



THE NORTHERNMOST UNIVERSITY
of Technology in Scandinavia

The 22nd Nordic Symposium in Tourism and Hospitality Research

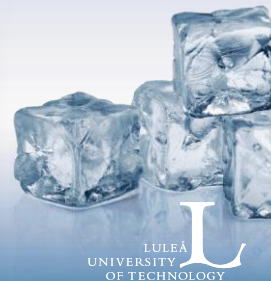
Bodø and Lofoten Islands, Sept 24-27, 2013

Session 5.5 Innovative packaging of experiences

The Solander Trail – an innovative hiking trail development process based on the Experience Economy paradigm

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Purpose of the presentation

- To present an ongoing participatory Action Research project in nature based tourism.
- The AR project involves a new process for hiking trail development based on theory from the Experience Economy and Experience Production.

Research question

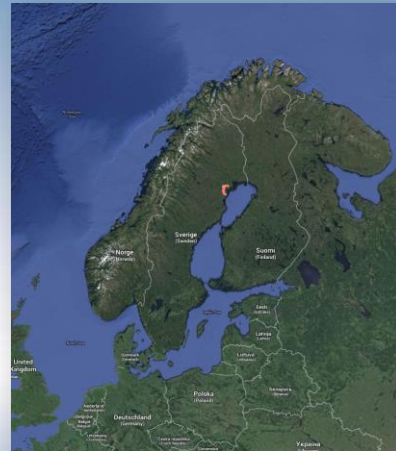
- How can a trail system be developed organic from a bottom-up tetra helix process trough implementing theories from the experience economy?



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Study Object

- The study object is the emerging 120 km Solander Trail in Piteå, Swedish Lapland.



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Theoretical perspective

Starting point:

- the paradigm shift introduced by the Experience Economy (Pine & Gilmore 1999 and others), shifting tourism offerings from providing tourism services to offering Meaningful Experiences (Boswijk et al 2007, 2012).
- This paradigm shift opened for new opportunities to develop tourism offerings.
- Several theoretical frameworks for this have been developed such as the Experience Triangle (Tarssanen 2009), Total Experience Management (Gelter 2006, 2010, 2011) and others.

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Theoretical Framework of the study

- Storytelling and Interpretation were chosen:
- Storytelling is assumed to contribute meaning to the experience (Pine & Gilmore 1999, Jensen 1999)
- Natural & Cultural Interpretation (Brochu & Merriman 2002) has a long history in bringing meaning to experiences of natural and cultural resources.



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By Interpretation we mean Tildenian Interpretation:

Tildenian Interpretation (Freman Tilden, Interpreting Our Heritage):

- P(provoke), R (relate) R (reveal)
- 3 goals (3H): Learning (Head), Emotional (Hart), and Action (Hand)
- Harmonize experiences around ONE theme
- Etc.

The BIG challenge – to develop an interpretative trail:

Example: Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve, Western Australia



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Background

- With the increased interest in nature-based tourism and sustainable travel, “adventure tourism” such as walking and hiking has become increasingly popular.
- Most nature-based destinations thus develop and offer cultural and natural walking trains and backcountry hiking trails to attract visitors.
- Famous hiking regions are often associated to mountainous areas such as New Zealand, the Alps, the Pyrenees, Scotland and the Scandinavian Mountains.



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Background

- Destinations lacking attractive national parks, splendid scenery, natural and cultural heritage sites with Unique Selling Points (USPs)
- as well as less known areas without any USPs, ‘
- have a demanding challenge to find a competitive positions on the world tourism map,
- and to compete with more popular trails nationally and internationally.



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Background

- Traditionally trail development is initiated and organized top-down by national or regional agencies, or by municipalities or on a commercial basis by resorts or DMO's.
- Both public or private driven trail development is based on traditional trail design (copycating) as a marked trail trough the landscape with information panels and spots of interest for rest and picnic.
- Trails are usually constructed by experts with minor involvement of local stakeholders.

