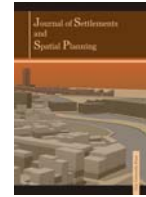




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Rural Development and Heritage Commons Management in Asturias (Spain): The Ecomuseum of Santo Adriano

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ABSTRACT

Our paper presents the case study of a common framework that has been developed for the management of heritage resources in a peripheral and impoverished area of rural Asturias (Spain). The article further explores the potential of conceiving heritage as a common good for enhancement, preservation and public outreach purposes, considering the current crisis state of public institutions in the whole West due to the prevalence of neoliberal governmentality frameworks. Our research argues that the creation of a brand that equates the region of Asturias with a somehow pristine natural environment untouched by humans, and the public management frameworks of cultural heritage, undermine the immanent relation between communities and their heritage and renders ineffectively any attempt to achieve rural sustainable development. We affirm that the consideration of heritage as a commons enables researchers, institutions and local communities to establish a more democratic and functional framework for the management, enhancement and preservation of heritage elements and facilitates the creation of democratic frameworks of decision making that foster sustainable development at a local scale.

1. INTRODUCTION

Different authors affirm that we live in a post-industrial society of fast changing realities [1]. Globalization entails not only the localization of values and a social need to enhance the idea of 'places' [2], but also increases territorial imbalances as a consequence of the concentration of wealth, population and resources in specific (normally urban) areas and regions [3]. Of course, many areas are left aside from these networks of value and tend to become empty, depopulated and impoverished regions. The recent evolution of rural spaces in Asturias reveals that these areas are becoming more and more marginal and peripheral [4], trends that the European Union rural development programs (LEADER or PRODER) have

not been able to prevent and that the present context of economic crisis in Spain deepens.

In this context of a systemic crisis, numerous different social actors are raising their voices and pointing to the need to redefine our economic development models, so as to seek greater levels of sustainability and efficiency. More specifically, it is increasingly necessary to redefine the role cultural heritage plays in our future visions and development plans for rural areas. The current framework for the management and public dissemination of heritage has relied too much on European subsidies that estranged communities from these elements. Also, it has generated a view of cultural heritage as a way of attracting and pushing forward expensive investments for infrastructures (museums, interpretation centres,

multi-purpose buildings, etc.) without paying attention to how these endogenous resources could serve as a basis for sustainable development.

This paper presents a project for cultural heritage management in an impoverished and depopulated territory which is full of significant resources: Santo Adriano. The project aims at the creation of a common framework for local action through the figure of the ecomuseum. The idea is to integrate different social actors in the project, either public or private, that want to engage in one way or another with the management of cultural heritage. The fundamental objective is to move away from the “Pharaonic” and “megalomaniacal” that pervade the field in the last decades in Spain, so as to seek a really sustainable model for the future. Thereby, we do not use sustainability as an empty signifier [5] that serves to justify the receipt of public subsidies (we work aside from public funding schemes), but as an ideal towards which we should move in our daily practices with heritage management. Ultimately, the aim is to provide new chances and jobs for the young people in the area, who currently have no choice but to emigrate.

2. CONTEXT

Asturias is a mountainous region situated in the north west of the Iberian Peninsula, with a population of around one million inhabitants. The region is characterized by a rather unequal pattern of demographic distribution. In fact, the 73.4% of the people is concentrated in the 10% of the territory, which broadly corresponds to the urban conurbations of Gijón and Oviedo. The rest of the region, which amounts to less than 30% of the population, corresponds to rural spaces with an aged population that will not have a generational replacement. Furthermore, these rural spaces have been hit by the economic crisis as the amount of unskilled workers employed in the first and secondary sectors was high. Today, 72% of the people in these areas work in the tertiary sector, which has to do with the will to undergo a transition towards a service and tourism based economy [6]. Ultimately, these spaces have become marginal areas within the capitalist economic framework and it is understandable that since the 1980s people in the area live with a sense of permanent and unsolvable crisis, both economic and of social values.

Given this rather negative economic climate, Asturias has been a region included in the Convergence policies of the European Union since the 1990s aiming at decreasing the economic imbalances between European regions. Accordingly, rural areas started to use these funding schemes to promote tourism, which was perceived as the goose that lays the golden eggs. This sector concentrated most investments, which were fundamentally geared towards the creation of new hotels and rural cottages, without paying much

attention to the preservation and enhancement of the values that made these hotels possible.

