This paper focuses on my experiences working with Fogo Island Arts and the Shorefast Foundation between 2010-2014. Fogo Island (Newfoundland, Canada) presents a compelling example of challenges facing rural communities around the world: declining populations, youth out-migration, limited economic opportunities, diminishing natural resources, higher costs of living. In response to these challenges, the Shorefast Foundation created four community-based projects with complimentary mandates aimed at bringing sustainable economic development to the region while protecting its cultural and ecological integrity: Fogo Island Arts (not-for-profit organization), Fogo Island Inn (social business), Shorefast Business Assistance Fund (micro lending initiative) and New Ocean Ethic (ecology think tank).

As Director of Programs for Fogo Island Arts I played a central role in developing programs that support Shorefast’s mandate. Best known for its international residency program, Fogo Island Arts supports the production of new works by artists and designers from diverse backgrounds. The organization’s work involves collaboration with individuals and institutions locally and internationally, creating opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue and the sharing of knowledge among different communities and stakeholders.

This paper provides me with an opportunity to situate these activities within a theoretical context. Focusing on how cultural traditions and local ecologies inform the production of contemporary art, and how the significance of a work changes when presented within global networks, I argue that the conventional “cosmopolitan” ways of measuring the value of cultural objects and practices doesn’t readily apply to work that is produced with the socio-economic wellbeing of local communities in mind. I look at alternative ways of measuring "success" based on the needs of rural communities and the criteria of contemporary art. I suggest that it is the productive tensions between diverse points of view (social, cultural, economic, environmental) that make the work being carried out on Fogo Island innovative.

**Keywords:** cultural heritage, contemporary art, sustainable development, social
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