

Economic change and Community planning
An example of social innovation in declining
rural areas

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Economic change

Structural change leading to crisis:
unemployment and very low income

- ❖ Survival strategy
- ❖ Development strategy

Survival strategy:

- Build community spirit and identity, to facilitate action
- Ensure citizens' participation in the decisions of government or big employers about the future of the community
- Encourage a culture of change
- Substitute money where possible (e.g. through time bank or skills sharing)

Development strategy

- Build new activities on natural and cultural assets or expand existing ones
- Exploit existing skills and develop new ones
- Plan new land uses (e.g. tourism, 2nd homes, industry)
- Facilitate the creation of enterprises
- Promote pluriactivity and diversification – one big employer or one type of economic activity have a higher possibility of collapsing

A model of social innovation that combines some of the survival and development strategies:

Ecomuseum -

Born in France in 1971, the concept of eco-museum links a community to a certain territory using the local heritage and history as a source of development.

There are about 400 eco-museums around the world.

Some definitions:

An eco-museum is a special kind of **living museum**, which displays heritage in its natural and social context and relates heritage to sustainable local development directly.

An ecomuseum is dynamic, not static.

It implies a **process** of social and cultural identity building

Its main target is to enable endogenous development, initiated by the local inhabitants

Concept of Ecomuseum

Museum <basic criteria>

Various activities as a museum:
collection, reservation, research study,
exhibition, education
Museum facility for life-long
education, center for
environmental education

Fragmented
museum,
preservation
area, field
museum

Regional museum
for inhabitants,
community
museum,
neighborhood
museum

ECOMUSEUM

Conservation of
local **Heritages** at
their own sites
Ecological park, natural
park, preservation of
historical sites,
national trust

Conservation
of historical
town, preser-
vation of rural
landscape,
groundwork
movement

Management by
community people's
Participation
Community involve-
ment, community
development by
inhabitants,
community-based
area management

An ecomuseum is a **process**, whereby rural communities preserve, interpret, and manage their natural and cultural heritage for their own sustainable development

Main ingredients of the process

- ❖ Community involvement: because only the community can decide which activities will be promoted and which parts of the locality will be included
- ❖ Building a sense of place: recognising that your locality is unique, has a distinct identity and even things that you consider unimportant may be of value for visitors, investors, education and of course for the community itself

- ❖ Pluriactivity: tourism, nature conservation and encouragement of nature-based activities, education –school trips, historical or contemporary buildings of interest (could be industrial buildings), food, drink, local products, cultural events, hunting, fishing, sports
- ❖ Involving the civic society: village associations, environmental associations, sport clubs ...
- ❖ Not excluding the industry and big employers in the area
- ❖ Make the local authorities an ally

Some indicative steps:

- ❖ The community discovers, recognises, lists the natural and cultural assets in the locality
- ❖ Seeks help from within its members and from external sources to preserve, renovate, publicise, interpret these assets
- ❖ Links these assets in a network, stresses their interdependence
- ❖ Invents entrepreneurial activities to generate income

Eco-museums have been shown to aid the growth of tourism infrastructure and visitors' numbers; to re-launch and sustain local industries and production and maintain their value; and to strengthen the social cohesion, participation and civic pride of the communities

- ❖ Leadership and animation are important factors, as well as expertise, in all steps of the process
- ❖ The creation of a central information, interpretation and publicity point is also important. Often this is a museum reflecting the character of the area.
- ❖ Voluntary work is a central aspect of the process

There are also risks in setting up an ecomuseum.

- ❖ Money is always a problem, even if only a small amount is needed to start the process of mobilisation of local communities. Funding may create dependencies that do not necessarily work to the community's best advantage.
- ❖ Institutionalisation of an ecomuseum is another risk. In some cases the public authorities of the area made a very good job, raising funds for crucial infrastructures of the ecomuseum and appointing staff to animate the task and run the facilities created. This however cancelled the whole idea of the "bottom up" approach implied in the ecomuseum model.

Ecomuseum Marqueze in South France







le patrimoine culturel :
l'ensemble de l'habitat



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