

DIRECTIONS OF APPLICATION OF THE ECO-MUSEUM APPROACH TO THE CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE EAST ZANGEZUR REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

I. BAYRAMOV, S. PASHAYEVA

Imran Bayramov¹, Sona Pashayeva²

^{1,2} Baku State University, Baku, Azerbaijan

¹ <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5922-6870>, E-mail: imranbayramov2003@mail.ru

² <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5537-9520>, E-mail: sonapasha029@gmail.com

Abstract: *The article analyzes the features of the creation of eco-museums in world practice and its application for the organization of eco-museums in the reconstructed East Zangezur region of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The functions of eco-museums in conservation of the natural and cultural heritage and their role in the development of regional tourism are described in detail, and 5 pilot zones in the corresponding administrative districts of Eastern Zangezur are proposed for the creation of eco-museums. The authors compared the corresponding indicators characterizing eco-museums and natural and cultural features of the region and gave a description of the development of potentially privileged areas of the region's tourism sector.*

Keywords: *eco-museums, ecotourism clusters, natural heritage, cultural heritage, eco-friendly approaches, nature-based solutions, tourism, East Zangezur, Azerbaijan, tourism destinations*

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Azerbaijan has a huge potential of natural and cultural resources, which in turn constitute the resource base for the development of the tourism and recreation sector of the economy. At the current stage of the country's socio-economic development and the adoption of national priorities for sustainable development, the topic of developing new, more sustainable and nature-based types of tourism is becoming increasingly relevant. One of these types of tourism is ecotourism.

The ecotourism approach is one of the most sustainable types of tourism. It includes the introduction of tourism management, the organization of tourist trips and other tourist activities, which again emphasizes the importance of the rational and optimal use of natural resources and contributes to the moral and physical recreation of tourists in nature and increased attention to the preservation of natural heritage.

The eco-museum approach, which emerged in the last century, has found its successful application in the restoration of territories after a long war, including the social participation of local communities and indigenous people in the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage

DIRECTIONS OF APPLICATION OF THE ECO-MUSEUM APPROACH TO THE CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE EAST ZANGEZUR REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

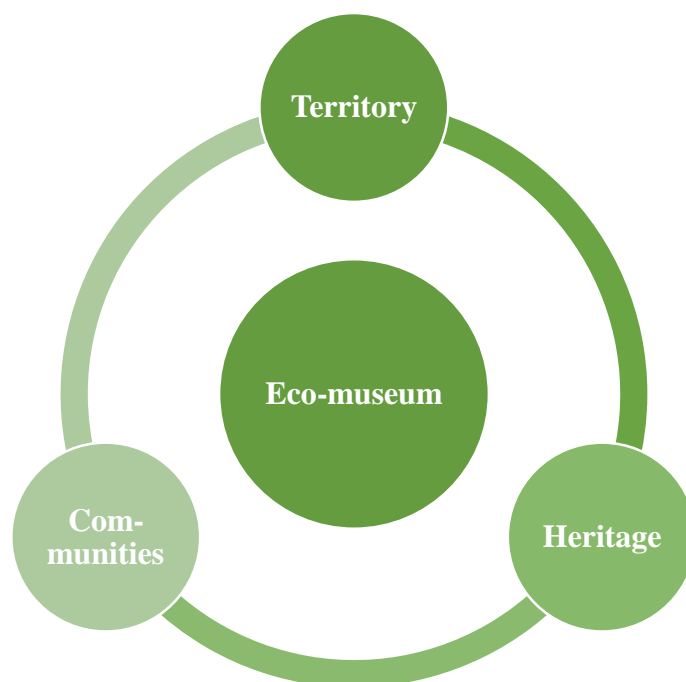
of a particular area. An eco-museum combines the life and culture of local communities and reflects the natural, ecological, cultural and historical features of the area.

This is a unique and inimitable type of creating natural and cultural monuments. Synthesizing nature with culture, eco-museums are an important object that has enormous tourist-attractive potential.

METHODOLOGY

Eco-museums have huge conservation power, which consists in preserving and maintaining the territory, natural and cultural heritage, as well as the characteristics of local communities. Eco-museums play a role not only in the development of tourism, but also in the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the region. Eco-museums are places or structures where culture meets nature, customs meet modernity, and traditions meet innovation. In this regard, eco-museums have enormous conservative power (*Figure 1*) (Badia et al., 2023; Doğan, 2019; Doğan et al., 2019).

