Post-Pandemic Tourism Development

June 2023

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Funding
Kamprad Family Foundation.

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Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the Kamprad Family Foundation for funding this research project exploring how different actors from the visitor economy in eastern Småland and Öland cope with the professional implications of the Corona pandemic. We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of our dedicated partner group representing the local and regional visitor economy. Their reflections and critical feedback have been invaluable to this project and to its knowledge co-production. Moreover, we are indebted to the interview partners willing to share their personal professional experiences and reflections throughout the first months of the pandemic. Finally, we thank Emma Lundin for her dedicated support and research assistance on the project.
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1 Introduction

This report documents the results of the research project “Post-Pandemic Tourism Development: Navigating Uncertainty in the Visitor Economy” (2020-2021). The project was funded by a donation of the Kamprad Family Foundation, and led by Professor Cornelius Holtorf (Archaeology, Faculty of Arts and Humanities) and Associate Professor Stephan Reinhold (Tourism Studies, School of Business and Economics) in collaboration with and supported by a group of dedicated partners from the tourism and heritage sector in Blekinge Län, Kalmar Län, and Kronoberg Län.

1.1 Purpose in brief

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has been presenting stakeholders in the visitor economy with an unprecedented level of uncertainty. Sweden’s approach to handling the pandemic, which is viewed as an international exception, and Småland and Öland with its focus on limited-season summer tourism provide an exceptional context to study how key stakeholders deal with relevant challenges from a decision-making perspective, promising insights beyond the immediate study context.

The pandemic has been and still is a chance to (re-)engage with the development trajectories of tourism in this area and what kind of futures various local stakeholders envision for it. To this end, it is valuable to evaluate the impact and response to Covid-19 in relation to developing the local UNESCO World Heritage site and to achieving the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

The interdisciplinary research project documented in this report sought to study how stakeholders in the visitor economy make sense of the uncertainty induced by the current SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in the short- and long-run through different lenses. To this end, we studied how stakeholders in the visitor economy reflected on their decisions to deal with the immediate implications of pandemic tourism and plan to engage them in a forward-looking process of scenario development and action-learning to open horizons that envision the present crisis as a chance to work towards a more sustainable future.

1.2 Results in brief

The project results address aspects of how the visitor economy in Småland can deal both with the present uncertainty and future crises of a similar nature. In the short-run, we identified how stakeholders in the local visitor economy made sense of the uncertainty of visitor business during the pandemic. This provides points of reflection for the stakeholders involved and suggestions for policy considerations to support the visitor economy for the future. For the long-run, we enhanced futures thinking and discussed development perspectives with stakeholders in the local visitor economy. This is a necessary input to inspiring strategies towards sustainable development beyond the immediate necessities of the present.

Finally, this work kick-started regular collaboration between academic researchers and key stakeholders in the local visitor economy. At university level, the project helped establish an interdisciplinary and cross-faculty working group that establishes collaboration on issues of mutual interest between researchers in cultural heritage and archaeology on the one hand, and researchers in business studies and tourism research on the other hand.
2 Project outline

2.1 Motivation of this project

In March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic brought international and domestic travel and tourism to a halt. With travel restrictions, meeting bans, and forced closures of many non-essential businesses in place, “the global tourism system moved from overtourism […] to non-tourism” (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020, p. 2) within a matter of days. By the end of April 2020, every destination across the globe had introduced travel restrictions (Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2020; UNWTO, 2020). At a global scale, this resulted in short-time work, layoffs, and businesses having to file for bankruptcy in the tourism, hospitality, and transportation sector – despite generous relief and aid packages from national governments (Gössling et al., 2020; Hall, Scott, & Gössling, 2020).

Given the perishable nature of experiential services, spring 2020 season revenues were irreversibly lost. The UNWTO (2020) reported a loss of approximately 67 million international arrivals and about USD 80 billion worldwide as of March 2020. It was unclear at the time to what extent the moderate lifting of restrictions on travel and leisure activities in European destinations would be able to sustain the different stakeholders whose livelihoods critically depend on tourism to benefit from yet uncertain future recovery. It was also uncertain what recovery paths in reviving the global tourism system as well as post-pandemic travel flow and leisure activities would look like (e.g. Hall et al., 2020; Prideaux, Thompson, & Pabel, 2020). In public as well as academic discourse, future visions of travel and tourism have been labeled “the new normal” (e.g. Brouder et al., 2020). Hence, the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic presented stakeholders in the visitor economy with an unprecedented level of uncertainty. This motivated us to study how stakeholders in the visitor economy made sense of the uncertainty induced by the pandemic in the short- and long-run to help the local visitor economy deal with the present consequences and aftermath of the corona pandemic, and potential future events of this nature. Specifically, we intended to study how stakeholders in the visitor economy justified their decisions to deal with the immediate implications of pandemic tourism and plan to engage them in a forward-looking process of action research to open horizons that envision the present crisis as a chance to work towards a more sustainable future. Sweden’s approach to handling the pandemic, which is still viewed as an exception, and Småland with its focus on limited-season summer tourism provided a well-suited context to study how the visitor economy can deal with challenges of this nature. The pandemic is, however, more than a set of issues to be dealt with. It is a chance to (re-)engage with the development trajectories of tourism in this area and what kinds of futures we envision for it. To this end, it is valuable to evaluate the impact and response to COVID-19 in relation to developing the local UNESCO World Heritage site and working towards the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The present project aimed to contribute to Sweden’s World Heritage Strategy and Sweden’s commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals as well as to deepen regular collaboration between academic researchers and key stakeholders in the local visitor economy.

