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## **Nordic Slow Adventure:**

### **Explorations in Time and Nature**

KEYWORDS: friluftsliv, hypermodernity; nature; comfort; passage; adventure tourism;

#### ABSTRACT

The potentially paradoxical concept of 'slow adventure' is offered here as having a particularly North European potential and a peculiarly Nordic orientation towards outdoor tourism activity. An overview of the relationship between the slow movements and the frenetically paced, technologically wired lived experience of hypermodernity is considered in the light of the rise of the adventure tourism 'industry'. We contrast the slow movement principles with mainstream, risk managed and rationalised 'fast' adventure tourism products, which focus predominantly on thrill and rush. The concept of slow adventure, as distinct from slow tourism or slow travel *per se* is then further developed to include *time, passage, comfort* and *nature*, aligned with Scandinavian concepts of friluftsliv, as determining elements in what have become highly regarded tourist experiences. We conclude that there cannot be an essentialist separation of 'slow' and 'fast' adventure (or travel, or tourism, or food...) *per se*. Rather, that these qualitative aspects of self-supported adventurous journeys illustrate significant, and hitherto largely ignored aspects in the analysis of adventure tourism, and point toward opportunities for well trained outdoor professionals who can make the most of the Nordic great outdoors for small numbers of clients, enabling inclusive, environmentally responsible, high-value, place-specific experiences, all year round.

## **Introduction**

This paper makes a unique contribution to the body of literature around adventure tourism. Firstly, the paper puts current forms of adventure tourism into context against the backdrop of accelerating, technology-driven ‘hypermodern’ life and the some of the cash-rich, time poor market segments who pay for these convenient experiences. Secondly it focuses on the importance of the temporal, natural, corporeal and philosophical dimensions of being, journeying and living outdoors as less-recognised aspects of such experiences, and part of the spectrum of what passes as ‘adventure tourism’. In doing so it introduces the Scandinavian concept of friluftsliv; the philosophy and practice of living and being outdoors, gently co-existing with nature, alongside that of the central ideas deriving from slow food movements to underline the textual, traditional significance of these elements in extended outdoor adventure experiences. Such conceptual positioning recalls and reconsiders Walle’s (1997) important article confronting obsessions with risk, rather than insight, but goes much further, suggesting the potential for new experiential product development, distinct from the conveniently packaged, ‘de-natured’ intense adventure experiences of thrill and rush at the other end of the nature-adventure spectrum.

Wilderness Scotland is the only adventure activity provider in Scotland to receive five stars in Visit Scotland’s national quality assurance scheme. The National Geographic ranked them in 2009 as the number one adventure travel company in Europe. The ethos of the company is summarised on their website as:

At the core of our business is a spirit and enthusiasm to explore and journey through the wild places of Scotland; a willingness to share such experiences with others; and to realise the positive socio-economic and environmental benefits of sustainable tourism. Our mission is to provide inspiring, memorable and high quality adventure travel experiences,

which benefit the local environments and communities in which we work.

Wilderness Scotland (2012).

It is apparent from the company's marketing that the commodification of thrill is not central to their business model, and yet their ranking and status in the adventure tourism industry is of the highest order. It would appear then that Wilderness Scotland have, through a broader interpretation of the notion of adventure, been notably successful in marketing to a particular audience which Weber refers to as 'marginal adventure tourists' (2001: 374) (i.e. not adrenaline junkies) and what Walle (1997) has termed 'insight seekers'.

In this paper, we develop the concept of 'slow adventure' as a suitable label and organizing framework for these types tourist experiences. It is a concept particularly suited to the wide, wild expanses of many parts of the world, and specifically to the outdoor living and journeying experience potential in Nordic countries. These places often have little in the way of industry or employment prospects, and endure a concomitant 'drain' of young people to the cities in search of meaningful, sustainable work. Tourism and hospitality work in these places can often be regarded as a relegation option; unskilled jobs in a low-status industry. Yet the skills required to deliver high quality slow adventure experiences are considerable, valued by many sectors of late-modern society and potentially lucrative. As packaged mass tourism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has promoted the possibility for guaranteed sun, sea and sand, so the tourists of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century seek unusual new luxuries in the form of time in nature, birch wood fires, cooking their own wild food, carrying their own luggage over rough lands or along remote coastlines in kayaks. Such experiences are prized and carry a high price tag in the marketplace as they are currently a scarce resource of rich, meaningful, potentially transcendent and intense experiences (Caru and Cova, 2003; Gelter, 2009;

Schouton, McAlexander and Koenig, 2007; Tumbat and Belk, 2011) for clients from outside of Scandinavia. Thus whilst the wide open, nature-rich spaces of these countries are a constant backdrop, possibly taken for granted and free-to-access for most Nordic people, it is important to recognize that such things are regarded quite differently in more densely populated and urbanized countries.

In Easto and Warburton's (2010) market report on adventure tourism in Scotland, they clarify the need for a definition of adventure tourism which moves beyond a focus on adventure sports (2010, p. 5) and they offer a redress to the overly narrow focus of some researchers and marketers who have fixated on risk and thrill; a view echoed by others (Varley, 2006; Walle, 1997; Weber, 2001). The obsession with intense, exciting moments can be seen to be a myopic focus on what might for some seem to be the most vital organ in the body of adventure, but this nevertheless fails to capture the simple, rich experience of extended time in the wild. Easto and Warburton (2010) go on to highlight research by the Adventure Travel Trade Association, who identified seven elements that represented the essence of adventure tourism:

Transformation: discovery of the 'real me'.