Figure 1
Conservation power of eco-museums



In terms of restoring settlements and resettling the population in newly created and reconstructed territories, the issue of employment of the population arises. Considering the nature of the settlement, as well as the resource potential of the territory of the East Zangezur economic region, the creation of tourist and recreational zones (TRZ) and the corresponding infrastructure here is advisable in terms of socio-economic sustainability.

The eco-museum concept can be well reflected in the plan of tourist representation of a separate village. The creation of open access eco-museums primarily forms the landmark of the territory and increases its tourist attractiveness.

Eco-museums and the infrastructure created around them will serve as a center for the development of local businesses of small and medium-sized enterprises. The concept of creating and developing eco-museums contributes to the formation of individual eco-tourism clusters (ETC) in the region (Figure 2). Considering that the economic region consists of five administrative districts, 5 pilot territories were selected at the first stage of creating eco-museums (Table 1) (Pasternak, 2018).

Figure 2

Cluster approach in the development of eco-museums in East Zangezur

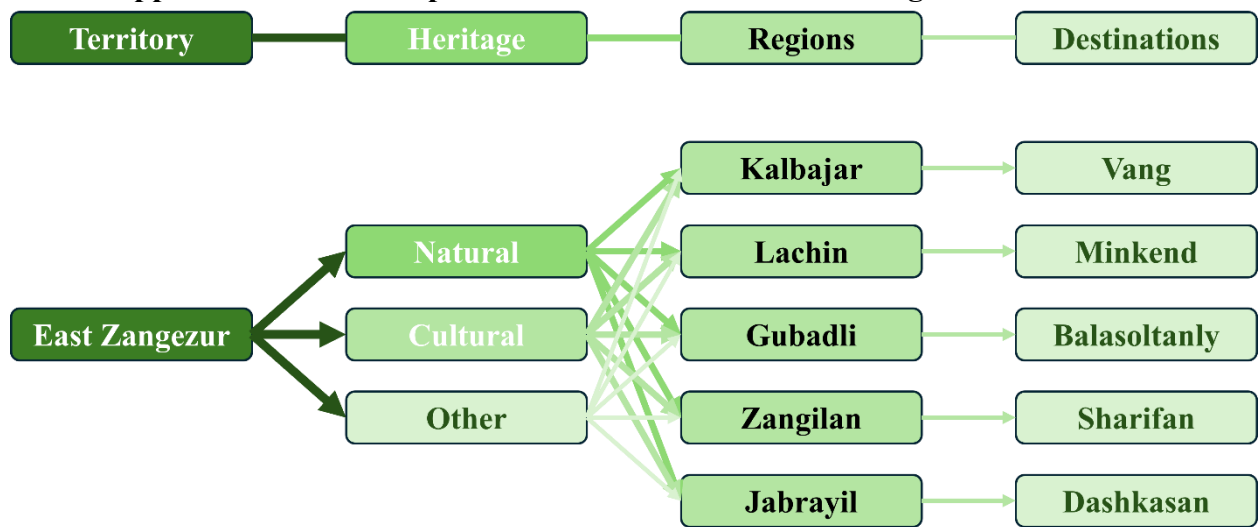


Table 1

Suitable places for the establishment of eco-museums in the administrative districts of East Zangezur

№	Planned location	Administrative district	Distance from the city center	Distance from the nearest airport	Population
1.	Vang	Kalbajar	29 km	51 km	150–200
2.	Minkend	Lachin	43 km	58 km	250–300
3.	Balasoltanly	Gubadli	23 km	35 km	200–250
4.	Sharifan	Zangilan	22 km	15 km	150–200
5.	Dashkasan	Jabrayil	11 km	29 km	150–200

The above-mentioned destinations have a huge natural and cultural heritage and can combine the ecological and cultural-historical interests of tourists regarding the customs and traditions of local communities (Figure 3). The development of villages and small settlements will be characterized by “reverse migration” in the region, which will contribute to maintaining