2.2 Research questions

Three research questions guided our study of how visitor economy make sense of the uncertainty induced by the current SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in the short- and long-run:

1. How do stakeholders of the visitor economy enact their context to make sense of the uncertainty in their business context throughout the pandemic and to mitigate its effects?
2. How do these stakeholders frame decisions under uncertainty and enable actions?
3. How does the current pandemic and its management impact perceptions of the future and provide new long-term visions and targets for actors in the local visitor economy?

These research questions considered both the immediate consequences of the disaster (RQ1, RQ2) and the long-term implications (RQ3) while using a paradoxical framing. That is, we simultaneously understand the pandemic as an issue to deal with and a chance to explore trajectories toward sustainable futures.

2.3 Research design and project activities

The research project was structured into three integral parts that involved parallel activities over the whole project duration:

Part 1 was concerned with the short-term perspective and addressed primarily research RQ1 and RQ2. Project activities involved a series of interviews with a select group of managers and entrepreneurs as well as a survey among business owners and management staff to understand how those different parties experienced and navigated the immediate consequences of the corona pandemic. Part 2 addressed the long-term perspective and thus the challenges and opportunities the pandemic entailed for perceptions of the future (see RQ3). Key to understanding changes to those perceptions were two activities: A futures literacy workshop (at Hossmo Gård) exploring and envisioning alternative futures and three long-term perspective inputs in joint seminars with the partner group on inspirational topics such as “the climate emergency” (Martin Gren), “Visions of a new Öland Historical Museum” (Ludvig Papmehl-Dufay) and “Justice and tourism futures” (Marianna Strzelecka). Part 3 related to joint activities across the long- and short-term perspective in seminars to strengthen collaboration and knowledge co-production with partners from the visitor economy and across faculties, and to discuss intermediate results as well as project milestones and progress.

The contents and activities for these parts are further detailed and linked to the answers to the corresponding research questions in chapter 3 (short-term perspective) and chapter 4 (long-term perspective).

2.4 Project organization and partners

Members of the tourism research group within the School of Business and Economics at Linnaeus University dealt with the short-term questions in the project:
- Dr. Stephan Reinhold, Associate Professor, Tourism Studies (project co-lead)
- Dr. Marianna Strzelecka, Associate Professor, Tourism Studies
- Per Pettersson Löfquist, Senior Lecturer, Tourism Studies
- Emma Lundin, Master Student, Tourism & Sustainability Program

Members of the Department of Cultural Sciences at Linnaeus University dealt with the long-term question in the project:
- Professor Cornelius Holtorf, Archaeology (project co-lead)
- Professor Anders Högborg, Archaeology
- Professor Martin Gren, Human Geography
- Dr. Ludvig Papmehl-Dufay, Associate Professor, Archaeology
- Dr. Annalisa Bolin, Archaeology
The partner group consisted of members from seven institutions in the regional visitor economy that contributed to the project with inputs, feedback, and participation in research activities:

- Tourism and events businesses: Kalmarsalen, Ekerum Resort
- Museums: Kalmar Läns Museum, Blekinge Museum, Ölands Museum
- Municipalities: Mörbylånga Municipality (UNESCO World Heritage, Ekerum), Kalmar Municipality (Destination Kalmar, Unika project), Oskarshamn Municipality
- Counties: Kalmar Län

3 Short-term perspective – activities and insights

3.1 Activities
We conducted interviews with informants and surveyed businesses to study how stakeholders of the visitor economy think about and act in their context to make sense of the uncertainty in their business throughout the pandemic and how they deal with its effects. Furthermore, we held seminars with our partners to learn about their concerns. The seminars also served to discuss and reflect on what we learned from our data analysis as well as to put the insights from our data analysis into perspective in a process of knowledge co-production. The section below details activities pertaining to interviews, the survey, and the seminars.

3.1.1 Interviews
Per Pettersson Lofquist interviewed 15 purposefully selected informants, that is business owners and managers, from the private and public sector in late spring to early summer 2021 (end before the start of the tourist season). Informants were selected so that their accounts would represent a range of different experiences (i.e., forced closure, lower demand in previous seasons, exceptional demand for their products and services), different sub-sectors of the visitor economy, regional policy representatives, and different organization sizes (i.e., measured in operations, revenue, and staff responsibilities). This had us include interviewees from both Kalmar Län and Kronoberg Län.

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to understand the interviewees' experiences and actions in their professional context throughout the corona pandemic. We sought to understand how they as stakeholders of the visitor economy dealt with the uncertainty and challenges inherent to their work during the pandemic. Consequently, the interviews included both elements of longitudinal retrospection and an outlook to the immediate and near-term future. We analyzed the results using qualitative, interpretative coding. Codes were both literature-based and inspired by the emergent themes in the narratives the interviewees shared. Including the reflections and feedback shared from the partner group upon presentation of first results (see ch. 3.1.3) added additional nuance and alternative interpretations to our own and literature-based interpretations presented in later sections of chapter 3.

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1 Some institutions were represented with multiple members in the partner group and some individuals represented more than just the organizations and institutions listed because of minority employments, board memberships, or similar auxiliary functions and responsibilities. Specific project activities involved participants beyond the partner group institutions.
3.1.2 Survey
Marianna Strzelecka surveyed tourism and hospitality sector businesses in the Kalmar-Öland area to identify the impact of the corona pandemic on businesses in the area and to learn what kind of solutions they had tried in response to the pandemic.

With help of a student research assistant and public archives, we identified 640 organizations that received the questionnaire. This resulted in 79 usable, anonymized responses, which reflects about a 12 percent response rate as is to be expected for this kind of survey. About 49 percent of those responding received external support funding, 43 percent received no funding while the remaining respondents chose not to answer or were able to draw on internal support for funding. Given the limited sample, we ran statistical analyses mostly to identify group differences for specific grouping criteria. Finally, we also used the results of the quantitative data to see if there are any fundamental differences or contradictions in topical areas addressed by both modes of data collection (survey, interviews). There is a fundamental agreement in the narrative we get from our interviews and the experiences reported in quantitative terms in our survey.

