particular threat. However, the Greek public officials (i.e. the Prefect of Thesprotia and the Mayor of Filiates) made it clear at the opening of the workshop that they are taking very seriously their role in regenerating the area and saving its rich cultural heritage, as exemplified by the folklore museum. The panel of experts also endorsed the work undertaken by the head of the community of Tsamantas in improving the village's infrastructure, utilising money from the Bellos legacy. With the assistance of local participants and officials, the invited academics and museum experts were able to obtain a good understanding of the problems facing Tsamantas and its museum, and to suggest an action programme for revitalisation. Most of the recommendations made were based upon their experience and practice in other parts of Europe. These recommendations are addressed to the three levels of local administration, namely the prefecture of Thesprotia, the municipality of Filiates and the community of Tsamantas, all of which are responsible for the economic and social welfare of the Mourgana area. It is up to these authorities to take on board the panel's recommendations and implement some of the proposed initiatives.

4.2 The first step – to be undertaken by the municipality of Filiates, with the approval of the prefecture and with the involvement of whole community – is to prepare a detailed programme of action to regenerate Tsamantas and its neighbouring villages and safeguard the future of its folklore museum. Such a programme must be realistic in terms of deadlines, and be supported by sufficient financial resources.

4.3 The future prosperity of Tsamantas will depend upon a small number of the following initiatives, examined in the preceding sections of this report:

Take immediate action for the preservation of the folklore museum and the Byzantine church of St. George in Kamitseni.

4.4 The designation of a transparent and dynamic structure for managing the museum, and the acquisition of a basic knowledge of conservation, are both of the utmost priority. The Byzantine church of the monastery St. George in Kamitseni, an invaluable cultural asset for the Mourgana area, urgently needs to have its roof repaired.

Concentrate on upland animal husbandry, agriculture, and the exploitation of natural resources.

4.5 There are ways in which existing agricultural activities can be made more profitable, i.e. by processing local produce. Attention should be paid to their promotion and to adopting e-commerce as soon as possible. Environmental management principles should be incorporated in all activities. An uncontrolled expansion of economic activities could increase the risk of depreciating the value of the pristine natural environment.

Encourage diversification and stimulate the development of new enterprises.

4.6 The economic development of the area is inextricably linked to the growth of existing businesses and the establishment of new ones. The entrepreneurial spirit of its community needs to be rekindled, through training, practical support and guidance, and avenues for new business initiatives need to be identified. The diasporic Tsamantiotes residing in Greece and other parts of the world should be regarded as potential human capital for Tsamantas. The community must build an electronic data-base of such people, through their brotherhood societies, and must enlist their support. Foreigners should be encouraged to move to the locality, bringing with them new skills, ideas and investment.

Continue to undertake infrastructure improvements, including wider use of the Internet.

4.7 Roads, water, sewage facilities (which are lacking), rubbish collection, electricity, and telecommunications (including the Internet), regular public transport and local shopping facilities are all vital for business and for reducing the area's isolation. The Municipality should work closely with the prefecture and the region to ensure that this part of Thesprotia receives preferential treatment in the allocation of infrastructure projects necessary to reduce the high costs of available goods and services. The museum could also serve as an Internet café and community advice centre.

Support and participate in trans-border cooperation.

4.8 It is highly likely (and desirable) that the prefecture of Thesprotia and the region of Epirus could embark on creating a *Euroregion* with Southern Albania, which could secure European funding. The village of Tsamantas has historically been the economic and cultural centre for the Mourgana communities on both sides of the border. Tsamantas and its museum could possibly be the location of a special new project or pilot scheme within the Euroregion framework.

Include all stakeholders, maintain momentum, and monitor and review progress.

4.9 Ultimately, successful economic regeneration of Tsamantas depends on the participation and motivation of its entire people, whether residing in the village or in other parts of the world. Their commitment, sense of collective mission, and enthusiasm for their homeland must be stimulated and sustained. The leadership qualities, charisma and energy of the elected representative of the community of Tsamantas could play a pivotal role in the economic regeneration process. Emigrant Tsamantiotes with experience in public administration and public relations must continue to give direction, provide practical support and advice, and defend the head of the community from inevitable criticism arising from self-serving politicians, a hostile media, and disaffected individuals. In turn, elected representatives must be more open and transparent in their decision-making process, and be more accountable (particularly with regard to the Bellos legacy) to all *Tsamantiotes*.

4.10 In order to halt the economic, social and cultural decline of Tsamantas, a well-structured five-year plan of activities must be drawn up and implemented. Achievement targets must be set for each year, against which performance can be monitored and measured. Many of the participants of this workshop would like to be kept informed on such progress and participate (if possible) in the annual review process. Some of these newly found 'Friends of Tsamantas' have already offered to the museum their services and some equipment, and it would be regrettable if these offers were ignored.

