



**Interviews with an Alphistian**  
**A Selection of Interviews with Anthony Skaggs**

**Interview by Stellan Beckmann ("CS")**

**2007**

*Tony Skaggs is a man who not only has a journal at [alphistia](#) but who also has a project - In this case a micronation - entitled [Alphistia](#). He approached me asking for an interview and since I am myself interested in Micronations it was no way I would say no. In this interview Tony answers my questions about Alphistia, it's history, language and influences.*

**CS: At first glance Alphistia it seems like the occasional Utopia, but on closer look it seems more like a real idea, a real vision and something that is more than just an Utopia. It almost seems as if it will happen in the future. Do you hope that you one day stand in the middle of a real Alphistia?**

Yes, I do hope that one day I will stand in the middle of a real Alphistia. I'm not quite sure how to get there though, except through my imagination. It's always been like that. I "discovered" Alphistia 40 years ago, when I was 9 years old. I introduced it to the other children in my neighborhood, and since kids are kids, they wanted to take part. We built little towns in our backyards, made various Alphistian artifacts such as coins, flags, booklets etc. There was also plenty of politics and intrigue that pre-teens might think up. It fell apart during puberty. My idealism got a slap or two from the disagreements and arguments that cropped up. It's never easy for people to get along, even 9-14 year olds playing in the backyard. I was surprised that even children's "politics" can be so rough.

Ever since, Alphistia has been my "personal" country. Once the internet came along, it became possible to share what I have developed with the world at large. Although it falls into that difficult to define category of "micronation" or "geofiction", it is as well a proposal for a new society, with its own language and ideology. But I know from who I am and what I have experienced in interacting with people since I was a child, that I do not have the kind of personality to bring that kind of Alphistia about. I am a dreamer and an idealist, not a politician. That has clearly limited Alphistia's development.

Still, I can do what I do best - imagine Alphistia. I don't want to say I'm another Zamenhof (the creator of Esperanto) or Herzl (the founder of Zionism, each of them are heroes and role models for me. Both men were dreamers and idealists, and both Esperanto and Israel exist because of their dreams. Others with political skills and belief in the ideals of an Interlanguage, or creating a homeland for the Jewish people made those things happen.

**CS: What are your thoughts of other micronations like, say, Lovely by people such as Danny Wallace? Do you consider them more commercial hippo-jippos rather than authentic micronations created with an oz of idealism?**

It's a universe of its own and I'm fascinated by it. I'm fondest of projects like Bergonia (sadly its creator died in a car crash last year). Bergonia far surpassed Alphistia in its imaginative development. Lovely has been harmless fun, and lots of people participated in it. They even made an imaginary voyage to Alphistia in one of their online newsletters. Talossa was probably the most "successful" of micronations because it had dozens of members worldwide who were linked by their constant bickering on an internet forum. Its king was charismatic, but like many of that kind, had a difficult personality. His own subjects dumped him and most fled into a much reduced "Republic of Talossa".

One micronation project I like is Patri Friedman's Seasteading. Although my political beliefs are really the opposite of Patri's free-market libertarianism, he is actually very focused, practical, and a good organizer. He's also charismatic without being an asshole tyrant. I wouldn't be at all surprised if he doesn't actually establish his project, which would involve creating a sovereign "seastead" on its own territory, however large or small.

**CS: Alphistia got its own language in development. How long has it taken to develop it and how difficult is it to make your own language? Do you have any tips for people who want to invent their own language about creating one? Is the alphistian language currently used by any other than you?**

Alphistia started in 1967 because I invented an alphabet. Within a few years, I began inventing words and a grammar. Although the alphabet was discarded, a few of the original words from Early Alphistian still survive: lesenum= native land, nomikle=book, yare=boy, ulanta=beautiful. The vocabulary then was just made up from thin air. In the years that followed, I took words from languages I studied: Spanish, Russian, German, Dutch, Norwegian. In the last 10 years, it's developed as a sort of Netherlandish/Scandinavian language.

Lots of people invent languages, and most of them are very good at it. I might learn more from them than they from me, so I wouldn't have tips on that, except to say to do what you love. It was easy to invent Alphistian, because I was at my happiest doing it. It's slow work, but rewarding and enjoyable. I read a quote by the creator of the modern Faroese dictionary, who coined many many new words, that the process is like writing poetry, of one word each.