Background

- Most trails can thus in a perspective of Experience Economy be regarded as **first generation staged experiences**,
- where the trail designer decides what experiences are going to be offered on what spots by designing resting areas, viewing spots and information panels.
- The hiker "consumes" these designed experiences and only to a minor degree co-create the hiking experience.



Background

- More culture oriented trails may include passing through villages that offer local business such as hostels, pubs, restaurants etc – being more interactive with the local community.
- Thus representing **second generation experience production** – a co-production between the hiker and the local community.
- A recent trend in increasing the interactivity between the trail and the hiker, is to use information technology with interactive trail information, GPS-based information systems and **Augmented Reality**.



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Background

- Other trends relating to the Experience Economy are **experience-defined trails** or thematic walks including pilgrim trails, historical trails, silent & slow trails, hiking events, Interpretative trails, etc.
- as well as **thematic guided walks** such as art- or literature based walks, spooky walks, murder mystery walks, interpretative walks etc.
- Also the segment of walkers and hikers has diversified, including both several day expedition like hikes to short walks, from beginners to advanced hikers, from well-being walks to luxury “glamping” experiences to adventurous hikes, etc.



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Background

- This diversification of the categories of hikers and their experiences preferences, as well as the transformation of tourism business from providing service to experiences,
- puts new demands on creative innovation when designing new trails for the Experience Economy.



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Methodology

Participatory Action Research (just started)

1. Engaged as entrepreneur through my company Guide Natura in product development
2. Board member of the local DMO (Destination Piteå of Swedish Lapland) - owner of the process
3. Steering board and working group in the project "Solanderleden berättar" (*Telling of the Solander Trail*)

Aim of the Action Research (my participation) is to contribute with theory from the Experience Economy and Experience production in the trail development process.

Aim with the research – a description and reflection of the innovative process of trail development.

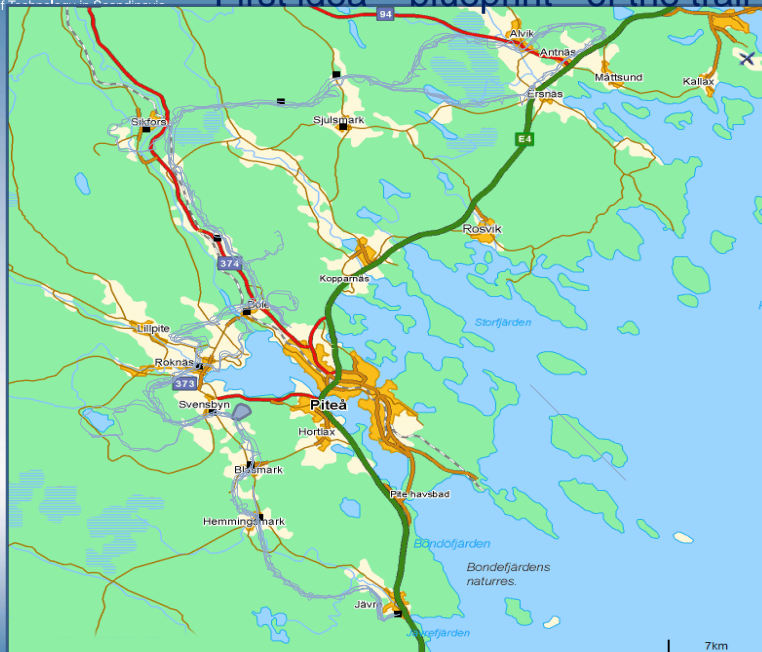
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Results so far:

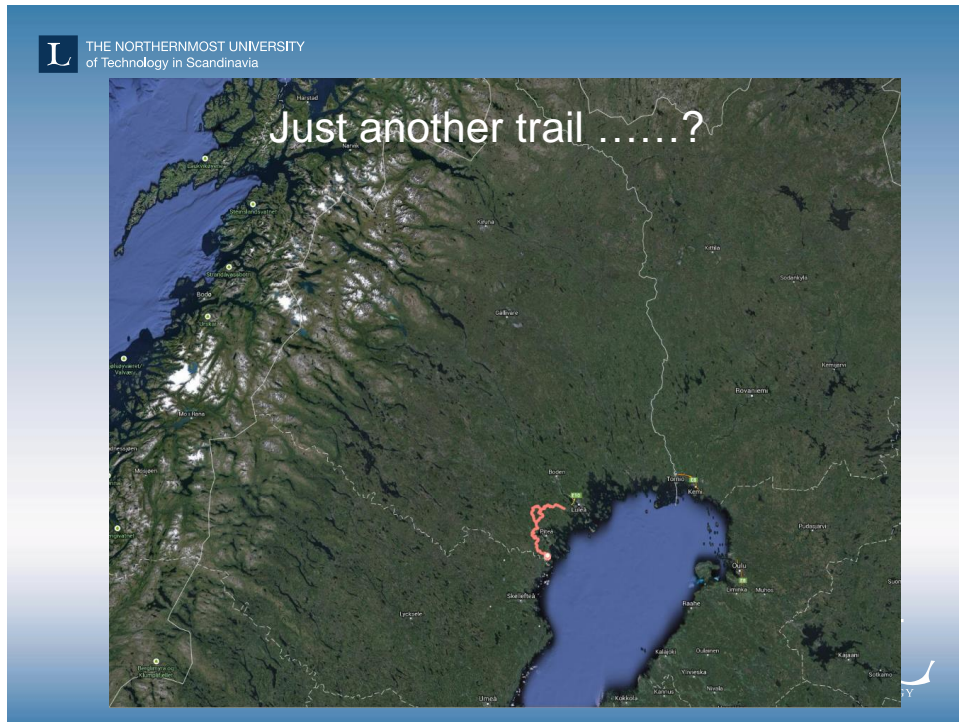
- The trail development was initiated by the Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF) as a pilot project in their project of rural development.
- The LRF project resulted in a pre-study engaging local stakeholders such as villages, village organizations, local sports and other clubs & organizations, and local entrepreneurs and companies as well as students from LTU in a complex tetra-helix process.
- This resulted in a idea of a 120 km trail through the cultural and natural landscape around Piteå called **"The farmers Trail"**.
- The aim of the trail was to raise the awareness of the local cultural and natural resources of the area and make it available to visitors, as well as rural development trough increased entrepreneurship associated to the trail.

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First idea – blueprint - of the trail



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Results so far:

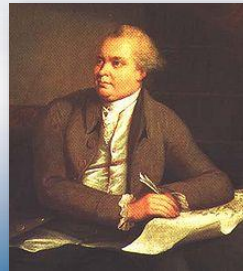
- The pre-study initiated by the Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF) resulted in a new project founded by the Swedish Agency for Economical and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket):
- Project: **Solanderleden berättar** (*Telling of the Solander Trail*)
- Aim: to develop the methodology of implementing Storytelling and Interpretation in a 7 km test-trail, the "Flottarstigen" (*Log-transporting trail*) as a national model for trail development.
- The trail name was changed (by my advice) from "The Farmer Trail" to "**The Solander Trail**"

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Who the f... is Solander

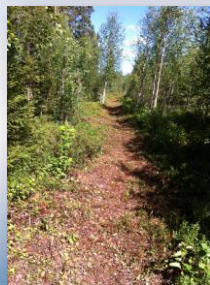
- Daniel Solander was born 1733 in Piteå, and was a student and disciples of Carl von Linné – aimed to marry Linnés daughter and take over his position as professor in Uppsala.
- Daniel sailed on the Endeavour 1767 with James Cook around the world, collecting new specimens for science.
- Daniel Solander is more known around the world then in Sweden.
- The thematic name Solander Trail, gives a storytelling-frame of natural and cultural history, discovery and entrepreneurship.



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Storytelling in different levels

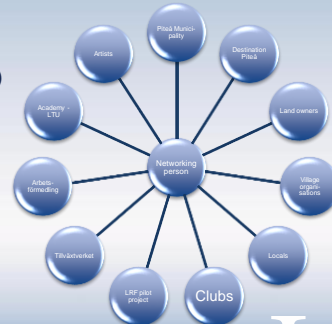
- Story for incoming tourists – the Solander story
- Stories for locals – “Flottarstigen” (Logging trail), “Elias leden” (the robber Elias), Pilgrim trail etc.