Discovery: the end result of exploration, and a prize for stepping out of the comfort zone.

Deep Appreciation: appreciating something bigger, something timeless and more than our everyday encounters.

Engagement: moving beyond a passive encounter to something that is active, engaging with people from different backgrounds, cultures and world views.

Web of Life: seeing ourselves as part of an interconnected network of nature.

The Real Thing: something which can only truly be experienced by being there.

Legacy: passing on the stories, ideas and beliefs.

(Easto and Warburton, 2010, p. 16)

Clearly, each of these components requires a considerable commitment in terms of participant time, and a willingness to let go; to allow the immersive process of being in a natural environment to unfold. Thus while extended duration and a gradual pace are core ingredients of slow adventure, so too is the subjectivity of temporality; the feeling of time. The concept of slow adventure will initially be contrasted with its imagined opposite: ‘fast-adventure’, below.

### **Theoretical Background**

Liberation from the confines of the traditional, and the grounded and rooted practices of being and doing, has forced members of industrialised societies into an increasingly agitated and anxious state (Auge, 2008). ‘Hypermodernity’, a term used by Paul Virilio (2000, 2004) and others to describe the accelerating pace of modern lives, increasingly celebrates and embraces flux and change and as such, both society and the individual can be viewed as enacting a continual metamorphosis where the space of our shared and personal values and meanings becomes fragmented, constrained and atomised. This neurasthenic condition, generated by the increasing sense of motion and pace in modernity was anticipated by Simmel’s essay *Metropolis and Mental Life* (Simmel 1971a). Written over 100 years ago, the phenomenon Simmel describes continues to intensify, now augmented by technological innovation and cyborg-like devices allowing a distancing from immediate physical experience whilst ensuring a constant connection with a multiplicity of virtual worlds and networks. Members of urban-industrialised societies are becoming more sedentary as the concomitant trend toward convenience, packaged experiences and

homes created as private technological leisure spaces continues. For many, movement, connection and exploration are being subsumed into the realm of the virtual where travel is instantaneous and no longer confined by the old frontiers (see Auge, 2008, 61-93). In hypermodern society, there is an apparent sense of temporal and spatial transcendence that is manifested through time-saving paraphernalia, communications technology and fast fashions, the processes of globalization and the growth of entertainment and social media. At the same time this may be conceived of as an enslavement:

Doomed to inertia, the inactive being transfers his natural capacities for movement and displacement to probes and scanners which instantaneously inform him about a remote reality, to the detriment of his own faculties of apprehension of the real... Having been first *mobile*, then *motorised*, man will thus become *motile*, deliberately limiting his body's area of influence to a few gestures, a few impulses like channel surfing. (Virilio, 1997, p. 11).

This temporo-spatial pressure is further complicated by the sense that the very pace of our lives is outrunning us, leaving us constantly short of time as time itself seems to accelerate (Auge, 2008). Little time is available for individuals to anchor themselves ontologically with places, narratives and histories which confer meaning (Lipovetsky and Charles, 2005; Virilio 1989). Castells (1996) suggests that the 'ground' of hypermodernity is ever-shifting, and that simultaneously the subject is lost in a world of discontinuity; connected with but confined by complex social networks of human consumption and communication which are extending and accelerating into more and more social spheres (Lipovetsky and Charles, 2005). During the same period, the modern era has allowed and promoted the expansion of tourism, via processes of rationalisation, which compress and control time for economic gain, but also allow managed free time for the refreshment of labour and for consumption. 'Free time', therefore, often becomes an imagined opportunity for a reconnection with romanticised notions of rich, meaningful

experiences. Inevitably, adventurous tourism and leisure have also been thoroughly colonised by capitalism, commodified, and as such might often fail to deliver their promised or imagined rewards. The experiences are invariably tightly controlled, and, for the adventure tourism consumer, could even be alienating, as tourists recognise their need for expert help in order to recreate safely outdoors is emphasised.

### **Fast Adventure**

The roots of the commodified form ‘fast adventure’ are deeply woven into the history and psyche of modernity (and eventually *hypermodernity*) through the ideology, narratives and glorification of an ‘adventure mentality’ (Nerlich, 1987) via fairy tales and accounts of heroic deeds. Later the adventure forms, already recognised as a useful aspect of capitalist exploitation, became training and education ‘products’ and, later, marketed tourist experiences. The ensuing rationalisation and commodification of adventure into adventure tourism (Varley, 2006), marked the beginning of a new epoch as such, where the romantic promise of adventure was brought a step closer to the masses through an increasingly focused range of exciting holiday activities. The rationalising logic of ‘McDonaldization’ (Ritzer, 1993) has subsumed the notion of adventure into the market place, where increasing levels of convenience, predictability and comfort are paramount. The marketplace has in short distilled the story of adventure down to its climactic moment and at the same time filtered out its slow, uncomfortable and less attractive aspects.