These developments were supported by a regional strategy aimed at branding Asturias as a tourism destination. The logo that was promoted from the very beginning was “Asturias Paraíso Natural” – Asturias Natural Paradise. This idea was of course related to the perception of the area as green, wet and mountainous, traits that differ from most Spanish landscapes away from the north west of the country. Clearly, this implied that cultural aspects and their associated territorial values remained in the background. Thus, “natural values” prevail and become the nodal point of logistic interests of management. Accordingly, broad policies have been put forward focusing in the preservation and reproduction of the grizzly bear of the Cantabrian since the 1980s. This has been paralleled by investments in their study from different fields of specialization like biology, zoology, and so on, and the creation of a tourism marketing related to the bear. This has even led to a change in the name of a entire valley: “the Trubia Valley” for that of the “the Bear valley”, trying to convey the idea that it would be easy to encounter a bear walking around the area when in reality the bear population is limited to 200 animals in the whole Cantabrian range.

These policies developed in recent years emphasize the relevance of “nature” and disregard the local people’s role in shaping and maintenance of this supposedly pristine nature and the cultural heritage elements related to it. In fact, vernacular people do not generally identify with these nature-oriented tourism discourses where they do not see their activity and worldviews reflected. Neither are they consulted nor their views taken into account in the development of territorial enhancement plans or spatial planning and heritage projects.



Fig. 1. Localization of area under study.

Therefore, we consider fundamental to shift our understandings of the origins and nature of landscapes and an associated transformation in the way we understand and manage the territory and its associated heritage entities. In line with most recent developments in the fields of strategic urban and spatial planning [7], it is necessary to move towards

inclusionary and participatory models of planning and management that take into account the different social actors that populate the territory. This implies moving away from neoliberal models of spatial planning [8] that only take into account social actors as long as they can be considered “economic subjects”, that is, (young) entrepreneurs and property owners. We propose a shift from individual subjects that neoliberal governmentality promotes [9, 10] towards a framework that considers communities as a whole, and that enables them to design and push forward projects that directly reflect their worldviews and interests at the local level. From these views and our experiences in the field, we have launched and put to work an ecomuseum project in Villanueva de Santo Adriano, a village situated in the heart of the “Bear Valley”, which we briefly describe now.

3. THE TERRITORY AND THE CURRENT MODEL OF HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

Santo Adriano is a small municipality of 22.6 km² extension and a population of around 250 inhabitants in 2010. However, in reality nearly half of the people live in surrounding urban centres like Oviedo. Also, it is fundamental to underscore the fact that more than 30% of the population is over 65 years old. The primary sector employs most of the active people (27%), although its relevance has been gradually decreasing in the last three decades, in a somewhat similar manner than the secondary sector (8%), especially after the collapse of the building and construction sector (2%). Only services have undergone a significant increase (62%) that derives from the public regional, national and European policies aiming at the promotion of tourism. Thus, for instance, in this small territory there are 127 hotel rooms, which nearly equates the number of local people [11]. Nonetheless, the increase in the activities of the tertiary sector is being implemented at the expense of the primary sector and the consequent abandonment of agricultural and farming activities, instead of becoming a complement to these activities. Therefore, rural Asturian areas are increasingly dependent on tourism revenues, characterized by their precarious labour conditions and their stationary unbalances [12]. The territory of the municipality of Santo Adriano is an exception within the “Trubia Valley”, composed by the municipalities of Proaza, Quirós and Teverga, as it is the only one that is not integrated within any protected area scheme such as the Natural Park of Somiedo or the Biosphere Reserve of Las Ubiñas-La Mesa. However, it boasts a large amount of historic and cultural assets. Despite this fact, and in a further example of the stubbornness of public administrations, the enhancement plans for the area are still based and emphasize its “natural values”. For instance, the 2001 “Plan de Dinamización Turística de los Valles del Oso” - the tourism promotion