3.1.3 Seminars
Three partner seminars were dedicated to sharing experience and discussing results from the short-term perspective:

- **Immediate issues**, hosted by Stephan Reinhold and Per Pettersson Löfqvist (February 4, 2021): Partners presented the most pressing issues and concerns for their upcoming tourist season and what they did to address those issues.

- **First results and Corona travel**, hosted by Stephan Reinhold (Jun 10, 2021): Presentation of proposition from the initial analysis; an update on international tourism development and recovery efforts.

- **Results and conclusions**, hosted by Stephan Reinhold and Marianna Strzelecka (Sept 17, 2021): Presentation and discussion of final results from survey and interviews and link to lessons learned about post-pandemic future.

3.2 Insights
This section summarizes what we have learned studying how visitor economy stakeholders have been reflecting on and acting in response to the pandemic. We first present the roller-coaster metaphor to capture how stakeholders make sense of their experience throughout the first few waves of the pandemic. Next, we point out what kinds of changes the stakeholders highlighted in their professional context before we present the actions (or “solutions”) they have chosen in response to the pandemic situation. We saw signs of resilience and an unusual kind of uncertainty characterizing the pandemic crisis. Finally, we discuss the futures shared by interview partners before we end by pointing to two policy recommendations.

3.2.1 A roller coaster year
The dominant metaphor for the common stakeholder experience throughout the pandemic is the “roller coaster”. This metaphor mentioned but not fully elaborated by one of the interviewees helps to capture the sentiment and the “ups” (↗) and “downs” (↘) of the restrictions on life, on travel, and on business for visitor economy stakeholders between spring 2020 and summer 2021. Figure 1 provides a visual illustration of the roller-coaster metaphor.

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2 This seminar was shared with the input on Climate Emergency by Martin Gren.
The conducted interviews revealed several negative and positive key events that contributed to this perception (see Figure 1). Between March and April 2020, many interviewees were confronted with unprecedented restrictions on their business practices, guest cancellations of pre-booked services, forced closures, and furlough as well as layoffs.

Toward the summer of 2020, this common experience branches out in several different roller-coaster paths. Some businesses had to stay shut (flat path in red) while others reopened from what turned out to be a modest (small peak) to an exceptional summer season (high peak). While compared to 2019 throughout Sweden, on average, guest nights dropped by 36 percent and accommodation income by 47 percent (Tillväxtverket, 2021; VISITA, 2020), some in Kalmar and on Öland experienced nearly pre-pandemic level demand pressure with an extended season. Overall, the ups and downs in the roller-coaster experience are not only the results of restrictions on public life and business as well as the development of virus variants. They are also the consequences of path dependencies in the decisions in how to handle the pandemic that created direct and indirect effects. The path dependencies seem most pronounced in hotels and restaurants and relate, for example to the consequences of furlough schemes on capacity, staffing, and purchasing decisions within organizations.

### 3.2.2 Experienced changes in the professional context

The interviews point to three key changes experienced by the interviewees: Changes in practices, changes in guest segments, and changes in priorities for activities.

First, across organization types, interviewees changed their practices by hosting online events and interactions, by introducing measures to keep distance from and between guests, and by means of different activities to manage visitor flows (incl. putting up signage, designing cueing areas, hiring security staff, etc.). Hotels specifically had to change their practices to accommodate shorter windows between booking and checking-in—sometimes even on the same day, to increase flexibility in staff scheduling and assigning responsibilities, and to address safety and service concerns in guest communication. Interviewees from organizations running tourist attractions assessed their service blueprints with medical professionals, introduced hand sanitizer, plexiglass dividers, masks, and sent their staff home to work remotely. Restaurants shifted to take-out and delivery options operating their
establishments for periods like “ghost kitchens”. Finally, tourist organizations, produced special reports to collect information and engaged in different activities to support their partners and the business community. Second, interviewees reported having guest segments change to younger Swedish couples and families with kids. Day trips with consumption from nearby areas brought additional consumption for farm shops on Öland and coffee shops. Outdoor activities proved very popular in general. Overnights, on average, were reported to have declined overall and per stay because of the domestic guest focus. However, some interviewees reported long-stay guests that traveled to South-East Sweden for work-actions (i.e., a combination of longer leisure trips with remote work), for an escape from larger cities such as Stockholm or Goteborg, or wellness retreats. Last, there was also mention of Swedish residents with migration background spending their summer in Sweden rather than with their families elsewhere.

Finally, interviewees reported that they change their priorities in their activities because of the pandemic. During the first wave of the pandemic in spring 2020, interviewees focused on conserving cash and keeping their business going, whenever possible. Some interviewees mentioned that they used forced downtime for more long-term planning. Generally, interviewees reflected that the pandemic has become an agenda item for future long-term strategy planning and plans. In addition, interviewees reflected that the pandemic has brought about an increased awareness among them as to the contribution of tourism for residents and near-distance visitors to mental wellbeing. Products to push for lifted restrictions in summers 2020 and 2021 shifted for many to outdoor and domestic traveler focus. Alongside those developments, interviewees mentioned that they sped up the digital component of their product and service development (e.g., digital visitor guides and interactions). Finally, interviewees mentioned that there has been increased attention to the sector as one of the most affected at a national and political level in terms of labor market consequences.

