

NEWSLETTER

2018/3



MID-POINT FOR THE SHAPE PROJECT

Professor Martin Price - UHI



This newsletter celebrates the mid-point of the SHAPE project and our recent partner meeting in Greenland. SHAPE has also been reaching out to the rest of Europe, with Ros Bryce's presentation in Romania in September, at the XI European Mountain Convention on "Cultural Heritage as an Engine for Creativity, Innovation and Socioeconomic Development of Mountain areas".

As you will read in these pages, the initiatives developed with local stakeholders in all of our project regions are well underway. As a transnational project, one major goal of SHAPE is to share these experiences, so that a key activity in the partner meeting was to design the 'learning journeys' which will be a vital part of the project in 2019.

For the stakeholders in each region, the 'learning journeys' will present an opportunity to present and discuss the initiatives they have been working on. For their visitors – who may include you! – these 2-3 day events will allow you to find out about these initiatives, provide feedback, and bring new ideas back to your own regions.

All of this knowledge will also be included in the SHAPE e-service, which will be launched early next year and become a resource that lasts well beyond the end of the project.

We hope that you find our news interesting and useful for your own activities – and look forward to your feedback!

SHAPE is a three-year Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme (NPA) project promoting the development of ecotourism initiatives. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

*Cover: Kujataa World Heritage Area,
South Greenland.*

Photo: Kjersti Isdal.

DEVELOPING ECO-TOURISM INITIATIVES AND LEARNING JOURNEYS

Ida Kragstrup – Kujalleq Municipality, Greenland

The fourth SHAPE partner meeting was hosted by Kommune Kujalleq in the South of Greenland from the 18th to the 22nd of September. The team members from Norway, Finland, Scotland, Iceland, Greenland and Canada discussed in detail the progress done on the eco-tourism initiatives and the next steps in the project, including the learning journeys.

SHAPE had a productive partner meeting in Narsaq in September. Hosted by the Greenlandic partner Kommune Kujalleq at the Inuili Food College, the team members from Norway, Finland, Scotland, Iceland, Greenland and Canada discussed in detail the progress done on the eco-tourism initiatives and the next steps in the project, including the learning journeys. The learning journeys, which will start next spring, are exciting knowledge exchange experiences in which stakeholders from the different SHA will learn about how other SHAs capitalise in their natural and cultural heritage facing the common challenges identified across the partnership regarding the development of ecotourism initiatives.

A warm welcome

The SHAPE partners arrived at Narsarsuaq in the afternoon and after a boat trip in the ice filled fjords, the Municipality welcomed the group in Narsaq, close to the Unesco World Heritage Site – Kujataa. We stayed at Inuili- Food College, who also had participated at the stakeholder workshop earlier this year in Campus Kujalleq. The students at the school had prepared delicious specialities of Greenland- a very nice and welcoming stay at the college.

Work started at the 19th with a presentation of our ecotourism initiatives and discussing of the different themes. We worked in groups developing ideas for each



Visiting the World Heritage Site of Kujataa, South Greenland. Photo: Daisy Silvennoinen.



Greenlandic specialties served at Inuili Food College. Photo: Ida Kragstrup.

learning journey and for which stakeholders it might be of interests to go on a learning journey.

Norse and Inuit culture

In the afternoon the group visited Narsaq Museum where the curator described the former life of both the Norse and the Inuit people. The project partners continued the work next day with updates and discussions on the governance case studies, communication and the e-service until the afternoon, when everybody went by boat to Qassiarsuk, which is a part of the Unesco World Heritage Site and the former homestead of Erik the Red. All were treated to a traditional “Kaffemik” – coffee and cakes, and to other Greenlandic specialties such as seal, musk ox and fish.

Kujataa is a landscape where people from two very different cultural traditions found the same solution to support a farming way of life in a sub-Arctic environment. This was demonstrated by visits to ruins from the Norse settlements and to Inuit farms of today.

Unesco World Heritage Site of Kujataa

The next day we crossed the fjord to Igaliku- the seat of the Norse bishop of Greenland and the first site of reintroduced farming after some three hundred years later by the Inuit. The Site Manager for the Unesco World Heritage Site guided us around in the old settlement and afterwards we walked at back at Kings Road to the boat and headed for Qooroq IceFjord to get a view of the Ice Cap.

During the meeting, the team had the opportunity to learn on site about the ecotourism opportunities and challenges faced by the recent World Heritage Site Kujataa in South Greenland.

