

Économusée Interaction with Local Community

1 Summary

We report on three examples of how the Économusée-network can create and develop something together with different actors in a good interaction with the community. The first example is from The Wool Week in Norway, which is an event in a community where many different activities are conducted for different audiences and age groups.

The second example is from a craftsman Joel Cole on the Faroe Islands, which helps inmates to rehabilitate and contribute to creative activity through craft production, and in addition contribute to better mastering and a more meaningful life.

The third example, the smithy, also on the Faroe Islands, uses three forms of “open house” for interacting with the local community. In particular for youths, this gives valuable experiences.

All the three examples, through with different perspectives, show how people who come together create something, not only products, but also social values, through activities, production, participating in a community, linking new social ties and not least, giving and gaining more knowledge, learning, experiences and joy in life.

In Ullveka (Wool Week), where Hillesvåg Ullvarefabrikk AS plays a big part in a trade event that greatly benefits the village and the handicraft, the aim is to raise awareness amongst consumers about the unique, natural, renewable and biodegradable benefits of the wool-fibre.

Joel Cole, who plays an important role for the rehabilitation of inmates. Cole’s aim is sharing the joy and discipline with inmates to create and help them further in life.

The Smithy of Trollanes, who has an open house for voluntary involvement of all groups in the company. The aim is to show trust between young and old to learn and teach crafts.



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2 The Wool Week – Economusee as major player in a yearly festival

Summary

Wool Week (Norwegian; “Ullveka”) came originally after initiative of Hillesvåg Ullvarefabrikk (Spinning Mill). They were inspired by the Campaign for Wool in England and Shetland where they have similar arrangements. Hillesvåg Spinning Mill has been the main driving force in Ullveka since 2014.

Hillesvåg Ullvarefabrikk focuses on working conditions, animal welfare, quality, show to origin. Customers become aware of quality, animal welfare and the environment.

They select dye that is biodegradable and approved as environmentally correct. Their wool are always Norwegian wool and they have Swan label (environmentally friendly). They will be a part of the upcoming UNESCOs Biosphere sustainability project.



Opening of the Wool week West by our mayor Astrid Arhus Byrknes

Background

«Ullveka»/ Wool week West Norway is an annual festival, arranged on the west coast of Norway since 2014. The reason they started with Ullveka, were to gain knowledge, awareness and visualization about:

- The value chain from the farmer to the wool production at the factory.

- Quality and origin - gain knowledge and awareness of what good quality means and the value of localism in a value-chain.

It was initiated by a number of organizations and their Wool Week West in Norway is a prolonging of the “Campaign for wool” in Great Britain and “Wool Week” in Shetland, and their idea is to bind the North Atlantic area even closer together when it comes to put emphasis on the usage of wool and local production.

So far, three counties in Norway have been involved in Wool week West; Hordaland, Sogn og Fjordane and Rogaland. They are three Économusées from the Norwegian network involved in Wool week West; Oleana Fashion Design Knitting Économusée, Ullform Felting and Design Économusée, and Hillesvåg Spinning Mill Économusée.

Hillesvåg Ullvarefabrikk Économusée has since 2014 been the main project-coordinator of Wool week West with two representatives from the mill on the Wool week west-board, and the Wool week West “headquarters” have been the at the mill.

Their open day, “A night at the factory», has been a part of Wool week West every year since 2014.

The idea behind Wool week West is a continuation of the already established focus on the usage of wool, sheep breeding, landscape shaping due to grazing and the role our sheep plays, and have played, since the day humans started to domesticate them, around the North Atlantic areas (cf. upcoming UNESCOs Biosphere project).

Hillesvåg Spinning Mill also attends the annual conference North Atlantic Native Sheep and Wool conference, and the network connected to this conference is linked to both the Wool week West in Norway and Wool week Shetland, and to several Économusées in the North European region.