3.2.3 “Solutions” to deal with the pandemic impact
Independent of the roller-coaster path, interviewees reported creative plans and activities to make use of their temporarily shut facilities, improve the quality of their services for future seasons, and put their employees to use in unconventional ways. Furthermore, interviewees positively commented on customer lenience and expressions of support toward struggling businesses or limited service under complicating pandemic circumstances.

Actions mentioned by the interviewees to deal with the implications of the Corona pandemic can be summarized in five categories ordered by the number of mentions: (1) digitalization related projects and activities; (2) renovation of existing infrastructure or building new facilities; (3) request funding or support checks from government and public authorities; (4) invest in and develop outdoor activities; (5) activities to improve the customer experience. These categories address the perceived changes in activities mentioned in the previous sections. Figure presents a word cloud of “solutions” that survey respondents mentioned using to help their organizations deal with the corona pandemic.
In general, the interviews demonstrate that public institutions and private organizations offering products or services for guests and visitors prioritized staying open, generating cash flow, and making the best use of the forced downtime. In contrast, representatives from public-private organizations and administrative bodies in turn focused on taking stock of resources and services as well as on building knowledge and service offerings to help their business clients deal with the pandemic.

3.2.4 Signs of resilience
The results of the anonymous survey for the businesses from Kalmar-Öland generally show signs of resilience among members of the visitor economy. On average, survey respondents did not agree with statements that asked them about different kinds of concerns (see Table 1). The only areas or slight concerns expressed related to feeling a little more ill at ease (3.33)

values in brackets are means, standard deviation between 0.98 and 1.58.

3 values in brackets are means, standard deviation between 0.98 and 1.58.
Those 39 survey respondents that reported having applied for external funds reported higher average concern about their economic situation (3.46)\(^4\) than those 34 that did not (2.65). This stays consistent when checking for implicit factors and when comparing reported performance. Economic support remains the only significant emotional domain\(^5\). Moreover, those respondents that indicated having good economic performance in 2020/21 worried consistently less about their economic situation.

3.2.5 An unusual kind of uncertainty
One of the key challenges of dealing with the present corona pandemic induced crisis relates to the unusual kind of uncertainty it entails. The common perception of a crisis seems akin to a one-time event of a certain level of severity and impact. In response, actors assess what and how dire the consequences are. And in response, they define plans and actions to work toward a constant improvement of their situation to the best of their abilities.

While a common crisis such as a severe economic downturn can be challenging too, the level of involved change over time appears significantly less pronounced. The pandemic crisis presented actors with a complex, non-linear problem. The effects seemed intangible at first and the situational assessment changed over times in both directions. It got better and it got worse again – in different waves. Moreover, there was and still is disagreement and uncertainty whether the measures to address the crisis will be working in ways expected. Hence, the development can feel like moving backward in time.

Overall, in the context of the roller coaster metaphor, this relates to the feeling of someone else steering the direction and speed of the development. Determining the “right” kinds of actions became a challenge and path-dependencies in decisions can compound the experience of changes in direction. For example, hotel managers and owners putting their staff on part-time layoff within furlough schemes saw themselves confronted with lacking flexibility and staff when restrictions of movements for travelers were revoked and bookings for rooms started to come in at very short notice.

3.2.6 The future continues
When asked about their immediate and near-future plans, interviewees post-pandemic futures represented mostly extensions of previous notions of what the future of travel and tourism would look like. Those futures are not complete deviations from prior development paths; they stayed mostly the same.

Certain aspects saw, however, an acceleration in timeline. Specifically, digitalization has been accelerated and has become more tangible in main and support processes in those institutions and organizations interviewed. Digitalization is seen as part of the future and the pandemic as a catalyst for digital tools.

Longer-term considerations with climate change and concerns for sustainability have been seen as part of the necessary agenda for the future of visitor economy stakeholders, however not in new ways. Generally, future statements are mainly instrumental and pragmatic. They have been grounded in economic rationales, and to a lesser extent in community concerns. Outside of speculations, what post-pandemic tourism demand and occupancy would look like, was opaque for our interview partners.

These aspects have been further explored and will be further elaborated in the next part of this report that deals with the long-term perspective for post-pandemic tourism (see chapter 4)

\(^4\) values in brackets are means, standard deviation between 1.49 and 1.64.
\(^5\) Significance level 0.15 in analysis of variance.
3.2.7 Policy recommendations

Those actors that support different partners and communities, namely public actors and tourist organizations stand to learn from the crisis for the future – what instruments work, how to communicate in the crisis to the best interest of their stakeholders. These solutions need to account for the roller coaster that represents a metaphor for the experience of the non-linear, complex development of the crisis. Support schemes need to adapt for the ups and downs.

In this light it seems pertinent to put a spotlight on two specific points:

First, we recommend an evaluation and discussion of the present *furlough and support schemes* for viable ways to tailor solutions to the realities of service work with high dependency on recurrent cash flow and short-term fluctuation in demand. This is critical considering types of crises that develop in waves rather than from good to worse and back again.

Second, the visitor economy requires work towards support in *attracting talent to and hiring staff*. This has been a particular issue in hospitality and the restaurant business before the pandemic, but throughout the crisis, additional talent has been lost to the sector. This might be a matter of providing career development opportunities in a sector characterized by SME structures, finding solutions for all-year engagements, and access to international qualified workers.

4 Long-term perspective: background and insights

4.1 Background – rationale and activities

4.1.1 Rationale

The COVID-19 pandemic has been more than a set of issues to be dealt with pragmatically in the visitor economy. It has also been a chance to (re-)engage with the development trajectories of tourism and what kinds of futures are being envisioned for it. In that way, the present project related to the agenda of ‘heritage futures’ which deals with the roles of heritage in managing the relations between present and future societies (Holtorf and Högberg 2021).

