

## **Heritage and development outside the metropolis; discussing issues of attractivity, growth, participation and sustainable development**

*Eva Svensson, Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, Karlstad University, SE-65188, Karlstad, Sweden. [Eva.Svensson@kau.se](mailto:Eva.Svensson@kau.se)*

### **Abstract**

In this paper the possibilities of heritage to contribute to sustainable development is investigated from a case study, the archaeological excavations of a medieval castle with local volunteers and municipal interests. The problematic fields of attractivity, growth and participation are discussed. Two new ways of working and relating, Living Labs and Innovative systems for sustainable development, is put forward in order to create more inclusive strategies, and thereby enhance the strengths of the contribution from sustainable development.

**Key words:** heritage, attractivity, growth, participation, sustainable development, living labs, innovative systems for sustainable development

### **Introduction**

Heritage and nature are both prominent landscape features and resources for different forms of use. They could also be main assets for creating sustainable development, especially in rural and non-metropolitan communities (Boverket et al. 2011; Riksantikvarieämbetet 2010). However, they are also contested areas, involving different groups of actors and interests (Svensson 2009; Svensson 2010 with references). In this paper three contested areas, and suggestions for methods to move forward, will be discussed departing from a case study.

The first area may be labelled attractivity. Small municipalities in Sweden tend to experience demographic and economic downturns as many young people move out, and traditional industries close down. In order to turn the negative trends new ways of competing for attractive citizens, not least the new creative class, and business are emerging (Kresl & Singh 2011). In this game heritage and nature are rendered new importance and new meanings. But these new meanings will probably enhance social stratification, as less attractive segments of citizens are likely to be excluded.

The second area is (economic) growth. According to Swedish and European politicians from top to bottom, the economic future of rural and smaller non-metropolitan areas lay in tourism, albeit long histories of various forms of industries and production. But tourism does not go well with lifestyles and relationships with nature and heritage of most local inhabitants. Also, so far most of the small scale nature and heritage business have problems of becoming profitable enough (Svensson 2010).

The third area is the, by the authorities, increased demand for citizen participation in management of protected nature and heritage. Participation has so far mostly been a top-down affair, as the authorities have not been willing to step down from deciding which values that should be protected, only the work and costs for management. The retraction of the authorities is challenged by the citizens' demands for information and knowledge, that is, and increased presence of experts. Also, experiences, mainly from the third world, is that participation, being a strong legitimizer, tend to increase existing social hierarchies (eg. Cooke & Kothari 2004).

Heritage and nature, and how these resources may contribute to a sustainable development, is thus contested. There is a need for new ways of working in order to turn contestation into inclusive strategies, and thereby enhance the strengths of the contribution from heritage and nature to sustainable development.

### **Methods**

In this paper I will do two things, first I will look closer at the three areas outlined above, attractivity, (economic) growth and participation, from a case study. The case, an archaeological project initiated by a small municipality, took place during four years in the middle of the 1990ies. During and after the excavations a number of other activities were also carried out in order to contribute to enhanced attractivity, quality of life and economic development in the municipality. The case will mainly enlighten a role of heritage, with some inference from the side of nature.

The theoretical framework departs from a post-sustainable perspective (Moorse 2008) and leans on the concept of Authoritative Heritage Discourse (AHD) (Smith 2006; Smith & Waterton 2009). Post-sustainable development takes a critical standpoint on the dominating view of the “marriage” between growth and environment governing much of today’s policies. AHD focus on the social and cultural processes of heritage, which in most cases are expert driven and excluding expressions of hierarchical and national statements. According to AHD is authenticity a major power constructor.

The main method used will be long term retrospective participatory observation (Fangen 2005). I was one of the responsible archeologists, taking part in all the planning and execution of the project, including relating to the municipal officers, politicians and citizens. The actual excavations took place three weeks every summer in the years 1992-1996. I was also involved in a number of meetings discussing and drawing up some of the suggestions for how to proceed after the project in order to create attractivity, enhanced quality of life and new sources of income to the municipality. Also, I was a member in the, for the project specially created, organization “Saxe Knutar”, involving local citizens, municipal officers and politicians and antiquarians, until it was dissolved in 2008. The experiences from this work has been recorded in excavations notes and reports, and meeting documents. There are also a couple of publications relating to the project (Eriksson, Haraldsson & Olsson 2004; Røjder & Schedin 2004; Svensson 2008).