Many theories of adventure (Ewert, 1989; Keiwa, 2002; Lewis, 2000, 2004; Martin & Priest, 1986; Morgan, 2000; Mortlock, 1984; Priest & Bunting, 1993) encapsulate the adventure motive as a desire for borderline experiences occupying the threshold between catastrophe and adventure. Such representations,



with their almost fatalistic proximity to disaster seem essentialist and elitist, and intuitively are at odds with the motives of many contemporary adventure travellers and tourists. Whilst the bungee jump, zip wires, white water rafting trips and abseiling sessions all squeeze the highest thrill quota into the tightest package (Cater, 2006; Cloke and Perkins, 2002), they ignore the wider experiential context.

As such, these capsule adventures can become decontextualised from the broader narratives of journey, dwelling and exploration and dislocated both from the environmental context and the holistic social nature of the experience. The resulting “adventure in a bun... disassociate[s] people from their experience of community and place” (Loynes, 1998, p.35) similar to the ways in which fast food is conveniently removed from its origins as a rationalised *mélange* of anonymised ingredients in contrast to slow food, which is a celebration of provenance, tradition and time.

The carefully marketed images of physically attractive bodies and textually mediated discourses on television and in adventure marketing communications also endow the performances of the fast adventurers with social significance and value. Adventure is ‘sexy’; being adventurous thus bestows an identity label, provides signifiers of cultural capital and emblems of social status for sale (Beedie and Hudson, 2003; Buckley, 2003; Cloke & Perkins, 2002). Such occurrences are, according to Moores (2000, p. 40) ‘a distinctive feature of contemporary society, existing as socially organised communicative and interpretive practices intersecting with and structuring people’s everyday worlds’. It is therefore easy to regard forms of ‘fast adventure’ as belonging to the world of everyday consumer culture (Chaney, 2002) and consumer identity projects.

Best's (1989) work on the society of the spectacle can be applied to further articulate the notion of fast adventure, where showmanship, voyeurism, extreme sports channels, sponsored 'heroes' and the staging and marketing of the 'wow moment' (see Cloke & Perkins, 2002) all play their part. This spectacle is given credence through the processes of 'post-mass tourism' (Urry, 1990) whereby fast adventure, as a commodity, is viewed as a badge of honour to be acquired, promising novelty, status, identity and excitement:

Participants engaging in commercial adventurous activity primarily seek fear and thrills. The most successful adventure tourism operators are those that have reduced their actual risk levels whilst effectively commodifying the thrills within.

(Cater, 2006, p. 317)

Thus the fast adventure archetype, as a product of cash-rich, time-poor consumer society, when linked to the march of the hypermodern condition can be viewed as a part of the fabric of the everyday world of consumerism and, for many, ingredients in off-the-shelf identity construction projects. Yet, even in many 'fast adventure' experiences, there can be slow moments; of contemplation sat on the belay ledge, inner thoughts undisturbed by work calls, texts and emails, and the experience of raw nature at its wildest in rough rivers or on snowy mountain slopes.

### **Slow Adventure**

Against the dystopic portrayals of hypermodernity, Honore (2004) has documented an emerging global phenomenon; 'slowness movements' which appear to be growing in response to, if not directly in confrontation with, the speeding up of society. The counter-cultural wave, manifesting itself in forms of

slow food, slow cities, slow travel, slow tourism, slow learning is evidence of a widespread perception that a fundamental slowing down is required if we are to focus on quality and meaning in our lives as opposed to convenience and efficiency (Honore, 2004). The movements are characterised by a valorisation of heritage, time, tradition and authenticity, and our conceptualisation of slow adventure is no different. In the Slow Food movement, local delicacies are renowned for their central role in local life, traditional practice and culture. Slow, rather than fast, processes of production (and consumption) are important. Effort and extended time taken in both production and consumption confers quality and value via objectified authenticity and is set in opposition to the rationalised, effort-saving and time-saving processes of fast / convenient food systems. Slow food is *of the land*, *of the people* and seasonal (*of time*) and its production and consumption reflects this: it is in essence participatory, and of the ‘ground’ Lash (1997).

The idea of slow adventure, in partial contrast to *fast* adventure, above, is a celebration of the (ir)rationality of uncertainty, unpredictability, transience, experiment, and the emotional content of human experience, particularly in the context of the great outdoors and engagements with what Gelter, referring to the Nordic concept of *friluftsliv*, has called the ‘more-than-human world’ (2000). These aspects of an ‘other’ modernity celebrate aspects of life that are central to the slow movements. As the pace of life accelerates, and de-differentiation is accentuated, there is a nostalgia for what is often lost in advanced capitalism is the dimension of what Lash (1999) has referred to as the ground; the ‘forgotten ground’. Slow adventures are in effect explorations of and reconnections with this ground: feeling, sensing and investing in place, community, belonging, sociality, and tradition over time and in nature. In developing these ideas, we borrow heavily from the philosophies of *friluftsliv*, but, following Gelter and others, are cautious about the challenges of a commercialised ‘*friluftsliv*’ which is shallow, packaged and focuses on the glamour of achievement and the fetishisation of modern technologies and equipment (Buckley, 2003).