Within the visitor economy, cultural heritage has long played a particular role (e.g. Staiff et al 2013). The same is true in the area around Kalmar (Småland and Öland) where cultural heritage destinations are of particular significance in attracting tourists. This includes castles, cultural landscapes, and a range of historic traditions.

In our area, it is particularly valuable to evaluate the impact and response to Covid-19 in relation to developing the local UNESCO World Heritage site and working towards the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. According to the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO 1972), the “Agricultural Landscape of Southern Öland” was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2000. UNESCO describes the site as follows:

The southern part of the island of Öland in the Baltic Sea is dominated by a vast limestone plateau. Human beings have lived here for some five thousand years and adapted their way of life to the physical constraints of the island. As a consequence, the landscape is unique, with abundant evidence of continuous human settlement from prehistoric times to the present day.\(^6\)

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\(^6\) [https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/968](https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/968)
According to the 1972 Convention (Article 4), Sweden, as a State Party to the Convention, recognizes “the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations” of its listed properties including the cultural landscape on Öland. In practice, this means that world heritage sites are to be conserved for an undetermined future and until further notice. Sweden’s new World Heritage Strategy (2019) established the vision that “Världsarven visar vägen till en hållbar och fredlig värld” (World Heritage directs us towards a sustainable and peaceful world, our translation). Concerning the development of the visitor economy, the following is recommended:

Specifikt gällande lokal och regional utveckling torde världsarven kunna tas till vara bättre framöver, t.ex. för besöksmålsutveckling och i arbetet med att tillgängliggöra kultur- och naturarv. I detta arbete kan kommuner, regioner, det civila samhället och lokala företag ha en mer framträdande roll i världsarvsarbetet. Världsarven och världsarvsarbetet bör också integreras mer i det övergripande arbetet med lokal och regional utveckling och tas upp i lokala och regionala utvecklingsplaner och program. (Världsarvsstrategi 2019: 9).

This Strategy particularly emphasizes the need to work towards sustainable development:

Agenda 2030-målen bör genomsyra allt världsarvsarbete och vara förebildligt i fråga om att bevara, använda och utveckla natur- och kulturmiljöer på ett hållbart sätt. Arbetet utifrån Agenda 2030-målen behöver därför vidareutvecklas. Lokala, regionala och nationella aktörer bör gemensamt ansvara för denna vidareutveckling. (Världsarvsstrategi 2019: 8)

The United Nations’ Agenda 2030 document defines 17 Sustainable Development Goals which are the world's plan to build a better world for people and our planet by 2030. Adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, these Goals are a call for action by all countries to promote prosperity while protecting the environment. Sweden is committed to this agenda. The present project aimed also at contributing to achieving Sweden’s World Heritage Strategy and Sweden’s commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition, this project was to kick-start new partnerships and regular collaboration between academic researchers and key stakeholders in the local and regional visitor economy. At a university level, the project aimed at initiating an interdisciplinary and cross-Faculty working group that strengthens collaboration on issues of mutual interest between researchers in cultural heritage and archaeology on the one hand, and researchers in business studies and tourism research on the other hand.

In this part of the project, we wanted to understand, in the context of the pandemic, how the local and regional tourism industry makes sense of uncertainty in the long term. Our main research question was therefore:

How does the current pandemic and its management impact on perceptions of the future and does it lead to new long-term visions and targets for actors in the local and regional visitor economy?

Throughout our project, we also wanted to contribute to increasing ‘futures literacy’ (see below) and supporting long-term decision-making in the local and regional tourism industry.

7 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org
4.1.2 Seminars

Among the participants in the six online seminars were the seven researchers involved in the project at Linnaeus University as well as representatives of seven external partners operating in the regional tourism industry.

The seminars were in each case focused on one specific topic. The following topics referred to the long-term perspective in particular:

- *The climate emergency – tourism & heritage*, led by Martin Gren (4 Feb 2021): as the tourism sector looks to recover from COVID-19, moving to a post-pandemic world, how can tourism be more proactive in the climate emergency?
- *Archaeological heritage on Öland and the vision of a new Öland Historical Museum*, led by Ludvig Papmehl-Dufay (5 Mar 2021): what could be the role of a new historical/archaeological museum on Öland and are threats to its success?
- *Justice and tourism futures*, led by Marianna Strzelecka (17 May 2021): how can tourism contribute to ‘sustainability as justice’ which boils down to recognizing differences and making sure the way tourism is done recognizes and represents different perspectives?

The following topic referred to the aim of strengthening collaboration:


4.1.3 Futures Workshop

The workshop was held at Hossmo Gård (see https://www.hossmogard.se) on 6 September 2021, 9:00–15:30.

Eleven Participants attended, including Julius Sääf, Emma Rydnér, Stefan Johnson, Maja Heuer, Meg Nömgård among the external partners and Stephan Reinhold, Cornelius Holtorf, Anders Högberg, and Marianna Strzelecka from Linnaeus University.

The workshop was held mostly in Swedish, although occasionally some English was used by those less fluent in Swedish.

The workshop was primarily about the participants’ capabilities in futures thinking (Holtorf 2022a). It addressed perceptions of the future and long-term visions and targets for actors in the local visitor economy. Drawing on research about ‘heritage futures’, ongoing collaboration with the UNESCO Global Futures Literacy Network, and their experience in running quite a few local futures workshops (but developing their format), Anders and Cornelius helped participants increasing their ‘futures literacy’ to imagine and anticipate alternative futures, create innovative future scenarios for their own activities (verksamheter), and develop specific sustainable development perspectives. The workshop also generated individual reflection and joint discussion, which is why physical presence and sufficient time were essential.

