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The shared future of the past

Heritage for place development in Västra Götaland

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Sustainable Destination Development



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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate place development and the role of heritage in Västra Götaland, partially through the case of the destination island of Åstol. An overarching area of interest was how regional development and heritage may intertwine. First, the region's development strategy was analyzed in relation to a regional developer's understanding of heritage as synonymous with the sustainable reuse of buildings and places. The second analytical chapter dealt with the region's place development method. Place development is about cross-sectoral collaboration, where heritage is one of many resources that are to be innovatively reused. The third chapter highlighted Åstol. Heritage is an ongoing development goal in Åstol's strategy plan. Nature has shaped the island's heritage, the locals and its identity of today. Branding as a calm, historical fishing community is useful for Åstol, as it gives the place both unique and universal characteristics in a Bohuslän west coast environment.

Key words

Heritage, heritage development, destination development, Västra Götaland, regional utvecklingsstrategi, platsutveckling, cross-sector collaboration

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Preface

A foundation for this study is anthropologist Ulrika Persson-Fischier's and heritage developer Christer Gustafsson's current research project on heritage implementation in Swedish regional development strategies. Their investigations show that there is generally very little focus on heritage in the Swedish regional development strategy documents. Some regions have highlighted the possibilities of heritage as a driving factor for growth more than others.

There are rich EU funding programs to guide European, national and regional heritage development (European Commission). Persson-Fischier, Gustafsson and I agree that it would be a waste if heritage was not to be implemented further regionally. Persson-Fischier and Gustafsson wish to investigate how heritage can be better implemented in the development goals on a regional level. Persson-Fischier and Gustafsson are making a quantitative comparative study combined with qualitative interviews on the regional decision making processes in heritage and development politics. To complement this, they have asked for a case study. Thus, my thesis will focus on one specific region and one (heritage) site within this region. The region of choice happened to be Västra Götaland, which has worked out its own way of guiding (heritage) place development. A place developer of the region has given his consent to me to study their place development method. Västra Götaland's place development method may illustrate a functioning site development, as a complementary method to 'ordinary' heritage development.

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1. Introduction

The field of heritage has to change, become more cross-disciplinary and future-oriented (K-podd 09: Riksantikvarieämbetet 2016, Sveriges Museer 2017, Cerisola 2018). If heritage destinations are to remain important, they have to be open to change, too. This corresponds with the national political goal of promoting a living heritage that is being preserved, used and even developed (Regeringen 2015). My experience as a museum worker is that heritage conservation and development do not always fit together. Conservation and development strive for the opposite things; one field mainly wishes to freeze time, while the other points forward (Aronsson in Beckman and Månsson 2009:37). How to do both of these tasks simultaneously will be a key issue for stakeholders to develop enduring, sustainable (heritage) destinations.

This study sheds light on the growing need for innovative collaboration and search for synergy effects in heritage and other disciplines, academically and professionally. This far in other related industries, heritage is a resource rather unutilized, which carries a strong momentum for sustainable development and growth around the globe (Swedish national heritage board, ICOMOS 2021). Most advantages of heritage places are “...unrealized due to insufficient information, a misunderstanding of management concepts or an inadequate strategy.” (Eppich, Heritage Development). Thus, this study wishes to illuminate functioning development strategies of the region of Västra Götaland, with a transdisciplinary theoretical approach. The region’s case of the island of Åstol will be an illustrative functioning destination development, as it is apart from a local community also a destination.

1.1 Purpose formulation

The purpose is to investigate how place development is made in Västra Götaland and what role heritage plays in this. The case of the island Åstol will be an illustrative place. An overarching research question is how regional development and heritage may intertwine.

1.2 Research questions

- How does ‘heritage’ play a part in Västra Götaland’s regional development strategy?
- How is place development made in Västra Götaland’s region and what role does heritage have in this?
- What role does heritage play in presenting Åstol, on its two websites and according to the local process leader?

2. Data collection and research design

2.1 Electronic documents and online web pages

The interest in studying online documents is increasing (Bryman 2016:556). For instance, Sillince and Brown (2009) studied websites to “explore how the constabularies’ organizational identities as displayed in the websites were rhetorically constructed.” (Bryman 2016:556). This thesis studies websites and online documents too, to shed light on the rhetorical usage of specific words in relation to the place identity. Thus, online analysis of rhetorical word usage can be well-combined with my research purpose. Even if websites are official, it is important to ethically consider why and to whom a webpage or any online document is created (Bryman 2016:557). Some of the documents that I will study are made for internal purposes, while others for external place development guidance. I have received approval to officially study the place development guidance and other semi-public documents.

A choice was to study two web pages of Åstol, together with the region’s different home page. This is to compare the identity creation on types of media, what the place represents in different settings. To analyse these just as all data, I made daily field notes of ideas and comments online and on paper. As the ethnologist Hanna Jansson (2017), I have continually saved screenshots of studied web pages online. In this way, you ensure that the information will not be lost if changes are made in the online environment (Jansson 2017:33). Ethically, the guideline of the Association of Internet Researchers stresses that the level of accessibility or sensitivity decides whether an online page can be studied ethically (Jansson 2017:39). Similarly to Jansson, Eva Fägerborg (2010:17:74) means that material such as pictures, movies and text that is public is researchable without permission. Information on the web pages that I study is mostly official. Thus, I can study it without any permission from its creators.

While studying the texts, Fairclough’s focus on linguistics, metaphors and word usage will be applied (Bergström & Boréus, in Wadstein 2015:8-9). Fairclough’s method goes along well with my overarching choice of theory; Fairclough believes in similarity with philosopher Michel Foucault, urban and regional scholar Johanna Wadstein (2015:7) and me, that discourses and power are both limiting and productive. Actions, identities and texts are shaped by the meaning system(s) that they are part of, just as separate entities can affect other parts of the discourse or meaning system. Studying words and metaphors of the texts let us see what webs of meaning systems that lie behind.

2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Apart from online observations, this study consists of three qualitative semi-structured interviews in Swedish, conducted online via Zoom during the spring of 2021. Two place developer coaches from the region's department, and one place development leader from Åstol were interviewed. The interviews lasted for 50 minutes to 1 hour and 40 minutes. Previously, an idea was to conduct more interviews with stakeholders in Åstol. This would have been interesting and possible in a study with a longer time frame. I chose to make interviews with the main actors to shed light on what has been written in the strategic documents. The combination of studying documents and interviews can be useful to gain different perspectives. The personal thoughts of the actors on place or destination development are of interest. Therefore the interviews are semi-structured, dealing with specific topics, so that the informants can take any preferable direction in the conversation (Bryman 2016:467). In this way, the researcher tries to not lead respondents into any previously assumed direction. If conversations wandered too much off-topic, I simply readjusted. The interviews have been transcribed thoroughly and analyzed through grounded theory and thematizing. The informants' names are fictitious.

2.3 Reflexivity

To me, heritage is a field of social sciences that I have studied critically throughout all my studies. I always strive to shed light on the decision-making processes behind the valuation of official heritage, and never take anything for granted. Therefore, I sometimes think heritage preservers are too conservative; Why are we to preserve if not also to give access. I have been amazed by people's desires to freeze time. It is the desire to remember that fascinates me, not any intrinsic value per se. Thus, my personal goal as a heritage ethnologist is to illustrate these negotiations of value making, in relation to heritage sites. In accordance with the Swedish government's heritage politics (Prop. 2016/17), I believe it is important to have a broadened and deepened open dialogue with visitors and the community in general, about what a specific (heritage) site means, to whom.

In this study, I have had to think of my role as a heritage worker in relation to the interviewed (heritage) site developers of my study. Sometimes I did not know whether to consider meetings with these experts as general discussions about my study, or if these discussions in fact could be counted as empirical data. My academic and working experience makes me initiated to critical heritage studies, which has given me access to and also complicated the ethical aspects of what can be considered empirical data or just discussions in mutual understanding. Nevertheless, critical reflection on this is needed for a functioning study.

2.4 Qualitative, inductive grounded theory and exploratory demarcation

This thesis follows an inductive approach, where the choice of theory is based on what the empirical data has to offer (Bryman 2016:23). Suggestions for a theoretical approach have been made after initial meetings with the field of this research, which is deeply aligned with Grounded theory; “This approach, which was first outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967), is regarded as especially strong in terms of generating theories out of data.” (Bryman 2016:23). Thus, I investigated the initiated field; the meeting with Persson-Fischier and Gustafsson, which generated new data, early notions of the field and suitable theoretical approaches.

An initial idea was to make a qualitative and quantitative comparative analysis of different regional strategy documents’ usage of the word heritage. After meeting Persson-Fischier and Gustafsson on their research project, we concluded that a case study would be complementary. Persson-Fischier agreed that the main area of interest in their research is the relationship between heritage conservation and site development, and how these two often differing sectors can collaborate better. This is an area of my interest, too.

After a brief interview with a place developer I call ‘Olof’, at the Västra Götaland Region (VGR) 3rd of March 2021, who is also a contact person to Gustafsson, I understood the importance of the word ‘place’ in their regional development strategy. Olof enlightened me on how they have used the words ‘place’ and ‘circular economy’ instead of ‘heritage’ development. This is why I thought of making a study comparing a theoretical sense of heritage with the region’s emic discourse of ‘place’, and place development.

At the end of March, I had another meeting with Olof, the place developer and ‘Anna’, who is a business coach and part of Olof’s VGR place development team. After this meeting on March 16th, it was decided that I will focus on the island Åstol in the Tjörn municipality in Västra Götaland. This is a clear example of a spatially limited space, since it is an island. Before this meeting, I had my eyes on Klädesholmen, another island nearby in Bohuslän, this one also famous for its historical herring fishing, just as Åstol. However, Olof and Anna concluded that Åstol has had a great local process leader of the place development lately. This is why they thought that Åstol might be a good, functioning example to study.

Another reason for choosing this place is that Åstol is a tourist destination. Besides, Åstol is interesting to study for its ‘rich living history’, as described on Åstol’s community’s webpage (Åstol.se). There were other places in the region that could have been fruitful to study, for their clear connections to heritage, such as Fengersfors or Uddebo. These places were discussed during our last meeting in March. Fengersfors or Uddebo, with industrial romantic settings that attract many artists, could have been interesting to compare. Olof thought that Åstol would be the best

example from VGR, as he believes that the developing process has been fruitful, with good communication between the local stakeholders. Olof and Anna therefore want me to compare VGR's developed methods with Åstol's place development.

Hereby, I have described how the decision of the research area has been a process, where I have actively chosen to be open to new input. Thus, I have followed an inductive approach, based on grounded theory. The process of collecting data has also followed this strategy.