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Stakeholders involved

- Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF)
- Swedish Forestry Agency (Skogsstyrelsen)
- Swedish Placement Service - Arbetsförmedlingen (Fas 3)
- Swedish Agency for Economical and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket)
- Municipality of Piteå
- Destination Piteå of Swedish Lapland (DMO)
- Land owners
- Sport clubs and associations (snowmobile clubs etc.)
- Villages elders and homeland organizations
- Local artists, entrepreneurs and tourism firms
- Academy; students, teachers and researchers
- > 100 persons involved

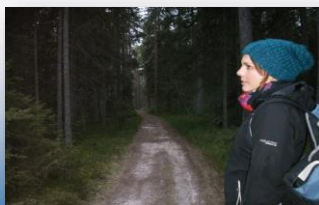


Beyond a tetra- and penta-helix process

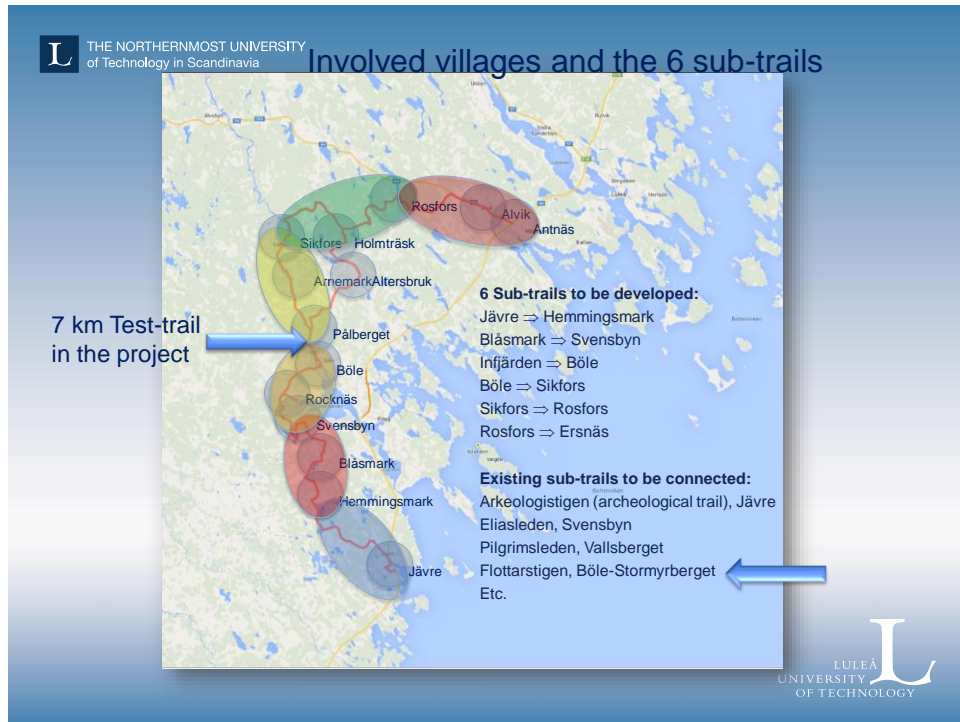
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Academic (LTU) participation

- Storytelling course – assignments
- Gastronomy course – assignments
- Media Design course - assignments
- Student think-thanks and test groups
- Award winning (3 times) Bachelor Thesis on innovative trail development based on storytelling and Interpretation (Hollström & Janum 2012)
- Me as participatory (Action) researcher