4.1.3.1 Workshop rationale

There are a variety of workshop methodologies being practiced for stakeholders in the visitor economy and indeed in other parts of the economy (see e.g. Bertella et al 2021).

The rationale and method of our workshop was informed by future workshops conducted over the past few years by Holtorf and Högberg. Since 2019, we have been running eight Future Workshops at the UNESCO Chair on Heritage Futures for a total of ca 100 professionals and politicians managing cultural heritage sites in and around Kalmar in Southeast Sweden. The workshops were held on invitation after news of their availability and
usefulness had spread by word of mouth. The workshops extended over a half day and involved three steps: the participants (1) documented first how they perceived the future several decades ahead, (2) identified then major challenges they anticipated, and (3) developed finally strategies to address these challenges using heritage. Subsequently, more work was still needed for each participating group to identify realistic goals and practical agendas for the heritage sites concerned.

The feedback we collected confirmed that the workshops succeeded in raising a new set of issues and inspiring long-term agendas in managing heritage. For example, in the light of workshops we held with a project group developing cultural heritage tourism in the Kalmar-Öland region, participants commented that “the workshop emphasized the need for longer future planning”, that it is “very useful to think further ahead than we commonly do and even to think with a larger and broader perspective,” and that “all felt that they ought to think more about the future in planning their work”. Similarly, after our workshop with the Steering Group of Kalmar Castle, participants stated that “engaging with foresight affected my ability to take more perspectives into account when we plan our work” and that “the workshop made me open for new ideas of how we could use the castle in the future” (all our translations).

4.1.3.2 Futures literacy

The workshop was also informed by existing approaches and key theoretical literature related to the field of Foresight. Based on the human capacity to consider eventualities ahead, foresight informs strategic thinking, decision-making, and planning. Its aim is to empower people to make sense of the future in new ways and make better decisions, based less on unquestioned assumptions and more on a realization of additional options for the future (Conway 2008).

The concept of ‘futures literacy’ has been used and developed by the Global Futures Literacy Network (at the time) led by a team around Riel Miller at UNESCO (Miller 2008, UNESCO n.d.). Futures literacy as an approach in foresight has been used, among other contexts, by the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (Larsen et al 2020: 80-1). They define it in terms of

“the capabilities of people to use and imagine multiple futures for different purposes in different contexts. Fostering futures literacy improves and sharpens the ability to harness the power of imagining the future, and it enables us to appreciate the diversity of both the world around us more fully and the choices we make.”

In this approach, uncertainty about the future is rendered a resource rather than a liability for planning ahead. In this light, futures literacy is not about the ability to predict what will happen but about two other capabilities.

Firstly, it is about gaining an awareness of the anticipatory assumptions concerning the future which present-day decisions (often inadvertently) tend to be based on. Futures literacy thus means unlearning what we never used to question, usually assumptions about a continuity from the present. Secondly, there is the need to acquire the skill to tell different stories, making sense of novel and emerging futures and anticipating changing needs of future generations. Futures literacy is thus also about learning to imagine alternative futures, providing alternatives for strategic decisions in the present. In other words, futures literacy is the ability to anticipate multiple possible futures that differ from the present. These possible futures are imagined in the light of major general trends that can be discerned for the years and decades ahead. Futures literacy is thus liberating people from the tight shackles of
‘presentism’: the disabling and unquestioned assumption that the status quo is timeless and the future unimaginable.

4.1.3.3 Causal Layered Analysis

Appreciating multiple, alternative, and emerging futures means to rethink and redevelop the stories we tell ourselves and thus reframing what we do. These ambitions have been practiced in a particular interesting way by Sohail Inayatullah in the context of what he calls Causal Layered Analysis (Inayatullah 2015, 2020). This approach distinguishes four distinct layers of analysis seeking to provide a deeper understanding of the thinking at work in decision-making, and planning for the future in a given context (Conway 2008: 7-8):

- **The litany** of what is widely taken for granted,
- **Social causes** or other factors that underpin particular practices,
- **The discourse and worldview** that inform assumptions widely made,
- **Metaphors and myths** framing intuitive beliefs about the future.

Causal Layered Analysis is about understanding all four layers and develop alternative futures that can change them.

The first level of analysis (the litany) focuses on creating in-depth understanding and skills to see beyond what appears to be self-explanatory. The next level of analysis (social causes) examines and tries to clarify the causes or factors that underlie opinions and discusses attitudes. The third level of analysis (the discourse and worldview) explores how structures and worldviews are starting points for change, including how participants construct their understanding of issues discussed. The fourth level of analysis (metaphors and myths) identifies intuitive ideas about the future. This is done to deconstruct them and to build alternatives.

Causal Layered Analysis is an approach with capacity to move “futures literacy from what is next to understanding how different worldviews and stakeholders construct reality” (Inayatullah 2020: 2). In practice, it takes participants in a future workshop through a process of understanding what needs to be learned, see the future as part of the present, understanding the limits inherited in presentism, create capacity to visualize alternative futures and how to integrate them into present day contexts, and finally elaborate on strategies to make change (Inayatullah 2020).

4.1.3.4 Workshop method

Our workshop lasted over a entire day, divided into three sections. We started with a short presentation of the day, followed by a plenum discussion based on the questions:

- Which narratives do you have about the visitor economy and its future?
- What kind of assumptions about the future are made in these narratives?
- What is taken for granted in these narratives about the future?