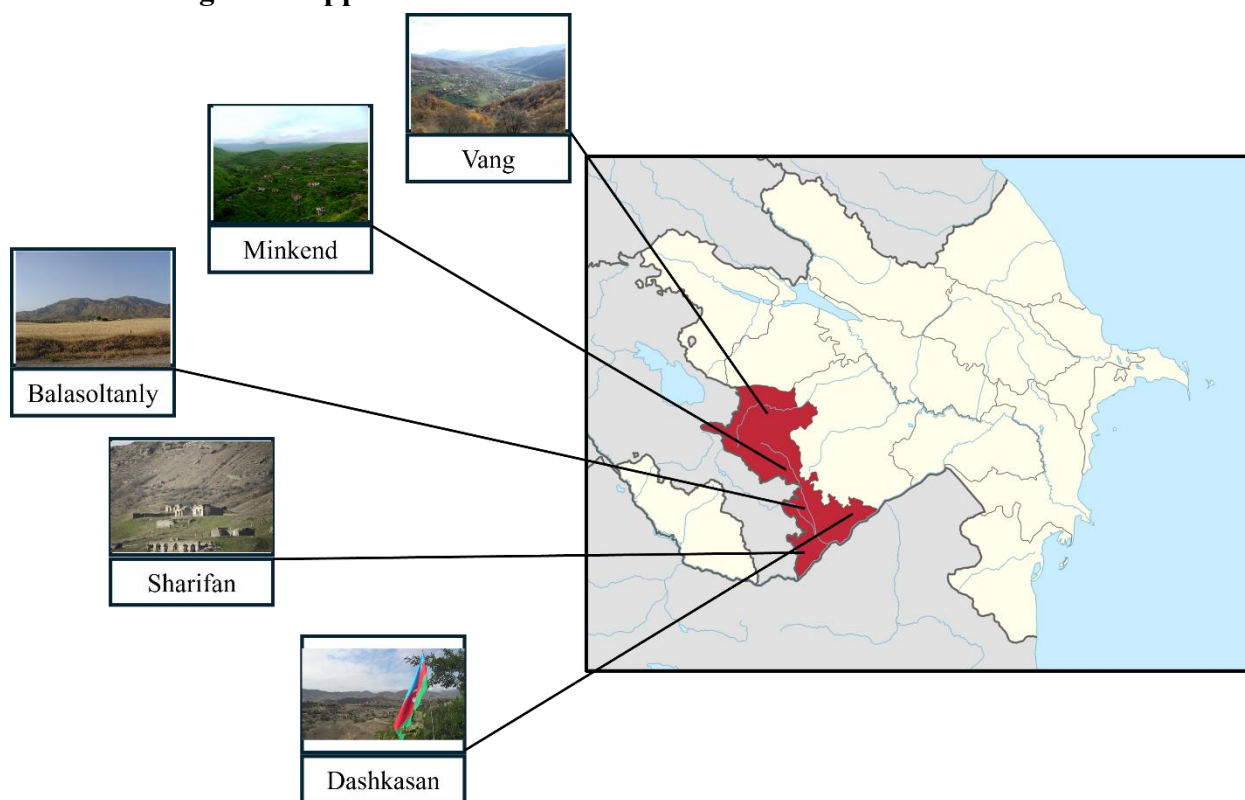
DIRECTIONS OF APPLICATION OF THE ECO-MUSEUM APPROACH TO THE CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE EAST ZANGEZUR REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

the socio-economic stability and independence of local communities. The significant eco- and agrotourism potential of the region is a stimulating factor for the development of nature-based tourism, including the use of the eco-museum approach (Navajas Corral et al., 2022; Simeoni et al., 2018).

It should be noted that the development of small settlements in the plan for the reconstruction of the region will be carried out in accordance with the state program “Great Return” and the unification of several settlements, considering their historical, geographical and social features. This will create the opportunity to attract an even larger segment of tourists and increase the number of stakeholders interested in the development of eco-museums, eco-, agro- and rural tourism (Bayramov et al., 2024; Pavlis, 2024).

The selected pilot settlements have favorable natural, cultural, agricultural and socio-demographic characteristics for the application of the eco-museum approach.