Methods

Their methods are varying tools and methods as courses, lectures, workshops, arts & craft-fairs, concerts, exhibitions, fashion shows and outdoor activities such as sheep gathering.

Each year they have a theme for their «Night at the factory». In 2017 it was «Colours - and the art of dying», so that was the “red tread” throughout the evening.

Hillesvåg has a close connection and cooperation with the local Arts & Crafts association and they have a shared house by the fjord in Hillesvåg, just 60 meters away from the mill. This house was used for the opening of the event with the book-release and lecture. (cf. also social interaction)

In 2017 Ullveka, the following main events were planned:

Book-release

They began the evening with a book-release from different wool authors etc. The book-release are followed by a talk by these same authors.

Exhibition on the history of dyeing

In their showroom, they had put up an exhibition with samples of colours and texts on the history of dyeing, from natural dyes to the modern synthetic methods, and a look into their production and range of colours on wool in their 119-year long history. They had also borrowed samples of dyed woollen fabrics from the 1920`ies from another Dye-works nearby, Kvamsdal Fargerier in Masjordnes, which has been turned into a museum.

Live dyeing of yarn

They had invited three indie dyers who all run individual companies where they hand-dye yarn and wool; Eva Lutes, Laila Henriksen from «Værbitt» and Iren Dyngeland from «Ullsalong». These are all well-known artisans in Norway. They sat up workstations for them in the mills production area and each of them dyed yarn «live» and sold their products as mini pop-up shops during the event and held mini-courses as visitors came to their tables.



The authors Ingun Grimstad Klepp and Tone Skårdal Tobiasson with indie dyer Laila Henriksen from “Værbitt” after the book-release.

Social interaction and value creation

They had also invited hand spinners from the local arts & craft-association who brought their drop spindles and spinning wheels to the mill and spun of multi-coloured fleece – prepared by the indie dyers, allowing old and young visitors to see and try out hand spinning.

In addition, they had a coffee, tea, cake and fruit buffet with their knitting-café area – free for the visitors to serve themselves. They set up the café in Hillesvåg’s showroom, so that people could sit down and talk and take a break during the evening.

Guided tours with a twist

During the evening, they had set up two guided tours through the Économusée– this time with a twist and a special treat for those who attended. They ended up with a third tour due to visitor

numbers, and 90 persons saw Hillesvåg's workspace and followed the process from fiber to yarn this special evening.

They had set up some test-skeins of yarn for dyeing in the dye-works with natural pigmentation of Madder and Turmeric. Visitors took part in the process by checking temperature and stirring in the pots and at the end of the tour they all got a little gift; a small ball of hand dyed yarn from the same receipt as the one they had seen at a previous stage. Hillesvåg Ullvarefabrikk had prepared this ahead.



Indie dyer Iren Dyngeland from "Ullsalong" dyeing with madder and birch-leaves during "A night at the factory"

Planning and execution

The Wool week this year on Hillesvåg Ullvarefabrikk was held from September 22, – October 1, 2017. A ten-day celebration of wool. As the previous years, it was a week of courses, lectures, fashion shows, family-events, "The wool city" (school-project) concerts, markets, fairs, gallery-exhibitions, book-releases and more.

The Hillesvåg Spinning Mill Économusée is responsible for three events every year during the Wool week; the opening-show, «Night at the Factory» and organizing the arts & craft fair with a number of artisans exhibiting and selling their products.

In addition, they print the program and posters at the mill, and they are responsible for updates at the Wool week West- website, Facebook and other social media. They also designed the Wool week west scarf in one of the artisan yarn qualities from Hillesvåg.

This year, the event «Night at the factory» took place for the fourth time, with a startup at 17.00 in the evening and held open to 23.00, so it was a six-hour program. Since Hillesvåg Ullvarefabrikk started Wool week West in 2014, this has been one of the most visited open days during the week, with average of 200-300 people taking part in the event every year, and by that also getting to know our Économusée in a new way.