2.5 Hermeneutic, interpretivist, constructivist approach

This study is using a hermeneutic, interpretivist, constructivist and in a basic sense also a phenomenological approach. The epistemology of my thesis is an interpretivist one, aligned with Max Weber, Alfred Schutz and Edmund Husserl (Bryman 2016:26). Interpretivism is about studying human beings as subjective beings, with no one measurable truth, as most times when studying nature and numbers. Von Wright (1971) has pointed out the difference between hermeneutics and positivism (in Bryman 2016:26). Rather than explaining *why* some phenomenon occurs, the hermeneutic and interpretivist approach is searching to *understand how* phenomena are perceived from a subjective point of view. The learning process of my thesis follows the hermeneutic loop (see figure 1.2, Michrina and Richards 1996:9), where knowledge is not linear, but rather develops while investigating the field and analytical tools simultaneously.

Phenomenology is a methodological tool particularly useful while encountering informants. It focuses on personal experiences connected to inhabiting the world. This goes well with Schutz' (1969) and Bryman's (2016:27) interpretation of the social scientist to construe the *social* world from the informant's own perspective, and not as a fixed, objective reality. "In order to grasp the meanings of a person's behavior, the phenomenologist attempts to see things from that person's point of view" (Bogdan and Taylor 1975: 13–14, in Bryman 2016:27). Since it is grounded, close to the empirical data, phenomenology is such an overarching method that can work well as a data collection method, along with any other theoretical methodology (Högström 2018:70). The ontology of the thesis is a constructivist one (Bryman 2016:29), where the meanings of the social world are interpreted as constructed, intersubjective (Michrina and Richards 1996:29) and indeterminate, rather than objective and definite. This is a typical qualitative approach, which in my point of view is highly taken for granted in humanities.

3. Theoretical tools

3.1 Heritage

Heritage scholar Laurajane Smith (2006) writes upon Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) and official versions of “a common identity based on the past” (Fröhlig 2018:47). The AHD is often accepted by the nation, as an official collective story of the nation’s identity. This is why it can also be seen as a hegemonic heritage discourse, as it is superior or more confirmed than unofficial, personal understandings of heritage. Smith is valuable to study in relation to the more or less nationally or regionally accepted versions of local identity and the heritage of the case places in this thesis.

Lud’a Klusáková et al. (2018) write on heritage and development strategies for small towns. To them, heritage studies is an evolving interdisciplinary area of research. Governors of small towns are often good at using heritage branding and “...whatever is at hand – images and stereotypes whether based on actual or adapted fact, or even invention – to attract tourists, investors, and inhabitants.” (Klusáková et al. 2018:141)

In 2002, the Swedish government and the National heritage board made an overarching investigation on the role of heritage for regional development together with other actors. This was then presented in a collection of articles, written by six authors. They described the growing expectations of heritage as a factor for financial growth and unofficial, nongovernmental usage (RAÄ 2002:9). These articles have laid a foundation for this thesis. One of these articles is written by Lotta Braunerhielm, geographer, dealing with the commodification of (heritage) places for locals and visitors (2002:37), applicable on Åstol as a destination and community.

Silvia Cerisola (2018) investigates the indirect positive social and financial impacts of heritage. Most research on the role of heritage in economic development has focused on heritage as an asset for cultural tourism, which supposedly has a direct impact on financial growth (Cerisola 2018:46). Cerisola shows that tangible (and indirectly intangible) heritage can inspire locals into becoming more creative, and therefore indirectly have a positive effect on economic growth. While involving locals in heritage, they can become more creative and thus contribute to a better sense of mutual belonging, wellbeing and economic growth (Cerisola 2018:46). Thus, involving locals in heritage in the case of my study may indirectly have positive effects.

3.2 Collective memory

If studying the local identities and heritage of a community, the concept of memory is a crucial aspect of those active memory processes. Memory studies is a multidisciplinary field. It focuses

on memory and the times that have passed, not only as an empirical choice of data, but also as a field of many theories (Fröhlig 2018:36). Many ethnographers, including myself, understand ‘memorising’ as an active process, created through interaction (Fröhlig 2018:39). All memory processes are social, in one way or another; The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs wrote in *Collective memories* (1992), where he describes memory as being not only individual but making sense in relation to time, space and social contexts (Fröhlig 2018:38). According to Halbwachs, memories become collective while being described and articulated in social cohesions (Fröhlig 2018:39). One way to understand collective memory is on a metaphorical, processual level, which is the one I will interpret. As a researcher, the focus is then on societies’ usage of cultural memory resources, such as discourses, stories, social practices and usage of cultural artefacts and memorial sites (Fröhlig 2018:39). The place development processes presented in this thesis deals with all of these aspects.

3.3 Place

In *Place: an introduction*, geographer Tim Cresswell (2015) describes the interdisciplinary concept of place. Place is a word commonly used in everyday life, just as in various academic ways. Cresswell argues that the concept therefore is vague, as it has so many underlying meanings (2011:18). To me, it is a word similar to culture, with various emic and etic explanations. As place is a central emic theme of my study, articles on this are crucial. It has been valuable to compare different articles of this with the emic understandings of the place case and the concept of place development from the region.

Place, space and landscape are all very interrelated terms that Cresswell (2015) touches upon. For instance, place is highly linked to sociologist and French Marxist Henri Lefebvre’s notion of social space. Lefebvre (1991) makes a distinction between ‘absolute space’, in an abstract sense, and ‘social space’, which are lived and meaningful spaces (Cresswell 2015:19). Cresswell argues that most research on place is actually involved in the making of meaning and experience, therefore highly linked to social space, as I see it. The quote below illustrates how the concept place is a socially constructed entity: “Place is how we make the world meaningful and the way we experience the world. Place, at a basic level, is space invested with meaning in the context of power.” (Cresswell 2015:19). Since place can be related to power relations, it is also useful to combine with an overarching discourse theoretical approach, as I will show below. Besides, since the identities of the place that I study are contested, with many different understandings of different stakeholders, Cresswell’s understanding of place and Lefebvre’s social space and place are useful tools in this research. However, it is important to remember

Lefebvre's initial structural approach to space, as social creation of space leading to material results (Pierce 2015:1284). This is a slightly more structuralist approach than I wish to apply. Still, Lefebvre's notion of social space is useful in comparison to other understandings of spatiality, such as a discursive one.

3.4 Discourse theory

In this study, the places can be understood as delimited spatial discourses, and even the concept of heritage may have its own discourse, as the one of place development in Västra Götaland's region. The political theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) are central founders of political discourse theory. A discourse is a more or less coherent meaning system that enables and creates limitations of what can be said or done (Gunnarson Payne 2018:252). According to Laclau and Mouffe (2008), everything is discursive, as both written words, spoken language, practices and material aspects are created in relation to contexts. While analyzing the discursive production of text documents, linguistic professor Norman Fairclough's (1995) tool will be used, where you start by analysing the linguistic constructions and grammatics of the text. Johanna Wadstein (2015) wrote a discursive master thesis analysis on the rural and urban development of Västerbotten. Wadstein used Fairclough's text analysis, which is why I was inspired. I find political discourse theory useful, as the ongoing meaning processes of the cases' place development *and* the regions' place development strategy both are results of intersubjective, social actions. What (materialised) past that can be useful in the place branding is constantly contested, just as a discourse. It is the results of those contests that I wish to study: the web pages and strategic documents, for instance.

Discourse theory can often be abstract and hard to grasp, with its huge offering of various concepts. Thus, it is important as a researcher to choose concepts relevant to the empirical data and research question (Payne 2018:269). In one sense, I am even using a 'retroductive method' (further developed by Glynos and Howarth (2007)), as I let the analysis constantly move between discovering the field and related theory. The most crucial is to let the empirical data guide the choice of concepts, which is why the methodology is very inductive, too.

4. Västra Götaland's Regional development strategy and heritage implementation

The first analytical chapter will deal with the region's development strategy (RDS) and usage of heritage. This will be analyzed in relation to developer 'Olof's' understanding of heritage as synonymous with 'circular business models'. First, a general background to the Västra Götaland region (VGR) will be presented.

4.1 Västra Götaland becomes a region

Västra Götaland as a region was made in 2000, when three counties (Gothenburg-Bohuslän, Skaraborg and Älvsborg) of 49 municipalities were assembled- the building antiquarian and cultural developer Olof informs me on March the 3rd 2021. The politics asked for a broadened, regional intermediate level of political rule, where the new region of Västra Götaland and the region of Malmö were experiments (Olof). Suddenly, three county museums had to become one. Still, old county museums exist within the region in Bohuslän and Skaraborg. Apart from that, the region has nowadays joint heritage management. The cultural management in the region managed to become intertwined last year, Olof says. Västarvet, the previous department of heritage management and Kultur i väst, the estetic contemporary cultural department are now joined as one giant management with 270 employees, named Förvaltningen för kulturutveckling, the management of cultural development. In 2010 the previous department of heritage management created a new section within that department, dealing with development. This section still exists, which is where Olof has been working for the last 11 years.

The heritage development department started as a regional investigation showed that the municipalities asked for ways to integrate heritage in general development. Olof and colleagues asked people in the municipalities what they found important in heritage management, where the answers dealt with how heritage could be implemented in the rest of the community. Answers did not often deal with simple building inventories or exhibition making "...but very often it dealt with... how heritage or cultural milieus become parts of other/ or how they interact with other sectors of society, such as tourism or... like that or urban development and such." (Olof 09.02). The need for heritage management was for it to integrate with other societal functions. From the start in 2010, heritage development in Västra Götaland was to be intertwined with other disciplines. This heritage development department is probably the one of its kind in Sweden. At least this is Olof's experience from meeting other Swedish heritage colleagues during

conferences around the country. “And sometimes when I joke a bit I use to say that the reason for us being the only one is that we are so bloody big (‘så jädra stora’) so that we can afford having these weird positions (‘tjänster’)” (Olof 10.49). Smaller departments generally cannot afford these, having people fuzzing around in the system (‘flummar runt i systemet’) as Olof puts it. Västra Götaland has got heritage developers because they are in the advantageous position to be able to afford it.

4.2 The strategy and heritage as reusing resources

Before meeting Olof, I had taken a look into the Regional development strategy (RDS), and concluded that the word heritage was not to be found. On the 7th of April, I took a new glance at Västra Götaland’s RDS. I sought to analyse the sentences and usage of the words ‘place’ and ‘heritage’, since Olof had spoken about place development. What ‘signs’ were linked to other signs in different sentences and sections (Laclau & Mouffe 2008, Fairclough 1995), were searched for. I also tried to find information between the lines on how notions of heritage could be implemented in the strategy. From meeting Olof, I knew that the region does not explicitly use the word heritage in the strategy. Olof has been taught not to search for the word heritage in strategic documents. Rather, you have to reinterpret the written goals for people working with heritage to implement it. He is not concerned about the particular word heritage not being written explicit in the RDS, but instead heritage is synonymous with:

Olof (12.54): “...efforts around the circular economy, and then I think ‘*circular economy is to recycle*’ We are working on old houses. How can we make sure that you reuse already existing buildings rather than just protect (‘k-märka’) and just leave them in mothballs (‘malpåse’)? And then it says, for example in our development strategy, it says quite a lot about *place development*. You might think that ‘it has nothing to do with heritage’. Ehm, I have been working on it for the last four years, and it has *a lot to do* with cultural heritage. So there is a lot to anchor it to (‘haka upp det på’) in the regional development strategy (‘RUS’), but it is not as simple as just reading the RDS and seeing how many times cultural ‘heritage’ occurs.”