The purpose of this discussion was to create an understanding that our assumptions about the future need to be developed, to meet and create futures that are not copies of the present (e.g., ‘used futures’, after Inayatullah [2020: 5]), but different compared to now. The outcome of the discussion was documented with bullet points visualized on a screen. We finalized this first part of the workshop with a discussion that gave the participants a first taste of what is needed to develop an enhanced futures literacy. This included (but was not limited to) a need to:

- challenge our expectations
• understand that the future will be different from what we often assume
• actively unlearn to think new
• participate in continues learning processes
• create (partly) new narratives about the future.

The second part of the workshop focused on building skills to imagine new futures. After an initial presentation and discussion of known trends (e.g., climate change, global population growth, aging populations and, urbanization), participants were divided into two groups. Under the direction of Cornelius and Anders, each group were instructed to discuss three issues:

1) How do you see the future in 2050? What happens when that affects the visitor economy? The purpose was to have the participants start visualizing future challenges and possibilities;
2) What do we choose to do, based on what may happen? This was discussed with the purpose to have the participants start thinking on what can be done to achieve change;
3) How can existing challenges for the visitor economy be met by you in your companies/organizations? The purpose with this third issue was to have the participants start imaging alternative futures for the visitor economy.

Notes were taken on a whiteboard throughout the discussions.

The third part of the workshop was again a plenum discussion. This time it was based on the questions:

What kind of new narratives about the future do you now see have emerged?
What may it entail from the visitor economy here and now?

Once again, the outcomes from the discussion were documented with bullet points visualized on a screen. The purpose of this last part of the workshop was to initiate processes of relearning and reframing among the participants. To make the processes visible, the bullet points from the first part of the workshop were contrasted with the bullet points from the third part on a screen. This was an effective way to visualize the learning and rethinking processes that had been occurring during the day. It made it clear to the participants that what they assumed about the future coming to the workshop, actually were assumptions based on ‘old futures’. It also made it clear that the workshop had initiated a first reframing of these ‘old futures’ and started a process to help participants re-writing futures in relation to their own contexts in their companies/organisations.

4.2 Insights

4.2.1 Context
Reference points for long-term perspectives of the local and regional visitor economy include Business Intelligence Syd’s Framtidsspaningar 2018 report which discussed trends relevant to the visitor economy in southern Sweden up until 2015 (BI SYD n.d.). During the duration of our project, the Kalmar County Region also worked with Kairos Futures on a new Strategy 2030 for the Visitor Economy. On a European level, regional impacts of the pandemic on the tourist sector and potential future developments have been discussed in an extensive report published during the final phase of our project (Böhme et al 2021).
The COVID19-pandemic and its implications for culture and heritage have previously been discussed in various other contexts. For example, the OECD published a report on Culture shock: COVID-19 and the cultural and creative sectors in 2020. In this report, it was argued that the cultural and creative sectors were among the hardest hit by the pandemic. The point made was that in addition to short-term support for artists and firms, policies can also leverage the economic and social impacts of culture in broader recovery packages and efforts to transform local economies.

Europa Nostra’s report COVID-19 & BEYOND: Challenges and Opportunities for Cultural Heritage (2020) summarized and analyzed the main findings of a consultation on this topic among Europa Nostra’s large pan-European network of members and partners. The study assessed implications for heritage personnel and security of jobs; implications for security of heritage sites, contents, and visitors; social, cultural and financial implications; as well as implications to ensure proper communication and to keep networks alive. It also provided recommendations for heritage actors and policymakers, distinguishing between immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its medium to longer-term implications. Finally, the study contained a mapping of initiatives launched by heritage stakeholders in relation to cultural heritage and the pandemic, such as surveys and data collection tools as well as statements, appeals and letters.

The International Council of Monuments and sites (ICOMOS 2020) also quickly published the results of a global survey providing an overview of the situation for cultural heritage worldwide, including, intriguingly, several positive impacts of the pandemic. They include in many cases improved tangible preservation, in other cases an increased interest and engagement in tangible and intangible local heritage strengthening communities, and often also an enhancement of digital accessibility.

In 2022, after the worst of the pandemic was over, UNESCO published a report on resilience, recovery, and revival, concluding with the following insights that are worth reflecting on by many working in the cultural sector (UNESCO 2022: 60):

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a reflection on what we value, our shared needs and shared future. It has made more acute the need to act together to tackle major societal and environmental issues. There is no going back to ‘normal’; going forward, a new path needs to be forged collectively to build a sustainable future.

The culture sector – with its inherent creativity – holds within it the seeds of its revival and those of the wider society and economy. Many organizations and cultural professionals have responded to the effects of the pandemic with fortitude and imagination, adapting models and practices and pivoting to new ways of working, of value creation and impactmaking. In society at large, there is a growing appreciation of the culture sector’s social value, and within the sector itself there is increased connectivity and solidarity. (…)

Many governments are yet to pivot from a mindset of ‘rescue’ to one which reframes the value proposition for culture and, in doing so, remolds strategic investment where culture is foundational for sustainable development.

We have also ourselves discussed cultural heritage in relation to the pandemic. In a short blog, Holtorf and Bolin (2020) engaged in some general reflections about the possible implications of the corona crisis in a heritage context. The same text has recently been published in Chinese translation, too. Later in 2020, Holtorf was invited to present a keynote lecture at the Opening Ceremony of the Virtual 26th Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) on 25 August 2020. He chose the title “Post-Corona Archaeology: Creating a New Normal?” In 2021, Holtorf wrote a somewhat more extensive
discussion for a Brazilian publication, entitled “Archaeology and cultural heritage beyond quarantine. Reflections from Sweden on COVID-19 and its consequences” (Holtorf 2022b).

4.2.2 Lessons learned

Concerning the long-term perspective and our original research question, we learned several things in the present project.