They also planned a book-release and book signing, a lecture, three popup-shops, live dying of yarn, live hand spinning, two guided tours, knitting-cafe, exhibition and good offers on yarns and carded wool for the visitors.



Fashion show at the opening of Wool week West, traditional sweaters in local wool parades the catwalk

Results

Ullveka initiated by Hillesvåg Ullvarefabrikk has strengthened and linked networks of locally owned companies that are committed to building robust and lively communities.

The Ullveka and the Économusée-concept managed to create something for those who come to visit. (awareness of quality, learning, cultural experiences, social experiences, networking, etc.)

The focus is on the local sheep and quality of wool: Local sheep – supporting local farmers (good fiber) which again ends up with more usage of the "whole" sheep (meat, wool, bone, horns etc). Farmers breed for example more with the emphasis on wool when the price of wool goes up.

There are many organizations involved in the event, all municipalities in the Nordhordland region - and several thousand people (about 2000) with the ring effects involved in the event. Hillesvåg Ullvarefabrik sponsors the schools with wool so that pupils can make products for Ullbyen.

With increased understanding of quality, the understanding of the artisan production behind each work process, knowledge of the raw material from the sheep to the finished knitting yarn, leads customers to the understanding of the fact that such a product may cost more than for example imported yarn from China.

Recommendations

Hillesvåg Ullvarefabrikk originally vision, and later the experience, is that local living business activity in network and conjunction with annual events ensures the development of the local community to be more economically, socially and environmentally vigorous.

The event is of great importance for the local community and strengthens local identity around the production of Norwegian wool from the farmer to the spinning mill.

Visitors to Ullveka will look at production and gain new awareness of what is quality and sustainable production.

3 Joel Cole – how to play a major role for inmate’s rehab

Since its conception, Joel Cole Art has always been about celebrating creative expression and sharing that joy and discipline with others who want to create.

It was with this in mind that the Joel Cole Art studio and gallery/Economusee was established next to the national detention center, in an abandoned NATO base high in the mountains in the Faroe Islands.



The Joel Cole Art studio exists here because of an intricate and evolving relationship with the Danish and Faroese authorities in charge of incarceration in the Faroe Islands.

Once a week, up to 6 inmates are welcomed into Joel’s creative space, taught how to use all the wood working machines (particularly the wood turning lathes) and allowed to create artwork.

Many parties benefit from this arrangement, including Joel Cole Art.

The inmates get an opportunity to spend extended periods of time developing and working through ideas while they plan and create artwork - all with the guidance of a trained artist and craftsman. When their artwork sells, the inmates reap the benefit of bolstered self-esteem and the knowledge they can do something they had previously not been able to do.

The administration of the detention center is required by law to offer the inmates some kind of work and rehabilitation, and their work in the art studio qualifies for both. So, the leadership at the detention center is very happy they have this kind of offering for their inmates. Plus, because of a meticulously negotiated contract, the services are provided in barter for rent, so there is minimal cost on the detention centres part.

Joel himself credits his work with the inmates as an unexpected source of inspiration, and a welcomed break in sometimes monotonous weeks of work alone.



Most importantly, though, may be the over-all impression of the detention center and the inmates from the Faroese people. The Faroese now know that inmates have the opportunity to create artwork while incarcerated, and often times create the most remarkable work. This does wonders to challenge any prejudice or preconceived notions about who sits in jail, and what they are like as individuals.

The program is financially self-sufficient, paying for materials, tools, and machine maintenance by the sale to the public of the artwork the inmates make. A local design artist has also created a poster that examines “metamorphosis” in relation to what the inmates go through while in detention. This poster is framed by the inmates and is also sold to generate income for the program. A tag denotes that the purchase of the hand-framed poster supports the program and the detention center.

One important feature about the program is that Joel has full reign over how and what he instructs and how he conducts the day-long instructions. Autonomy by the artist in charge of such a program is strongly recommended so that the intent to allow inmates to creatively express themselves is not diluted or hampered by any bureaucracy. The only such intrusion by a governing body is to create and maintain a safe environment for everyone involved.

