

Japan ecomuseums: Global models for concrete realities

Óscar Navajas Corral

Applying ecomuseology

The first Japanese experiences around the conception of a museum without walls and based in the symbiosis of the scenery and the recovery of a cultural heritage can be found out in the open-air museums which were developed in the 50's.

In many of them it is intended to keep the building in use, as well as the place where they are located. Maybe we can mention the words of Rivière (1973 in Diallo, 1986: 43-44), whom after his experience with Scandinavian open-air museums defined this typology as *une collection d'éléments d'architecture traditionnelle rurale principalement, transférés dans un parc avec leurs équipements domestiques, agricoles, artisanaux, etc., ou garnis d'équipement équivalents, dotés de cas échéant d'un minimum d'environnement. a ces ensembles de micro-unités écologiques, le musée de plein air ajoute un ou plusieurs bâtiments conservés surplaces, ou construits au dessin, dans les quels son exposés collections complémentaires, en permanence ou temporairement: mobiliers, objets d'art populaire, costumes, etc.*

In the North of Osaka, close to Shin-Osaka, it is located the first open-air Museum of Japan, *Open-air Museum of old Japanese Farm Houses*¹, created in 1956. This museum is made up of 12 houses and buildings of traditional use such as granaries and mills, excellent both for its good preservation and its active use for the visitors, the Hida-Shirakawago, declared world heritage in 1995. A first approach to keep a

¹ <http://www.occh.or.jp/minka/>

traditional heritage that was threatened by the industrialization of the post-war period might be considered.

This museum would be followed by others, such as the *Nihon Minkaen Japan Open-Air Folk House Museum* in the suburbs of Tokyo, opened in 1965, this museum is characterized by its rigor in the recovery and preservation of the traditional architecture as well as the work made by the museum staff and museum volunteers regarding the effort in order to keep the houses alive during the open hours².

The experiences of Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum³ (1993) with 30 unique buildings of Japan from the XVII to the beginning of the XX are also interesting; The Sankeien Garden Open-air Museum⁴, an open-air museum characterized by the natural heritage and the static relation between culture and nature; or the Hokkaido Historical Village, in Sapporo⁵, opened in 1983, and, unlike other museums is organized by the different habitats existing in the North part of the country: mountain, farm, city intended to simulate a particular way of life. This fact emphasizes the sense of utility of the recovered and preserved architectures with linked to the recreation of the environments.

However, these open-air museums cannot be strictly considered the beginning of the ecomuseology as occurs in other places of Europe, basically in France and Scandinavian countries. Regarding Japan, they are an achievement of emergency political decisions in order to preserve a heritage at risk of being destroyed after the II World War.

The history of the Japanese ecomuseums can be divided in three different periods (Ohara, 2006; Davis, 2007):

1. The first time the ecomuseums in Japan are considered as such is in 1960's thank you to Professor Tsurata (1974)

² In these facilities the visitor can participate in the process of making tea, whose leaves grow in the proximities, they can join the tea ceremony, the can learn about bamboos, cloth dying or watch a Kabuki play

³ www.tatemonoen.jp

⁴ <http://homepage3.nifty.com/plantsandjapan/page062.html>

⁵ <http://www.kaitaku.or.jp/info/info.htm>

who introduced the word *ecomuseum* in Japan after his participation in the General Conference of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 1974, organized under the theme *The Museum and the Modern World*, held in Copenhagen (Denmark). This first approach to the ecomuseums responded to certain environmental worry related with natural and cultural ecomuseal foundations already initiated in other parts of the world.

2. In the 1980's the word ecomuseum was re-introduced as an alternative to the traditional museum for the developing local areas. This new point of view towards the ecomuseum key happens at the same time as the economic bubble. In those years the government was establishing economical projects in order to develop rural areas. A growing in the construction of museums starts with a touristic perspective; however, it will end up in an economical burden for the civil governments which had already serious difficulties to maintain them. In addition, it must be pointed out the beginning of ecomuseal experiences that in those years the state was going through a period of decentralization where the prefectures and towns were having more and more autonomy in making decisions about their local development policies. Many municipalities would be interested in ecomuseums as a way of preserving their territory, recover the heritage and the cultural identity without the need of creating facilities (Ohara, 2006: 1-2)⁶. Some of the experiences born in those years are the Asahimachi ecomuseum, created in 1989⁷ and officially

⁶ This is the time when Juzo Arai will begin this new theoretical-practical version of the Japanese ecomuseums. His contribution will not only contribute to the ecomuseal model and its philosophy and characteristics but also it will establish the figure of the ecomuseum in Japan with the creation of the Japan Ecomuseological Society (JECOMS) founded on March 26th, 1995. The JECOMS is an association with 250 members approximately who share the principles of the ecomuseology.

⁷ It might be mentioned the article written by George F. MacDonald in the magazine *Museum* in 1987, where he analysed the situation of the museums in the world and he started describing Asia, and analysing Japan in detail. The industrialization process had deteriorated the environment and

established as ecomuseum in 1991 in the prefecture of Yamagata or the community museum of Hirano-cho near Osaka.

Although the fact that the open-air ecomuseum are not the foundations of the future Japanese ecomuseums has been mentioned, they establish some characteristics for the future ecomuseal institutions: new state concerns regarding the heritage preservation; developing of a environmental concern towards the sustainable development, concern for the education, the museography and the heritage interpretation, and an open mind about new generations of professionals working in new types of museums different to the traditional ones.