The vocabulary is limited right now at about 3000 words, but those are 3000 useful, everyday words. I think in Alphistian all the time. I've heard from several people who've taught themselves some the language, when they've come across it on the web. They are generally linguistic savants who pick up languages very easily, although Alphistian is not at all a difficult language to learn. I'm always flattered to hear from people who write me in it. There isn't a circle of fluent speakers - yet. I think there could be though.

Alphistian is an integral part of a future Alphistian society. While English is the world's interlanguage (NOT Esperanto as we're well aware), there should be room for many, many

languages in this world. A country that would be as small as Alphistia would blossom using its own language. The example of Iceland is exactly what I mean by that. Nearly everyone in Iceland knows English quite well, but they love their own language and take great joy writing in it, singing it, and constantly talking with one another in it. It's a remarkable model. The revival of Hebrew in modern Israel is even more of a model, because a modern language was made from ancient Heberew and millions of people with no special talents for language have learned it.

**CS: There are several books about Alphistia. Are there only books related to Alphistia written by you or are there others who have contributed to the Alphistian canon?**

All the books have been written by me. They are projects from various periods, from the Constitution of 1976 and the booklet about the Alphistian government from 1975, to the Landanomikle tales from a few years ago and the Alphistian Manifesto from recently.

**CS: You don't consider religion an important part of forming a new country with a whole new lifestyle, but do you think that people can live lives without "spiritual goals" or would you consider the alphistian way of life as a kind of spiritual goal for it's people?**

Religion is important for many people, and although everything I've described about Alphistia states clearly that it would be a secular society with complete separation between church and state, it is not a project that is against religion. It is neutral towards it. Personally I am an agnostic/borderline atheist. But I grew up Catholic and still appreciate the beauty of churches, of religious ceremony, of the ideals for brotherly love etc. Religion and politics however do not mix well at all. History shows that over and over and over. Extremist religious movements such as American Evangelical fundamentalism or the Wahhabist or Taliban-style Muslims would find a country like Alphistia thorny ground to preach in. Alphistia would be attractive to people simply because they DON'T want to live in a society dominated by religion.

Alphistia in itself wouldn't be spiritual, other than the normal love of one's homeland brings about a warm feeling. Alphistia would be a place where people try to live decently and act decently toward one another because we're all human, not because God commands us to do so. Morality really has nothing to do with religion and spirituality. People in Alphistia would be free to practice their faith, but social mores and majority opinion would very likely be secular and humanist.

**CS: The Alphistian Times doesn't contain solely news on Alphistia. What is the idea behind a news magazine? What news do you tend to post the most of and why?**

Unfortunately "The Alphistian Times" has become a bit of a mess. I haven't followed through on all those articles floating around my head when I set it up last year. It will probably get another revamping in the near future, to a more manageable format. In recent months I've usually announced Alphistian news on the regular personal blog I keep.

For a while I was summarizing a few events in world news regularly on "The Alphistian Times" site, mostly as practice translating the items into Alphistian. But I haven't been doing that recently. Basically I would like "The Alphistian Times" to be pretty much exclusively about Alphistia, with background articles about influences politically and historically, and of course news about the Project as it develops.

**CS: Is there a national anthem for Alphistia?**

There have been several. When I was a boy, I wrote one in Alphistian to the tune of the Maoist revolutionary hit: "Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman". I've forgotten most of the words of this early anthem, and no record of them in written form have come down to us...

A few years ago, a young man in England wrote some songs in very fluent Alphistian and sent them to me. One was an anthem, and it was very nice of him to do this. Because of his own very mixed-up neo-nazi sympathies however, that friendship was not meant to be. I still have the texts, but wouldn't use them for anything official related to Alphistia. The official anthem for Alphistia still waits to be written.

**CS: Is the blog for more personal matters rather than news of Alphistia?**

My blog at is both personal and Alphistian. Information about Alphistia however, can be accessed through the website: <http://www.alphistia.com>

And just as a closing though, I'd also like to mention that your homeland Sweden has been a big influence on Alphistia. The Social Democratic ideal of the Folkhemmet really inspired me when I began reading about it in the 1980s. The idea that a country is like a family, and that in a family you must take care of all its members, provide them with warm and comfortable homes, a way to make a living and to keep them healthy from birth through old age... that is NOT the American dream, which is an ideology of every man for himself and the accumulation of as many material goods as possible. Although Sweden's Social Democrats have moved beyond the Folkhemmet and currently the country is ruled by a coalition that rejects it, it's not a lost ideology. At least not for me. I think it will make a "comeback". It's a noble set of ideas and ideals, and it's a fundamental part of the Alphistian Manifesto.