Figure 3
Location and general appearance of eco-museums



The criteria for selecting sites for the establishment of eco-museums were chosen based on international approaches and considering local historical and geographical conditions:









































- (1) The presence of historical and cultural monuments or ruins with a known history of origin or legends are of interest to visitors;
- (2) The presence of a set of interconnected and interdependent natural landscape ecosystems that are intact or slightly altered by anthropogenic and technogenic impacts;

- (3) The presence of identified species of animals and plants that are characteristic of a given region (area) and that are capable of maintaining their vital functions under current environmental circumstances;
- (4) The presence of traditional cultural and everyday customs of local communities and the identification of their preservation and ability to be passed on from one generation to next;
- (5) Assessment of the tourist and recreational potential of a given region (settlement) and establishment of its accessibility in terms of transport, tourist routes, and hiking trips. (Belliggiano et al., 2021; Buczek-Kowalik et al., 2013)

Regarding the organization and management of eco-museums, it should be noted that state support is needed for the restoration and renovation of both settlements and individual infrastructure components that are closely related to tourism activities. In this regard, support and encouragement from small and medium-sized businesses for their independent initial functioning in the region is necessary. In addition, it should be noted that stakeholders are not only the state and entrepreneurs, but also representatives of local communities and organizers of tourist trips.

Table 2 shows the presence/absence of relevant indicators that characterize the tourist attractiveness of the location of eco-museums:

Table 2
Presence/absence of indicators characterizing the tourist attractiveness of the location of eco-museums

№	Indicator	Vang	Minkend	Balasoitanly	Sharifan	Dashkasan
1.	Interdistrict highway					
2.	Intra-district road communication					
3.	Flowing rivers					
4.	Standing river / Dry-river valley					
5.	Lake or reservoir					
6.	Attractive landscapes					
7.	Forests and shrubs					
8.	Historical monuments					

RESULTS

*DIRECTIONS OF APPLICATION OF THE ECO-MUSEUM APPROACH TO THE
CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE EAST
ZANGEZUR REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN*

The study concluded that eco-museums, as attractive landmarks, can accelerate the development of local and regional tourism in terms of heritage, cultural and ecological tourism. They are also able to accelerate and promote the socio-economic and infrastructural development of local communities and small settlements.

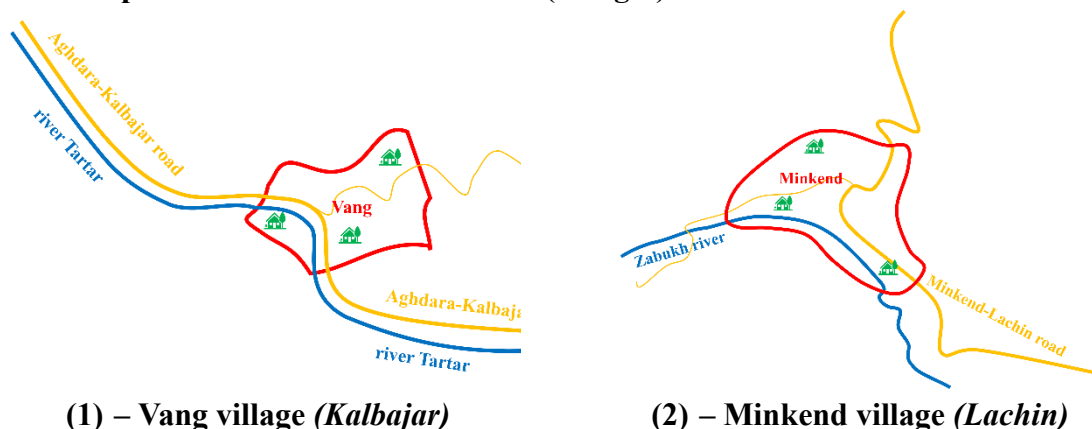
On the other hand, eco-museums are effective for self-employment of the rural population, as well as the formation of small and medium-sized business entities in the territory. It is worth noting the role of the development of individual rural areas in the diversification and, especially, decentralization of the regional and national economy of the country. And the fact that with the development of tourist services and products, the share of the tertiary sector in the structure of economic activity will grow again emphasizes the sustainable and social orientation of this idea. Eco-museums are practical, and suitable tourist approaches in the territory of the East Zangezur economic region. This region has an ancient history and many cultural and natural monuments to attract the attention of tourists.