3. The third key moment in the construction of the Japanese ecomuseology would come in the 1990's when the society and the Japanese government policies change towards the environmental sustainability and the development of communities, been greatly influenced by the international environmental movements which will have the Environment and Development United Nations Conference of Rio de Janeiro in 1992, as frame of action.

This conference suggested parameters closed to the ecomuseal philosophy of promoting the respect and preservation of natural environments and the development of their communities from a wide point of view of sustainability. In Japan was exemplified in the creation of centers for interpretation and learning in the areas of environmental preservation named "ecomuseums" (Ohara, 2006: 2). Following this, in 1998 the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry y Fisheries created the figure of the "Rural

the traditional heritage. The new policies had to develop paying attention to this situation, reason why MacDonald said (1987: 209) that Japan was having more than one hundred open-air museums. Places to recover the architecture but also the education and the cultural identity of the Japanese society.

Environmental Museums”⁸, whose basis belong to the idea of agreeing to the local stories, culture and traditions; the creating of spaces and facilities, spread around the main facility must be connected by paths; promoting the active participation of the local population having them conscious and getting them involved in the scenery and the activities; and the local governments or mixed enterprises will take care of an intended sustainable and effective management.

These characteristics could be the prototype for the creation of an ecomuseum, however, a more carefully look can tell us that the policies of this system are central policies and they come from a vertical structure, opposite to the horizontal democratic situation where the ecomuseums are based in theory. However, following Professor Ohara, these initiatives are the beginning of a ecomuseal policy in Japan.

Nowadays the Japanese ecomuseums and the ecomuseology in general are establishing as well as the definition of a common model of work. La JECOMS, whose center is the National University of Yokohama, under the supervision of Professor Kazuoki Ohara, from the Department of Architecture, is focusing its efforts towards an approach to the museology as a discipline that can be a symbiosis of the technical and human sciences in the theory and practice of the ecomuseal experiences that are being developed in Japan.

In the map of the Japanese ecomuseums introduced in 2002 (Davis 2004: 9) the different experiences were both in rural and urban areas. These locations were in Tamagawa; the Kounotori Ecomuseum; Asian Live Ecomuseum; the Osaka neighbourhood, Hirano-cho; the Asahi-machi Ecomuseum and the Ecomuseum of the Miura Peninsula. Nowadays the Japanese ecomuseums are over one hundred and they keep an structure of located ecomuseums both in urban and rural locations.

The ecomuseology in Japan has been able to develop due to reassert of the communities identity, which have seen in the

⁸ Mentioned by Ohara (2006: 2) as DEN-EN KUKAN HAKUBUTUKAN in Japanese.

ecomuseums a way of participate in their own future by recovering their traditions and developing policies for their future (Ohara, 2006: 3-4).

The reality. Description of the japanese ecomuseums

In this part a brief description of the ecomuseums visited in situ and later on analyzed will be hold

Kawasaki. Kawasaki is a city located in the East part of Tokyo Bay, close to the estuary of Tama River, in Kanagawa Prefecture. Nowadays Kawasaki is a post-industrial city which supplies Tokyo with labor and which has over a million and a half of population.

Among the extended city, the Tama River and its shore make a natural lung for the city and its inhabitants. The river has been an economic resource but also a social and cultural resource for the citizens' life. The economical changes and the diversion of the commercial attention over the river have promoted that the administration establish its social policy in it. Thus, regarding the citizens' participation there are three institutions which work under the preservation of the traditions and cultural identities, and at the same time, they collaborate actively with the population. The first one is the Nihon Minkaen Japan Open-Air Folk House Museum in Ikuta Park. The second one is the Tamagawa Ecomuseum⁹, in the Tama-ku area and it is a response to the social needs of this river shore. And the third one is the Kawasaki Industrial Town Museum¹⁰ located in Kawasaki-ku, in the administrative area of Kawasaki.

Both the Tamagawa ecomuseum and the Kawasaki ecomuseum are urban models of ecomuseums with an administrative center from where there are created different experiences and satellite spaces as initiatives for the population's concern (Ohara, 2008): cleaning and collecting

⁹ <http://www.seseragikan.com/ivetokiroku/clean-up1004/index.html>

¹⁰ http://www.city.kawasaki.jp/index_e.htm

waste from its shore, organizing workshops on environmental concern, popular parties and events both traditional and contemporaneous, etc.

These ecomuseums which were born in the beginning of 2000 try to bring together and in a democratic way the social call, the industrial and economical factors and the civil power of the city. With the support of the enterprises, the government support and the effort of the social associations, the ecomuseums have developed several campaigns counting on the citizens' participation. The idea is the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage (tangible and intangible) that contributes to the development of the community by integrating both the rural and urban sides. This idea of using the concept of ecomuseum tries to recover a holistic area and to get the democratic and social participation as a way of development and learning.

Hirano-cho ecomuseum. It is one of the earliest and most emblematic ecomuseal initiatives in Japan. Hirano-ku is a neighbourhood in the Southeast of Osaka with an unusual history inside the history of Osaka and the history of Japan. It is characterized by an autarchy which gave this neighbourhood a kind of independence from the feudalism to nowadays. The idiosyncrasy of its inhabitants shows a personality somehow unusual compared to the stereotype of the Japanese population; an affable and empathetic community. The main idea to stimulate this neighbourhood started in 1990's following a local movement of the inhabitants supported and coordinated by Ryonin Kawaguchi, the priest of the Buddhist temple of Senkouji, (Davis, 2007). In 1993 it was established as ecomuseum or as an alive museum for the development of the community. The project included the recovery of the neighbourhood through the citizen's intervention, their identity and the renovation of the urban space. The emblematic buildings have been recovered and restored, the personal movable properties have been recovered, the urban facilities have been equipped, and the social, cultural and economical activities have been promoted.