(September 26, 2007)

***Q and A for exhibit about Alphistia in Hamburg Germany  
2006***

**Who is the person behind Enteve and Alphistia?**

I am Anthony Skaggs (in Alphistian this is Anton Sakasa). I was born in 1958 near Cincinnati Ohio, and grew up there. I invented (or “discovered” as I like to say) Alphistia when I was 9 years old. As I grew older, Alphistia grew with me. I drew extensive maps for its cities, primarily the capital Enteve.

**What are the major influences for Enteve?**

One of the major subliminal influences for Enteve seems to have been from the four years I spent during my university studies in Lexington, Kentucky. It's a typical American college town. These are generally quite livable places in a country full of urban and suburban nightmares. There are more cultural offerings than the norm, and less feelings of being overwhelmed by the larger society.

In the last few years, I've become very interested in the ideas of Jaime Lerner. He was the former mayor of Curitiba, Brazil. Curitiba is known as one of the greenest cities in the world, both economically, and as a city full of parks and trees. Lerner is an optimist and an activist, and most of all - a realist. He has a knack for applying small scale measures that have a large positive impact. Such as building a low-cost but high quality rapid bus network, such as planting trees, pedestrianizing the city center, and building district centers at transit nodes, concentrating city and social services together. Curitiba is in a third world country, but doesn't have many of the problems cities in such countries have. It doesn't have a lot of the problems cities in many industrialized countries have, for that matter.

**Where do you live now?**

I've lived in New York City for 25 years. It's not an easy place to live in, and its easy to feel overwhelmed and alienated here. The city is quite a good example of bad planning, but its inhabitants live far more greenly than most Americans - most do not own cars and they do not live in oversized houses on large lots in spacewasting subdivisions. Most use the extensive but rather shabby subway system (all electrified) to get around, and the average New Yorker walks far more than the average American.

**What's next for Enteve?**

I'm a dreamer, not a politician, and certainly not a revolutionary. I know my role is to imagine Enteve and Alphistia, and to disseminate my ideas. Those with skills I don't have might follow through with some results in the future. That would be a rather interesting personal future...

**Interview by Maria Grazia Ligato, an Italian journalist  
(1999)**

***MGL: Can you tell me about your life? what do you do in your "second" life? Are you an American citizen? Are you married with children? What is your occupation?***

My name is Anthony Skaggs, and I am 41. I live in New York City, but I grew up in a small town near Cincinnati Ohio, in the midwestern part of the US. I now work in a library, have a graduate university education, and have worked in public libraries, a television network research center, and currently, in a magazine's library. I'm not married and don't have children.

***MGL: Why did you found Alphistia?***

It was something I created as a boy, when I was 9 years old. I've always been extremely interested in life in foreign countries, and so as soon as I could go to our local library, I was reading books about all the countries of the world. I was also interested in languages. Somehow, I began to create my own language, and then a country - which I first called "Alpha", but I soon changed it to Alphistia. I invented an alphabet very similar to the ancient Etruscan alphabet...and I built small "towns" in the garden of my family's house. Children from the neighborhood were very eager to play in my Alphistian world with me.

As I grew older, I began to travel to some of the countries I've always wanted to see. I learned a lot about the world, and about the country I was born in. I'm not really a model American citizen. I disagree with almost everything America does politically and economically, although I believe in democracy and a capitalist economy (but not the extreme free-market model of the US). My political sympathies are much more like those in the Scandinavian social democratic countries, or the way of life in the Netherlands. I've modeled quite a lot of things in Alphistia after those countries, and have designed a model country which reflects my beliefs and ideals.