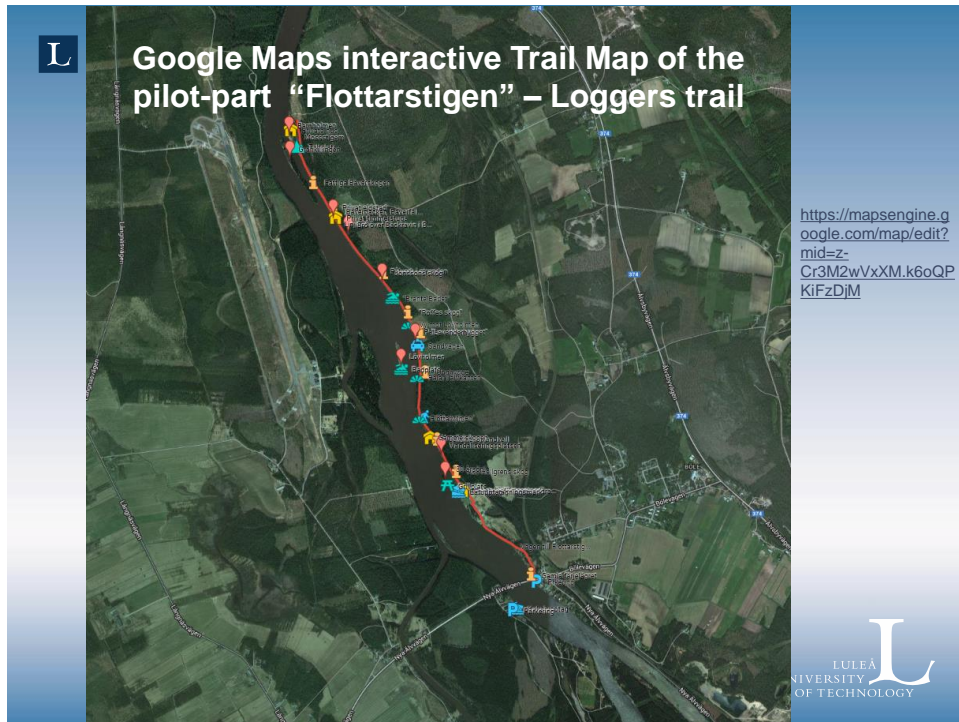
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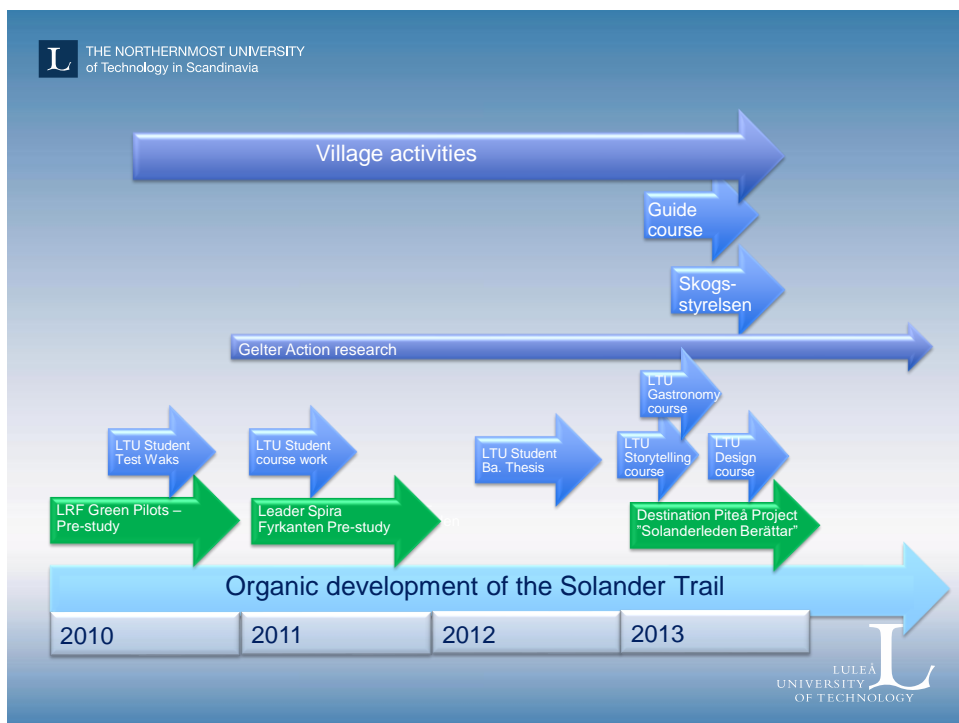
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Activities in the project