Slow movements, in general, are a counter-cultural response to mass industrialisation, attempting to recover and protect modernity's forgotten ground against the backdrop of rational marketization and hypermodernity. Here we present the concept of slow adventure, initially by contrasting the slow movement ideas with the more mainstream, 'fast' packaged adventure experiences (above) available in the marketplace and then by considering its key dimensions, described here as nature, time, passage, and comfort. It is important to recognize that what is discussed here is the participants' experience of the extraordinary, such as deep spiritual feelings or transcendental moments, but that these are often wrapped up in quotidian activities such as walking, cooking, making shelter and so forth, which could only be framed as extraordinary due to the setting and context.

Whilst the prefix 'slow' seems currently to be almost ubiquitous in a variety of contemporary cultural realms, the term is used here as stimulus for the recognition of a peculiar paradox. Most adventures, particularly in the commercial arena, would be regarded as 'fast', encompassing as they do the intense, focused moments of conveniently packaged excitement which fit neatly into busy urban lives. To speak of 'slow adventure' at first seems at odds with the known in common concept of adventure, involving uncertainty, risk, play, notions of heroism, thrill and excitement (Buckley, 2011; Gyimothy and Mykletun, 2004; Lindberg, Hansen and Eide, 2013). However, there exist adventure forms which share many of the core values attributed to other aspects of the slow movements, including; respect for quality over convenience, tradition, 'authentic' experience, the connection between people and place, exploration, and extended time for rejuvenation, re-enchantment and reflection (Honore, 2004). These forms are particularly important in some spheres of Nordic tourism, where landscapes are lightly populated, may be perceived as wild and are imbued with the culture, stories and practices of indigenous peoples.

There is also an ambiguity; slow food characteristics can vary due to the people, soils, weather and time of consumption. This is an aspect encompassed by the French term, *terroir*, and suggests the variability of food, or in our case, experience, due to natural variations in conditions; landscape, weather, season, time (Barham, 2003). Slow adventures will also vary with weather, landscape, time and so forth. Time, inevitably, is the core strand which underpins the slow movements. As Fullagar, Wilson and Markwell (2012) suggest, time lost through over-committed lives translates as time invested (found) in production, in connecting with place, in being with others, in shared enjoyment and *communitas* during slow tourism; it is time which allows meaning to be generated and experiences and memories to coalesce either in a commercial context or as personal aspects of outdoor leisure and tourism.

Put simply, the concept of slow adventure is based on an appreciation of the journey as an experiential dimension rather than the chore of getting to a destination. In this sense, the journey; being there, in the land or on the sea *is* the holiday. Gardner argues that ‘speed destroys the connection with the landscape’ and space-time compression accelerating in hypermodernity means that journeys often lose their significance as part of the tourist experience in many contexts (2009, p.13). If the journey is slow, takes time, and requires effort, the tension of separation, the distance between the familiar and the exotic is more directly experienced through the process of travel from one place to another and through the linear transit of routes (Tuan 2003). Thus ‘the trip constitutes... a place where time stands still or is reversed into a utopian space of freedom, abundance and transparency’ (Curtis and Pajaczkowska, 1994, p.199). As Howard (2012) points out, however, echoing Tuan’s (1998) arguments in *Escapism*, late-modern consumers will access their experiences by exploring the internet and invariably booking online – even slow ‘escape’ is thus contingent upon the (fast) technologies required to achieve it.

The apparently paradoxical notion of slow adventure also draws upon the recent work on slow travel and tourism (Dickinson & Lumsden 2010; Gardner 2009; Howard 2012), which itself builds in part upon the notion of mobility (Urry, 2000; 2002; 2007), and the ideologies of the slow movements to present a new analytical framework for adventure tourism research. For the slow adventurer, the geography delineating the realms of home and holiday expands, no longer as a problem requiring the speediest execution, but rather as a field of opportunity for a particular leisure and tourism experience to unfold. An example of an existing Nordic slow adventure-as-tourism enterprise, Hotel Spruce, is offered below:

Advertisement: Wilderness living at Hotel Spruce, Norway

Hotel Spruce is the most unique wilderness living adventure in Norway. At the worlds only 5-(thousand) stars hotel – you`ll enjoy sleeping in open air, love wild food and wilderness cooking. Days are spent hiking, canoeing and wildlife watching...

Even though a stay at Hotel Spruce will develop your skills and prepare you for a solo trip out in the wilderness, this is not a survival course” says former Norwegian Navy Seal, Petter Thorsen. “It’s all about enjoying the simple life in nature, with good food and new friendships as a result.

It also involves learning, sharing and appreciating the extreme luxury the simple outdoor life can give. Great food, hot fires and fresh air under the hotel’s custom-made canopies, from which you can lie in your sleeping bag and see thousands of stars twinkling in the heavens. You know you have come to the right place when the bearded man in the checked shirt, Geir Vie, puts his hand out and gives you the kind of handshake you’d expect from his appearance. But this is not a mere front for the tourists. Geir is a dyed-in-the-wool

local, an outdoorsman through and through, with a lifetime of experience as a field biologist, outdoors chef, organic smallholder and carpenter. He's highly practical and an incurable optimist, with a passion for culture and tradition

Source: Wild Norway Archives (2013)

## **Friluftsliv**

Following on from Hotel Spruce, it is appropriate to further consider the idea of friluftsliv at this stage, as a cultural practice, a form of outdoor experiencing and variously as a lived philosophy of Nordic peoples.