Many of the objects that are part of the identity of the inhabitants are located in small museums or small establishments (satellites) where the economical activity keeps its rhythm, however they include properties related to the history of that place.

Although Hirano appears as “Hirano Machigurumi Museum” in the touristic map of Osaka and there is a marked route that can be visited it is not a touristic place. However, the interesting point is to appreciate that this “related places” not only have an exposure role but the way they are located, the places themselves and even the facilities stimulates the relation with the people and the environment, they involve the visitor. The main and original idea is the sense of community and involvement of all the inhabitants. The visit to Hirano turns out to be a discovery of small identities that become the pieces of a puzzle that is the whole neighbourhood. It is intended to move for a “tourist-visitor” to a “tourist-visitor-participant”.

Hirano includes a model of ecomuseal decentralization where the neuralgic centre do not follow the policies of intervention but it implements a model of interaction where the facilities complement each other by building a net of relations where the idea of ecomuseum is the one that connects the ideal of work (Davis, 2004: 97-101; Corsane, 2006: 116; Ohara, 2008: 45).

Toyo-oka Oriental White Stork Ecomuseum¹¹. The history of this ecomuseum begins in 1955 when the Association for the Preservation of the White Oriental Stork starts to mobilize together with the government and the local populations in order to preserve this species.

The ecomuseum is located in the town of Toyooka, in the prefecture of Hyogo, a place that is protected since 1919, when the government created the law for the protection of the natural areas under the name of National Natural Monuments. This law has let the Hyogo Prefecture, and specially Toyooka, take benefit from the government support, which has also let

¹¹ <http://www3.city.toyooka.lg.jp/Kounotori/index.htm>

the development of a long term project based of scientific research of the natural habitat and the co-existence of the local environment of humans and nature.

The awareness of the population has been one of the priorities of Toyooka and the Center for the Preservation in the last years. It is intended to expand a new style of life and economy for the whole area. To achieve it different projects have been developed, such as the “White Store Friendly Farming Method”, created to make the population aware of the rice as an economical source for the area and the domestic tourism of the area. In this effort the new environmental mentality has been essential in the last years.

It must be pointed out from this project how the organization has become little by little vertical¹² and how the natural species preserved as the symbol of a whole city and area has made the population been involved in their own social, cultural and economical development (Cerny, 2006). In terms of ecomuseology, this ecomuseum would be a centralized model where a main site is the visible focus which centralizes the essential theme of the ecomuseum and the area would be completed with other satellite sites.

Miyagawa Ecomuseum (Ise, Mie prefecture)¹³. The ecomuseum of Mayagawa can be found in the prefecture of Mie, in the South of Kyoto. It is an place with both a seaside area and mountains with thick forests. The center is the city of Ise, a city located in the confluence of the Miyagawa River with the coast, around 200 kilometres from Osaka. This strategic location as well as the environment makes the place ideal for the development of touristic activities¹⁴.

¹² The prefecture of Hyogo is located right in the centre. The National government is the one which supplies the economical support, however the prefecture and the city of Toyooka are in charge of hiring professionals

¹³ <http://miyarune.cool.ne.jp/>

¹⁴ The area of Miyagawa owns a rich cultural Heritage characterized by the temple of Jingu, a pilgrim place in New Year; the natural protected heritage in the West area of Miyagawa Village is a National Park, as well as the area in the South of Ise)National Park of Yoshino Kumano and National Park of

The ecomuseum is another facility of this environment located in Taiki, inside a Natural Park. It belongs to the prefecture but it has completely autonomy of action over the place. The building where it is placed is an old elementary school. It includes several rooms for the interpretation of the environment and some offices from where the activities are centralized. This site is also used as an information office for the visitors (routes, heritage, etc.), despite of the fact that there is a great variety of activities to spread and make the population aware.

The ecomuseum is conceived as an alive museum, which involves the population of the community. Thus the historical development of the social environment, the nature, the culture, the heritage and the local industries is explained through the development of the community aiming to show an active museum. In this way, the ecomuseum is a mixture between the civil power and the community. The area of Miyagawa is well known not only for the touristic industry but also for being the third most important area in the production of Japanese tea, for its wood industry and its rice fields.

Chigasaki-Hiratsuka Ecomuseum. These two cities are located in the prefecture of Kanawaga, 30 km. away of its main city, Yokohama. They are two industrial cities developed due to the amount of factories and as the residence of many people working in Yokohama and Tokyo. It does not have an important heritage although close it can be found Kamakura and Hase, two cities known by their famous religious heritage. These two places, on the other hand, belong to the Ecomuseum of the Miura Peninsula.

Among towers of buildings and factories there are heritage places, parks or museums, such as the one in the city or the

Iseshima), whereas the centre is a Natural Park which belongs to Mie Prefecture (Natural Park of the Iseshima Gorge) It has also seaside resources both in its use as a commercial port and as a beach and leisure centre. These resources have let the creation of several facilities which promote the natural resources and the sidesea, such as the Spanish Thematic Park.

museum of modern art, with temporary exhibitions and rooms that can be used by any citizen (public gallery). Both cities area also coastal and they take advantage of the sea and the beach, although Chigasaki works more with its seaside resources by promoting the surf.