Old buildings are to be reused, instead of only conserved, put in mothballs (‘malpåsar’). Place development deals a lot with heritage, and circular economy is about reusing resources, such as heritage. According to Olof, during our first meeting in March, the RDS’s section on circular business models (‘cirkulära affärsmodeller’) could be a way to creatively reuse resources such as heritage buildings and places. The RDS focuses on Four intersectional forces (‘Fyra tvärssektoriella kraftsamlingar’): Fulfilled studies, digitalisation, electrification and circular business models. In the latter of these four parts of the strategy, it states: “In a fossil independent and circular Västra Götaland, the inhabitants can and want to make sustainable choices and contribute to creative solutions that limit the impact on the environment and climate change.”

(VGR's RDS 2021:7). As described above, in page seven, the 'circular business model' is mostly focused on the reuse of non-fossil resources. However, Olof describes the circular economy as even reusing old buildings (read 'heritage'). I must say that it is in the meeting with Olof that I see a clearer connection between circular business models and heritage and its relevance to nature.

“In Västra Götaland there are great natural resources with water, forests, fields as basis for competitive businesses, where the rich natural life, the long coastline and the many lakes make the regions different parts attractive to visit, live in and work in. In Västra Götaland, there is also much unique heritage, an active cultural life and an engaged civil society” (VGR's RDS 2021:8).

In this passage of the text, important natural resources are accentuated. Nature could be a central theme in the discourse of regional development, where water, forests, fields, coastline and lakes are highly relational words. It also states why nature is important; to tourism and to the people who live there. What kind of unique heritage that lays here is not even described in this section. This may indicate that the unique heritage is less valued than the natural resources. On the other hand, the European commission (2015:7) has concluded that a more holistic approach to management of places' natural and cultural heritage combined has proved to be efficient and increased quality of life. It makes sense that places are entities of different meanings at once, similar to an understanding of place as social space; the socially contested and at the same time natural, spatial environments through which we perceive the world (compare with Lefevbre 1991 and Cresswell 2015:19). Places have many layers. It would still be interesting to better comprehend what heritage may mean in Västra Götaland's context.

In one part of the strategy, tourism is described as cultural and creative businesses, such as events, movies, games and fashion (VGR's RDS 2021:12). These areas are important for the attractiveness of the region. One can note that only creative business is mentioned here. Heritage or historical sites are not mentioned. I am actively searching for underlying meanings of heritage, as this is the foundational problem of the research that Persson-Fischier and Gustafsson introduced me to; that descriptions of heritage assets are often missing in the regional development strategies in Sweden. Olof is used to reading between the lines, as many regions or places use different words for heritage. His opinion is that developers and colleagues analysing the regional strategies are to find ways to creatively implement heritage, if heritage is what they wish to highlight. We have to read between the lines.

The region seeks to raise international competitiveness by investing in sustainable and fossil independent industries, health and life science, sustainable mobility, food, biobased materials, renewable energy and hospitality industry and cultural and creative industries (VGR's RDS

2021:12). One may ask what kind of visitors the region wishes to attract, or what type of tourism or destination they want to be. The identity could be based on movies, games and fashion, as pinpointed aspects of creative businesses on page 12. The word ‘hospitality industry’ is at least linked to ‘cultural and creative industries’, recyclable trends of ‘sustainable mobility’ and ‘renewable energy’.

4.3 Spatial heritage for circular business models

As earlier mentioned, the region wishes to enable circular business models. Regarding circular business models, the strategy says that “(m)etals and materials that cannot be replaced by biobased materials have to be returned to the production so that those keep their financial value over time. This inclines new business models that give maximal customer value (‘kundnytt’) and minimal resource usage” (VGR’s RDS 2021:19). Circular thinking is for Olof much about preserving *and* reusing buildings, such as those with defined heritage values. Because of the defined values of protected heritage sites, these are sites that cannot be replaced. Thus, the region needs to find new creative ways of maximising the usage and customer value, while also maintaining the sites’ financial and historical values. It is this tricky balancing between opposing strives that very much defines the needs for sustainable development.

Here is to me a depicting quote from the EU Commission on Heritage development, discussing reuse of heritage and circular economy, which is similar to Olof’s recycling understanding of heritage sites and circular business models: “In many places across Europe, the contribution of cultural heritage to sustainable development has been crucial: particularly in the regeneration of cities and landscapes. Cities recycling buildings, using historic street-patterns and exploiting historic synergies have improved quality of life and reduced carbon emissions.” (EU Commission 2015:7). Heritage could and should be valued, if places seek improved quality of life. Reusing buildings and cultural environments give a sense of continuum, character and identity creation (Riksantikvarieämbetet 2009, Lidman 2014:14). Not only buildings, but natural heritage sites are also important drivers to sustainable social living (EU Commission 2015:7).

The regional development strategy is all about the need for cross-sectoral collaboration and resources to meet, such as nature and cultural heritage. The strategy is built around Vision Västra Götaland– Det goda livet (‘the good life’), whis is “about health, work and education, safety, community and participation in society, a good environment where we care for the renewable systems, meeting needs of children and youth, a resilient growth and a rich cultural life. The good life needs a sustainable development, where the economic, social and environmental aspects are interdependent and strengthen each other” (Vision Västra Götaland 2005:2). Reusing resources

of all kinds could be sustainable, whether it is old buildings with defined heritage values, as Olof discussed, or the harbour where fishermen approach the jetty and children swim, as with the case of the island Åstol which will be presented in chapter three.

4.4 Heritage has the potential for sustainable growth, I argue in accordance with the EU Commission (2015). In financial terms, heritage has usually been considered “a cost to society; a financial burden tolerated, principally, as a moral duty.” (EU Commission 2015:6). Historic monuments and buildings, parks, gardens, museums and cultural landscapes are public costs. It is usually hard to measure any direct positive financial impact from these places, which is why environmental protection of heritage still is traditionally understood as a devouring economic cost (EU Commission 2015:6). However, “it is now generally accepted that environmental neglect can have severe economic and social impacts which outweigh the cost of protection.” (EU Commission 2015:6). Nowadays, many people know that protecting nature and heritage sites have a lot more important positive factors that are to be valued in the economic models.

The authors of the EU Commission report (2015) argue that the common current view of heritage being cost-centred is not very accurate. They mean that “Cultural heritage must be seen as a special, but integral, component in the production of European GDP and innovation, its growth process, competitiveness and in the welfare of European society. Just as environmental protection, it should be mainstreamed into policy and regarded as a production factor in economic and wider policy development.” (EU Commission 2015:6). The Council of the European Union has concluded that heritage is a ‘strategic resource for a sustainable Europe’ (EU Commission 2015:6). Thus, the region is doing right in valuing heritage. The word heritage could be more prominent in the strategy document. Still, heritage is implemented in relation to ‘circular business models’.

For heritage represents’ aims to convince developers of the importance of heritage as a driver for (financial) growth, arguments for conservation in the traditional sense are less profitable than arguments that are connoted to economic and business values (Paju 2002:21). Rural development researcher Martin Paju (2002) writing for the Swedish National Heritage board, says that heritage should be considered as equal to other socioeconomic values in the decision making processes of the division of fundings between different functions (Paju 2002:21). Hence, heritage is not only a cost of conservation, but has to be recognized for its growth factors. The growth is not only financial, but social: Heritage “...also enriches the quality of life for European citizens and contributes to their wellbeing, sense of history, identity and belonging. Such social benefits are

beyond what can be measured in terms of pure income statistics and have been long recognised.” (EU Commission 2015:7).

4.5 Innovative business models, testing and collaborations

The regional development strategy points out that circular thinking is to inspire new business models. “Innovations in circular product and business development in combination with products and services contributing to decreased material flows is building the foundation for new business models. This creates affordability and long term financial sustainability” (VGR’s RDS 2021:19). The innovative business models may be the Business improvement district inspired local governance of the place development method that Västra Götaland has developed. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Experience has to be gathered on innovative development methods. During the workshop ‘Towards a new EU agenda for cultural heritage research and innovation, 27 November. 2014’, the economy panel agreed that successful heritage use needs “...innovative finance, investment, governance and business models...” (EU Commission 2015:19). Experience has to be gathered on functioning and less functioning funding, such as public-private partnerships. Västra Götalands’ heritage development department has been continuously exploratory in developing their methods for development. Olof says (11.17): “Sometimes I compare us to.../ If this would have been in the military, we would have been some kind of scout unit, walking out on minefields to see if it is possible to get around here. (We laugh) Testing, establishing a foothold in other policy areas.“

According to the regional development strategy, the public sector is important in guiding innovative business models. “New business models with changed value cycles (‘värdecykler’) increase the need for collaboration at both company level and societal level (‘systemnivå’). By taking the lead, opportunities open up for other industries and sectors of society to follow (‘haka på’) and drive the process forward.” (VGR’s RDS 2021:19). This resembles Olof’s department, which exists to explore new functioning strategies for development. Besides, new collaborations, on societal and local levels are needed for sustainable development.

Traditionally, heritage is usually about conservation, freezing time, but for sustainable development, heritage has to be implemented as a natural asset for future development (Génétay & Lindberg 2015 in Lidman 2018:5). Involving the private sector in local heritage management may be a good option: “Once cultural heritage is regarded as a positive economic driver in the European economy, it makes sense to involve the private sector more in exploiting its potential.” (EU Commission 2015:8). May it be intangible assets connected to spatial heritage sites that can

be further used by the *private* sector. This is an *alternative* to the common use of heritage for tourism in the public sector, where hotels, museums and sites are managed on a regional or governmental level. “An alternative approach consists in the private sector becoming more involved in (cultural) heritage, in order to optimise its use within its own business model” (EU Commission 2015:8). In this way, intangible and spatial resources connected to heritage can bloom, leading to increased job opportunities and growth.