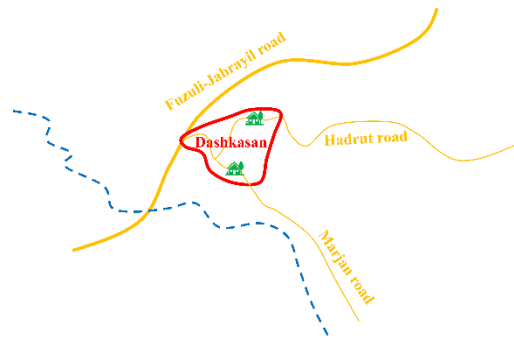
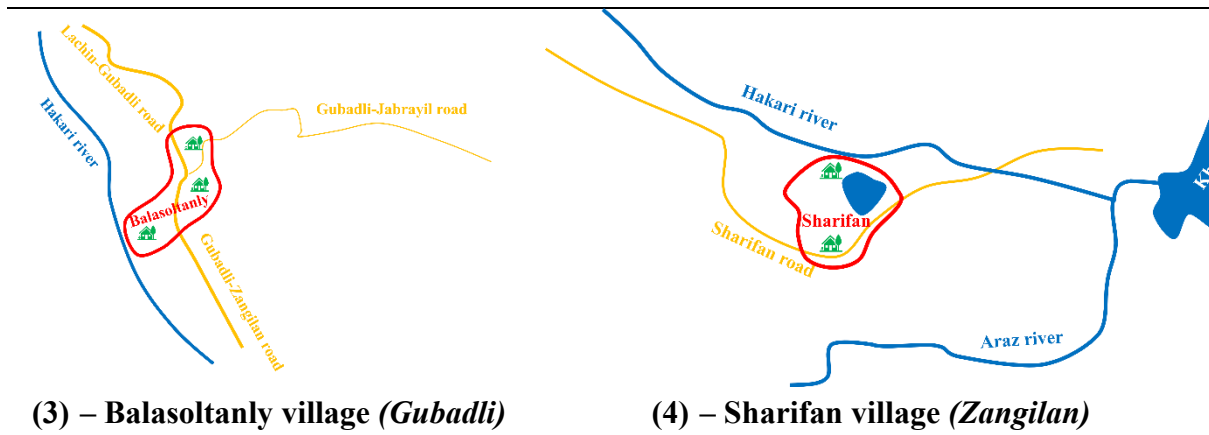
In addition, the region serves as a natural habitat for many rare species of plants and animals that live both in Azerbaijan and throughout the Lesser Caucasus, which creates an anthropogenically untouched terrestrial ecosystem for the habitat and residence of the living world. This contributes to the development of ecotourism and the maintenance of the biodiversity of the region.

Figure 4 shows mind maps of areas where we consider it favorable to create eco-museums. Common to all five points is the presence of a river or river system (including a former watercourse valley) in the immediate vicinity, the location of points on the main and connecting inter-district automobile routes, as well as the presence of an intra-district road and communication network for better accessibility for tourists and the population.

In addition, all these locations have the corresponding historical, cultural, natural and ecological potential for the creation of ecotourism clusters or eco-villages to attract more tourists, as well as supporting sustainable socio-economic development of the population and the balance of natural ecosystems in terms of implementing state policy in the field of greening and the use of “green production” in these territories (Bayramov et al., 2024).

Figure 4
Mind maps of eco-museum destinations (villages)





It should be noted that the promotion of eco-friendly projects and nature-based solutions contributes to the development of responsible tourism, which corresponds to the conceptual foundations of the development of tourism services at the current stage.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Following from the above arguments, it can be said that the most appropriate thing is to reconstruct the historical quarters of these settlements and organize an eco-museum in these streets (quarters) of the villages. It is advisable to display examples of local art and craftsmanship in eco-museums to ensure their tourist appeal and to support the work of eco-museums. Weekly master classes for children and schoolchildren, as well as enthusiasts who are interested in arts and creativity, can be organized here.

Eco-museums can also play the role of a culinary center, where, apart from historical and cultural values, samples of folk cuisine will be baked. This will turn eco-museums into popular centers for the everyday social and public activity of the rural population, as well as tourists visiting this region.

To integrate eco-museums with nature, it is advisable to identify its landscape design with the landscapes of the territory, which will ensure a smooth visual-aesthetic transition and contrast between landscape units.

All this will lead to the development of tourism in the region in the following aspects:

- (i) **Historical tourism** will once again acquire its appearance and will be reflected in historical monuments and elements of eco-museums and adjacent areas;

*DIRECTIONS OF APPLICATION OF THE ECO-MUSEUM APPROACH TO THE
CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE EAST
ZANGEZUR REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN*

- (ii) Favorable conditions will be created for the development of **cultural tourism** from the point of view of encouraging the socio-cultural values of local communities and small ethnic groups;
- (iii) Development of **gastronomic tourism** associated with national dishes and baked goods of the inhabiting peoples;
- (iv) Natural and **ecological tourism** will be reflected in landscape and ecological design and planning of neighborhoods in harmony with the natural environment;
- (v) **Rural tourism** will be reflected in the customs and skills of the local population, as well as in the local climate conditions favorable for agriculture;
- (vi) **Creative tourism** will be represented by elements of art and folk crafts;
- (vii) **Sustainable and regenerative tourism** will be reflected both in the combination of the above factors and in low-carbon and nature-based tourism activities (Ghorbanzadeh, 2018; Moreno Mendoza et al., 2021).