Second, I will put forward suggestions for methods and models, from experiences in other fields and as theoretical approaches that may be fruitful to try in the field of making heritage, and I believe also nature, important parts in a socially inclusive sustainable development. The suggestions, Living Labs (European network of living labs) and Innovative systems for sustainable development (Tukker et al.2008) will be discussed from a comparative perspective on the field.

## **Results and Discussion**

In the summers of 1992-1996 archaeological excavations took place on a small rocky island, called Saxen, in the northern part of lake Vänern, that is the biggest lake in Sweden (Röjder & Schedin 2004). The excavations were initiated due to the city of Kristinehamn celebrating its 350 years anniversary, and the politicians and municipal officers wanted to carry out the celebration with style. Practically, the excavations were organized from the county museum, Värmlands Museum, whose staff of archaeologist worked with local volunteers at the excavations.

The municipal reasons for targeting the small island, quite at a distance from the town, was the medieval castle situated on the island. The castle was locally known under name “Saxholmen”, but no such name is known from any medieval document. It is likely that the castle bore another name, but as far as we know there are no written records with information on the site. The lack of historical information has been an important factor for triggering local people’s imagination during centuries. Already in local literature from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, legends of the castle and different enterprises on the island are described (Gyllenius 1962). These legends were still alive and very important in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to large segments of citizens in the municipality of Kristinehamn. Also, the same citizens were spending a lot of time on sailing boats in lake Vänern (Kristinehamn probably possesses the largest marina in Sweden), and were frequently passing by the island of Saxen and reproducing all legends they heard since childhood. Being a major site, and object of uniting interests and feelings among large segments of municipal citizens, the municipal politicians decided to try and stage an excavation at the legendary site in order to have a 350 years anniversary megacelebration.

But the politicians hoped for more than a celebration. In fact there were great ambitions concerning the side effects. The excavations were supposed to generate a deeper sense of community belonging, added quality of life among the citizens, increased attractivity for both local citizens and potential inmovers (who probably had never heard of Saxholmen), and also “food” for upstarting businesses based on nature and heritage resources (mainly tourism). Ironically, nature conservation was ruled over in order to stage the project. The island of Saxen was a nature reserve, and the excavations were presumed to have negative impact on the flora and fauna of the island. Initially, the municipality had to build an “alternative nest” to an eagle otherwise breeding in a pine by the castle tower.

Archaeologically, the project was a success with unearthing a thirteen century castle with an outstanding findsmaterial (Eriksson, Haraldsson & Olsson 2004; Röjder & Schedin 2004;

Svensson 2008), and the four excavation seasons were great opportunities for coming together for local citizens. Luckily enough the potential threat to the nature reserve turned out to be not relevant, as the endangered species rather increased by the excavations.

After the excavations other activities were organized by different actors, mostly connected to the organization Saxe Knutar with local citizens, municipal officers and politicians and antiquarians as members. But the antiquarians were not taking part in the organization of the new activities, the two most noteworthy being boat trips on a copy of a 17<sup>th</sup> century wreck (called Bojorten) and a costume play (by the title Erik and Ingeborg) staged on Saxen. These activities were characterized by hybridity in the sense that they were mixing presumed historical authenticity with preconceived notions of the past and modernity. However, both the boat trips and the costume play came to an end, when the commitment of the involved volunteers ceased.

Concerning the three areas investigated here, attractiveness, (economic) growth and citizen participation, the results were more divergent.

#### Attractivity

While the excavations and the activities that were staged later were going on Saxen became a more attractive island to visit. Also, there was a pride growing in people, both among those who actually to part in the excavations and others, of having an interesting site and an excavation in the area. But attractiveness possessed exclusive and excluding qualities as there was a strong connection between attractiveness and sailing. Most of those noticing and visiting Saxen came by private boats, and sailing was spiced up by the possibility to pass by the thirteenth century. Even if possessing a sailing boat appears to be more common in Kristinehamn than elsewhere in Sweden, it is /was still not for everybody. There were some organized common boat trips taking people from the city center to the island of Saxen, but these trips were time consuming, cost money and run on an infrequent time table. The municipal ambitions of a large enough jetty for hosting larger boats came into conflict with both nature conservation and heritage management, and was not realized until many years after the activities on the island had ceased. Throughout the excavations and the following activities on Saxen, attractiveness demanded access to a boat.