plan for the Bear Valley – geared 39% of the total funding amount (approx. 1,536,000 €) in the construction of museums and in their equipment, among them a centre for the interpretation of “nature” in Tuñón¹. Despite its construction, the centre was never actually inaugurated owing to the fact that the municipality did not have the necessary endowments to afford the maintenance of the equipment and the personnel. The remaining three cultural buildings in the municipality followed suit. In the end, the centre in Tuñón had to be reshaped (with a further investment of 40,000€) and its exploitation was leased to a private company dedicated to the promotion of active rural tourism². Similarly, other projects managed and funded by public administrations, such as the Cultural Park of the “Camín Real de la Mesa”, failed due to a lack of consensus between the different social actors involved and the absence of long-term planning. Again, local people’s opinions were not taken into account, and, in fact, people in the area barely know about the Cultural Park project and the European Funding group associated with it³. Clearly, these different processes follow a similar pattern that we can perceive in the different scales of socioeconomic life in contemporary Spain: a transference of public funds to private hands (from the huge money transfereces from the State to the finance sector; to the “small” rural development projects in sites like Santo Adriano that favour private investors). Also, short-term political interests prevail over the common interests of the communities, which increasingly threatens the legitimacy of political representation and, consequently, of the spatial planning and heritage management initiatives being implemented. How is it possible to plan the creation of multiple heritage interpretation centres and museums (on the grounds of promoting sustainable development in a rural area) without even thinking whether it would be possible to inaugurate and keep them open or not?

¹ Specifically, the budget for the building was of 141.173€. Data extracted from BOPA [Official Bulletin of the Principality of Asturias], nº 17 – January, 22, 2001. Available in: http://tematico.asturias.es/bopa/Bol/20010122/00732_02.htm. Last accessed: December, 6, 2012.

² As can be seen in this notice published in the journal La Voz de Asturias, November, 14, 2006:<http://archivo.lavozdeasturias.es/html/306460.html>. Last accessed: December, 6, 2012.

³ Citizens’ participation in the management of structural funds in Asturias does not exist, in contrast to other sites like Finland [13]. The management of these resources is always mediated and co-opted, if not directly appropriated by political parties, either directly through their representatives in the municipalities, or through the creation of ad-hoc associations tightly linked to the parties that can participate in these processes of decision making. This occurs in the G.D.R. Camín Real de la Mesa for instance, a group in charge of managing European funds for the area where Santo Adriano is located. Supposedly, in 2007 this organization changed its legislation in order to “open up” to public participation by incorporating agrarian trade unions and representatives from non-governmental and non-profit organizations (<http://www.caminrealdelamesa.es/leader/gdr/>). However, a superficial research using search engines reveals that every representative from these organizations is linked with political parties in one way or another. This situation paves the way for the creation of patronage networks, for gate-keeping processes that leave citizens aside of decision-making processes, and for the prevalence of short-term political interests broadly.

Therefore, large amounts of money were channelled towards the “construction sector bubble” in the form of cultural projects, which cannot now be reinvested or transformed into something else. The paradox of the whole process though is that sustainable development has being precluded by the occupation of the cultural and socioeconomic space for it by discourses using the concept as a banner that were in reality feeding into an unsustainable political economy based on corruption and short-term political interest at a national scale [14]. Also, an essentialist and object-oriented understanding of heritage entities prevails in most institutional initiatives [14]. Meanwhile, the rich cultural heritage and the traditions of people in the area were left aside and gradually fell into oblivion. Probably the best example of this is provided by the Palaeolithic site of Santo Adriano. This cave comprises a relevant complex of Upper Palaeolithic engravings. The site had remained buried during decades below a layer of debris discharged in the site during the construction of the road that connects the Trubia Valley with the centre of Asturias (the contemporary AS-228 road). The repair and expansion works of the road during the early 1990s entailed the removal of the debris from the previous works. Thus, the cave was unearthed, with the results of research carried out in it being published a few years afterwards [16, 17]. However, during the two decades since its discovery, no further intervention was performed, beyond the building of an enclosing wall. The repairing of the access to the site would have not been expensive, as it is close to the main road and many of the materials from the removed debris could have done the work for facilitating the access (i.e., metal ramps). Nonetheless, not a single euro went to the enhancement of the site nor to its promotion, even though it boasts the oldest figurative and artistic manifestations of the Homo Sapiens in Europe. It remained abandoned and surrounded by brambles and illegal rubbish dumps until 2011, when the Sociocultural Association La Ponte presented a project to clean and enhance the site and to make it open for public visiting. Curiously enough, Santo Adriano remains the only city council in the Trubia Valley that has no equipment or museum infrastructure for the presentation and diffusion of heritage.

