

Kelman, I. 2005. "Vulnerability, Heritage, and Sustainability for the Faroe Islands". Presentation at Learning Lessons from Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Island Development, London, U.K., 18 February 2005.

Presentation abstract:

This work examines sustaining small islands through managing vulnerabilities to their heritage. The Faroe Islands, an autonomous region of Denmark in the North Sea, is used as a case study. Despite a rich and varied heritage along with strong pride and interest in preserving that heritage, the main vulnerability experienced by the Faroes is emigration which has drained the population and skill base. Using Faroese heritage to create on-island opportunities is one approach which should be considered, although potentially detrimental consequences could result and should be analysed beforehand.

Two examples are used. The island of Koltur has some exceptional remains of the old Norse building tradition and could be turned into a living museum. Issues of isolation and facilities must be overcome without altering the islands character or environment. The bird cliffs of Vestmanna illustrate how the use of heritage to generate livelihoods might damage the heritage, but further suggest that simple solutions are feasible.

Both examples indicate practical ways forward for managing small island heritage in order to reduce vulnerability and to enhance sustainability. At a more general level, a principle might be emerging related to a possible steady state of a "sustainability-insularity cycle" where an island oscillates between increased sustainability and increased isolation without managing to achieve an appropriate balance of both sustainability and insularity.

Thanks to the U.K.s National Trust, the National Tourist office in the Faroes, and Mentamálaráðið (Ministry of Culture) who supported this work.