It cannot be said that they have a settled ecomuseum, however, they have working groups which plan their activities like an ecomuseum. The city of Chigasaki itself is located inside the net of JECOMS. It truly shows a model of community development similar to other city close by, for example Kawasaki. In these places the tourism cannot be the tool for the economical development; they are located close to bigger touristic sites (star heritage). Chigasaki y Hiratsuka, in addition to Yokohama and the capital have their main competitors in places like Hase, mentioned before, and Hakone, an typical place for the Japanese tourism in the western side. The policies of development are focused towards the use of the heritage as a benefit for the community's identity and to improve the quality of life on their inhabitants in a social and cultural sense.

The idea of work in both cities using the independent working groups, moves away from the centralized models of ecomuseums with an administrative base and close to a model of heritage research and social development as the one observed in the Miura Peninsula. It is intended to establish an interconnected working net from which community policies and the sustainability of these places might be developed.

Toya Ecomuseum¹⁵. The area of Toya is a place with volcanic activity until quiet recently. The last eruption dates from 2000 leaving material damage and two new natural resources, a crater and a vent that are still expelling gas. This fact makes Toya have a special idiosyncrasy among their inhabitants who live together with this natural peculiarity. The efforts of the regional and state governments address to preserve this area without damaging the way of life of the

¹⁵ <http://www.town.sobetsu.hokkaido.jp/eco/english/index.html>

communities living there and to educate the visitors on the importance of the place.

In addition, Toya is one of the favourite national touristic places, both for the practice of sky and other winter sports and for its lake in the fall. The tourism is greatly developed in this area. This was thought as dangerous for an area with such characteristics. Thus the ecomuseum was created following this compromise of awareness and economical and ecological sustainability¹⁶.

The ecomuseum was created in 2008 with the existence *centro*: Nicho no Eki Sobetsu Information Center, which is the place where all the actions are centralized and where the visitors get information for the excursions. In 2009 another administrative figure come to strengthen this policy: The UNESCO creates the Geopark, defined as *a natural park where you can learn firsthand about "the changing World of Our Mother Earth"*.

Following Hiroyuki Obi, one of the managers of the ecomuseum, the purpose of the ecomuseum is addressed to the preservation and awareness of this National Park rather than becoming an ecomuseal system. The local population uses the ecomuseum as a touristic resource and not so much as a way of expressing its memory.

Asahi-machi Ecomuseum¹⁷. The ecomuseum of Asahi was one of the first ones taking the initiative of working in the ecomuseal system in 1988-1989 and establishing as an ecomuseum in 1991. Following one of its initiators, Mr. Noshiwaza, the different steps for the establishment of the ecomuseum were as follows:

¹⁶ According to the prospectus the ecomuseum Lake Toya area is *an ecomuseum is a new type of natural museum" with resident participation an integrated exhibition hall comprising the natural environment, forests, streets and ruins of local communities. Places of interests are categorized according to theme at the Lake Toya Area Ecomuseum, where visitors can learn about the volcanoes, history and culture of the area*

¹⁷ <http://asahi-ecom.jp/>

The ecomuseology started 35 years ago from a small society of people interested in the environmental education, Naturalist Group, aiming to make the population aware of the importance of the territory and its development. They thought the philosophy of ecomuseums could fulfil this purpose.

The ecomuseum plays the role of advisor and promoter of activities such as the development of Footpath, as well as natural and cultural resources, such as the recovery of the material and immaterial, activity where the population takes part to get them involved in the aware and education, and a star heritage, the Earth Temple built in 1990. The temple was paid by the inhabitants. A plaque in a rock let us see the name of every person who contributed to this construction and how much they paid. This is a very important symbol of citizen's union and involvement. A little path inside the forest holds different monuments related with the nature: wood, fire, land, metal and water. In this last one, the water is the element used to wash one's hands before prying. The temple is a metal sheet which reflects the sky and from where the moon can be seen in clear nights. Under the temple there is an empty space full of earthenware pots in concordances with the nature and the people visiting the place. Every year in July this temple is the place chosen for the community to celebrate a festival where children wearing traditional customs dance over the metal sheet.

Nowadays the ecomuseum is centralized in the office of the "core-center" and it is a centralized ecomuseum with satellites. The "core-center" is a bio-climatic building created around ten years ago which adopted the name of ecomuseum "center", although the real centralization is an office (ecomuseum's room) inside the building. This room shares the building with diverse community services. A general library with an area specialized in the history of the area; an educational department to support both teachers and students, an auditorium, and several room used for courses, activities or workshops,

Nowadays it is considered as an institution inside the territory (a non governmental organization) which shares the

development of the place together with the production of wine, the apple industry and the winter touristic activities, such as sky. However the managers see the ecomuseum as an entity for the citizens' awareness. This is the real sense of the ecomuseum of Asahi, created 30 years ago. It could seem that the ecomuseum has become a bunch of satellites or touristic information points both for guides and visitors. However, its real work is to keep these places alive, relate them and take roots among the population. The ecomuseum does the most important work teaching the meaning of the place. It is a way of knowing the environment. Integration is a key word in this ecomuseum. The ecomuseum lives for the inhabitants and the territory.

Oku-Aziza Ecomuseum¹⁸. The area of Oku has eighteen little villages with a population of no more than 2000 people in total. 45% of the population which lives in this mountainous area are retired from their jobs. The birth-rate has gone down and most of the young population has moved to bigger cities to get a job of study at university.

The project of this ecomuseum was born 30 years ago when this area started to be claimed as a touristic place specially in spring and fall for the climate and sceneries. Although the ecomuseal initiative had already thought about this place from 1990's, the main period is in 2002 when the plan to build the ecomuseum is made, and 2006, once the project starts. Two people will be essential in the project: Saga Songhai, current secretary of JECOMS; and Genesis Yukawa, one of the educational section members who introduced the idea of the ecomuseum in this area.

