



ECOMUSEUMS ON ISLANDS ENSURING A MUTUALLY SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR HERITAGE AND COMMUNITIES ON A CHALLENGING CONTEXT

Island context holds specific challenges for heritage & conservation projects, usually facing lack of resources, accessibility issues and extreme weather conditions. These can be counterbalanced by enabling local knowledge to inform strategic decision-making. Moreover, the small scale of local communities, renders island context an ideal “prototype” for creating and developing innovative management frameworks based on incorporating local knowledge and principles of co-creation. Finally, islands usually combine rich biodiversity and natural heritage resources, thus providing more opportunities for integrated policies between natural and cultural heritage. Ecomuseums have been illustrating the relationship between physical settings and intangible cultural heritage, while being community-lead organizations that foster social, economic and environmental sustainable development, usually based on some sort of partnership governance (Davis, 2011) Apparently, ecomuseums appear as a dynamic model for island contexts, however the concept’s adaptability on island contexts needs to be studied further & in depth. The paper will initially explore the physical and managerial conditions of creation of the Ecomuseums in Flodden, Northumberland (the first ecomuseum to be created in England) in relation to the ones for Skye Ecomuseum-Ceumannan in the Isle of Skye, Scotland. Flodden as a case of a border line museum, in the middle line between Scotland and England in the island of UK and Skye ecomuseum in a remote island in Orkney, represent phenomenically similar but different contexts. Aiming at clarifying the role of ecomuseums in supporting local community development in these contexts, the author will subsequently attempt an evaluation of their contribution in social cohesion & heritage conservation. The use of landscape features and the incorporation of community heritage in their programme are the main points of focus. This comparative study, aims to generalize the findings, defining the limits and possibilities lying in island context for sustaining heritage sites & linked local communities by adopting the ecomuseum paradigm.



SKYECOMUSEUM

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The Skye Ecomuseum being the first in the UK in 2004, at the time of its creation, was supported by the island’s local trust which included representatives from local voluntary groups and organizations and took responsibility for development having the strengthening of the sense of place in the midst of its values (Davis, 2014).

Inauguration happened in 2008 with the Eco museum showing a great awareness of the wide range of natural and cultural assets existing in the area. The first 13 sites of interest included an area of marked trails around the Ecomuseum in Elishadder, which house itself some collections of geological specimens. Skye-Ceumannan shares a sheer understanding of the concern of the Ecomuseums as the presentation on the spot, where natural historical and cultural historical subjects happened & happen. The landscape is perceived as a mix of natural elements that host historical memories and as the base of the museum, which focuses on a strong sense of community identity and a spectacular and unique natural environment which is of great attraction to geologists, naturalists, and walkers.

The museum’s location on an island with very powerful histories of banishment, and its compelling symbolism of hope and overcoming, are communicating local identity and significance.

It encompasses a ‘geographical’ territory, which can be determined by different shared characteristics, including sites of special interest accessed by new footpaths, an impressive viewing platform extended over Lealt Gorge and attractive physical and digital interpretation telling the “Staffin Story”. Staffin’s harbour – known locally as “The Slip” – is regarded with great affection by the community’s residents, both past and present.

Ceumannan has integrated Staffin’s unique assemblage of natural and cultural heritage elements to reveal a more multi-faceted and rounded approach to an understanding of the area that is supported by the local community. Given that in western culture, man is traditionally stood apart from nature and that this has reflected directly in the management of spaces (Babic, 2015), islands can become paradigmatic cases for reestablishing the holistic concept that the Eco museums stand for, reflecting on overcoming the dichotomy between nature and culture & reinforcing the human factor role in the process of reconnecting aspects of heritage. Skye Ceumannan Ecomuseum can be viewed as a paradigmatic case study for achieving this ideal.

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