Surprise Find at Galloway and Southern Ayrshire:

A TREASURE TROVE OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Marie McNulty - Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve

Reaching back to the recent past, to the times of your grandparents or great grandparents, may help building identity and engaging visitors to your area. We all like to compare the “now” to how it “used to be”. Finding old photographs is normally fairly easy, as the SHAPE group in Galloway and Southern Ayrshire found out.

Stakeholders in Galloway and Southern Ayrshire were given the opportunity to look at previously unseen images taken in their area from the early 1970's to the late 1990's. During the SHAPE asset mapping workshops, the local Museum at Newton Stewart revealed that a collection of slides was in their possession donated by the family of a local Doctor. The collection of over 2000 slides taken over a period of 30 years had been carefully catalogued by Dr Lang. He was clearly a man who was passionate about the local area having taken so many photos of its natural assets, the local landscape, wildlife, flora and fauna, falcons, comets, snow, lichens- the list goes on!

At the visit to the museum it was agreed that such a wonderful collection, which also captures land use change over the last 30 years is definitely worthy of being digitised and made available for others to see.

Do you have experience or suggestions on how to use photographs in order to build identity or attract visitors to your region, please share them with us at www.facebook.com/SHAPE.Project.



'The Night Sky over Galloway 1997' Photo: Natalie Marr.



Search and you will find! SHAPE stakeholders discover a treasure trove of photographs. Sue Clark (holding slide) and Meta Maltman local stakeholders from the Glentroll and Bragrennan Community Trust. Photo: Marie McNulty.

USING NATURAL AND CULTURAL ASSETS TO DEVELOP TOURISM PRODUCTS

Ida Kragstrup – Kujalleq Municipality, Greenland

Mapping your natural and cultural assets is the beginning only. You may discover that your region has more to offer than you had thought, but then you have to consider how to develop your assets into attractive tourism activities.

SHAPE partner Kujalleq Municipality in Greenland has developed an [on-line map](#) outlining cultural and natural assets in the area.

The mapping exercise demonstrated that the region has a lot of opportunities for different tourism activities, but also some challenges like the need of more entrepreneurship

and lack of infrastructure and permanent employment opportunities - because of the seasonal character of the tourism business. Next step was therefore to develop an operational structure for using all the ideas to develop attractive tourism products. These are some of the ideas launched at the stakeholder workshop at Campus Kujalleq:



Example of the on-line map with the cultural and natural assets as the stakeholders focused on at the workshop at Campus Kujalleq in April. Maps made by Malena Johansen, Kommune Kujalleq.

Develop the Unesco World Heritage area - “Kujataa - Norse and Inuit Farming at The Edge of the Ice Cap”

The history is seen all over in the landscape – why not tell the story of the Norse and Inuit? More promotion of the area is needed as well as developing eco-tourism initiatives such as hiking, cycling, farm holidays, storytelling, myths, drum dances and theme trails.

Develop “The Camino of South Greenland”

A net of hiking trails with overnight cabins in the South of Greenland that can be taken care of by local companies, sheep farmers or entrepreneurs. The locals will have an opportunity to develop these trails together with other activities and then be part of the local tourism sector. Use the local guides and employ young people in independent

tourism including adventure activities, wandering, wildlife watching, heritage and culture, kayaking and other sports activities.

“A taste of Greenland”

– Farm Holidays with local food. There is a growing interest for tasting and preparing Greenlandic food. You can catch and prepare your own food or bring it to a hotel and have it prepared there. It would also be possible to develop a course by Inuili-Food College. Taking part in that, the visitors could learn to preserve different types of food like smoking fish, musk oxen and reindeer. An added attraction would be offering a “Kaffemik” – coffee, cakes and often a lot of different Greenlandic specialties in private homes.

“Made in Greenland”

- Branding is essential, and Greenlandic products and handcrafts need a quality stamp showing the rich cultural heritage. Today there is a lack of quality assessment of the handicrafts - we need a quality mark on all ecotourism products/services, including local food, handicrafts, wool products and other Greenlandic specialties. It might be interesting using local wool for knitting/weaving. A cooperation between the sheep farmers is necessary to focus on the wool, plant colours of wool products and the production of yarns.



Example of hiking trails with overnight cabins as part of the idea of “The Camino of South Greenland”.

CELEBRATING NORWEGIAN WOOL!