There was also another limitation to the availability of attractiveness based on heritage. To most people heritage sites, not even the castle, meant anything without a story. Or, better, a “true” history. Without an historical context, fact or fiction, a heritage site was no more than a heap of stones. Also when it came to the castle, Saxholmen, it was the legends that had captured people’s interests in the first place. With the excavations new stories, based on science, emerged. The new stories were considered better, as people wanted to know what had really happened on the island in medieval times, and how their castle related to the rest of the society at that time. The high regard for, and wishes for consumption of, expert knowledge in heritage has been documented also elsewhere (Svensson 2010, especially p. 80). Thus there was limited added attractiveness of the area to citizens not participating in the excavations, attending guided tours or lectures.

### (Economic) Growth

The excavations on Saxen were mainly financed by the municipality of Kristinehamn, that is the taxes paid by the citizens. From the side of the municipality, the excavations were considered an investment, as have been put forward above. In the eyes of the politicians the nature and heritage on Saxen were major assets for creating new business. Kristinehamn had old traditions as an industrial city, in combination with an agrarian hinterland. As both industry and agriculture, and also population, were shrinking the municipality was in need of new, post-industrial, work places. But such work places did not appear as a result of the excavations. The boat trips on Bojorten and the costume play did not bring in new jobs or new money.

In fact, there was hardly any interest at all among the participants in the excavations in creating new businesses. Most of them had good jobs or were retired. Also, very few saw heritage or nature as assets for business. It was a common opinion that nature and heritage were of great value, but how and in what context was not reflected upon. Among the “activist” segment of the participants there were ambitions to increase the value of heritage and make it more interesting to “new” groups by creating new activities such as the costume play and the boat trips. If these enterprises could bring in some money, that was nice but not the purpose.

Two other factors prohibiting heritage (and to some extent maybe also nature) from becoming resources for developing business should be pointed out. First, heritage and to some extent nature, is considered both “difficult” and important to “make right”. That is, authenticity is considered a guiding-star, and as authenticity is believed to be the domain of antiquarians there are strong limitations to what ordinary citizens find themselves capable of doing (cfr. Svensson 2010). Second, there is a law in Sweden, called *allemansrätten* in Swedish, granting everybody access to nature and heritage in the land outside gardens and houses. Nature and heritage being free to everybody to visit make them less obvious objects for tourist businesses.

### Citizen participation

The excavations at Saxholmen were directed by archaeologists from the regional museum, but the majority of excavators at Saxholmen were local volunteers, citizens of the municipality of Kristinehamn. Most of them were well established and respected in the local society, often part of families with long local history. Several of the participants held academic degrees and good job positions or had retired from such jobs. But there was also a large body of participants with a blue collar background, albeit often retired. Having a history of being skillful on the job, almost any kind of job, was important for gaining respect, thereby transgressing traditional class borders. Having many relatives and friends were key factors for becoming established. Among the volunteers, there were also a few local politicians and municipal officers. Some of them being well respected by the other volunteers, others were more isolated. It was very clear that political and religious affiliations were of no importance in the coming together of the volunteers, that the interest in local history was uniting.

Apart from archaeologists, municipal officers and politicians and citizens, there was a group of long term unemployed people, placed in labor market measures by the municipality and under orders to do the necessary heavy tasks instructed by the archaeologists. This group of people, albeit also citizens of Kristinehamn, was not included in the participatory activities.

Quite soon the leading municipal officer taking part in the excavations, together with the archeologists, started lobbying for creating an organization that would be the forum for citizen participation in the excavations. The hopes were that such an organization would also be in charge of activities outside of the excavations, that It would be a channel of information to other citizens and that there would breed ideas for continuous enterprise's after the excavation.