4. THE SOCIOCULTURAL ASSOCIATION LA PONTE AND THE CREATION OF A COMMON SPACE OF ACTION AND INTERACTION AROUND HERITAGE COMMONS

Therefore, it is clear that our territory boasts a large amount of heritage and cultural assets of high relevance which are today completely abandoned due to the lack of a common project for the future and a common idea that can make them cohere and be useful for local communities and for a really sustainable territorial development. In this context, it is compelling

to develop a heritage management framework with the feet in the ground and to explore and discuss the role that heritage management should have in rural and local development projects.

Facing the lack of concrete initiatives headed towards the enhancement and diffusion of heritage sites, and the almost absence of investment in conservation projects, a local association took the lead and starts developing and putting forward initiatives to promote sustainable heritage management in the area. This is the aforementioned Sociocultural Association La Ponte (www.laponte.org). The association has a local character and it guarantees the direct participation of people in decision-making processes. Moreover, within the association a work group was created that started to elaborate a management project and the fundamental long-term expectations and organizational structures. The underlying idea of the group was to create an ecomuseum, conceived as an abstract ideal to be achieved but still in tune with the basic principles of ecomuseums as conceived by their original developers in France [18-19]. Ecomuseums are decentred institutions of heritage management in close association with local communities. They were created during the 1970s in opposition to the classic idea of museum, conceived as a collection, a building and a public, whose passivity is taken for granted and promoted. In contrast, ecomuseums, society museums, or participatory museums [19], are based on the existence of a territory (museum decentralization) where local people can actively participate in heritage management, rural development and cultural diffusion. Within the structure of the museum different social actors can be actively involved. Public sector technicians can be engaged in them, but their function remains of technical and economic support, and of advice, without implying a privileged power position in the management and decision-making structures of the ecomuseum [21, 24]. The ecomuseum is, in this current context of economic crisis, a strong device for the construction of meanings and for the enhancement of cultural heritage, which must stop being perceived as something alien by local communities to be enhanced as something esteemed and valuable, and thus as something that contributes to local development not only in economic, but also in social and cultural terms. In fact, within post-industrial societies, it is flawed to disconnect these fields and analyze them separately.

5. THE ECOMUSEUM OF SANTO ADRIANO

The ecomuseum of Santo Adriano has been conceived as an instrument of network management that aims to establish a link between different social actors in the area that are involved in heritage management and in the creation of a common spaces where issues of outreach, conservation and research tend to converge. The objectives of the museum are

multiple: basically, to create job opportunities and thus provide life alternatives for young people in the area, and in relation to this to enhance heritage and cultural values and present them to the public.

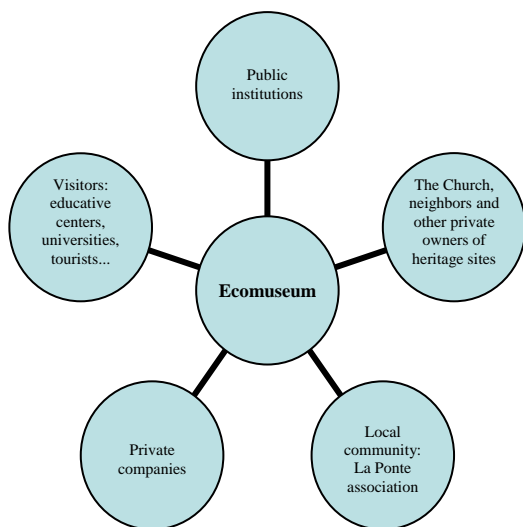


Fig. 2. Structure of the ecomuseum of Santo Adriano.

To sum up, the objectives of the program are as follows:

1). To carry out research and enhance heritage sites for public presentation in the territory of Santo Adriano, promoting archaeological, ethnographic and historical research. Furthermore, our objective is to elaborate catalogues of sites of cultural and heritage relevance.