4.11 In the changing geopolitical landscape of south-east Europe, as well as the rest of the world, new ideas and prospects are arising, leading to more business opportunities. The opening of the Greek-Albanian border is a local example of this, and must be exploited. Of course, there is no simple or quick-fix solution to the problems faced by the community of Tsamantas. However, the recommendations made in this report could lead the way to economic regeneration of the area. The recommendations are not written in stone; instead they provide a framework for essential action. But if the proud people of Tsamantas, with the support of the local administration, are willing to undertake them, the economic and cultural revitalisation of their village could become a reality.

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Also taking part were local officials, including three from southern Albania (Michalis Kousekas from Karroq, George Kokosis from Grazhdan, and Petros Rakas from Zminec).

Appendix

CONSERVATION REPORT: The collection at the Tsamantas Folklore Museum and its care

By Lynn Morrison, Saffron Walden Museum, England

The basic premise is to keep the museum as it is but to upgrade elements of the display that are falling apart, and resolve unsafe practices and displays that are damaging other objects. Basic care of objects can coexist with preservation of the status quo.

Funding must be in place to pay for conservators – work will not come free, and it is up to the Museum Committee and the stakeholders to allocate funds at either a basic level (subsistence) or a reasonable rate of pay for 2-3 conservators to work together at a mutually convenient time, in order to undertake basic care of the collection for a minimum of 3 weeks, with workplace, materials, lodging and transport issues addressed. One-off conservation of this nature will help, but maintenance in the following years needs to be programmed in.

Main problems: high humidity in winter, lack of cleaning to deter pests, no visual inspections being undertaken in spring and summer to identify pest infestations, inappropriate adhesives and lacquers, poor framing, high light-levels.

At risk now:

Organics

Wood, specifically from woodworm and termites

Organics, generally from rodent activity

Textiles (especially wool and fur), from moths

Photographs, from poor display and framing, light fading, embrittlement and distortion. These are irreplaceable and should be scanned for safe keeping.

Paper and newspapers – as with photographs (above), but also susceptible to pests

Inorganic materials

Iron, from high humidity levels leading to corrosion

Copper and brass, from high humidity levels leading to bronze disease

Some suggested solutions:

1. Make the building watertight – check for leaks and the state of the roof; make good the exterior.
2. Survey the building – clear out cellars, check damp is not getting in and that gutters are not blocked, etc.

3. Electrical wiring test – some of the wiring is frankly dangerous and a fire risk. There is even some exposed wiring. Repair hazardous wiring, clip up, put electrical tape around joins, fix extra sockets. This to be undertaken by a qualified electrician.
4. Blinds or shutters need to be fixed to windows to lower the light levels and to stop direct sunlight causing deterioration to objects. Opening windows should be avoided, as this allows pests to enter.
5. No lights to be near objects, or they will fade rapidly – especially the costumes in the wall cases. There are alternatives, e.g. fluorescent tubes on the ceiling rather than in the cases, or directional spotlights pointing at objects from a distance.
6. Conservation heating – an oil-filled radiator in the centre of each room is ideal. These should be attached to a humidistat and kept on low background heat in each room, to drive out moisture (though not near objects); however, the filters on the humidistats would need to be changed regularly as they cannot be left unsupervised for months at a time, or they would stop working, for various reasons. This is a low-cost solution and is easier to maintain than dehumidifiers, which collect water and need emptying (unless a hole is drilled in the wall, allowing water to run outside via a pipe).
7. Monitor the internal environment of the museum – this needs basic training, but equipment can be supplied.
8. Repair some of the cracked Perspex cases, using clear silicone or a new sheet of Perspex. This makes the case less vulnerable to pests and to dust. Seal all cases; this involves removing wiring in some instances (costume displays especially), but the lights should not be there anyway, as they are too close to fabrics.
9. If the cases are not sealed, the mothballs will not work to preserve the costumes. It is also unhealthy for people to breathe these vapours. In the longer term, alternatives should be found, as mothballs are likely to be banned by the EU.
10. The framed items are in great need of new framing and protection.
11. Dust the objects, and examine their condition for pest damage while doing so; a survey usually involves a tick list showing whether an object is marked and identifiable, whether it is in need of further conservation, and allowing any further remarks.
12. Clean the cases, dust shelves, freshen up paintwork, improve sockets and switches – generally smarten up the appearance of the museum. A little basic equipment would help: soft dusting brushes, antistatic cloths, a vacuum cleaner, instructions to a willing volunteer who is regularly available.

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