The organization, Saxe Knutar, was founded under municipal auspices, and the persons appointed for positions were well seen by the municipal officers. They were all very capable persons with a great interest in both the past and the future of the local society. However, very soon Saxe Knutar experienced severe internal strives, based on the importance of authenticity in the work of the organization. The strives continued through the years until Saxe Knutar was dissolved, but was more and more marginalized as the archaeologists intervened and sided with the board and tuning down the importance of authenticity.

When the excavations were finished, and the archaeologists withdraw from more active part in the organization, the role of Saxe Knutar had to change. But it was hard for the organization to find new ways of working. Most members became very passive or left the organization. To them the excavations and learning more of the medieval history - the scientific story – was the main reason for their joining Saxe Knutar. When the possibility consume expert knowledge, accurate history, was no longer available they lost interest. Only a few worked hard to find new activities to engage in. With the experts gone, the internal strife in the organization also became more accentuated as nobody could master the concept of authenticity.

### Some lessons

From the description above a number of lessons can be learned with bearing on how heritage could contribute to sustainable development. Several of the lessons would also have bearing on nature:

- Citizens want to consume knowledge on heritage and history (and possible also nature)
- Projects involving expert knowledge seldom survive the exodus of experts
- Heritage (and also nature) are considered "difficult" and the domains of experts
- Heritage and nature are not perceived as assets for building new businesses by most citizens, but as values "out there"
- Attractivity can be created, but is selectively experienced
- Participation is not for everybody. Participants must bring in certain qualities or resources

- Heritage should be better integrated in the society to contribute to sustainable development. The importance of what heritage can bring in must be elucidated, and the yoke of authenticity must be dealt with
- Heritage is a meeting place

### New ways of moving on...???

In order to activate heritage into a source of socially inclusive, sustainable development (at least) two processes are necessary. First, there is a need to create a framework for ongoing, target orientated co-operation between experts and citizens. In the field of heritage the presence of expert appears one of the best ways of granting social inclusiveness and endurance in the projects. Second, heritage should be better integrated in the daily life of society in order not to be so exclusive and “difficult”, and the contribution of heritage could be nesting in different sectors of society as heritage has the capacity of contributing to “hard-to-catch-qualities” such as meeting places, social capital, community pride and alternative consumption (Svensson 2010, p. 138-139).

Concerning the first process, the way of working standing out as the best way of achieving such a framework is Living Labs. Living Labs are described as “...open innovation environments in real-life settings, in which user-driven innovation is fully integrated within the co-creation process of new services, products and societal infrastructures. In recent years, Living Labs have become a powerful instrument for effectively involving the user at all stages of the research, development and innovation process...” (Living Labs 2009, p. 5)

The second process is rather a change of perspective meaning involving heritage in overreaching societal, strategies for achieving sustainable development. Such a change in perspective would be quite necessary in order to stage Living Labs on heritage and local sustainable development. The model innovative systems for sustainable development is far reaching and including various aspects and sectors of society, from changes in lifestyles to new energy and transportation technology, that has to co-act to achieve sustainable development (Tukker et al. 2008). Through such a model capacities of heritage could be integrated in different sectors of society.

### **Conclusions**

Heritage possesses various qualities that would contribute to sustainable development if activated in socially inclusive strategies, and integrated in different sectors of society. Citizens are often interested in (their) local history, and heritage may therefore function for uniting people, as a meeting place. But there are also demands from other sectors of society, not least from small municipalities suffering from demographic and economic downturns, that heritage should add to local attractiveness and growth. There are also strong interests forwarding increased public participation and less presence of authorities and experts.

The three fields of attractiveness, (economic) growth and participation are complex and contested. The case study of the archeological project at Saxholmen shows that enforcing these aspects of heritage may enforce social segregation and excluding processes. With the

power of authenticity hovering over heritage, the role of antiquarian experts become crucial, also for making heritage more accessible and socially inclusive.

In order to stage the role of heritage in sustainable development, two new ways of working and relating heritage is put forward. Living Labs and Innovative systems for sustainable development are tools that would house socially and societally more inclusive strategies for heritage, and thereby enhance the strengths of the contribution for sustainable development.

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