Kjersti Isdal – Nordhordland Biosphere Reserve Candidate

Nordhordland, the Norwegian partner in the SHAPE project, has long traditions in sheep farming and in wool manufacture. Now the region is using the old traditions to strengthen cultural identity, to attract visitors and to develop new industry. It all comes together in the yearly “Wool-week”.

In the rugged landscape along the western coast of Norway, sheep farming and wool production has for hundreds of years been fundamental for the livelihood of the local population. With the emergence of modern society, this has changed, but Nordhordland is still a core area for wool production in Norway. Through a comprehensive project involving partners both from the farming community, from the wool industry and from politics, the region will now take a clear position in this area.

An annual wool week

Every year, people from all over the country gather in Nordhordland to share knowledge and learn more about the use of wool. This year, the Wool-week has a 10-day program filled with events that focus on the identity of western Norway, on the region's proud cultural heritage and on the strong tradition of textile crafts and wool use. On offer is a wide range of courses, lectures and exhibitions, knitting cafes, social and culinary events.

Local identity as basis for visitor initiatives

But the Wool-week is not just a festival - it is a strong indicator of living traditions of wool both in the region of Nordhordland and in the county of Hordaland. Building on this, the project team is now developing a focused itinerary for visitors where they can experience both sheep farming, wool production and textile creation. They will of course also be offered exciting dishes based on lamb meat.

The wool project may eventually be important for everyone in the value chain from sheep farmer to designer. You can find more information about the Wool-week in Nordhordland here: www.ullveka.no



The annual “Wool-week” in Nordhordland celebrates norwegian sheep and wool, and contributes to strengthen cultural identity, attract visitors and to develop new industry. Photo: Vegar Valde.

RIVER KOITAJOKI; THE INVISIBLE PEARL OF NORTH KARELIA

Daisy Silvennoinen - North Karelia Biosphere Reserve

SHAPE partners from Finland are developing forest and waterway routes along and across the Koitajoki river basin that is centrally located and connects key tourism regions in the area. The guiding principle for the work is co-management of both natural and cultural resources.

“Koitajoki”, located partly in Ilomantsi municipality, is a 200 km long river that meanders back and forth across the borders of Finland and Russia. On the Finnish side, the river is approximately 90km long and plays a vital role connecting both tangible and intangible nature and cultural assets of the region along its course. “Koitajoki” flows in Finnish territory for about 20km, after which it turns back into the Russian territory, to return to Finland approximately 30 kilometers further south. It then flows northwest through the “Petkeljärvi National Park” that is home to old-growth forests including 150 year old shield bark covered pines that have remained untouched by the forest industry. The National Park also features battle trenches from the Continuation War of the 1940s. Some kilometers after “Möhkö”; Finland’s easternmost village with a rich history of ironworks dating from the 1850s, “Koitajoki” widens to form a beautiful lake named “Nuorajärvi”. From there, it flows through lake “Mekrijärvi”, and “Kesonsuo Nature Conservation Area” which is a bird sanctuary for both

breeders and migrants. It then continues its flow through at least three more lakes, after which its waters descend along the river “Pielisjoki” into lake “Pyhäselkä”.

Co-management of natural and cultural heritage

The uniqueness of “Koitajoki” river not only lies on its beautiful meander-like form and how it flows, but also on its multifaceted roles in linking the region’s assets of natural and cultural significance; from region’s war history, to past and current cultural, economic and locals’ day to day uses. Therefore, co-management is vital for maintaining the region’s cultural and natural heritage of which “Koitajoki River” is a major actor. Working on preserving “Koitajoki” river’s valuable whitefish (*Coregonus lavaretus pallasii*) population and traditional fishing practices (river seining) is an example of how co-management supports both natural and cultural heritage. River seining is considered an internationally specific practice worthy of recognition under UNESCO’s list of intangible cultural heritage.

A soft approach to sustainable tourism development

SHAPE partners from Finland aim at developing forest and waterway routes along and across the “Koitajoki river basin” that is centrally located and connects key tourism regions across NK SHA. The main aim is to link the already available, but rather fragmented natural and cultural assets into packaged services; incorporating also storytelling on the significance of the river on the region’s nature and cultural heritage. This is done by encouraging networking and cooperation among stakeholders, to jointly develop sustainable tourism experiences that foster economic, socio-cultural, and environmental sustainability in the region. This initiative is done in close co-operation with other Biosphere Reserves (BR) related activities, such as FRESHABIT LIFE IP Koitajoki project which is a seven-year effort to improve the river ecosystem by measures directly in the river, and on the watershed. Two more international environmental projects are to start in autumn 2018.