Crystal clear water sparkles around us with the marbled river bottom several meters below, giving the sensation of our canoe gliding in open air. The strong current and our synchronized paddle strokes carry the canoe down this Arctic river with a force that creates a deep shiver of pleasure. The breathtaking big sky above us, the river valley bordered by magnificent mountains, and the sensation of undisturbed wildlife surrounding us causes a deep emotional storm of happiness within, filling my eyes with tears – a spiritual, almost religious feeling I often experience in nature. This landscape absorbs me so completely, entering through all of my senses and directly touching my limbic system. This gives me a sensation of a total integration with this land: a strong feeling of being at home in a place I have never visited before. Sensing myself as part of the landscape... 'I get a strong feeling of knowing the ways of things around me.

Gelter (2000, p.77-78).

The above was Gelter's (2000) introduction to his study of friluftsliv. He identifies the movements as a back-to-nature zeitgeist in response to industrialization and urbanization in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and therefore

being the preserve of the educated and leisured classes. Pederson Gurholt (2008) adds that friluftsliv was precisely the preserve of those wistfully seeking to recover the connections with the outdoors enjoyed by their grandparents, who lived on, in and from the land. Successful Scandinavian explorers strengthened the image. Both Pederson Gurholt (2008) and Gelter (2000) point to the tremendous influences of Arne Næss and Fridtjof Nansen in shaping the ideas of ‘outdoor life’ philosophies in Norway and beyond. Gelter even argues that friluftsliv was organized and developed by one of the world’s first tourism organisations, *Den Norske Turistforening*, or DNT, promoting skiing and other healthy outdoor activities as a counter to the new urban ills. But, as he (2000) later opines, there is a forceful commercialization current in outdoor activities, such that new equipment and activity sub-cultures are reified, fetishised and promoted. This may suggest the practice of friluftsliv as exclusive, expensive and hard to access, yet the basic philosophy is about simple, basic outdoor life, living comfortably in and with nature; staring at the flames in a fire, or listening to the waves crashing on a beach. Just *being*, outdoors.

Dickenson & Lumsdon (2010, p.88) state that the “embodied sense of being there, physically coping with the locality” is a central experiential aspect of slow travel that leads to the formation of significant memories and narratives which often relate to the adventurous moments of such journeys. Yet they pay little attention to the leisure and tourism form ‘adventure’. This may in part rest upon the aforementioned paradox: that combining the term ‘slow’ with the term ‘adventure,’ may seem odd when popular representations and dominant discourses tend to focus on speed, rush and thrill (Cater, 2006; Buckley 2011). Slow adventures are imbued with a sense of the explorer-ethic and with a hitherto conflicting ecosophical sense of comfortably dwelling in wild places in recognition that such places are (or were once) in fact our home (Faarlund 1993, Næss, 1993; Varley and Medway, 2010). The ‘conflict’ arises from ideologies and narratives drawn from the era of exploitative exploration under colonial capitalism,



set against more contemporary notions of belonging to the wild (Næss, 1993). Trends, which might evidence the increasing interest in such adventure tourism forms, include the massive rise in prime time television programmes celebrating apparently pristine environments, indigenous cultures, bush craft and survival skills (Fullagar et al. 2012). Gelter's crucial work in this regard is represented in his 2009 paper in which he considers various friluftsliv experiences as, in part expressive of, and also as an adjunct to what he calls 'transmodernity'. In particular, he points toward the 'adventuretainment' and 'eco-edutainment' trends for friluftsliv and how, rather than travelling to exotic places with guaranteed sun, sea and sand, we can return, via extraordinary tourist experiences, to our original home, *our* nature (Gelter 2009). In this sense, he makes the case for a friluftsliv which is not old-fashioned, but is absolutely right for the new generations of hypermodernity and even 'homo zappiens' – inhabitants of the online social media world (2009, p.32).

Supporting such assertions, the global industry membership body, the Adventure Travel Trade Association, states that:

Today's adventure traveller seeks experiences beyond high-adrenaline sports. Adventure provides a mix of activities that enable authentic, un-manufactured experiences

Wild Scotland (2010)

Walle's (1997) 'insight model' confronted the dominant focus on risk taking behaviour with the proposition that risk is merely the by-product of a more important and overarching motivation for insight and knowledge in wild places and that the tourism industry can benefit by developing products for this market. Walle's article draws upon the rich legacy of American writers and thinkers such as John Muir,

Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau who have drawn philosophical and ethical inspiration from their experiences of nature (ibid 1997). The key example provided by Walle, that of fly fishing, fails to satisfy many of the accepted terms of reference for theorists of ‘risk and rush’ adventure . If, however, Walle’s ideas are expanded around fly fishing to include self supported travel, navigation, wild camping, particularly but not necessarily in remote, unpopulated and ‘wild’ locations, then the journey to the location, as well as the actual fishing, start to take on the mantle of what we here term ‘slow adventure’ and to some extent ‘friluftsliv’. To be sure, following these ideas, there are opportunities to experience slow adventure in locations less wild and closer to our urban homes, as long as the immersive nature of journeying and living outdoors can be present.