In the city of Mishima the public building which works as a *center* of the ecomuseum can be found. A public place for the community. It has a section which promotes the industry, an area of social wealth fare, a bookstore, a room with the historical documents of this area, the administration and another section for the education of adults and children. The

¹⁸ www.town.mishima.fukushima.jp

ecomuseal section, managed by Igarashi Yoshinobu, makes the ecomuseal plan work. The main action is to be aware of the importance of preserving the traditions as an identity and economic resource for the sustainability of the area.

The main industries are related with tourism, Colonial Wood and agriculture, although this last one is done by no more than 100 people and as a way of self supply. The tourism is a source but it is seen somehow distrustfully as a way of getting over the economical and identity crisis. Everything starts with the local concern and the outside visitors.

The Asahi-Machi ecomuseum was a great influence for this place. The both were built for similar reasons: environmental and cultural concern, lost of population, new growing industries like tourism. This creates needs in the population who tries to get back to their past in order to built their future. The ecomuseum is used as an educational tool, as well as to document and value the natural and cultural heritage.

Península Miura Ecomuseum. The Peninsula of Miura is located in the Southeast part of Tokyo, with a length of 21 km. from North to South and around 8 km. from East to West. It is surrounded by Sagami and Tokyo Bay which promote the fishing industry similar to the Caribbean and one of the only places for fishing tuna left over in Japan. In addition to the fishing industry, the Peninsula of Miura is famous for its orography where many hills with less than 300 meters make this geographical space an area with natural green sites coexisting with urban and industrial areas.

In addition to the tuna fishing, the area is surrounded by tropical sea currents with unique sea species. The engine industry is also important, especially in the Northeast area, close to Tokyo and Yokohama, where the car industry is a big economical source. Finally, the leisure and touristic industry is growing, having national and international touristic places, such as Kamakura or Hayama, as well as a developed industry of sport sailing.

In 1998, a group of researchers discovered some activities related with sea activities, agricultural activities and Cultural

heritage organized by different working groups, however without any connection among them, which led to an individual and disconnected outlook. A report was elaborated and it was decided to start working with an ecomuseum model. This model followed the outline of the first French ecomuseums and the ones developed in Japan later on, like the Asahi-Machi ecomuseum. A model with a “core” and some satellites. This model had the inconvenience of many satellites going on disconnected, as well as the length of the land and its orography, which made difficult to centralize the work.

The reality of the Peninsula of Miura, its idiosyncrasy and the working groups previous to the creation of the ecomuseum led to the option of creating another model of interaction based on the “necklace model” of Peter Davis. In the case of Miura, this model assumes that every satellite is related with the *center* and interconnected. The *center* does not have the main position, becoming another satellite regarding activity planning, meeting points and working groups planning. This decentralized model continues to have autonomy of action but knowing the performance of the other sites.

Ohara recognizes that the creation of such a network has been difficult. It was a slow process of getting to know each place and each working group, establishing trusting relations. It was mainly an evolutionary process, making first some working groups and having them related later on until recently.

Nowadays the ecomuseum is composed by 45 local groups (ecomuseums), mainly non-governmental organizations, and 7 public official entities working together in the writing of the annual publication, “Totteoki no Hanashi” (Regional Treasures), with researches and activities made during the year and specific guide books of each part of the ecomuseum; a Newsletter with recent information of the whole Peninsula of Miura and distributed for all the population in every public buildings and the main site of the working groups. It is a way of connection with the population and the concern regarding the ecomuseum. In addition to these activities and the meetings of the working groups, an Annual Forum for the working groups and the citizens takes place. This forum deals with the

activities of each area, the topics of these activities and the guide books. It is an important place for the debate and the exchange of information.

Peter Davis wrote in 2004 that *the Miura ecomuseum is still at an early stage in its evolution, yet it is evident through conversations with them that the local activists have real enthusiasm for the concept, recognizing the advantages of working together, sharing expertise and training, jointly marketing their enterprises and beginning to prepare shared databases. The involvement of a major local museum provides real opportunities, with expertise on hand in relation to documenting and conserving tangible and intangible heritage resources. That the museum is prepared to work within a loose confederation is also remarkable. Unlike many major provincial museums in the world it is not only prepared to accept that small associations of local people have a basic right to be involved with their heritage (that heritage is not just for curators), but also wishes to be actively involved in a larger enterprise, one with a different, more democratic vision. Whether the Miura ecomuseum will succeed as an integrated heritage organization is difficult to tell at this stage; there is clearly strong enthusiasm both from local authorities and some local people that gives reason for optimism. However, whether the ecomuseum will have meaning for all local people and visitors has yet to be tested. For the casual visitor the sites would probably be seen as isolated examples of heritage preservation, and not as an integrated effort. Many of the sites are not even signed or advertised, and most tourists (and locals) would probably pass them by unnoticed.*

6 years after the reality is relatively different. The working groups are more and more active, the interrelations are efficient and their action had been extended through publications and diffusion to the population. The Achilles' heel continues been the ignorance of the population regarding what is an ecomuseum, what implies to be, as Davis said, this might lead to a group of isolated activities in the area. However it is important to think about the essential of an ecomuseum in an evaluative way, the main role should be adapting to the social

needs and the efforts made to extend the research and documentary works of its heritage as well as the participation of the community.