Reusing various resources combined with local collaboration is at heart both for heritage management and circular business models within Västra Götaland. The civil engagement in more sustainable lifestyles is increasing, according to the strategy (VGR’s RDS 2021:21). The region sees a growing sustainable business: “There is also a huge engagement in civil society, cultural life, education and to inspire locals to become more sustainable. This contributes to the local business life developing their offers and business models around concepts such as rentals, reuse, sharing and reparation, which altogether contributes to vivid and attractive places” (VGR’s RDS 2021:19). The words ‘rentals’, ‘reuse’, ‘sharing’ and ‘reparation’ (or *uthyrning*, *återbruk*, *delning* and *reparation*) are all connected to living places. These signs are all part of a sustainability discourse, as reuse and circular resources are often considered so. The sign ‘cultural life’ is also connected to ‘education’, ‘civil society’, ‘locals’ and ‘sustainable’. Engagement in cultural life is to make locals more sustainable. Both ‘cultural life’ and ‘business life’ could be connected to a sustainability discourse. The reuse of heritage that Olof discussed is to him connected to circular business models. If heritage is intertwined with circular business models, the reuse of intangible heritage values and/or heritage places can also be considered sustainable. The sign ‘place’ is used here in relation to reparation and reuse, making the place into a living and attractive one. Places apart from spatial are also socially contested (Lefebvre 1991). Thus, places are developed and reused. Words such as ‘reparation’ and ‘reuse’ (or ‘reparation’ and ‘återbruk’) are central themes or signs in the discourse of local place development or local business life in the region.

To conclude, heritage can be read as sustainable reuse of old buildings and places in the regional development strategy. Heritage is synonymous with circular business models and important in place development, according to place and heritage developer Olof. In other words, heritage is implemented in the strategy and the discourse of circular business models and place development. Place development is to be sustainable, engage locals and it is using circular business models. Therefore, the next chapter will focus on the region’s specific place development strategy, inspired by creative business models.

5. Collaborative and creative place development

This chapter will focus on Västra Götaland's place development method (PDM) in relation to heritage and its connection to Business improvement districts and nongovernmental stakeholders. It will start by discussing what a place is. In the regional development strategy (RDS) document, it says that "To handle the competition of competence and labour, the whole region needs to be an attractive place to live and work in" (VGR's RDS 2021). The region needs to have attractive 'places'. The region has to be attractive spatially for the people living and working there. This far 'place' does not seem to be so much for visitors as for the locals.

5.1 Socially constructed places in specific settings

I shall go further into what a place is, emically and etically. The region has developed a place development manual that is to be used by local process leaders. Olof finds the place development strategy useful, as the region has many successful cases that have used this method to become more attractive to locals and visitors. The region has also continuously worked on developing their place development method.

To start with, the place development manual describes a place as "...a smaller area that people who live there experience as their place" (2021:1). Accordingly, a place is about the people living there, and a place that they perceive as theirs. The manual describes further thoroughly that a place is spatially bounded, smaller than a city, municipality or a part of a region (2021:2). This reminds of Laclau and Mouffe's (2008) understanding of discourses as more or less coherent meaning systems that create opportunities and limitations. A place can be a smaller, naturally divided place, such as an island, which has a very clear natural division, or a place that crosses administrative borders such as those crossing different municipalities, the manual says. Still, it is important to remember that a place has never fixed boundaries, it says in the place development manual. This is because discourses such as one of a specific place are socially constructed (Laclau and Mouffe's 2008). This goes well with Cresswell's approach on placemaking processes in chapter 5 (2014). "Places are never finished, but are produced through the reiteration of practices – the repetition of seemingly mundane activities on a daily basis." (Cresswell 2014:116). Similarly, a place discourse is to be defined by its actors involved in the development process, the manual, Olof and Åstol's local process leader say. Thus, this derives to Laclau and Mouffe's (2008) and Cresswell's (2014) theoretical understanding of places as socially constructed in specific settings. It is during the process and in relation to stakeholders involved that the place is defined and given meaning.

5.2 Business improvement districts

To understand Västra Götaland Region's (VGR's) concept of 'platsutveckling' or place development, the concept of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) has to be applied, since this is a concept that their place development method is built upon. However, VGR's place development has been further developed to fit Swedish regulations.

Peyroux et al (2011) write about BIDs in an urban context, and illustrate this international model from local interpretations. Meltzer (2011) writes about BID neighborhoods in New York. Even though the chosen places of this coming study are cases of rural development rather than urban, applying a BID concept is useful in understanding what the region's strategy derives from. Brooks (2006,2007) means that BIDs should be adapted on a local, micro-level to be fully successful (referred to in Meltzer 2011:67). This goes hand in hand with the VGR's understanding of more micro place development.

Place development, or 'platsutveckling' is according to VGR's handbook for local process leaders: "A locally lead, long term organisation in a limited place where the civil society, business, and public actors cooperate to solve common needs ' (2021:1). This correlates much with the concept of Business improvement districts (BIDs), as these are common management systems for neighborhoods and its actors involved. BIDs are "public in nature", but serve as private governments (Meltzer 2011:67). Both social scientists, economists and historians have shown that "...(c)ommon management can actually be very sustainable if it is in accordance with situation-tailored, or situation-specific types of governance" (EU Commission 2015:9). This might be the reason for BIDs being situated in place bounded areas. As stated in the previous section, these places are not entirely fixed, but rather contingent, of a fluid nature, defined in the social context of its local actors, applying Laclau and Mouffe(2008).

The concept of BID originated from North America and is a district model of self-taxing (Peyroux et al 2011:1). Later on, this model has been adapted internationally. "BIDs are a specific form of public-private partnership and of 'networked local governance' in which the boundaries between the public and the private spheres become fluid." (Peyroux et al 2011:2). From this, we can see that BIDs highly focus on the financial and political aspects of local leadership, or governance. Peyroux et al (2011) discusses articles concerning local governance regimes, inspired by French philosopher Michel Foucault and critical discourse analysis, which is why this could be a valuable theoretical background for my study.

The RDS describes that the public-private collaboration can renew working methods to become more circular or innovative. This makes me think of new business models, considered as innovative, that are also aimed for in the strategy. Here, a connection to Business improvement

districts is clear. Olof confirmed that the region's place development method is inspired by the six-step model of BIDs. Västra Götaland's PDM states that they have tried to use a six step BID-inspired strategy for place development within the region (See appendix 1). Place development in the countryside can sometimes lack the financial means of business leaders or property owners, but luckily there are often other kinds of resources, it says. The business developer here called 'Anna' says that these resources can be both companies, spatial rooms, nature, property, just as civil engagement, heritage and collaborating neighbors. Even the PDM is considered a resource. Heritage is one of many resources that are to be used.

The region's PDM reminds of Boverket's description of BIDs, business improvement districts. According to Boverket (2019) a BID is a method where involved stakeholders are trying to improve a spatially bounded area by their own financial means. This improvement can be made through events, involving more business or making changes in the physical space (VGR's PDM 2021:1). Olof speaks similarly about the safety measures that change the surroundings for the better. For instance, he describes a place that used to have old buildings where many alcoholics and criminals used to live, becoming safe streets for children to walk on, as the landlord and local stakeholders together decided to start a no drugs policy for people living there. The manual says similarly that the purpose of the development is often to create attractive, safe and neat public places with shared values of people who live there (2021:1).

Besides, Meltzer (2011:67) states in similarity to Olof and the place development manual that "BIDs also tend to form in neighborhoods that possess signs of appreciation and growth." BIDs tend to form in areas that are not the absolutely wealthy areas, but still with valuable properties (Meltzer 2011:67). New York's business improvement districts mainly deal with keeping streets 'clean and safe' (Meltzer 2011:68). It usually takes 18 months to two years to start a BID, formed by a committee of local property owners (Meltzer 2011:68). This is similar to Västra Götaland's place development, as these initial development process groups are formed by local business owners, but not necessarily property owners. In the case of Åstol, for instance, there are representatives from the different associations on the island.

5.3 Place development's community-strengthening collaboration

The manual highlights the important social aspect of place development and collaboration between stakeholders. A place development is to let local stakeholders collaborate in handling common needs, the region's manual informs. To enhance an ongoing positive development, it is important to make all important stakeholders reconcile, and to identify common goals that everyone agrees to prioritise. The place development work team has to involve external actors,

such as the municipality, the manual pinpoints. This is to avoid conflicts on responsibilities and opposing interests. It is thus important that everyone agrees on the strategy, if the local place developers wish to make the development last after the region's guides have withdrawn and the pilot study is ended. Community strengthening is crucial for place development, mainly about gathering human resources. "How do you create a local collaboration, where locals living in the place ('orten'), involved in business or associations, may strengthen their place ('ort') together with the municipality. That was the entrance. And that is what Västra Götaland calls place development." (Olof 17.27). 'Anna', one of Olof's colleagues from the business unit, agrees. Place development is to make more robust and resilient places that are not as vulnerable to changes in the surroundings, the PDM, Olof and Anna confirm. The regional development coaches are there to assist local stakeholders start their own development. It is also clarified in the manual that local governance is not to take over public responsibility by law, but that locals simply can improve their lives by collaborating locally.

5.4 The six steps of place development

The region helps to kickstart a local development process, where local process leaders receive guidance through the six steps of their process model with support from a regional process coach (VGR's Place development manual 2021:3). Appendix 1 shows the six steps of the initial place development process, in the region's manual (2021:6). Its first three stages (see arrows), 'anchoring to place and municipality', 'mapping' and 'analysis' are important for gathering stakeholders and defining what the place consists of. From then, defining a common 'vision' ('målbild'), 'local development plan' and 'organisation/financing' for future development is facilitated. The region does not invest in just any place, but the place has to follow specific criteria to be offered the financial and social supportive package that the region's place developers are offering. The criteria for the place depends on what the purpose for the specific development is. "Sometimes the goal is to strengthen service in the countryside, sometimes to strengthen cultural and creative businesses or tourism" (VGR's PDM 2021:3).

5.5 Synergy effects and diverse resources

Parallel to the heritage and place development department, Olof and Anna tell me that the business unit is also working on place development, initially from a social service perspective, strengthening services in rural areas such as stores, postal offices and cash dispensers. The two units have been working together in place development since 2016 with the project Sustainable Places ('Hållbara platser'). The two units realized that they had been working on four places

simultaneously, which is why they decided to start collaborating. Olof was also a project leader the last two years of a place development project for the business unit. Anna from the business unit says that (22.29): "...the idea with the region's place development is to find synergy effects ('synergieffekter') between social services and the hospitality industry. According to Olof, the business department unit realized the following:

If we only support stores with money so that they can buy a new freezer, we can do that until *the end of days*, sort of, but what we really should do, should be to stimulate so that the place *becomes* stronger, because there is a customer base or... or that, if it is a place where visitors come, that the store makes money from the arrival of tourists, where it is more about *mobilizing the place, strengthening the community* rather than just leaving money for life support ('livsuppehållande'), as respirator operations ('respiratorverksamhet') for a store.