### **Elements Of Slow Adventure**

Whilst the rationalisation of excitement is no doubt a desirable selling point for the commercial operator, it is not the only source of competitive advantage in the adventure tourism industry. We propose that the qualities of slow adventure include elements of the journey; the joys and hardships of outdoor living, self propelled travel and associated physical engagement with the natural environment over time. These ‘qualities’ may be summarised as: *time*, *nature*, *passage* and *comfort*. They are totally interdependent and deliberately malleable and all impact upon mind and body. As Lindberg et al (2013) propose, this notion of slow adventure is in effect a multi-relational perspective; time, context (nature), the body in movement (passage), and a ‘comfortable’ interaction with the environment serve as ontological conceptions for understanding these dynamic experiences and meanings.

‘Time’ is inevitably an important experiential component, and the awareness of time passing during outdoor journeys is felt during the ‘passage’ (see below) of the journey itself, and via natural change such

as light and dark, tides and weather. In slow adventure, time does not merely pass, but is felt, in bodily rhythms of tiredness, sleep, wakefulness, and effort. For example, the perception of time via the dropping of the sun is corporeally evident as winds rise, the air becomes cold and shadows lengthen. Moreover, the significance of time is woven into the landscape as history, heritage, tradition, and origin (Ingold 1993).

The effects of 'Nature' are acute in slow adventures, due to the extended time of exposure to them. Basking in the sun on rocks worn smooth by glacial erosion; the unfolding of natural expanses and wide skies; feet sinking into peat bogs; cooking in wild mountain corries; encounters with wildlife; struggling with tents in rain, snow and wind; storm or star watching; sleeping in and with the great outdoors. It is this direct engagement with natural forces which insists that participants envelop themselves in their environment; surrender to it, even. Further, natural encounters with plants, animals and geological features can provide a story set in time and in a particular environment. Recent work by Fredman, Wall-Reinius and Grunden (2012) is useful here in considering the qualities, management and characteristics of nature for nature-based activities – in this case, remoteness, biodiversity and other considerations are also of interest, and subsequent research might enquire as to the key properties of environments suited to the slow adventure concept. Furthermore, the fact that most Scandinavian countries, via the principle of 'allemansretten' or *every man's right* enjoy free access to open, non-garden land, and that Scotland and Iceland enjoy similar privileges, helps to demonstrate the potential for this form of tourism development for Northern European countries.

The term 'passage' refers not only to the physical journeying *through* a physical landscape, (as opposed to the passage *over* the landscape of the passenger) but is also a journey of change and transformation, which takes time (Schouten et al. 2007). 'Passage' encompasses the navigation of self through time and space;

the crossing of borders and natural obstacles; moving toward horizons and the retrospective gaze to where the traveller has come from. Tuan (2003, p. 54) suggests that ‘human lives are a dialectical movement between shelter and venture, attachment and freedom’. Between the identifiable events or touristic highlights, which the literature focuses upon, the slow adventurer’s day unfolds in quiet periods of human- or nature- powered travel which may lead to boredom, day dreaming and trance-like lapses of self awareness. This is the embodied journey to / from elsewhere, where the slow adventure tourist carries only the basic material requisites for survival (food, shelter, navigational aids etc.) and usually by their own physical effort.

It is the very linearity and gradual passage and progression which contrasts with the spasmodic, frenetic virtual meta-city described by Virilio and Auge. The mobilities of slow adventure unravel the ‘discontinuity and interdict’ of the worldwide metropolis (Auge, 2008, p. xiii) and may be considered to enhance the apparent effects of ‘time stretching’. The relationship between the body, the journey and immersion in natural time offers both corporeal and geographical evidence of passage, suggesting the decompression of hypermodern time. This effect may eventually then allow a synchronisation of natural and personal rhythms (Gelter, 2000). As such, time itself is, from a qualitative perspective, regained, refelt and recognized, perhaps as a recovery of the forgotten aspect of child-experienced-time. In part that is a playful notion of day-dream-time where the mind can wander freely. Passage, then, is a function of time, embedded in nature, and a growing comfort in the process of the journey.

‘Comfort’ equally has a number of meanings in the context of slow adventure. Firstly, there is the process of becoming comfortable with the challenges presented by the journey (sustained effort for example). Indeed, blisters, sores, sunburn, aches and pains would initially be framed as *dis*-comfort, and at odds with

the usual tourist product. Yet the journey becomes inscribed upon the adventurer's body, in salt, sores and sunburn, mud, sweat and moss (Varley, 2011). Dimmock writes of the 'comfort' found metres down beneath the waves, cocooned in an alien environment, and in slow adventure too, 'comfort reflects one's ability to function easily within an environment where engagement is free from stress and difficulty' (2009, p. 279, see also Cater, 2008). In addition, comfort may be derived from a re-connection with place, tradition and history (linked to time). The traditional, rural life, imagined as slow, rich and meaningful can become a 'refuge' landscape; a place to escape to. The spiritual or transcendental dimension of rural tourism (Sharpley & Jepson, 2011) can be applied to the landscapes of adventure through the extension of a notion of slow interaction. Within this extension, the departure from the speed of the metropolis (Virilio, 1997) to the comfortable parameters of a vernacular language (Alexander, 1979) and indigenous practices (McIntosh, 2001) are taken a step further into an almost primitive condition of survival. Whilst inescapably framed by our cultural perspectives, such experiences are none-the-less pre-modern in essence and to an extent pre-socialised in their rawness.