- Project steering board meetings
- Project workgroup meetings
- Landscape improvements (bush clearings, trail preparations, resting benches, campfire areas etc) – test-trail (7 km)
- Walk-and-talks with entrepreneurs
- Walk-and-talk with locals & landowners
- Walk-and-talk with Bill Taylor (Scotland) & steering & work group
- Benchmarking (Scotland, Tyresta NP, Höga Kusten etc.)
- Student involvement (courses, think-tanks, test groups, thesis)
- Trail development plan (LRF)
- Trail development handbook (Gelter)
- Guiding and Interpretation course for entrepreneurs (Gelter)
- Graphical profile for the Solander Trail (under development)
- Adoption of bridges, huts, trail segments etc by companies



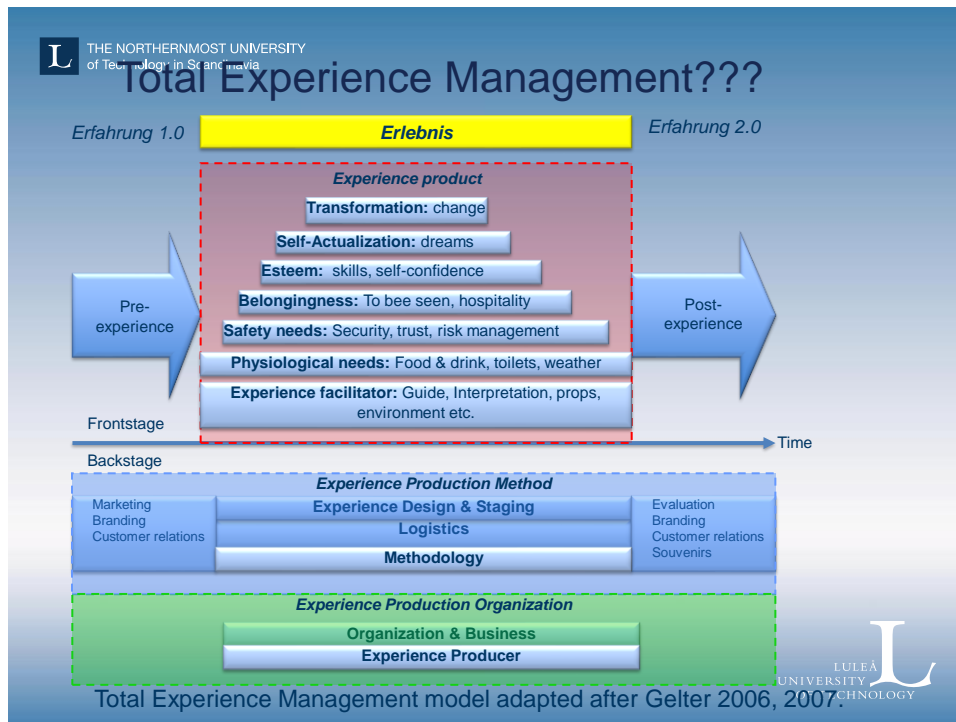
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Innovations so far

- The development process *per se*
- Penta-helix cooperation
- Storytelling-sites (huts,shelters etc.)
- New products:
 - Vaddling (Vandra & paddla) = “hikanoing” (hiking & kanoing)
 - Re-emerging Linneus searching Solander herbatation
 - New historical gastronomic offerings
- Place-naming:
 - Desperate beaver forest
 - Silent moss-trail
 - Crying child island
 - 30-year island
 - etc.
- No information panels (instead Argumented Reality)
- Adoption of bridges, huts, trail segments etc by companies for maintenance & sustainability



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Conclusions

- Bottom-up process
- Crowd-founded innovation process
- Beyond Tetra-helix process
- Trail development without clear USP
- Using Experience Economy, especially Storytelling and Interpretation to form EVPs -Experience Value Promises (Schmitt 2003)
- Co-creation, between Theory, Action-Research and Practice.

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Thank You!