Following Ohara (2006: 9-10) the purposes for the future address to the protection and spreading of the diversity of the Peninsula of Miura regarding values such as sustainability and promoting the participation of the community, letting the population feel relevant in their own land. These aims start from the research, the development of educational activities and the link with the community through the social work. The main aim is to make the auto management and auto funding of the museum activities possible, and to achieve a strong interconnected local groups' network. This network, according to Ohara, will start with an active cooperation and a coordinated work between the center of the ecomuseum and the satellites, the first one located in Yokosuka.

New experiences, new challenges.

In addition to the ecomuseums already settled, other experiences were taking place, such as the case of the Prefecture of Kagoshima. The South of the country presents some experiences related to ecomuseums, showing interest for its methodology of cultural and social development in an area where the weather conditions are different from the rest of Japan. It also has an economy based on fishing, agriculture and technological industry, and a population suffering problems of ageing and difficulties to keep young population in rural areas.

One of the examples is the Ecomuseum of Carriageway, where a population of 186 inhabitants with an average of 72 years old created a social committee aiming to revitalize the area through its heritage and stimulating the economy in order to attract young population to the community.

Fukuyama is a place with an important heritage not being used, with an economical activity monopolized for the rice

	KAWASAKI	TAMAGAWA	HIRANO-CHO	TOYO-OKA	MIYAGAWA	CHIGASAKI- HIRATSUKA	TOYA	ASAHI-MACHI	OKU-AIUZU	MIURA. P.	KARAEIGAWA	FUKUYAMA
1. Participation of the community in the ecomuseum management (democratic act)			X			X		X	X	X	X	X
2. The ecomuseum is a democratic act between the community and the civil power			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3. The ecomuseum belongs to a civil power	X	X		X	X	X		X	X			
4. There is a building used as the main center in the ecomuseum	X	X		X	X		X	X		X		
5. Natural Environment				X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
6. Urban Environment	X	X	X			X				X		
7. Natural heritage				X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
8. Traditional Heritage	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
9. Contemporaneous Heritage	X	X	X			X				X		X
10. It includes strong touristic resources				X	X		X	X	X	X		
11. It is created from a need (awareness)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
12. It is created around a theme or topic		X		X	X		X					
13. The participation of the community is important	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
14. The ecomuseum is another institution in the area	X	X		X	X		X					

15. The ecomuseum contributes to the integral development of the area	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
16. The ecomuseum is a symbol for the community			X					X	X	X	X	
17. Use of the community volunteers			X		X			X	X	X	X	X

Vinegar production and a decreasing of young population. The ecomuseal methodology is establishing a way of covering these needs in a medium and-long term¹⁹.

Principles of the japanese ecomuseology. Towards the future

The ecomuseal indicators developed by many authors during their theoretical researches and practical experiences, explained in previous chapters as direct references to analyzed the ecomuseums as unique identities different to other kinds of museistic institutions, have lead to elaborate a list of indicators created after this research in the field of the Japanese ecomuseums. In the following chart the different indicators are presented as characteristics²⁰ appeared in these ecomuseums.

As it has been discuss, the participation of the community in the management and decision making is a feature that appears in every author and in every ecomuseum, reason why here we refer to the degree of compromise between the community and the local governments regarding a democratic management on equal terms. Only in seven of the twelve

¹⁹ This city created in July 2010 the "International Forum on the Ecomuseum in Kirishima" with the participation of the whole community, the enterprises, the political powers and the professionals of the ecomuseums, in order to valuate the possibility and the needs of creating an ecomuseum in that place.

²⁰ It must be considered that some criteria might have different degrees of development due to its qualitative feature, establishing a general pattern in its application.

ecomuseums analyzed it can be noticed an integral participation (or close to integral) of the community in the management of the ecomuseum. The Achilles' heel of the ecomuseums, not only in Japan, continues being to delegate the management of the ecomuseum from the civil powers and the professionals to the organized community. This is the key to create an ecomuseum, since the first initiatives in the creation of an ecomuseal experience begin with reflexion made by the people in the community who move to readjust that adversity. When an ecomuseum gets the support of public and private institutions, the advice and interest of professionals from different disciplines and certain economical stability the community might loose prominence in favour of those who become the financial support of most of the ecomuseal activities. This post-revolutionary or calm moment has let many ecomuseums around the world (Seixal in Portugal, Creusot in France, Maestrazgo in Spain) become a more institutionalized kind of museum²¹.

Many of the studied cases in Japan lead to the idea that the ecomuseum is a part of the territory (nº 14). However, this analysis establishes that the starting point in order to get out of a period of crisis, covering the needs and been able to look towards a future development begins with an ecomuseal philosophy. According to many authors this starting point assumes that the ecomuseum must be a constant action, a continuous social movement, a utopia based of its first moments of the community autarchy, as it can be seen in the Ecomuseum of Hirano. The danger of this system is an

²¹ Some authors, such as Hugues de Varine (2005) think that even the ecomuseum could change its nomenclature although they try to keep its spirit and methodology of ecomuseal work, as it happened in Creusot and Maestrazgo. In Japan some cases can be found in Asahi-Machi or Oku-Aizu, where the first impulse of change, of warning from the community emerged in the late eighties and beginning of the nineties, however the generational change and the effort to eradicate their needs have evolved the ecomuseum to an important institution for the community however not essential for its integral development.

excessive decline of the ecomuseal strength if the action went to the same group of people who initiated the experience and it did not produce awareness, as it is the case of Asahi-Machi, where a generational support is missed in those ones who stimulated the first generation of work over the territory. In many of the cases suffering this situation the ecomuseum is taken over by the administration and it becomes an institution, as we have mentioned before.