***MGL: Do you have a political goal?***

Mostly, Alphistia is a personal hobby, although as I've said, I do have specific political ideas. I haven't claimed any territory to be Alphistian though. It's a virtual country, a model country. As a model it reflects my personal ideas and vision about the type of country I would like to live in...but it doesn't seem possible for me to live in Scandinavia or Holland. So instead, I write and draw maps, and work on the Alphistian language during much of my free time because it is very enjoyable (like any hobby is - like painting, gardening etc). But since I also have ideas I want to share with people, I put a lot of information about Alphistia on my website. It would be nice if people who agreed with what I believe were interested in the possibility of creating an Alphistian community, but so far that hasn't occurred, and to tell the truth, I'm not a very good politician. I've been surprised people are curious to know about this imaginary place, and that's been a great experience for me.

Thousands of people have looked at the website in the last few years, and several people have become friends because of their interest in the project. Alphistia doesn't have citizens really, but

there are people involved with it, especially people interested in the Alphistian language. I send out a newsletter several times a year to about 40 people who have asked to be on a mailing list.

***MGL: How many citizens do you have? Can I have the e-mail address of one?***

One other person has learned quite a lot of the Alphistian language, and it so happens he is Italian. His name is Francesco, and he is a wonderful person, extremely gifted in learning languages. He knows several dozen foreign languages. At the moment he is a teacher in Poland, and I'll send you his e-mail address. You can ask him about his feelings about Alphistian, and we met last year in Warsaw, so he knows me personally. He is a very supportive friend of all things Alphistian.

There are several other people involved in Alphistia - an American learning the language who lives in Seattle, a Canadian teen who is very sympathetic and helpful, and some people in the Netherlands who also have imaginary countries. I belong to the Dutch Geofictional Association, which is very active, with about 50 members. They've included Alphistian maps and booklets in an exhibit about geofictional countries in Utrecht last year, and Alphistia has been mentioned in Dutch newspaper and tv reports about micronations.

***MGL: Are you looking for funds to finance your project?***

No, because Alphistia hasn't become a political movement like the Northern Alliance in Italy, or some projects I've spotted on the web that hope to set up free-market utopias.

***MGL: Is Alphistia just a role-playing game?***

AS: I think Alphistia is a personal passtime, a way for me to express myself, be creative, but also to share my ideas. I'm serious about my ideas, but not expecting Alphistia to exist as a real country. I think it would make a very nice real country though. It's very enjoyable as it is, and I like sharing Alphistia with others via the internet.



**Interview by Thomas Leys, Belgian micronationalist  
1998**

*Thomas Leys, a young Belgian micronational activist, proposed an e-interview not long ago with me, the founder of Project Alphistia. The following is the text of that "conversation" (Thomas's part is in boldface)*

**"Alphistia is an idea", although a very elaborate one. When I read the introductory booklets, I couldn't help thinking that I was actually reading about the dream of someone. There's no doubt that many people have some thoughts on the "ideal society", but you're one of the few to actually write down what you want. Is it therefore correct to assume that Alphistia gives you a lot of personal satisfaction, insofar as it gives you the opportunity to be creative while doing something useful?**

Alphistia does give me lots of personal satisfaction, because it's the "place" where I go several times a day, and usually it's where I "am" as I fall asleep each night. Sometimes I'm not sure whether I'm inventing a country or discovering one...I'd like to think that I'm discovering it, and I want to share what I've found. That's the reason it's on the web, and that's why I've written several booklets about Alphistia. The usefulness up to now is personal, because I find this quest of discovery very enjoyable, but ultimately its usefulness will be whether other people find that what Alphistia represents is the sort of place they would like to be part of on some level. In any case, my discoveries should be written down, and I try to do that as seriously as possible...of course I have limited amounts of time like everybody else.

**Alphistia has a history dating back to 1967. At that time, Robert Ben Madison "the father of micronationalism", was three years old. Did you ever think when you were a child that Alphistia would exist now in some form?**

Madison's micronations list has provided many links to Alphistia, and it's great he thought to put that on the net...I got the idea for Alphistia back in 1967, that's true, and it's been a part of my life continuously since then, but no, I really had no idea that Alphistia would exist now, or that I'd make it into something more than an "inner land" for me personally.