The world's wild places, particularly those that require extended journeys to encounter them, offer a different reality for many and may be actively or sub-consciously pursued by some adventurers as a refuge, or therapeutic space that is in contrast to the fragmented, accelerating, mediated experience of the hypermodern subject. Effectively, time, nature, passage and comfort promote the sense of resistance to hypermodern conditions of lightness and speed, and offer the opportunity to dwell and connect with places lived in and passed through (Obrador-pons, 2003).

A circumnavigation of a tidal island by sea kayak exposes the paddler to a diurnal rhythm measured by the arc of the sun and the pull of the moon in a natural world in which the kayaker is suspended. As such, the lunar cycle is experienced through the flows and ebbs of the tide. The kayaker's journey is dependent upon both a rational and experiential understanding of tidal flows as well as localised knowledge of how the particular manifestations of those forces may make stretches of coast impassable at certain times of the tide. These temporal flows are experienced sensually, as is the dream-like trudge across a moonlight expanse of frozen sastrugi, the changing texture and sound of the neve crunching underfoot or the freezing katabatic winds surging before the peaks appear in a glow of refracted light. The associated fusion of mind, body and environment through these forms of active, extended immersion may be felt as a deep sense of enjoyment, satisfaction and creative accomplishment (Boniface, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Gelter, 2000; Hardy, 2003).

Whilst fast adventure can be experienced by the tourist almost on a whim; for example as a half-day activity, a 'multi-activity taster week' or as part of a wider holiday experience, slow adventure requires more serious commitment from participants of both time and energy. Commitment, uncertainty, natural hazards, navigation, transit, remoteness and increasing self sufficiency are all necessary ingredients of slow adventure which in combination impact the tourist's spatial and temporal perceptions even to varying degrees in the commercial service-scape. In addition, when boredom, hunger, anxiety and physical discomfort take hold, the experience is often not easily exchangeable for a more pleasing, accessible commodity. Thus while the notion of escapism and freedom (Tuan 1998) may well be themes of slow adventure (and of tourism in general), so too in slow adventure is the paradoxical notion of *inescapability* and commitment. In this sense the journeying element of slow adventure assumes a work-

like aspect quite distinct from many other forms of tourism. Here, as in friluftsliv, life is a lived and embodied journey where dualisms of work and leisure, travel and residency, attachment and freedom become blurred, 'body and mind harmonise' (Gelter, 2000).

It is in this light that the slow adventurer is perhaps, through their extended inhabitation of a 'natural' environment, establishing a newly territorialised everyday. Routines such as the erecting of tents, the packing of gear, collecting water, cutting wood, cooking, all take on a deeper significance as part of the whole unfolding process of daily life on the journey. As Gelter (2000) would have it, these characteristics separate the consumer/spectator tourist from the slow adventurer who must connect, and commit.

## **Conclusions**

In this paper we have added the concept of slow adventure to the adventure tourism debate, and have also considered the distinctive philosophical and cultural form, friluftsliv, as a characteristic of some kinds of outdoor recreation conducted in Scandinavian countries. If the two concepts are combined, a very particular approach to what might be called slow adventure tourism is arrived at. In these countries, for many of the population, the outdoors is 'home', and can be a source of tranquility, transcendence, food, exercise and refreshment. This is not the case for many of the populations who might wish to experience such things, however, and members of densely populated BRIC countries and others could form a viable and lucrative market, keen to experience these remarkable ways of living which contrast with their own lived experiences. The notions of departure and return are embedded within tourism as a transition from the everyday to the extraordinary and back again in a search for pleasure (Rojek and Urry 1997). Within the sphere of adventure this notion is often framed as escapism; a quest for freedom or solitude or an

escape attempt of sorts (Cohen and Taylor, 1992; Pigram & Jenkins, 2006; Schmidt & Little, 2007; Tuan, 1998). It must be recognised however that slow adventure, like any other aspect of tourism, is absolutely *part* of hypermodernity, generated as a dialectical response to the frenetic, neurasthenic conditions of contemporary urban life, and curiously may be regarded as a way of coming home, rather than escaping.

There cannot be a reified, essentialist separation of ‘slow’ and ‘fast’ adventure (or travel, or food...) *per se*. Rather, these experiences are arraigned along a continuum and determined by qualitative, subjective, and temporal aspects. Indeed, the slow adventure concept itself is in effect a spectrum of experiences, where long arduous expeditions in remote, lightly explored, far-from-help regions may be deemed more committing than a half-day spent in contemplation, fishing and foraging for wild food on the sea shore. All, however, are aspects which might allow degrees of transcendence, remove and respite from the frenetic pace of the urban everyday in hypermodernity – most will have elements of ‘fast’ and ‘slow’ adventure in them.