Supporting places with financial means only have little effect, consequently. Mobilizing the community is crucial. Place development has to find its new ways of collecting resources, interdisciplinary and for many purposes at once in a holistic approach. This is where cross-sector collaboration ('tvärsektoriell samverkan') comes into picture, where for instance social services and the hospitality industry meet:

Olof (19.49): It is not very often that people working on cultural heritage, culture, business, and sometimes those working on social sustainability, maybe even those working on traffic planning, talk together. You often work in your downpipes ('stuprör'). But precisely in site development, it has become so. So it is a pretty good example of cross-sectoral collaboration, which everyone is talking about nowadays. (he laughs)

Involved actors in the region have to work out new ways to solve common issues, just as the place development manual itself suggests for local place developments. On both regional and local levels, innovative collaboration is crucial. If innovative business models are to reuse resources such as buildings, heritage should be important even in the place development manual and local place development. Heritage is by developer Anna mentioned as one of many resources that are to be reused in innovative ways in place development. Gathering human resources seems more important for place development, as heritage can only be analysed as cultural and creative businesses and cultural environments in the region's PDM (2021:3,4). However, collaboration between heritage, culture and business developers is the creative heritage implementation of the region's place development.

Until this point, we can see that sustainable development needs to involve different actors on all levels, whether these are local, regional or probably even (inter)national. When it comes to BIDs, Meltzer (2011) finds that BIDs tend to shape in more commercial spaces, including a variety of services and customer needs. Boverket (2019) confirms this, by stating that the model is usually adapted in shopping mall organizations. 'Business' has a negative ring to some locals

according to Olof, as it sounds too focused on commercialisation. Interestingly, financial arguments are more convincing for a strengthened heritage reuse in development (Paju 2002:21). On the other hand, these financial arguments are to be used if you want to stress heritage's underlying possibilities for financial growth. It makes sense that financial arguments are useful if you want to improve a place's economy. Moreover, locals may want to focus on other kinds of growth, such as social or environmental wellbeing. This reminds of Liburd's and Edward's (ed. 2018:27) discussions on tourism development often being focused on financial, static aspects in the past, though tourism and sustainable development are dynamic processes. Liburd argues that sustainable (tourism) development has to be other-regarding and collaborative over various disciplines (2018:27). It is to be understood that neither of these social processes are value neutral, since collaboration are joint outcomes; they are loaded with power negotiations and differing interests, from a discursive perspective. It is thus of importance that actors care for one another, and dare to see beyond their own interests, if they are to reach sustainable shared goals.

To summarize, both financial, social and environmental sustainability is to be found in the region's place development method, inspired by nongovernmental and innovative collaboration in BIDs. All aspects are thus equally important while considering 'growth'. Västra Götaland's place development is mainly about gathering resources of all kinds, including heritage, to solve common issues through innovative collaboration, locally and regionally.

6. Åstol as a branded fishing community

In the previous chapters, the study has shed light on the creative circular use of heritage in Västra Götaland's regional development strategy, and their place development manual's (PDM's) focus on social, local leadership while branding places. This chapter will highlight the specific place of Åstol and their work on branding and self-identification, similar to the place development manual's strategies. This will be done by analysing the local process leader's perspective on the creative development on the site, just as analysing Åstol's online branding.

Place development in tourism discourses is often about branding, as Västra Götaland's place development manual states. This is why the case will also be analyzed through the concept of branding. Place identity ('platsidentitet') is the social actions of that place (Lidman 2018:15), partially its collective memories (Halbwachs 1992, Fröhlig 2017:40). Cresswell (2014:120) refers to Edward Casey's (1987:186-187) "place memory" and memory coming alive while being place-supported. Identity is both individual, social and tangible (Fröhlig 2017:40). Identity is itself a fluid and changing concept (Lidman 2018:15). This refers to the discursive understanding of everything's contingency, that every phenomenon is repeatedly constructed in specific social contexts (Laclau & Mouffe 2008).

Lefebvre's (1991) *representations of space* is similar to a discursive understanding of place, and is useful to this study. Braunerhielm (2002) presents Lefebvre's work on *The Production of Space* (1991). It discusses places as both *spatial practices*, *representations of space* and *representational space*. In this section of my thesis, Lefebvre's representation of space is useful, since it describes the imagined space that are verbal and written results from people's perceptions of a specific place. Policymakers are often trying to control the conceptualisations of space (Lefebvre 1991, Braunerhielm 2002:34). The strategic documents previously analyzed (VGR's RDS, VGR's PDM) are written results from perceived space; The space has been analyzed by regional developers and put into strategic documents, thus representations.

The decision of place conceptualisations are discursive, contested in a web of power relations (Cresswell 2014). The place development of Åstol is itself a contested result from social actors of the site and the region. Results of the conceptualisations can be the policies themselves, or other representations (Braunerhielm 2002:34). In tourism, these representations are usually brochures, travel books and guides (Braunerhielm 2002:34). Therefore, written representations on webpages online are other representations of the studied case or place that will be studied later in this chapter. In this way, representations of the chosen place appear. It will start by presenting Åstol's work on collaboration.

6.1 The local process leader and shared engagement

‘Malin’ has been a local process leader for 1,5 years for the initial place development phase in Åstol. In June 2019, ‘Olof’, a place developer called to ask if she wanted to become a local process leader for Åstol’s place development. Malin and her husband first saw Åstol in 2001, when they bought a summerhouse, a fishing cottage (‘fiskarstuga’) on the island. They were amazed by the natural experience of the island, situated in Västerhavet. They noticed that the locals were very friendly and caring, which Malin and her husband appreciated. In 2013, they moved permanently from Stockholm to the island, into a bigger house. Malin has been active in an association on Åstol, where she has been organising some big events. Her already active role is why she believes she was voted for as a local process leader. Malin’s professional background as a school pedagogical developer, for teachers and in collaborative ways, was probably also useful for this position as Åstol’s local process leader.

There are many associations situated on the island, seven to be precise. There is one for the society, one for the street maintenance, one for boats, sports, gardening, a local community association and a financial association. These associations have been working on their own specific goals individually, as well as on their shared goals, Malin says. One goal with the strategic place development plan was to make these associations work together, along with business owners, social service, other places nearby and the region. One previous problem happened four years ago, when two different associations on the island asked the municipality for help with the same problem, simultaneously but separately (Malin). According to Malin, this could definitely have been organised collectively. For her, the need for collaboration became even clearer at this point. Malin says that the various associations have their own facebook-groups. Another challenge is to make those work together, so that theme days and activities do not coincide. Moreover, the associations can work together in making common activities. This coincides with Nora Bohlin’s (2020) interview report ‘Åstol’s future: the people, the calmness and the future’ made during a sustainability project in maritime service and hospitality industries. Local engagement over all associations is crucial for a democratic Åstol (Bohlin 2020:16).

6.2 A joint venture

In the search for a local process leader, other locals were asked. These were hesitant though, as they did not want to lead activities and process development. Malin realized that a social process is not only her responsibility, because it has to be a joint venture.

Malin (25.05): It could work. It is not only depending on me. I have to have a project *group*. And from that thought, the challenge becomes a totally different one.

Sandra: Ah, so it becomes another one than if you would only be working by yourself?

M: Yes, precisely. That you don't see it as 'It is *I* who am to turn the wheels of development'. You have to create prerequisites for *more* people to be able to do that.

S: And why do you need that? (smiling)

M: Well, partly because if, if I am doing it myself it becomes very heavy. That is one reason, naturally. But the *main reason* is to gain as many *different perspectives and thoughts and ideas* as possible. Because if I am developing something only from my understanding, it is only going to be *my* understanding, but if there are *more people* contributing with ideas and thoughts and, and making things, well, actually the analysis that I talked about initially, then we get to see much more. The picture becomes richer, the more people that are involved. So that is why it is important to not be alone.

These quotes clarify the collaborative aims of the place development in Åstol and the RDS. In phase I of the process, the many stakeholders are to be gathered to enable solving common problems and unused potentials (VGR's Place development manual 2021:7). Collecting resources, such as human resources and shared commitment, is a very important factor for social growth, according to 'Anna', a place developer from Västra Götaland's region's business unit. The manual describes that it is easier if even stakeholders with opposing aims try to work together, in order to find a common vision and working methods. Whom to collaborate with is of course a matter of power relations and a desired positioning in relation to some other entity. Apart from that, collaboration can lead to a gained advantage for all parties; "Individuals or organisations may enter into collaboration to achieve something they could not generate alone" (Liburd 2018:13). Liburd proposes that actors who want to be resilient are to collaborate with both civil society and people "...who care beyond selfish interests" (2018:27) This is so that actors can "...embrace complexity and chaos over time" (2018:27). A place development is to help gather local actors to collaborate on shared issues (VGR's Place development manual 2021:2). Thus, it is important to gather people for sustainable development, as in Åstol.

Accordingly, Malin pointed out that it is usually non-representative for an individual to develop a place all by herself. For this reason, Malin wanted to gather people, more ideas and multiple understandings of Åstol. With help from the region, the locals started a project group ('samverkansråd') during the place development's initial phase, with chairpersons from all associations. This consisted of 15 people, which included all associations, business developers or traders, and social services working together in meeting common priorities and collecting resources. Malin was impressed with everyone's efforts timewise, partaking in all meetings, collecting statistics and personal inputs, making their own investigations and small projects. Four target areas were defined but first, a vision for Åstol was formulated:

Vision

“Åstol shall be a living community for residents, visitors and for different public and business actors. This society should be characterized by a strong cultural archipelago identity paired with the community, well-being, joy and quality of life that provides added value to live in or often visit Åstol.” (Strategy plan for Åstol Året runt, place development plan 2021:5).

Åstol’s Goals (‘Målområden’)

1. New understanding of residents (all-year-around-residents, part-time-living, tourists and guest harbor visitors).
2. Collaboration between associations and businesses and other stakeholders on the island, but also between Åstol and other islands, the “mainland” and the municipality we are a part of.
3. The heritage development (milieu, sights and cultural life).
4. Marketing, information and communication based on our real and potential visitors.

6.3 Åstol, a unique branded destination

Until this point, the thesis has discussed the second process goal of Åstol, regarding collaboration. From now on, the focus will be on the other three, in connection to Åstol as a branded destination. A question is what the vision’s ‘cultural archipelago identity’ means, and furthermore what Åstol’s heritage identity is based on. This section will examine this.