The ecomuseum is a democratic act between the community and the civil power. It is a discussion forum for the whole community in equal terms, a place to solve problems and make decisions. This indicator (nº 2) tries to probe if the analyzed ecomuseum are close to a democratic dialogue or, on the other hand the ecomuseum is a space planned by a few with the later participation of the whole community.

The ecomuseum belongs to a civil power. Following the same line of thought of the previous indicator (nº 2), it shows if the decision of creating an ecomuseum in a settled place is a political (from a few) decision of a decision made by the community. The beginning of an ecomuseum involves expenses mainly coming from the public administration, which influence the power of taking decisions and the management for those who are holding the civil power of the community and the territory. In the long run this system makes that the administration of the ecomuseum is inherit from government to government reducing enormously the participation of the community over the management. The community ends to assume that the political powers are the ones who have the rights over the ecomuseum, since they have the civil power. All the Japanese ecomuseums but some exceptions belong to a civil power that is in charge of the administration. This economical survival is not a bad option since it guarantees the continuity of the institution but it is also dangerous from a point of view of political manipulation. The ecomuseum of the Peninsula of Miura and the one in Hirano would be in this group of ecomuseum that have some administrative independence or have get a status quo between the political powers and the ecomuseal actors.

The *centre*²², place for the ecomuseum coordination and surrounded by satellites was a basic model in ten first generations of ecomuseums in France during 1960's and 1970's. In Japan this system of *centre* has been broadly used and most of the ecomuseums show a clear and distinctive place used as a catalyst of the activities. Toyooka, Miyagawa, Asahi-Machi, Kawasaki, the Peninsula of Miura, are some examples. However the evolution of this ecomuseal models these *centers* stop being the catalytic space to become a place for the coordination and meeting of the proposals and needs of the territory and the satellites. The best example of this kind of *centre* is the Ecomuseum of the Peninsula of Miura, where the administrative building of the prefecture located in Yokosuka is the place to hold the meetings and to compile and spread the information of the different satellites but it does not by any case make decisions nor interfere in the policy of the local working groups.

Due to the social and economical evolution of Japan, many ecomuseal experiences from the end of the XX century and the beginning of the XXI century have been developed in urban environments, something atypical compared to other places like Spain, where the ecomuseum has been used only in rural environments.

The creation of ecomuseums in urban and natural areas has increased that the worry of the Japanese ecomuseums focuses on both the recovery of a traditional heritage and the value and appreciation of the most contemporary heritage. In urban spaces, such as the Ecomuseum of Kawasaki and Tamawaga there is a rich contemporaneous culture that can be seen in the adaptation of its neighbourhood, streets and buildings and in the symbiosis between new and fresh ways of expression of the youngest communities, and the rational classicism of many buildings built before 1990's. Other museums, such as the one in Hirano are a perfect example of

²² The word used in the international readings to name this place is *core*, here translated as center, although there are other names, such as heart or nucleus.

the union between the traditional and the contemporaneous. The community has made important efforts to recover all the historical memory through its heritage and at the same time taking care of its contemporaneous heritage that is actually being used (asphalt, adaptation of the streets, cabling, plumbing, etc.) In addition there are ecomuseums where the heritage is mixed like the Ecomuseum of the Peninsula of Miura or the one in Miyagawa.

In every Japanese museum, no matter if they are located in urban places, natural places or a mixture of both there is a palpable worry for the environment. This concern is tightly related to the idea of sustainability. It is not only a concern about the environmental care or the preservation of the unique natural spaces but a concern about the importance of the relation between the natural environment, the territory and the human activity. Some of the ecomuseums are located inside powerful touristic resources as the ones in Miyagawa, the Peninsula of Miura, Toyooka, Toya; or in potential touristic resources as the ones in Oku-Aizu or Asahi-Machi, with rich natural and cultural heritage.²³ Having these resources is a priori beneficial for the development of these places; however it can be detrimental if the ecomuseum is not representative enough in the territory and in the community to make decisions. In any case in the current Japanese ecomuseology the ecomuseums are tools that contribute to the integral development of the community territory in a holistic way in some cases, or with a great implication in the community. In both cases they are considered useful experiences.

One of the main aspects of the ecomuseums is the participation of the community. This factor makes the difference between the ecomuseums and the traditional museums. In the Japanese ecomuseums the participation of the community in the activities is high. Their involvement with the institution is seen as a way of getting to know the place where they live. The only factor in which the Japanese

²³ From these two ecomuseums, Asahi-Machi is the one which has started to use its resources, especially the natural ones, for the winter sports.

ecomuseums needs to continue working is in the participation of the community in the administration and management of the ecomuseums. Hirano, Asahi-Machi, the Peninsula of Miura o Karaigawa are the only examples where this is a reality. In the rest of the institutions administrative managers, professionals related with tourism or social sciences without any relation with the beginnings of the institution are the ones managing these ecomuseums. Although the community has a high involvement, as it has been mentioned before, in most cases this administrative and usually imposed structure slows down an approximation of the spirit of the ecomuseum to the population. The Ecomuseum of the Peninsula of Miura is a good example in breaking this system. Its decentralized working action in local groups has made possible an independence of the different places from the *centre*, what is allowing a dialogue between the dynamizers of the ecomuseums and the population.

The integral development is one of the aspect attempted to fill in every ecomuseum that has been analyzed, thus it has rarely been achieved. However all of them are creating with the idea of a need (awareness) to preserve and research the heritage, to stop the demographic decrease, the social rootlessness and an adverse economical situation. And they are also born in relation with a specific topic or theme that connects with the community and the environment. These criteria are useful to work with the idea of ecomuseum as a reference, a symbol for the community.