Slow adventures, and the practices of *friluftsliv* are clearly, in the eyes of the protagonists, worth the effort. There is a dislocation between the surroundings of opulence, comfort and luxury of a holiday in a resort with the simplicity of a wilderness expedition, yet both are ‘luxuries, of a kind. In the latter endeavor there is an evident investment of time, bodily effort, a sacrifice of modern comfort and a commitment to the outdoor life that suggests that rewards of particular personal significance may be a central motivation rather than the quest for conveniently packaged comfort and pleasure. The proposition then is not that slow adventure is any more or less authentic or adventurous (or intense) than other tourist activities, but that its protagonists may be particularly concerned and driven by the idea of pursuing their own existential projects, and more on their own terms. Whilst slow adventures might at times be



structured by the marketplace and dependent upon the technologies of the modern world, there is within them a noticeable stepping away from the project of efficiency and speed. The closely managed experience is replaced by a focus on the particular, variable and localised aspects of place and the method of exploration is the inverse of efficient; it is necessarily 'slow', self-guided or enabled. Counter-culture movements, such as slow food, are seen by authors such as Nilsson, Svärd, Widarsson and Wirell (2007) to be expressions of a stance that values place-based relationships, local distinctiveness and process over homogenisation and efficiency. But all of this is relative; most 'slow' adventure tourism products will have elements of rationalisation, predictability and control, and many 'fast' adventures will include contemplation and 'slow' moments. The fast-slow comparison is not a divide, but a spectrum of tourist possibilities and products. We cannot claim that slow adventure is in any sense an absolute standard with which to segment the tourism industry. Rather, slow adventure is a concept, which, like other elements of the slow movement, may ultimately attract some quality standards, professional awards, brands and assurances (and therefore to some extent become more rationalized in the future). What it does depend upon, and what is celebrated, are the wild, open, natural places of the world, and the preservation of traditional methods of access and egress, along with free access rights for people to be there. Countries must therefore confront and carefully consider ideas such as increasing or allowing snow mobile access, mountain bike track building and other developments in the knowledge that these places are fragile, and that they can support sustainable forms of tourism only if preserved and enhanced (Fredman, Wall-Reinus and Grunden, 2012; Sandell, 2005).

We have used the cross-cutting planes of *time*, *nature*, *passage* and *comfort* which form a web of ideas connecting and dividing the dialectic between 'fast' and 'slow' adventure and distinguishing slow adventure from slow travel / tourism. Time in this sense also encompasses the 'decompression' potential

of slow adventure, infused with the ideas of deep friluftsliv, particularly as Wild Norway and Wilderness Scotland would have it – journeys unfold at human pace, meals take time to prepare; time is spent directly in the effort of journeying and living. Memories may be created during the journey, but they may also be re-connected with.

Nature, of course, has its own time frame, and the slow adventurer attunes themselves to this phenomenon. In fast adventures, the vagaries of nature are often managed-out; the time-pressured consumer cannot wait for rivers to rise for their rafting trip, so instead, dam-release timings are adhered to; climbing walls are built indoors in order that climbing can take place regardless of the weather and so forth. In slow adventures, nature offers an inescapable contrast to the manageable urban setting. Clothes get wet with sweat, rain, river or seawater, whilst winds or snow can make crossings impossible and tents collapse. The natural aspect of slow adventures intersects with the other themes here and simultaneously confronts the rationalising tendencies of modernity. The concept of *passage* is also an important, deliberately soft construct. Passage, clearly, encompasses the effort made in journeying, but also includes some contrasts. In slow adventure the tourist is an active traveller, not a passive passenger; people, nature, time and discomfort are to be coped-with, endured, enjoyed; effort is required, as is commitment. But the term passage also suggests the possibility for metamorphosis; a transcendent potential not unlike that suggested by Walle (1997). This metamorphosis may lead to additional qualities of the ‘passage’ which are closely interwoven with the fourth concept, comfort; it may lead to the participant feeling a sense of heftedness to the land, river or sea, to momentary dwelling and what Simmel (1971b) has suggested is the ‘unconditional presentness’ of the adventure; *being* there. It is here that we propose the journeys of slow adventure differentiate themselves in that they liberate tourists from the confines of rational time and return the traveller to the ground. Auge’s (2008) most pessimistic portrayals of modernity present the dark

downside of our mobility where the global-city with a standardised, anonymous centre, grinds down local distinctiveness, creates insecurity, and decentres the individual in a world of discontinuity. It is against this backdrop that recreation and tourism assumes an important role in bringing people together in activities where a sense of environmental consciousness, belonging, emotional commonality and *communitas* are experienced (Robinson, 2008; Wheaton, 2004). In this sense, slow adventure fits well with the people, landscapes, cultures and skills of the Nordic countries, and emerges as an opportunity to facilitate high value, unique and memorable experiences. It may also be a concept that makes Nordic tourism distinctive and highly valued for those on the outside – a sustainable, eco-sensible tourism rich in the skills and cultures of the region and its peoples. As studies by Pouta, Neuvonen and Sievänen (2013) suggest, nature-based tourism can attract high-spending tourists, particularly valuable in the remote rural settings suited to slow adventure. Similarly, Tangleland (2011) argues that there is tremendous potential for growth in the sector, and that participants are indeed seeking transformative, learning experiences and insights. These experiences can only adequately be delivered by well trained, professional guides who, in addition to the hard skills of navigation, first aid, mountaineering or kayaking, must be well versed in the soft skills of outdoor hospitality, emotional intelligence and facilitation (Valkonen, Huilaja and Koikkalainen, 2013).

Clearly, there are opportunities for further qualitative research into the nature of these experiences, accounts of them and the key points of value to visiting tourists. Other countries may discover that the same principles can be followed in making the best of their landscape and cultural memories, be it on land or sea, scorched desert or arctic tundra; the dimensions of slow adventure are wrapped up in active engagement with place and people, set in natural time and place.



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