It is useful to further present today’s Åstol. Between fall 2019 and spring 2020, statistics were collected by the process group to successfully analyse contemporary synergy effects between social service and tourism (Strategy plan for Åstol Året runt, place development plan 2021:3). The current situation analysis is presented as follows:

Åstol is an island off the southern tip of Tjörn that has 180 year-round residents. Pretty much half of its 173 houses are inhabited by part-time residents. In the project, the term leisure inhabitants (‘fritidsboende’) will be avoided as we now know that the part-time residents live on average 80 days per year at Åstol. They account for half of the revenues in our store (‘handelsbod’), and a significant part of the ferry’s passengers, and they therefore constitute an important resource for Åstol’s prerequisites for being a living society. Together, all residents of Åstol are about 500 people and Åstol’s future is borne by everyone who lives whole or parts of the year here. In summer, the number of people staying on the island also increases at least double. However, the curve for those who live all year at Åstol is downward. In 2009 there were 216 people and in 2019 we were 180 people (85 of these were over 65 years old).”

Åstol is to be valued for all its inhabitants, both permanent, part-time and visitors. The place development is to find synergy effects between these, to contribute to growth in many factors. The analysis is also made in accordance with Västra Götaland’s Phase 1 of the process development, where the local process group, in this case Åstol Året runt, gathers local stakeholders, statistics and other information connected to the current site analysis (VGR’s PDM 2021:7).

The first thought that occurs while studying Väst Sverige, one of the island's two homepages (see Appendix 2) is that it is a destination site, made to attract readers. This is complemented by the 'Åstol året runts place development strategy' (2021:5):

"We have an amazing island-world (ö-värld) that Åstol is a part of. We need to put Åstol in the center of this island world and everything it has to offer. We are not an island, we are an island in an island world (en ö i en övärld). What lies around us are resources in marketing to spend more time here."

Åstol is an island among islands along the coast of Bohuslän. This is similar to Malin's first impression of Åstol, part of a west coast landscape (11.04): "Of course we liked what we had seen of the west coast before, but that far we did not want to go. But then, when you get out to this exclusive, pretty exotic west coast milieu with the saltwater and wind and sun, crabs and sea stars and/ then it is hard to resist, really." Åstol is described as a more exotic west coast milieu. One may wonder in what ways Åstol may differ from the other islands.

Globalisation has created a need for local differentiation for tourism destinations (Braunerhielm 2002:33). Braunerhielm (2002:37) means that (cultural) heritage makes places unique, as intangible heritage is setting a frame for its locals. Heritage creates symbolic values for potential tourism. Thus, heritage is an important political and financial asset for authentic place identity (Braunerhielm 2002:37). "A place is not isolated from the rest of the world, but part of a complex network with its surroundings or maybe even globally." (VGR's PDM 2021:2). The PDM says that strong places have many strong networks, though the place development is about strengthening the specific local place. If one is to strengthen a place, it has to differentiate from the rest of the world. If everything is discursive, it is also interconnected, relational in some way (Laclau & Mouffe 2008). Specific places can also be considered as their own discourses, setting frames for what is possible within that spatial zone. Today, tourism is far from uniform, leading globally to both urban cities and countryside, making the symbolic values of specific places important, if these are to be distinguished from others (Braunerhielm 2002:34). Places need to articulate certain characteristics for identifying them or their products (Braunerhielm 2002:32).

For rural small towns and places, "(u)niqueness is often a means of linking local with national in monuments, architecture, the intangible heritage, and prominent personalities associated with a particular place." (Klusáková 2018:141). Thus, place branding may set the place into a specific context, that can be both nationally and locally bounded. Networks and connections are made on a larger scale. Local identities are linked to bigger social processes of commemorations, if referring to Halbwachs' (1992) concept of collective memory. Collaboration between islands nearby is also important to consider for attracting visitors (Bohlin 2020:16, Malin). These Bohuslän islands have similar characters that can be used for collaboration instead

of competition (Malin 05.06). The islands are put into a shared West coast context. In order to make a place or its linked products truly competitive, yet actors are to find its local unique values (Klusáková 2018:13). The process team has identified unique characteristics too. Here, Malin compares the neighboring island Dyrön and Åstol:

Malin (06.18): It is not that you walk among a lot of houses, but you are really in nature (on Dyrön). And anything like that is not to be found on Åstol, but on Åstol, we have this strong fishing tradition. We have a totally different heritage. We have a lot more cool buildings here with the narrow streets and the old fishing cabins put closely together. And there it might be clearer for you how these two perspectives may complement each other. You can get this nature experience, exercise and hike on Dyrön, while we can offer the cultural tradition in a totally different way than Dyrön can.

Malin thinks Dyrön and Åstol have complementary characteristics that should be utilized through collaboration between the islands. These two islands may offer combined stays, where visitors stay on either one of the islands and get to see both of them and what they have to offer (Malin). Åstol has been identified both as unique and as similar to the surrounding islands.

6.4 Åstol's calm fishing heritage brand

“A sense of calm is the first impression you have as you step off the ferry in the deep horse-shoe harbour.” (Västsverige.com). Another Åstol webpage, Åstolrock.se, made by locals, says similarly; “Living and being out here is like a remedy for body and soul” (See appendix 3). Åstol is about living in harmony with nature, the ocean, birdwatching and feeling the wind (Malin, Bohlin 2020:16). Before moving from Stockholm to Åstol Malin was never aware of the wind direction. Nowadays, she knows exactly how many meters per second does it blow and if it is a southeast wind, she tells while laughing. Living next to the ocean makes you aware of subtle changes in the environment, which can be considered mindful and soothing. To Malin, living in harmony with nature is a part of the archipelago identity. I ask Malin what ‘archipelago identity’ is to her after she mentioned the word while describing the place vision:

Malin (46.22): When I think of archipelago culture, I partly think of this fishing tradition that exists out here. (...) All buildings are characterized by their past as a fishing community. We have boathouses in long lines around the whole harbor, around all of Åstol we have boathouses. These were very important in the supply of fishing trawlers or shrimp trawls. A lot of herring has been caught from here as well.”

The fishing tradition of Åstol is an imagined representation of space, by using Lefebvre's concept (1991:33-53). Malin perceives the space as shaped by its past heritage, a fishing identity. In fact, even the physical space, such as the boathouses on the island, are spatial reminders of this identity. The spatial practice of the space that is to be perceived (Lefebvre 1991) makes it highly likely to perceive Åstol as a fishing community, even though it was mainly a former identity. To many locals Åstol's heritage is the fishing tradition, Christian solidarity and calmness, but there

are of course differing individual stories that are being commemorated (Bohlin 2020). Memories are social practices (Halbwachs 1992 and Olick 2007:6). According to Halbwachs, "...even the most primary individual memories are socially framed..." Olick (2007:6). Memories are being selected and constructed in relation to other human beings in a specific contemporary setting for a group's current needs, according to Halbwachs (1992). "In order to explain the present, leaders of a group reconstruct a past using rationalization to choose which events are remembered, those that are eliminated, and rearrange events to conform to the social narrative" (Memorial Worlds). Malin and other stakeholders of Åstol may commemorate the island as a fishing community.

The French historian Pierre Nora built upon Halbwachs, stating that commemoration is also a deliberate selection of memories (1996) that is more applicable on Roma Kungsgård than Åstol. This was a case studied on Gotland by a group of students in the master program of Sustainable destination development, in the spring of 2021. After speaking with different local stakeholders, it was noticeable that they had different understandings of the site. Some referred to it as an abbey ruin, others to a 17th century mansion, others as access to library and food supply, and a few more as a nice walking trail. In the case of Roma, the selective commemoration becomes clear, as these vary a lot. Besides, Roma's dark past as a military site seemed forgotten, not articulated by any of the stakeholders that we met. Some locals mainly think of Roma as a new industrial hub, according to a rural developer that we interviewed. Many new companies had recently moved into the old sugar factory. Place identity may vary depending on selective memory.

If representative memory is selected, the fishing community and archipelago identity is the articulated representation of Åstol. Halbwachs' term collective memory was inspired by French sociologist Emile Durkheim's concept of *conscience collective*. "As such, Halbwachs's work on collective memory also drew our attention not only to the social frameworks of individual memory or even to social memory (i.e., the memory of groups) per se but also to collective memories as *representations collective*, publicly available symbols and meanings about the past" (Olick 2007:6). The collective, publicly branded representations of Åstol are based on the fishing and archipelago identity. Representations of the social are the same as representations of place, as these are both usually articulated by specific stakeholders. The perceived space is articulated by stakeholders such as process leaders or website owners, in relation to other stakeholders and current wishes. In the case of Åstol, branding as a fishing community is useful, giving the place both unique and universal values in a Bohuslän west coast environment.

Heritage, to me, is a concept similar to collective memory and representations of space. Heritage could be considered a discursive practice that is made in relation to time and space

bounded contexts. Here is a quote, depicting heritage in accordance to heritage scholar LauraJane Smith (2006) and social geographer Inger Birkeland (2015):

“From a constructivist perspective, heritage is always socially created, interpreted and communicated within particular contexts and from particular perspectives (Smith 2006). Heritage is made in the present as a contemporary product, and is consequently distinct from a historical view of the past (Handler and Linnekin 1984; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Lowenthal 1985).”(Birkeland 2015:163).

Heritage is notions of the past, making sense in the present, thus similar to Halbwachs collective memory (1992). It is the resources being identified, such as the fishing tradition of Åstol for its current place development. “Heritage processes help to preserve particular aspects of the past, but such processes are always selective.” (Birkeland 2015:173). Here, a historical background to the articulated archipelago identity is needed.

Åstol, as the many neighboring islands in Bohuslän have been part of a fishing tradition, in Åstol since the 1800th century. Thus, it was inhabited in 1761 (Åstolrock.se). Åstol had another great herring period between the 1950-1970s. Nowadays the fishing from Åstol has more or less ceased. Most of Åstol’s inhabitants are working on the mainland (Åstolrock.se). There are still inhabitants who grew up here during the great herring period of the 50's to 70's, who are now about 60-70 years old (Malin). They have many stories to tell about all the fishermen who died nearby. The folk museum association has many photos exhibited in their café. These photos might be representations of space, or social representations of memories, to draw from Lefevbre (1991) or Halbwachs (1992). The pentecostal church was also important, especially during the big fishing periods. Malin thinks exposure to the powers of nature and the dangerous lives of many fishermen may be reasons. There are many stories of all that drowned, on the sea, in the harbour and all boats that have sunk (Malin). Malin thinks that the vulnerability to nature makes people dependent on each other. This was probably why the church was necessary in making people come together in hard times, giving a sense of meaning and comfort. Today, the church is in a dwindling existence. Malin thinks that the exposure to nature lives on as a slower tempo for the inhabitants:

“...even if the church is not that strong out here anymore, there is still a strong sense of... some approach to life issues that are... well, a slower pace, that you take more care of each other. That you come out here to calm down in life, to think of where you are. So, there we think that we have a great potential for some kind of retreat, tourism. To come out here and simply make a stop in life and land and think things, that is... Because that is something that Åstol really has.”

