

Landscapes of Development

1.0

Archipelago 136



INSTITUTE
OF DESIGN
INNOVATION
THE GLASGOW
SCHOOL OF ART

The Creative Futures Partnership (CFP)

The CFP is a pioneering partnership between The Glasgow School of Art (GSA) and the Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE). It has been established to deliver transformational benefits for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

The CFP combines the GSA's strengths in creativity and innovation with HIE's economic and community development expertise. Through research and teaching programmes the partnership is committed to the long-term and sustainable development of a creative, entrepreneurial and internationally connected region.

This booklet is one of three short publications that explores the work that the Institute of Design Innovation (InDI) created within the geographical region of the Hebrides. It develops the themes of 'Innovation from the Edge' through its creative research and teaching programmes.

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"The GSA's skills and resources have strengthened Ionad Hiort's creative thinking, technical knowledge and community confidence while St Kilda has been an exciting way to introduce InDI's new campus to the islands."

Malcolm MacLean
Chairman of UNESCO Scotland, and adviser to
the St Kilda Centre, Isle of Lewis





A —
View from St. Kilda.

B —
John MacIvor, Ionad
Hiort group member.

C —
InDI researcher
Fergus Fullarton-Pegg
with Iain Buchanan,
chairman of Ionad
Hiort.



The Beginning

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Innovation from the Edge

'Innovation from the Edge' is an underpinning research theme of InDI. Here, our proposal is that change will emerge from the edges of our country.

According to a 'hub and spoke' model, areas like the Western Isles and Shetland are far away from 'civilisation'. These regions have a rich and diverse cultural legacy. There is no cultural deficit, in fact there is a cultural asset.

We believe that radical innovation will come from these areas. This is particularly true with the rise of digital technology, which can have a transformational quality in remote communities, allowing huge leaps in knowledge to be made.

We seek to recognize and protect this richness of culture and heritage. Within this research theme, we look at the 'edges' and explore how interesting and transformational learnings can be of benefit to both rural and urban areas.

During the early months of 2014, a group from the Institute of Design Innovation travelled to Uig in the west of Lewis to meet the St Kilda Centre community group (or Ionad Hiort in Gaelic). We had been asked by Rachael McCormack, the Director of Strengthening Communities at Highlands and Islands Enterprise to meet with Ionad Hiort to explore how we could help and work with each other. We have since developed a close working relationship with the group.

This relationship is the foundation of the Design Innovation research and teaching programme, Archipelago 136, which responds to Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam's research theme 'Innovation from the Edge'. Ionad Hiort is developing an iconic and world-class centre to celebrate the story of St Kilda to local, national and international audiences. Initially, we worked with the group to help develop the vision and strategy of this centre, which will sit on the cliff tops of Mangurstadh, Lewis.

Now, a vibrant portfolio of teaching and research projects has been developed, inspired by Hebridean culture and themes around island life, of which this booklet outlines.



Enabling Capabilities

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Ionad Hiort (The St Kilda Centre)

A key purpose of this centre on the edge of Isle of Lewis is to bring people to this remote region: to live, visit, work and study. The group hope the centre will regenerate and renew their own local community, as well as other fragile communities across the Hebrides.

St Kilda is an archipelago of islands, which protrudes defiantly from the unforgiving waters of the North Atlantic some 40 miles from Lewis. It was home to the St Kildans who lived there until they were evacuated in 1936. By this point the community had declined significantly leaving an ageing population. With fewer young people, life on St Kilda had become very difficult to sustain.

The story of St Kilda is a story of human survival in extreme conditions. It is a story that has captured the imaginations of travellers, artists and poets for centuries. While the story may now be historical, the themes within it still echo through into contemporary life. InDI's collaboration with Ionad Hiort and the Uig community has provided a meaningful platform to develop Archipelago 136.

The relationship that has developed over the course of two years has seen a variety of outputs including a clear strategy and mission statement for Ionad Hiort. It has also seen an evolution of what design innovation can do in developing not only institutional relationships but community landscapes.

Of particular note, were the series of open workshops where challenging questions revolving around strategy, community, and looking 'beyond the museum' all catalysed in what we call 'enabling capabilities' within a community. As Malcolm Maclean has stated about the collaboration, the ongoing relationship gave the group, 'a chance to be able to test out our own thinking ... on some very bright people who have taken a very serious interest in the project.'

Through these formal and informal interactions, the work with Ionad Hiort has recently focused on the creation of a prospectus that will assist the group in developing their new type of heritage centre. We see our relationship developing further towards the edge of innovation.

A —
During one of the
'strategy' workshops
on Uig with Ionad
Hiort.



