

Case study: Geoparks and Landscapes

The concept Geoparks was established in 2000, and since then the network has grown. In 2015 Geoparks became part of UNESCO, and includes today 140 geoparks in 38 countries worldwide, and the network is growing fast. Geoparks are established in all neighbour Nordic countries and throughout Europe. During 2019 Sweden submitted an application to establish European Geoparks in addition to the national designated parks.

A Geopark works actively to show and spread knowledge about geology and geological sites. Among other things, by developing sustainable tourism, related hospitality industries and the general socio-economic well-being of the area. Outreach activities, especially for children and young people, are an important aspect to increase public awareness of interconnections between geology and biology, as well as geology, people and cultural history. All in all, a Geopark provides an increased understanding of how we best manage our natural resources and our planet, but also opportunities for positive rural development.

An example of a possible new, and somewhat new type of Geopark area is the Swedish archipelago environments. In this connection, the geology and geomorphology have created a coastal environment with special attributes and special needs for management with changing lifestyles and environmental impacts. At the end of the 1960s, herring fishing in the North Sea deteriorated significantly, because of excessive fishing pressure and a reduction in herring stocks. It was mainly the fishing nations closest to the North Sea that conducted this intensive herring fishing. Due to the deteriorated herring fishing, many Swedish fishermen left the fisheries and switched over to other activities. The fishing harbour's that were now modernized became in many cases empty of fishing boats. At the same time, the demand for marinas increased through the so-called plastic revolution in the recreational boat sector. The first plastic boat was manufactured in the USA in the early 1940s, but it was a couple of decades later the plastic leisure boats became predominant in European and their expansion has also led to a widespread expansion of leisure marinas along many coasts. The ports formally used for year-round fishing often dominated today by recreational boats for only seasonal use.

This difference is accompanied by a similar change in the local populations and the variable demands on societal service. Also, the environmental impacts have changed. The socio-economic conditions, the geo-heritage and the environment need to be integrated into the same landscape-scale model to help decision makers anticipate trends and necessary measures for a balanced management.

Question at issue:

- If sensitive parts of the Bohus coast is not managed with a sustainable landscape perspective, e.g. as Geoparks, what consequences would it entail for future developments in 10-50 years?