There is something about Åstol making people calm down, it seems according to Malin, Bohlin (2020) and the two websites. The space itself gives attractiveness to visitors, just as its many representational aspects (compare with Lefevbre 1991), as Åstol is perceived by locals. After

finishing writing, I watched “Åke from Åstol”, a humorous musical short movie from 1998, made by Galenskaparna and After Shave. Egon from Dyrön visits Åstol during the film: “Here you live in harmony with the elements. Here the sea is a companion, the wind a friendly friend and the exposure an inspiring strong partner who welds together and excites. Everyone is kind, everyone is happy”. This reflects what the data has expressed. Åstol is perceived as a place exposed to the powers of nature and a fishing heritage, making people calm down in today’s rushing world. This is today’s heritage being branded and developed by Åstol stakeholders.

Being in nature may have a comforting effect, Malin thinks, just as offering yoga retreats. Malin, also a yoga instructor, has ideas on collaborating with one of the island’s galleries, to make a combined art-making and yoga retreat. The members of the process development team and the community of Åstol are currently thinking of ways to develop the heritage on site. An actress thought of making a play (‘vandringsteater’) telling the island’s many fishing stories. Besides, they have ideas of letting visitors meet locals, in fishing activities, historical guided tours where you see where the women used to gather while doing laundry and gossiping, and making bread with old local women using their old unique ovens. Åstol’s smokehouse (Åstols Rökeri) has been very popular, attracting locals and visitors during the weekend after work with live music nights (Malin). It is a fishing restaurant with its own smokehouse founded in 1984 (Åstolrock.se), listed as one of Sweden’s best restaurants (åstolsrökeri.se). The smokehouse may represent a development of the fishing heritage, though more activating, less soothing than the idea of a yoga retreat.

6.5 Upscaling and re-evaluating heritage resources: glimpses of two other cases

Using resources at hand is the concept of Bricolage, coined by ethnologist Claude Levi-Strauss (1962) and used within a wide variety of disciplines, such as entrepreneurial studies. “When discussing resource seeking and utilizing, bricolage theory views entrepreneurial processes as making do with what is at hand” (Kang 2017:342). It is the creative new combinations of upscaled, revalued resources made by entrepreneurs and local stakeholders. These resources can be both human, intangible and spatial, material (Anna). Bricolage is similar to Åstol’s reuse of historic street-patterns and buildings. Earlier, I quoted the EU Commission, stating that reusing historical spatialities reduces carbon emissions and improves quality of life (2015:7). This is the sustainable case of Åstol. Since they are using resources at hand, it is similar to bricolage. Using available resources through bricolage is even similar to Olofs’s often stated notion of place development, while referring to the introductory speech of the moderator of the regional development committee, during a final conference in a site development project (Olof 31.37):

“All regional development is based on the conditions that exist at the site. It is very rare to be able to create something completely new without having to build your development on what already exists - *its cultural heritage* (*‘dess kulturarv’*).” Åstol has used the resources at hand to develop it further. In the case of Åstol, the main resource happened to be its rich fishing tradition, in comparison to Dyrön, with a more pristine nature.

To stay attractive in the future, places have to develop their identity, particularly previous industrial areas. New businesses (*‘nya näringsgrenar’*) often grow out of the old one (Olof 32.05). To make a short contrasting example to Åstol, the city of Leicester in the United Kingdom did not focus on its historical layers as assets for place branding. Leicester, for long the city of clothes, went through deindustrialisation in the 1970s, (Hassen & Giovanardi 2017). Leicester then turned into an “industrial relic”. Leicester has rich historical assets, with medieval street patterns and Victorian character, that have been “somewhat neglected” (Hassen & Giovanardi 2017:47). When the city was to reinvent its identity, historical assets were not used; “Leicester was not generally considered to be a historical town but rather a grey and run-down industrial city that was struggling to compete with Nottingham's Robin Hood legend (Leicester Promotions 1999 in Hassen & Giovanardi 2017:47). Instead, Leicester was to be reinvented into a multicultural, inclusive city, based on its migrational assets. For local authorities, this was an opportunity for celebrating diversity. This case is similar to Bradford, the city of film in the United Kingdom, that was for a long time an industrial city (Kang 2017). After its industrial decline, its identity had to be reinvented, as Birkeland suggests.

Similar to Leicester, Bradford also looked for its multicultural assets of migration flows. Interestingly, a finding of a more traditional British heritage spot, what might have been the grave of King Richard III, is rather considered as a challenge to the recently developed multicultural brand of Leicester. Hassen and Giovanardi conclude that Leicester has managed to establish a lasting, strong brand of celebrating diversity, despite other, traditional opposing brands, such as the one of “England’s last warrior king” (2017:50). These examples really expose the place brandings’ selective characteristics, as socially constructed in time-bound contexts. While history can be considered a burden for some old industrial places, it can be assets for others. It all depends on what actors do with what is at hand. Creative bricolage and reinvention are needed for places to remain attractive (Birkeland 2015, Klusáková 2018). At least places’ perceived, branded heritage has to be developed in order to remain, as time and the social world moves forward. Åstol is currently working on this, where ideas such as the play, ‘meet the locals’, yoga retreats and Rökeriet are emerging ones.

Now, after the place development phase, Malin thinks that the community association ('samhällsförening') will get a strengthened role in working on the vision. Åstol also has a new communication group, making a shared branded identity. They will work through all associations' information available online to make it coherent. Malin and the marketing group will use facebook and instagram, because these are the dynamic popular platforms. These platforms enable continuous marketing. Rökeriet has great instagram marketing for instance, Malin thinks; They post information on their after works and weekend artists. All locals meet there, Malin says. Rökeriet later makes updates with pictures and clips after the weekend. Consequently, the marketing is continuous. Both the social media marketing, café, gallery, shop, bath, park, and Rökeriet have the potential for developing Åstol's fishing community further.

The spatial boundaries of Åstol actually created the opportunity for stronger collaboration. The closeness to nature is what has shaped Åstol's heritage, locals and identity of today. Heritage is just as place and social representations perceived and articulated by specific stakeholders in specific settings, such as process leaders or website owners, in relation to other stakeholders and current wishes. Åstol's physical space affects what development is possible within that zone. In the case of Åstol, even the spatial boundaries create a need for making people come together. Branding as a calm fishing community is useful for Åstol, since it gives the place both unique and universal values in a Bohuslän, west coast environment.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Results

The purpose was to investigate how place development is taking place in the case of the island Åstol in Västra Götaland and what role heritage plays in this. An overarching research question was how regional development and heritage may intertwine. The analytical chapters responded to one each of the research questions below.

1. How does 'heritage' play a part in Västra Götaland's regional development strategy?

The first analytical chapter analyzed the strategy in relation to developer 'Olof's' understanding of heritage as synonymous with 'circular business models'. Heritage is implemented in the RDS as sustainable reuse of old buildings and places. Heritage is important in the discourse of place development. Place development is to be sustainable, engage locals and it is using circular business models. Public-private, cross-sectoral collaboration can innovate working methods to become more circular. Västra Götalands' heritage development department has been continuously exploratory in developing their methods for development.

The regional development strategy is all about the need for resources to meet, such as nature and cultural heritage. Traditionally, heritage deals with conserving and freezing time. For sustainable development heritage has to be implemented as a self-evident asset for future development. Reusing buildings and environments generally gives a sense of continuum, character and identity creation (Riksantikvarieämbetet 2009 and Lidman 2014:14). Not only buildings, but natural heritage sites are also important factors for sustainable social living (EU Commission 2015:7). Reusing resources of all kinds is a sustainable goal of Västra Götaland.

2. How is place development made in Västra Götaland's region and what role does heritage have in this?

The second analytical chapter dealt with Västra Götaland's place development method and its connection to heritage, Business improvement districts and nongovernmental stakeholders. It started by discussing what a place is. A place has never fixed boundaries, the place development manual tells. Places are like discourses continuously socially constructed in placemaking processes (Laclau and Mouffe 2008 and Cresswell 2014). Similarly, a place is to be defined by its actors involved in the development process, the manual, Olof and Åstol's local process leader say. It is during the process and in relation to stakeholders involved that the place is defined and given meaning.

Place development is according to Västra Götaland region's handbook for local process leaders: "A locally lead, long term organisation in a limited place where the civil society, business, and public actors cooperate to solve common needs ' (2021:1). This correlates with the public-private government systems of Business improvement districts (Meltzer 2011). According to the heritage developers and local process leaders, the method has been successful. The region has continuously developed their PDM, just as the RDS.

Place development has to find new ways of collecting resources, interdisciplinary and for many purposes at once in a holistic approach. This is where other-regarding, cross-sector collaboration is needed, where the social services and hospitality industry meet (Liburd 2018:27). Heritage is one of many resources that are to be reused innovatively in the region's place development. Heritage is notable as cultural and creative business or cultural environments in the PDM. Collaboration between heritage, culture and business developers is nevertheless the creative heritage implementation of the region's place development.

3. What role does heritage play in presenting Åstol, on its two websites and according to the local process leader?

The third analytical chapter highlighted the specific place of Åstol and local stakeholders' place branding and identification. Åstol's online branding was analysed just as local process leaders' perspectives on the creative development on site. Åstol's recent place development followed the place development manual, and is currently working on its historical identity based on the archipelago and fishing community. Åstol's recent place development has gathered human resources and various inputs to strengthen the community. With help from the region, the locals started a project group with various local representatives in order to meet common priorities.

Place branding is about setting the place into a specific context while simultaneously making it unique. Åstol is a branded historical fishing community in the context of the Swedish west coast. Local identities are linked to bigger social commemorations (Halbwachs 1992). Collaboration between islands nearby is important to consider for attracting visitors, according to the local process leader. Dyrön and Åstol have complementary characteristics to be utilized through tourism collaboration between the islands. Åstol has a strong heritage and reused physical remains of fishing tradition, while Dyrön can be valued mostly for its nature.

Heritage, places and social representations are perceived and articulated by Åstol's website owners and process leaders, in relation to regional stakeholders and current wishes. Heritage is an ongoing development goal in the Strategy plan for Åstol Året runt, place development plan (2021:5). Åstol's representations of space (compare with Lefebvre 1991) is to the local developer

and the websites, a historical place exposed to the powers of nature, making Åstol a place for contemplation and calmness. The spatial boundaries of Åstol created the need for stronger collaboration. The closeness to nature is what has shaped Åstol's heritage, locals and identity of today. Branding as a calm fishing community is useful for Åstol, as it gives the place both unique and universal values in a Bohuslän, west coast environment.

7.2 Discussion and new research questions

It is fascinating to think of how the physical aspects of place create limits and possibilities for connected articulations and perceptions. Åstol's harsh island climate makes people reliant on each other. In one way, Åstol's nature has enabled a cultural heritage that is to be branded today. Without island nature, no fishing community, and without its collaboration, no heritage brand today. The place development is about creative reuse of resources in new combinations. There is no wonder that cultural and natural heritage are intertwined in this case. In most cases, culture and nature are rather simplifying dichotomies. In this study, I see places as complex entities constructed of various aspects. Heritage is only one part of those entities.