The Archipelago 136 programme

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Celtic mythology, Viking settlement and land clearance feature prominently in the historical narrative of the Hebrides. More contemporary concerns include depopulation, tourism dependency, and industrial decline. Responding to this complex context, InDI's Archipelago 136 programme investigates the possible contributions of Design Innovation to the development and sustainability of the Hebrides' distributed rural communities.

In Archipelago 136, we use Design Innovation to help express the unique cultures of island life through our ideas of 'innovation from the edge'. We continue our research begun with Ionad Hiort with other distributed communities of the Hebrides. In it we explore ways to build resilient, creative and confident communities and partnerships.



A —
A session during the Winter School 2016 held at the Creative Campus, Forres.

B —
John, a local labourer on the Isle of Lewis.

C —
A view along one of single track roads near Clachan Sands, North Uist.



Digital Makers

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Digital Makers investigates the impact digital manufacturing technologies – such as 3D printers – could have on the future of creative practitioners and rural manufacturing. Invoking the innovation from the edge ethos, we work with practitioners to experiment with new forms of ‘making’ using traditional and new technologies: designing and making artefacts that uncover the possibilities of new technologies for rural creative enterprises.

— Research to date:

In the first phase of the research, we worked extensively with creative individuals in the Highlands and Islands to explore the potential for new technology in their creative practices. We engaged with communities of practitioners to experiment with new technologies in practical workshops and disseminated our research through talks and symposium events. The research generated so far has been presented at a national conference and is currently under peer review for an international journal.

Currently, the project is recruiting for the first Digital Makers commission – an award of £750 for a group or individual to explore using digital technology to develop new products. This is a collaboration between a Highlands and Islands creative, a network of maker spaces, and the InDI team.


— The Future:

As the research moves further into the second phase, it will create two more commissions to explore the potential of digital technology, and continue to engage with the creative community through workshops and pop-up events.

The next events will be a 3D print workshop and pop-up maker space developed as part of the XPO North technology playground and workshop series. By the end of this next phase in 2016, the project aims to develop an exhibition and symposium to showcase research so far. We also seek to engage the public in our research; develop a strategy for technology transfer to highland and island creative industries; and present work internationally through conferences and journal publication.

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A —
Digital making
in action



**'It was so interesting to see
the process, and having
the chance to develop a test
piece was really exciting.'**

Participant in a Digital Maker event



A —
The artist gathering a natural fungus on Lewis to make a manuscript dye for the Songlines artwork



B —
The current stage of the final artwork to be inaugurated on the Stornoway-Ullapool ferry crossing.

Inspired from the work with Ionad Hiort, Songlines is a collaborative project between An Lanntair arts centre in Stornoway and InDI. Through local artist and GSA student collaboration, Songlines seeks to create an aspirational artistic journey from Stornoway to Uig, the home of the proposed St Kilda centre.

Six pieces of art will be placed along the route, creating a new island destination. The idea for Songlines was developed during consultancy work commissioned by Ionad Hiort.

— Work to date:

In January 2016, the Songlines panel selected Thomas Keyes for the inaugural commission. Thomas had proposed a contemporary illuminated manuscript. Once selected, he was teamed up with a GSA Design Innovation post-graduate student Mhairi Creanor. Mhairi was selected on the basis that she held a deep local knowledge of Lewis and was able to readily engage in the subject.

In March 2016, Thomas and Mhairi traveled to Lewis, where they met with their local partner Catherine Maclean. During the trip they traveled the route a number of times and engaged with the community in Uig, Callanish and Gearrannan. At the end of this trip Thomas and the student had agreed upon a final approach for the artwork.

— Developments to date:

So far, a highly attractive contemporary manuscript which references the history and ecology of the Stornoway-Uig route has been created. In conjunction with Caledonian-MacBrayne, it has been agreed that this artwork will appear on the Ullapool-Stornoway ferry for the duration of the summer. The artist-student collaboration has been very successful, and both a high-quality artwork and productive partnerships have been developed over a relatively short period.

— The future:

The second call for a Songlines artist has been issued and a second panel took place in May. Through the remainder of 2016, formal communication of the project will continue, with regular press releases and social media updates will be issued. Research relating to the value of Songlines is ongoing.

The art pieces are commissioned in collaboration between Bealach, a two-year cultural initiative being led by An Lanntair, and InDI's Songlines in partnership with development agency Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Bealach runs throughout 2015–2017 with funding secured through winning Creative Scotland's Creative Place Awards 2015.

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Embedded Teaching

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Winter School 2016

Hebridean culture and themes around island life have been embedded within our teaching curriculum throughout the Design Innovation Masters programmes. These are integral to not only continue our 'Innovation from the edge' ideas but to link across the GSA's teaching programmes.

Led by InDI, the GSA's Seasonal Schools in the Highlands and Islands are an example of our progressive teaching modes. Research and teaching carried out during the schools benefits organisations and communities in the region, as well as students on our programmes.