The river Koitajoki. Photo: Alpo Hassinen.

Treat your visitors as guests

GAELIC HOSPITALITY REFRESHED

Laura Hamlet and Natasha Hutchinson - Wester Ross Biosphere Reserve

Being a visitor or a guest are two different concepts. We would like to treat all our visitors as guests, but that may be difficult in a modern world. The SHAPE partners in Wester Ross are working on a Destination Management Plan where they, among other things, carefully consider what a “Highland Welcome” really means.

Welcoming guests has always been important in Gaelic culture since memory began. Gaelic poetry and legends often reward the giver of hospitality with lavish gifts and praise whilst the consequences of turning away strangers and guests were a thing to be feared. The Highland Welcome is deeply embedded in our tradition of the Ceilidh, or ‘social visit’, as a form of entertainment where stories, poetry and songs are shared, and riddles, music and lively debate is encouraged. Present-day ceilidhs normally take the form of dances, but the custom of welcoming in guests is still strong in our collective psyche.

A Destination Management Plan

However, as tourism grows globally and resident populations continue to decline in the Scottish Highlands, the strain of responding to every friendly knock on the door becomes more keenly felt. We have identified the need to prepare a Destination Management Plan in Wester Ross which requires adequate planning and support to address these pressures. In the past, Clan chiefs, travelling bards and the early church worked together to look after guests and in much the same way, our modern support network (local authority, public agencies and businesses)



Exploring the waters and coasts of Wester Ross. Photo: Ann Hoffman.

is coming together to create a Highland Welcome to be made famous once again. We are communicating with our stakeholders about the following points:

- That visitors and guests are two different concepts and by treating our tourists as guests we can encourage responsible behaviour and reduce the strain on both tourism service providers, the host community and our environment.
- That we need a strong support network made up of everyone involved in the 'guest experience'
- That we are not alone, other areas are experiencing similar issues/opportunities and we can learn from the success stories of other SHAs and share best practice.

We value the sharing aspect of our culture, whether it is the food, traditions, landscapes or local knowledge. History has shown us that cooperation is rarely rose-tinted. Gaelic tales and ballads are full of messy stories of fighting and disputes and this is no less true today, although we tend to do this now in more subtle ways! The DMP process has not been without its fair share of reality and we believe that by sharing experiences with honesty and transparency we can help effectively address the challenges found when stakeholders hold disparate views, ingrained regional politics or a lack of will to work together. Our aim by 2020 is that our region is being managed efficiently for guests and that there is a welcoming culture across the board.



Most settlements in Wester Ross are found where the mountains meet the sea. Photo: Ann Hoffman.



A view of Ullapool from its harbour. Photo: Ann Hoffman.

Learning opportunities for our stakeholders:

VISIT ANOTHER SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE AREA

Rosalind Bryce - SHAPE

Learning from each other is central to the SHAPE project. During 2019 you may visit another Sustainable Heritage Area in order to learn and share your experiences in sustainable tourism. The learning journeys have different themes; your local SHAPE partner will be discussing these opportunities with interested stakeholders who could benefit from taking part.

Now that the ecotourism initiatives are underway in each SHAPE Sustainable Heritage Area, we are looking forward to one of the anticipated highlights of 2019- the learning journeys!

Learning and connecting with stakeholders from another country

The learning journeys will offer opportunities for our regional stakeholders, including local businesses, tourist providers and community representatives from each Sustainable Heritage Area to meet in another SHA to

learn about the ecotourism development underway there, and to discuss challenges and approaches of common interest. We envisage these experiences providing a source of inspiration and new ideas for people working with ecotourism projects, in a setting that will help foster international networks.

Different themes – different possibilities

The learning journeys, to take place in five of our SHAs, will have different themes and therefore present different learning opportunities. For example, the learning journey



Kujataa World Heritage Area, South Greenland. Photo: Rosalind Bryce.

to Nordhordland in Norway will explore the development of a tourist experience, the 'Wool-Route', which is based on local traditions and the natural landscape. Meanwhile stakeholders visiting Snæfellsnes in Iceland will observe and discuss ways of promoting more responsible visitor behaviour that can better protect natural and cultural assets.

All information will be available online

We will capture the reflections of stakeholders attending the learning journeys through written and visual media and make these available online. We look forward to introducing stakeholders from across the SHAPE partnership and hearing what ideas emerge!



SHAPE

Sustainable Heritage Areas: Partnerships for Ecotourism

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