**You use a quotation by Oscar Wilde in one of your writings to describe Alphistia's role in the modern world: "A map of the world without Utopia on it is not even worth looking at."Should Alphistia be interpreted as "Utopia II", as a criticism of the current world and that there is an alternative?**

Well, yes and no...I'm not sure I used that quote by Wilde to describe Alphistia's role in today's world, but to explain that even if Alphistia is never more than a personal hobby, or even if it never has its own territory, that wouldn't mean it wasn't worthwhile or was a failure. It could still serve as a model for a better society than the one I live in. A "better society" is the goal, but not utopia. In any case, the whole idea of Alphistia is to offer an alternative, but if it ends up only as a utopian project, it would be in good company.

**Your booklets read like a tourist guide to Alphistia, particularly the prototype Alpha Village one. Does this mean Alphistia will look exactly like you've described it? Or is this approach meant to motivate individuals to help make Alphistia a reality?**

Alphistia has changed a lot over the years with just the input from me, so I would expect that if Alphistia were to exist, or if the interim Alpha Village existed, they wouldn't be exactly as I describe them. They would be similar to the basic principles Alphistia represents: a humane, green, egalitarian, democratic, small scale society with a distinctive language and culture. I would hope others would be attracted to what I've described as the Alphistian idea. But there's a lot of other aspects to building a new society...and that can't be done just by one person.

**Alphistia has all the characteristics of a Scandinavian welfare state. Where does that come from?**

Scandinavia is a big and obvious influence on Alphistia. The "Swedish Model" is something I really admire and hasn't really been given its due, I think. But quite a lot of people would like to live in a Scandinavian style welfare state, and we all can't go to live in Scandinavia. Such people even exist in the US, an extreme laissez-faire place. Since I grew up in a society that is rather ruthless and harsh with its social Darwinism, a less ruthless and harsh society has always been attractive to me. I feel that the cost of a welfare state on the Swedish model is well worth the high price. I think the costs of a system like the US can't be measured monetarily: it's relatively cheap taxwise, but the waste in human potential and the social costs are too high a price to pay.

**Although Alphistia currently is rather small, a full culture and language has been developed, making Alphistia a total experience of nationhood. However, the ultimate goal of Project Alphistia is to establish a territorial presence. Honestly, how real do you see the chances for this?**

Realism can't be the most important thing in the micronation world...otherwise, very few micronations would exist. So I don't get too concerned about the chances for a real, existing Alphistia with its own territory. But I have HOPE for that. One of the movements most important to me has been the Zionist goal of establishing the state of Israel. How many people said that would never happen or should never happen? The Zionist hymn, now the national anthem of Israel is "Hatikvah". That word means hope. The reality of Alphistia as a land with its own territory is something for the future. The reality of now is the hope that that will happen.

**One could say that Alphistia is a micronation without a fixed territory. Have you ever considered declaring Alphistia as non-territorial, so that an inflow of citizens could be created and a so-called "pre-Alphistia" could exist? And how does Alphistia see itself as part of the community of micronations?**

I would like other people to be involved in Alphistia as a "micronation", which I think is a term that is flexible enough to include virtual countries without fixed territories. After all, claiming territory, as many micronations do, doesn't mean that those claims are accepted by people in the greater world outside. I think the web provides a huge potential for Alphistia to build a constituency, the "pre-Alphistia" you mention. The next step might be to establish an Alpha Village, where people could live together in an autonomous entity that's still on the land of another country.

A good example of this "pre-Alphistia" sort of status is the international Esperanto movement. It has brought together people from all over the world who share common values and goals. There is a real Esperanto culture, but no actual "Esperanto-land". A similar thing could develop

for Alphistia, with the long-term goal of establishing the "lesenum" (a land of our own).

As far as Alphistia being part of the community of micronations...it's definitely a part of it, in all its diversity. I personally have a lot of respect for people who have established micronations, but my own focus has been to develop Alphistia internally. I haven't been involved in the day to day scene of micronations interacting with each other.

**The year 2000 is coming near, and it seems that Alphistia will exist in the next millennium. How do you see it evolving? And how much does it dominate your own life?"**

I think it will always be part of my life. I have many projects that will personally keep me busy through the next millennium. As I've said elsewhere in this interview, I have my hopes for Alphistia, but it's important also to say that I have no political skills whatsoever...I'm not a kingmaker (of myself). So in that sense, Alphistia as lesenum would probably be built by others. My idea of my place in a future Alphistia would be as a founding citizen. I could live out my older years in a humane and decent society that I helped create. Alphistian politics I'd leave entirely to those with political personalities. (December 18, 1998)