This program drives a higher level of awareness of, understanding of, and empathy for the inmates and the people surrounding them, both privately and professionally.

If any other Economusee is interested in establishing a similar program, Joel is very willing to share his experiences making this program a reality.



4 The Smithy at Trollanes – an open house method

Économusée as inspirational actor in the local community

Summary and the background

One of the activities the Faroese Économusées have had desire to incorporate is “open house”. The Faroe Islands is a small community with 50,000 people living on 18 islands. When a new activity is established in the community the attention among the citizens is high. The locals on the island or in the village come and visit and show interest in the activity.

Methods

It is common, that the workshops are open during the day, and sometime in the evening to, and act as an activity and enjoyable forum. Here you can meet the artisan, and other people in the village, drink coffee and watch when the artisan works.

All the Faroese Économusées have open doors like this, and offer coffee when people arrive. But in between, there is announced that there is coffee, music or a lecture, and all are welcomed.

Planning and execution

The announcement is usually in the social media, word of mouth ore in the local paper, but music events, like Summartónar, are announced in a special folder, and distributed in all tourist information's.

Here we want to use Économusée The Blacksmith on Trøllanes as an example and to show 3 types of open house that are common in all the Faroese Economusée workshops.

1. The daily "open house" where residents come "past" to hear new and see what work is going on at the moment.
2. Youth in the community is allowed to "use" the workshop as a gathering place. Here they meet, especially in winter, to experience the atmosphere in the workshop, and try out opportunities. Some work on an object while others are watching.
3. Scheduled events, eg on the weekend or other specified time, with a defined program. Such an "open house" event can be music, lectures, courses or anything else.



June 2017, the blacksmith Mikkjal Joensen, the child John Tóri Thorsteinsson og Bjørk Mikladal

Economusée the Blacksmith in Trøllanes, has been open since 2011. During the period there have been a number of events, both spontaneous and planned. They all have the character of "open houses" and have helped to give Économusée a good reputation, as open and welcoming.

Ad. 1. When there is light in the workshop, the locals pass by. Someone makes coffee and there is talk. Sometimes the locals come with pancakes or muffins. Children are also welcome.



Guest at the Blacksmith at Trøllanes, invited outside for coffee and cake.

Ad. 2. The young people on the island of Kalsoy, where the blacksmith of Trøllanes is located, generally travels to the mainland for activities. After the Economusée opened on Trøllanes, it often happened that the young people instead chose to get on their bikes and meet in the workshop. They experiment and discuss and are interested in the activities of the forge. The boys attract the girls, and therefore it becomes a form of unplanned youth activity for boys and girls.

Ad. 3. Planned activities involving the community, young people as elderly, are music activities or courses. One measure we would point out was a course in the ironsmith subject. It was a course where older smiths met young blacksmiths to tell and show how the blacksmith looked back 40-60 years ago. There was a meal involved and the smith was open to visitors, hearing the discussion between the elderly and the younger ones. This activity is highly recommended as it created a good synergy and was a good experience for all involved.



The old smiths Otto Joensen and Ólavur Samson



Visitors listen to old smiths, telling about the traditional handcraft.

Results

The most important results we can see from the activities in the smithy at Trøllanes is the interest and knowledge of the qualities of the Economusée concept, which occurs in the local community. We believe that this can be generalized to all the communities where an Economuse workshop has been established. The next and not less important result is the attention of traditional craftsmanship, and the interest in learning about the culture and history behind this. That young people experience the traditional craftsmanship as exciting is the beginning of a new era for this part of our culture.



Recommendations

We recommend that the Économusée workshops market themselves as open and welcoming workshops. They can do this by showing young and older trust. To allow them to try tools and tell about their experiences or the youngsters can ask and experiment.

An open and welcoming environment does not require much, and sometimes a jug of coffee and a welcoming attitude are enough.