The Winter School 2016 brought together more than 80 students and academics from three European Schools, as well as business and community leaders, and art and design practitioners to our campus in the Highlands and Islands.

Students from Köln International School of Design (KISD) and Copenhagen's KADK (The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Schools of Architecture, Design and Conservation) joined their GSA counterparts to explore the theme Island Life: Designing Research Questions, which kick-started a research project focusing on the Scottish Hebridean islands

Students investigated the culture of the Hebrides and spoke with islanders to identify ways in which design can improve life across the islands. The students looked at issues as varied as transport, health & wellbeing, cultural life and tourism.

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A —

Our teaching programmes engage debate and creative discourse here in the studios and outwith in the Highland communities.

Student Work

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InDI's students and faculty work with technology corporations, local communities and academic institutions around the globe to create, develop and share new and preferable futures. Their outcomes propose alternative visions of how humanity and technology might interact born from real-life research and a desire to imagine change. Within the A136 programme, research themes and questions around Hebridean and island life have been embedded in the curriculum.

— Student projects so far:

Ten student teams have each worked on a discrete group project, which all aim to respond to a unique aspect of the culture and geography of the Hebrides. Each project outcome contains a proposal or set of proposals for how a given context (e.g. crofting, community-led democracy, outdoor recreation) might be positively reconfigured for the benefit of specific stakeholder communities (e.g. teenagers, young families, the elderly).

— Work to date:

Starting in Winter School and continuing over a twelve-week period, each student team has carried forward and investigated a specific pre-determined theme relating to the islands (e.g. landscape and history). Through the duration of the project, they conducted extensive desk research,

interviewed locals and national experts and have recently made field visits to the islands. Through these field visits, groups have visited almost every major island in the Outer Hebrides chain, including Lewis, Harris, North and South Uist and Barra. At each location they engaged with local communities through workshops at large venues (e.g. Taigh Chearsabhagh in Uist) or speaking informally with local champions (e.g. youth workers in Barra). Through these field visits students were able to design final project outcomes to be presented in May.

— Learnings so far:

Students have exhibited a remarkable ability to sensitively engage in contexts which present unique and unfamiliar challenges. A strategy for conducting future Highlands and Islands student projects has now been successfully developed.

— The future:

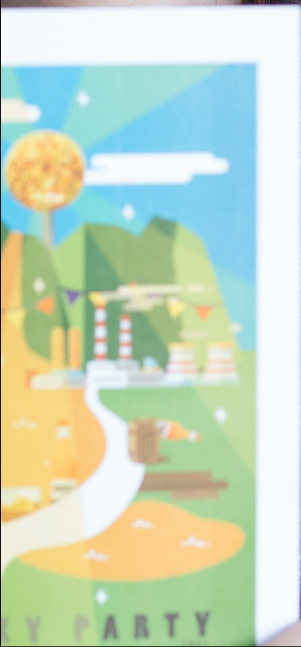
Students submit their projects in early May. A one-day exhibition of student work hosted at the GSA will follow. Talks are underway with An Lanntair looking at the possibility of taking this exhibition to the Hebrides in the late summer.

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"Bringing international students and academics together is a productive and innovative way of tackling the challenges facing the Highlands and Islands."

David Oxley
Highlands and Islands Enterprise Area Manager





Island Bearings

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Over the last two years, from nascent connections in Uig to embedding students within the islands, our work with the Hebridean communities has flourished and will continue to develop. Pushing forward the ideas of 'Innovation from the Edge', we imagine our research and teaching to foment a sense of creative community development.

Since then our research has evolved towards a creative socio-cultural programme called Islands Bearings. It explores the themes of the future of island heritage through the innovative use narratives, co-production, and digital tools. This is to challenge not only existing traditional ways of heritage practices, but also, seek out alternatives to the ways that visitor and islander work together. Through this, the programme focuses on how heritage is practised and constructed and recover how island identity is revealed, questioned, and sought within these island communities.

We ask the question:

How can island communities develop strategies that incorporate robust and innovative solutions to generating contemporary Hebridean heritage?

Currently, this project covers the ongoing work of Ionad Hiort on the Isle of Lewis, and the developing relationships on North and South Uist. We have begun collaborations with regional arts and heritage centres such as Taigh Chearsabagh in North Uist embedding our student projects into the communities.

Further work is planned for the research programme of working in conjunction with various communities across the Outer Hebrides. This is to include the groups of Stòras Uibhist Community Trust, and Ceolas which will hopefully improve tourist and islander relations by developing creative social enterprises.

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A —
A postcard making session exploring the themes of landscape identity and perception.





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Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean

CREATIVE FUTURES PARTNERSHIP