2). To promote education and popular participation, a key issue for the enhancement of heritage value. This includes the offering of didactic itineraries throughout the territory.

3). To set out an alternative to the current model of rural development and the role that cultural heritage plays within it. To do so, we will base our approach in concepts such as sustainability, local development, and the recovering of endogenous resources.

4). To remain a local and associative project where initiatives come from, and decisions are taken within the local framework. Public administrations or other collaborative institutions should remain as financial or technical supporters according to pre-established criteria, without exerting their influence or determining decisions taken from the ecomuseum. This guarantees that the institution will remain as an independent initiative, and prevents its cooptation by partidist and political underlying interests.

5). To become part of the network of the System of Museums of the Principality of Asturias. This would enable us to reach agreements with the Archaeological museum to gain the custody over archaeological and heritage objects coming from

excavations in the area that should be kept by the community.

6). To promote the implementation of the Agenda 21 alternative.

6. THE EVOLUTION OF THE PROJECT DURING THE FIRST YEAR

Before implementing the various actions envisaged in our project it was necessary to have the permission of the owners of cultural heritage sites and entities to work with them. Sometimes they were private, sometimes public. Legally, we resorted to the establishment of specific links and partnerships between our organization and the different types of owners that we had to deal with: neighbours, the Church, the regional state, etc. Thus we started to lay the foundations of our museum project: a traditional farmhouse, a site with upper Paleolithic engravings, an Asturian barn (hórreo), the parish church, and so on. In short, we work to create a structure that brings together all the cultural heritage elements regardless of the kind of ownership forms and institutions, seeking ways of agreeing with people to integrate those elements with our exhibition discourse.



Fig. 3. Ecomuseum visitors participating in a workshop of experimental archaeology.

In our first year of existence we received a total of 342 visits. Given the modest initial investment (less than 100 €) and of the expenses derived from the activities that have been carried out, the benefits obtained already allow us to start reinvesting in necessary tasks that are needed for the preservation of

heritage sites which, in turn, will generate further revenue for the community. Thus, the structure of the ecomuseum is being reinforced, a Webpage has been created, and our outreach capabilities have been enhanced. Despite our apparent limitations as an organization, our results seem rather positive when we compared with the visitor statistics from other sites that have received huge public investments such as the Casa del Oro – Gold Interpretation Centre – in Belmonte de Miranda, that hosts an average of 2-5 visits per day after having received 200,000 € for its restoration. Similarly, the House of the Wolf in the same municipality, received an investment of 1.400.000€ and it was never inaugurated, as well as many other cultural centres as the previously mentioned Centre for the Interpretation of Nature in Tuñón.

7. PUBLIC OR COMMON HERITAGE?

Our experience marks a turning point in the historical heritage management framework within the territory of the Principality of Asturias. And we believe that it can become an example for other organizations with similar social aims and views to ours that can start to implement their own projects. A non-profit organization, like ours, has a private nature according to the law of associations of the Spanish state. Therefore, most public technicians in charge of reviewing our projects have considered that under no circumstances will the management of a “Bien de Interés Cultural” – good of cultural interest – (defined as “public” as defined in the Act 1/2001, 6 March of Cultural Heritage of Asturias) be given to such an organization.

Then the question we ask is: why to catalogue a Good of Cultural Interest “de jure” as a “public good”, if its administration entails deprivation for the people and the community: enclosing and restricting access, only allowed to groups of “experts”, normally without proposals of enhancement and dissemination. What image is offered in the face of the public of the management of our “public” heritage? The image is of total neglect: for instance lack of access and rubbish landfills around or within heritage sites as in the Palaeolithic cave of Santo Adriano. This contravenes the fundamental principle of “enhancement”, because this state of things conveys to the public a sense that heritage is something uninteresting and without value: the administration therefore far from fulfilling its responsibility. And, more important, institutions do not reflect social attitudes but also shape them and create subjectivity [25-26]. That is, it is not that local communities are uninterested in heritage and this is extended by institutional attitudes, but rather, it is normally institutional behaviour that creates negative behaviours and does not put any value in heritage assets. The facts are too obvious to be overlooked. Even some administration experts agree with us in many of

our points, being conscious of the deficiencies in public management programs and their rather traditional views on the issue. Thus, some of them support our ecomuseum project, whereas others neglect it. A debate arises then between public experts around the juridical nature of cultural heritage and who should own heritage assets, in which we advocate the following position.