A similar noticeable trend is the one of cross-sectoral collaboration, which can be identified throughout the whole thesis. Västra Götaland's regional development is about letting both spatial resources, staff and locals meet in new ways. When it comes to spatial resources, heritage and nature meets in Åstol and the RDS. Nature is constantly referred to in the RDS with the focus on circular reuse and environmental assets, where heritage is included. The region works on synergy effects with its staff, letting heritage, culture, social service and business developers meet in place development. Even various local actors of the place are to meet. The cross-sectoral regional workers meet the various locals and its resources at hand. The collaborations are exploratory on many levels within the region. Again, heritage is to be seen as a part of a wider collaboration. Heritage is both tangible assets for place branding, and a professional knowledge of developers involved in heritage, no matter what disciplines they may originate from. Also this study has tried to apply an interdisciplinary theoretical toolbox.

It is not surprising that the word heritage was not prominent in the regional development strategy (RDS). An initial analysis made by Persson-Fiscier and Gustafsson while comparing the RDSs of Sweden is that heritage is often given little space. Västra Götaland is using other words while using the concept of heritage. What matters is that heritage can be valued as a growth factor for locals and visitors. Locals of Åstol are currently developing their heritage brand.

A comparative analysis of the Swedish regions' heritage implementation in the RDSs would be valuable in finding other functioning implementations. Other comparative studies could have been between different heritage sites, or places with heritage-based brands. Even comparisons with places with less articulated heritage connotations would have been interesting. One initial idea was to compare Åstol or another Västra Götaland case with Roma Kungsgård, a destination on Gotland. This Gotland case would have been interesting for its various heritage identities and stakeholders. A phenomenological approach could have been useful then, by comparing different actors' perceptions and senses of the place(s).

Another fruitful entry would have been to follow the ongoing place development in real time. This could be made over the whole initial development phase, or at least a year. This would enable tracing the discursive decision processes and impact of different actors. Then, joining (un)official meetings and conducting interviews with all stakeholders would be necessary. In my study, the analysed data are instead articulated results of these processes, which of course has its representative limitations but also usefulness in subsequent analysis. Nevertheless, the overall societal situation and time limits have made my chosen demarcation the possible one today. Hopefully, comparisons and on site field studies will be conducted in the future.

My overall conclusion is that heritage has to be re-evaluated as part of a wider development if it is to remain relevant. Cross-sectoral and creative resource usage is crucial.

Interviews

1. Olof, heritage and place developer at Västra Götaland
Date of interview: 2021-03-03 13:30
Length of interview: 50 minutes
Interview conducted by the author
2. Olof and Anna, heritage, place and business developers at Västra Götaland
Date of interview: 2021-03-16 09:00
Length of interview: 1 hour 30 minutes
Interview conducted by the author
3. Malin, local place developer
Date of interview: 2021-04-16 10:00
Length of interview: 1 hour 40 minutes
Interview conducted by the author

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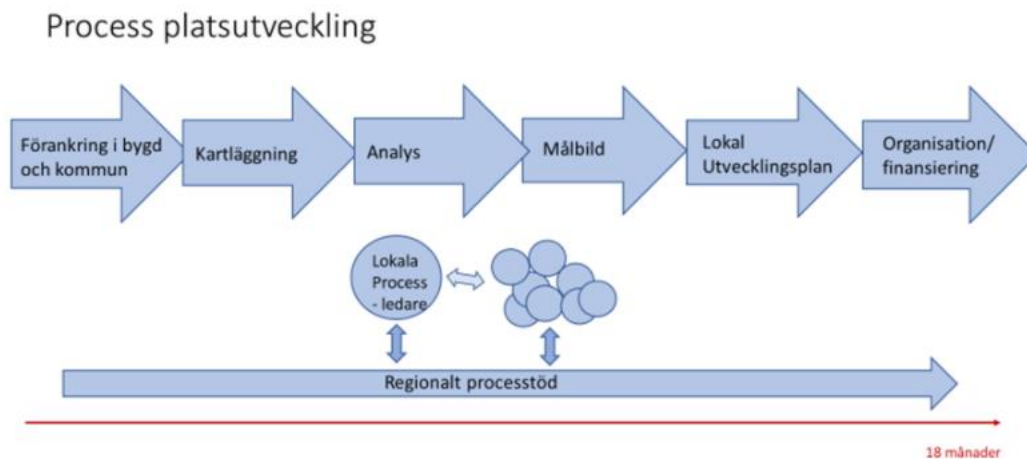
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Appendices

Appendix 1. The 6-step place development process in the Place development manual.



Appendix 2. West Sweden, Västsverige.com, 'Åstol'.

Part of **WEST SWEDEN**

Södra Bohuslän
MARSTRAND - TJÖRN - ÖRSKOT
KUNGLYV - STENUNGSSÖ

THINGS TO DO ▾ EAT & DRINK ▾ STAY ▾ MEETINGS ▾ ▾

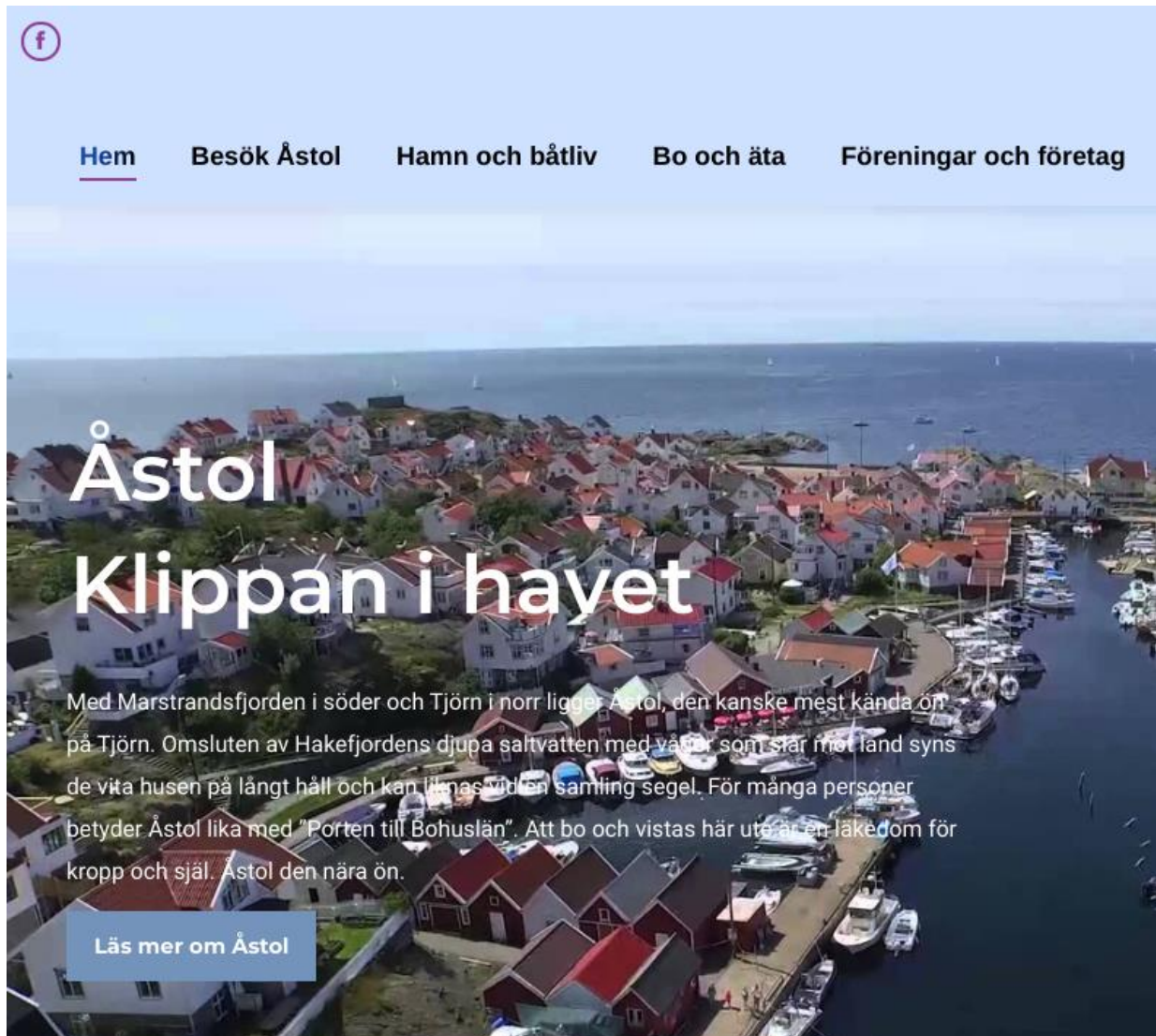
ÅSTOL

Tjörn

The rocky island with white wooden houses

Åstol is the small island with the white wooden houses surrounded by rugged rocks rising from the sea. The island is easy to reach by ferry from Rönnäng, and is located between Tjörn and Marstrand on the coast of Bohuslän. A day trip is quite sufficient to walk around the traffic-free island and enjoy the beautiful views, the boathouses and the dramatic rocks.

Appendix 3. Åstolrock.se, 'Åstol: Klippan i havet'.



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[Hem](#) [Besök Åstol](#) [Hamn och båtliv](#) [Bo och äta](#) [Föreningar och företag](#)

Åstol Klippan i havet

Med Marstrandsfjorden i söder och Tjörn i norr ligger Åstol, den kanske mest kända ön på Tjörn. Omsluten av Hakefjordens djupa saltvatten med väder som strar mot land syns de vita husen på långt håll och kan liknas vid en samling segel. För många personer betyder Åstol lika med "Porten till Bohuslän". Att bo och vistas här utgör en läkeDOM för kropp och själ. Åstol den nära ön.

[Läs mer om Åstol](#)

Appendix 4.

Interview guide, Olof and Anna

How do you work individually? (Since when, professional background)

What does your collaboration look like? How cross-sectoral?

What are your common/shared goals/missions?

What are/has been your challenges in place development/ collaboration?
(communication, decision processes, financing, coaches?)

What has been successful? (Do you have a recipe for success?)

What is your dream vision (for place development)?

What are the recent places that you have worked with?

Are there any places you would like to investigate further?

Appendix 5.

Interview guide, Malin

How and why did you become a local process leader?

What is Åstol? (To whom)

What actors have you worked with?

How was the dialogue with different actors? (With whom, when, how)

What is the purpose/ goal with Åstol's place development? SMART goals?
(Any problems or unused potential?)

What needed improvement? What wishes and needs existed (before, during, still, after)?

Is there any development company (utvecklingsbolag) or limited company (AB)?



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