Conclusions

After analyzing and concurring both theoretical and practical national and international models and the analytic work made in the Japanese ecomuseal experiences it can be concluded that the creation of an ecomuseal experience begins with a situation of crisis – or needs – from the point of view of losing the community's identity, decreasing of the birth-rate, economical recession or some other paradigms. The accumulation of these factors awakes the concern of a

population or a neighbours' association, which is called a minority associated movement which realizes some actions and activities to activate the social and cultural life of a established community in a given environment.

The concern of these minority movements leads to a continuous policy of awareness towards the different agents of the population and the environment. The society is the main focus of this provocation. The tools for this concern, considered as the key factors for the Japanese ecomuseal model start with the creation of an interrelated network of working groups and with enough freedom to work at their own rate; the integral development of the community following the contemporaneous parameters of sustainability established in the last decades and letting the self-sufficiency of the institution without any dependence that might damage the working groups' network.

It must be notices that one of the beneficial characteristics of the Japanese culture is its power of assimilation and reflexion about the influence of other cultures. In ecomuseological terms it can be observed how the Japanese development is influenced by both the French and English ecomuseal thoughts which adapt to the needs of a specific ecomuseum in a specific moment.

The working group networks are one of the pillars of the Japanese ecomuseal models. A way of decentralized management that implies independence and compromise as well as leave flexibility to the other pillars of the ecomuseums: the critical thought, the interpretation of the environment and the integral development of the society and the environment. From a local point of view (Japan) and in terms of globalization this decentralized and interrelated frame, simulating a spider's web, is one of the contributions that must be taken into account for the ecomuseums of the XXI century.

References

AA.VV. (1998). *Regional Rediscovery and the Ecomuseum* (Special report), Pacific Friend, Jijigaho-Sha, vol. 25, n. 12,

aprile, pp. 18-25.

ARAI J. (1989), Yagaihakubutsukan soron (Overview of Open-Air Museums), in "The Journal of the Museological Society of Japan", vol. 14, nn. 1-2.

CERNY, J (2006). Implementation of the Ecomuseum concept as tool of regional development in current Japan. En Japan Foundation Fellow Final Project Report.

DAVIS, P. (2004), Ecomuseums and the Democratization of Japanese Museology, in "International Journal of Heritage Studies", vol. 10, n. 1, marzo, pp. 93-110.

DAVIS, P (2007). Ecomuseums and sustainability in Italy, Japan and China: concept adaptation through implementation. En KENLL, S.J., MACLEOD, S. and WATSON, S (ed.) (2007). Museum Revolutions. How museums change and are changed. Routledge, Londrés y Nueva York.

JOUBERT, A (1999). De la France au Japon: les Ecomusées. Ponencia para el Simposio de Ecomuseologia Asahi-Machi (1995). Publicado en la revista JECOMS, nº2, 1999.12.

MIZUSHIMA, Eiji (1989). Qu'est-ce qu'un "musée intelligent"? Le point de vue d'un Japonais. Museum International, Vol. XLJ n O 4, 1989, p. 241-243.

OHARA, K (1998). The Image of 'Ecomuseum' in Japan (a founder member of JECOMS (Japan Ecomuseological Society), and Professor, Department of Architecture, Yokohama National University) this article was on vol.25 no.12, pp.26-27, Pacific Friends, Jijigaho-sha, 1998.4.

OHARA, K (1999). Ecomuseum heno tabi (Journey to Ecomuseums), Kajima publishing, p. 12.

OHARA, K; YANAGIDA, A (2004). Ecomuseums in current Japan. Ecomuseum network of Miura Peninsula. Ponencia presentada para el III EIEMC (Third International Conference of Ecomuseums and Community Museums) en Río de Janeiro, 2004.

OHARA, K; YANAGIDA, A (2004). Gli ecomusei nel Giappone di oggi: i presupposti e la visione. En Maurizio Maggi (a cura di) (2004), Quaderni di Ricerca 108. Museo e Cittadinanza Condividere il patrimonio culturale per promuovere la

partecipazione e la formazione civica. Istituto di Ricerche Economico-Sociali del Piemonte, Piemonte (Italia)

OHARA, K; YANAGIDA, A (2004). L'ecomuseo della penisola di Miura: come costruire un modello reticolare. En Maurizio Maggi (a cura di) (2004), Quaderni di Ricerca 108. Museo e Cittadinanza Condividere il patrimonio culturale per promuovere la partecipazione e la formazione civica. Istituto di Ricerche Economico-Sociali del Piemonte, Piemonte (Italia).

OHARA, K (2005). Ecomuseums in Japan today. En el Congreso Internacional de Ecomuseos: Communication and Exploration.

OHARA, K (2008). What have we learnt and should we learn from Scandinavian Ecomuseums? A study on museological way to make sustainable community. Journal of Japan Ecomuseological Society, nº 13, 2008. P: 43-51.

TSURUTA, S. (1974), ICOM shizenshi hakubutsukan kokusai iinkai nikki (Diary of International Committee of Natural History Museums ICOM), Hakubutsukan kenkyu, pp. 9-10.

About the author:

Oscar Navaja is Lecturer and coordinator of the Programme in Cultural Management at the University Antonio Nebrija, Spain. He is Vice-Chairman of the Asociación Espacios para la Memoria (EPM) for the management and the interpretation of the heritage of the Civil War. PhD candidate in Museology at the Alcalá de Henares University, Spain.