8. DISCUSSION. OUR HERITAGE IS NEITHER PUBLIC NOR PRIVATE: IT IS A COMMONS

The state and the autonomous regions of Spain have suffered a sort of Diogenes syndrome, whereby they have accumulated and sanctioned more and more heritage sites and increased the number of public obligations in their regard. Of course, these supposed “good practices” regarding heritage management are rarely implemented and now, facing the rampant economic crisis of the country, institutions are overwhelmed and heritage protection and enhancement seems to be the last of their concerns. Human resources (technicians, heritage experts and archaeologists) are overwhelmed in the face of a huge amount of sites, problems, necessary interventions, management problems, and positive actions regarding heritage. The problem is that heritage only exists when it is socially constructed, and this requires active initiatives to be projected and implemented in reality in the long-term view. If heritage is abandoned, then it becomes a waste like garbage in literal terms. Cultural heritage must be considered as a commons and it is necessary to transform its juridical and legal character for two fundamental reasons: First, so it does not fall into complete abandonment and oblivion. It is a common misconception to think that heritage is saved whenever it is sanctioned by public institutions as a “Good of Cultural Interest”. What determines the future of a site is how it is managed and who manages it. If the state carries on claiming its exclusive right to manage public goods the system will eventually collapse, as the construction of heritage is an ongoing and ever expanding task, as society starts to esteem and value more and more remnants from the past and academics enlarge their conceptualizations of heritage. Thus, more and more categories are been included within heritage and the number of sites grows exponentially accordingly: landscapes, immaterial practices, industrial and mining sites, etc. Who will be responsible for their management and conservation in the future? This question becomes compelling if we take into account that within neoliberal frameworks of governmentality the role of public institutions tends to be reduced along with its resources and capabilities [27]. Of course, this is done on the grounds that private property produces more richness and provides better management frameworks in all contexts: a flawed assumption in the case of heritage, as in many others [28].

Here we face a second problem. Once the state has granted a heritage status to some element, thus turning it into a legally protected thing, it is likely to be assigned an exchange value, and become part of the market economy as a valuable good/resource. Any item of cultural interest can move from public to private hands and thus be exploited economically through concessions or leases. In fact, as we have already mentioned, the growing deconstruction of the Welfare State leads towards the gradual privatization of "the public" realm. How long will it take for our public institutions to privatize our heritage? Not too much, we suspect, if we look at the cases of Greece and Italy where part of their national heritages have been put on sale to offset their debt crisis, which are quite similar to our own crisis⁴.

We suggest that a way of avoiding this problem is to conceive public heritage as a commons, and to assign a legal figure to this novel status. Whereas public property is owned by the state and can thus become a market good, common property is of everyone, or even better, of no one. It is not only public (it must be shared), but is also common (its management must be consensual and agree upon). It is important to note that the commons must be conceived as a situated concept rather than a Universal claim. The latter position is embodied by UNESCO when the institution claims to protect the Universal heritage of human mankind. Our proposal is to think in specific situations when heritage might be conceived as a commons in a specific site where a heritage assemblage can be created: an interested community, people with the necessary knowledge to act as mediators between market and state forces and the community, and to understand the potential of heritage for economic development, and so on. That is, heritage is not common everywhere, but it is necessary to open the door to its conception as a commons in specific contexts [29]. This standpoint forces us to expand our conception of heritage management, opening it to multiple social actors willing to be involved in the process and to become accountable with local communities where heritage is located. This can be done through local councils, foundations, cooperatives, associations, etc. That is, to advance towards the collective administration of common pool resources in order to render heritage an inalienable good.