REFERENCES

1. Badia, F., & Donato, F. (2023, October 26). Management Perspectives for Ecomuseums Effectiveness: a Holistic Approach to Sociocultural Development of Local Areas. *European Journal of Cultural Management and Policy*, 1-13. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/ejcmp.2023.11851>
2. Bayramov, İ. A., & Paşayeva, S. V. (2024). "Yaşıl dünya naminə həmərlük: karbonsuz istehsal, dayanıqlı inkişaf, innovativ texnologiyalar" mövzusunda Respublika elmi-praktik konfransı. *Azərbaycanda sağlamliq turizminin inkişaf etdirilməsində dünya təcrübəsinin tətbiqi imkanları* (ss. 308-320). Bakı:Füyuzat. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/380375593_Azərbaycanda_saglamliq_turizminin_inkisaf_etdirilmsind_dunya_tcrubsinin_ttbiqi_imkanlari_Possibilities_of_applying_world_experience_in_the_development_of_health_tourism_in_Azerbaijan?_tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7Im mənbədən tapılıb
3. Belliggiano, A., Bindi, L., & Ievoli, C. (2021, August 8). Walking along the Sheeptrack... Rural Tourism, Ecomuseums, and Bio-Cultural Heritage. *Sustainability*, 13(16), 1-22. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/su13168870>
4. Buczek-Kowalik, M., Mitura, T., & Klamár, R. (2013). Ekomuzea – nowy produkt turystyczny na przykładzie ekomuzeum Hołe. *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska sectio B – Geographia Geologia Mineralogia et Petrographia*, LXVIII(1), 57-68. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.2478/v10066-012-0028-1>
5. Doğan, M. (2019, August). The Ecomuseum and Solidarity Tourism: a Case Study from Northeast Turkey. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, 9(4), 537-552. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JCHMSD-12-2017-0086>
6. Doğan, M., & Timothy, D. (2019, March 26). Beynod Tourism and Taxes: the Ecomuseum and Social Development in the Ak-Chin Tribal Community. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 18(2), 133-149. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2019.1593994>

7. Ghorbanzadeh, M. (2018, June). Rural Tourism Entrepreneurship Survey with Emphasis on Eco-museum Concept. *Civil Engineering Journal*, 4(6), 1403-1414. doi:10.28991/cej-0309181
8. Moreno Mendoza, H., Parreño-Castellano, J., & Ubierna Expósito, C. (2021, January). The Ecomuseum as a Space for the Activation of Governance Processes. Co-management of Heritage in Responsible Tourism Management. *PASOS Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 19(4), 633-654. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.25145/j.pasos.2021.19.042
9. Navajas Corral, O., & Fernández Fernández, J. (2022). The Importance of Ecomuseums and Local Knowledge for a Sustainable Future: the La Ponte-Ecomuseu Project. In Collective, N. Borelli, P. Davis, & R. Dal Santo (Eds.), *Ecomuseums and Climate Change* (pp. 283-302). Milano, Italy: Ledizioni LediPublishing. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368756575_The_importance_of_ecomuseums_and_local_knowledge_for_a_sustainable_future_the_La_Ponte-Ecomuseu_project
10. Pasternak, T., & Verba, V. (2018, May 20). Pilgrimage Sites in Slovakia as the Base for the Formation of Ecomuseums – Case Study of Lutina Pilgrimage Site (Slovakia). *Geographica Pannonica*, 22(2), 139-149. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.5937/22-16619
11. Pavlis, E. (2024, July 31). The Ecomuseum as a Platform for Territorial Development: the Case of Greek Ecomuseums. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 1-18. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2024.2386695
12. Simeoni, F., & De Crescenzo, V. (2018, March 15). Ecomuseums (on Clean Energy), Cycle Tourism and Civic Crowdfunding: A New Match for Sustainability? *Sustainability*, 10(3), 1-16. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/su10030817