In the villages of Asturias, people are used to this kind of property regime and it would not be a novelty for them. Rather, it would be a return to management logics that they know and understand well, and which could themselves be conceived as immaterial heritage. For instance, in Santo Adriano 70% of the territory is constituted by communally

owned forests. The existence of this common heritage was associated with the existence of neighbourhood organizations (Xuntas and Conceyos) that made sense within the management framework of common properties. Within them, decision making processes were consensual and participative and direct democracy worked normally. However, these common goods have been gradually expropriated since the XIX century by the State in its process of legitimization and because of a negative intellectual and cultural climate that favoured private and public ownership [30-31]. The reasons argued for the expropriation were not different from those who today advocate against common heritage property, either heritage experts, archaeologists, architects or public experts: that communities are not knowledgeable enough to manage their properties and thus other forms of expertise and control must be imposed upon them. Of course, as communities are gradually depleted from common goods their associated common management organizations lose their sense and public and private forms of property and management take over. After three decades of democratic government in Spain the consequences are clear for local communities in the North West of the country: decrease in political autonomy, proliferation of individualist and passive social actors, development of intricate and all-encompassing patronage networks linked to political parties, inaction of civil society, etc. [32, 34]. In conclusion, in order to foster a democratic ethos and work for the construction of a really democratic society, we aim to promote participatory forms of decision making and consensual thinking. However, communities can only arise around that which is shared, that which is common [35]. And a democratic community must necessary share a commons if it is not to be shattered within post-industrial societies: the heritage commons and tradition can provide that shared binding tissue [36, 37]. Without common goods, the sense of communal institutions of management fades away and the state and public administrations take over [38].

Contrary to commonplace assumptions about them, common properties are still recognized in current legislative frameworks. Not only there is a broad tendency to return to common management frameworks officially, as in Scotland [39], but even the Spanish Constitution of 1978 sanctions their existence. In fact, the article 132 regulates the legal status of common goods, on the grounds of their inalienable character, immunity from seizure and the impossibility of reversing their legal status.

Therefore, there is a legal framework that could well be developed and spread to some goods of collective interest such as cultural heritage. This would contribute to the development of technical, socioeconomic and political devices for horizontal policy making and the democratic management of

⁴ Can be seen an example in this notice published in the newspaper The Telegraph, June, 4, 2010: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/7803090/Venice-sells-off-its-heritage-to-plug-cash-black-hole.html#>. Last accessed: December, 6, 2012.

common pool resources as heritage. As the case of our ecomuseum demonstrates, those institutions must involve in their management frameworks multiple social actors and institutions: lawyers, technicians, archaeologists, heritage experts, the Church, citizens, etc. We believe that cultural heritage must provide the basis for these kinds of aims in the long-term, rather than being driven by short-term political and party interests that have led us to an economic, social and political catastrophe that will lead to the short and long-term destruction of heritage goods.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The ecomuseum of Santo Adriano arises as a pragmatic response to the needs and desires of a group of young and active people living in a depopulated and depressed rural area in Asturias. This structure enables us to create a museological project where different social actors (either public or private) converge because they share similar interests and aim to be engaged in the development of the project. The object of our initiative is to create a participatory framework for heritage and museum management, where the democratic relations among community members, and the sustainable relations between those and their surrounding environment are prioritized over profit making and institutional goals. Thus, we aim to overcome traditional museum management frameworks based on subsidies from public bodies that are ultimately disconnected from society and are unsustainable.

The creation of this cultural infrastructure allows local people to actively participate in the management and preservation of cultural heritage and the creation of a common space of management. Also, the museum contributes to the economic dynamics of the area, seeking a real sustainable development and supporting initiatives that enable people in rural areas to diversify their activities and sources of income. In this way, the enhancement of landscape is carried out side to side with those who created and shaped it, the local people.

This enables us to counter the prevailing "naturalist" narrative put forward by the public-private partnership in their will to create a destination brand in Asturias on the grounds of its supposed savage nature, which is in reality the product of a millenary relation between environment and human life: a cultural landscape. Ultimately, we suggest that it would be wise to add a further potential legal status for heritage goods in order to overcome the modern deadlock by which the building of modern nations required those to own heritage goods. Therefore, we propose the situated concept of the "heritage commons" as a potential alternative to the public ownership of heritage, and as a device for local communities to regain control over their goods and to actively work towards their preservation

and enhancement for the common good. This is just a little step, but one that moves forward towards the constitution of the "coming community" [40].

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