Most significantly, the interviews conducted (see section 3.2.6) show that during the pandemic many regional stakeholders in the regional visitor economy have been thinking only a short time ahead and in terms of what they do now. Their concern regarding the pandemic extended to the season ahead or in some cases to the season after that. What the future holds for travel and tourism was perceived more or less in the same terms as before the pandemic. To the extent that the future planned for and worried about is short and based on assumptions informed by the present, it can be said that futures literacy in the regional tourism sector, i.e., the ability to anticipate multiple possible futures that differ from the present, is relatively low.

In the context of the present project, the UNESCO Chair on Heritage Futures commissioned a parallel study from Kalmar County Museum investigating their perceptions of the local visitor economy in a future perspective (Johansson 2021). The study, which is based on eight interviews with the members of the management group of the museum, including its director, shows that – with one notable exception – long-term future thinking is poorly developed:

- The museum changed the original brief of the study from studying perceptions of the museum’s role in the regional visitor economy of the future to studying perceptions of the future of the regional visitor economy in a one-year and ten-year perspective.
- Mostly, the senior managers did not consider in detail substantial differences between the museum’s role in the regional visitor economy one year ahead compared with ten years ahead (with the notable exception of digitalization and its impact, see below).
- Generally, the senior managers discussed their ten-year perspective based on their current operations and current goals and aspirations rather than on discernible long-term trends in a wider context.
- The museum’s current strategic plan does not extend further than 4 years ahead.

At the same time, we also noted some existing capacity among actors in the local and regional visitor economy to imagine and consider long-term visions and changing targets to be aimed at. In several of our seminar discussions, it was stressed how the pandemic advanced the already ongoing process of digitization. All agreed when one of the stakeholders stated that COVID 19 caused a 10-year leap in digitization (the ‘acceleration in timeline’ referred to in section 3.2.6). This observation is in line with how others described digitization as a major outcome of the pandemic (OECD 2020: 24, 44; Europa Nostra 2020: 10; Böhme et al 2021: 119-120). In terms of tourism, besides digital marketing, digital management, and visitors’ digital needs and expectations, this transformation is relevant in two main ways:

1. the rise of ‘digital tourism:’ increasing digital consumption of services and experiences that otherwise would have meant a physical trip;
2. an increase in the number of people working from home (‘home office’), consequently changing patterns of local tourism near the home (‘hemester’ or short-distance travel for relaxation in breaks or on weekends) and indeed appearing indicators (such as rising house
prices on Öland) that people move their homes to regions further way from the physical location of their employers or customers.

Both trends mean that the future significance of the visitor economy to regional development in the Kalmar area may be less about creating local jobs by attracting tourists and more about providing services to an increasing section of the population working from home (or part-time home). According to one report of the European Commission (Böhme et al 2021: 122-3), Sweden can expect positive impacts from post-pandemic tourism trends because of favorable conditions for the development both of digitalization and of sustainable and eco-friendly tourism.

We learned about two specific ways in which the trend towards digitalization had already been put into action. In one case, Kalmarsalen, a local company in Kalmar providing venues for meetings and conferences, extended its business idea from physically hosting meetings to managing digital meetings. Before the pandemic, Kalmarsalen identified itself as having flexible venues. During the pandemic this was taken to a new level. By building studios upon stages originally built for live performances they turned their biggest disadvantage, a big venue not allowed to welcome guests, into an advantage with various studios for different customer needs regarding digital meeting setups. In the other case, Kalmar County Museum extended its approach from the museum largely offering services in a certain location (associated with the widespread idea that the museum functions as a physical “meeting place”) to the museum providing a growing number of services as a “Netflix for heritage” which can be accessed digitally (Emdén 2021). The plan is to hold 45 new lectures every year with all of them being open to attend physically and being broadcast online and recorded at the same time. This hybrid format means that they can be kept available online in the future (Emdén 2021). Andreas Juhl, responsible at the museum for this project, explained in a conversation with Cornelius Holtorf (26 October 2021, his translation) that “Corona lowered the threshold for daring to invest into a digital future” when “it was no longer an alternative not to continue with the digital” because the digital “had become too promising to stop it again”. This switch of metaphor opened also for new ways of generating income, allowing for selling tickets to provide digital access and down the road for subscriptions by municipalities to provide access to citizens via schools, old people homes, or public libraries. Elsewhere, two senior staff in the pedagogical Department put the lessons of the pandemic like this (Johansson 2021: 12):

Paradoxically, the pandemic has made it easier to think about the future, both in a shorter and in a longer perspective. Maybe because we all long for a pandemic-free future but also because we are forced to think new all the time. The big difference in terms of operations in the last year at the museum is that the digital has gone from being something that is linked to existing exhibitions in retrospect, to something that complements and even replaces our ‘ordinary’ activities.

Additionally, we also learned that the workshop format was appreciated by our external partners for the additional opportunity to think about the long term. Comments submitted after the workshop on 6 September included the following: ”dagen var givande då det var flera stimulerande och givande diskussioner kring vad verksamhetens roll och besöksnäring kan innebära i en framtid beroende på olika scenarion”, ”[workshopen] satte pandemin i ett längre/framtida perspektiv. under pandemin har vi varit tvungna att fokusera på här och nuet med ständiga omställningar vilket gjort att framtidsperspektivet blivit lite ’lidande’”, ”Att tänka utan att bli påverkat av sin samtida kontext är intressant och välbehövligt”, ”Livet är alltid i förändring och vi behöver ta in den tanken i högre utsträckning i vårt strategiska
tänkande.” These are all statements that can be read as appreciations of increased futures literacy.

These insights underline also that the long-term thinking required for the World Heritage Site Agricultural Landscape of Southern Öland, which is an important regional tourist attraction, to direct us towards a sustainable and peaceful world, as expected by the Swedish World Heritage Strategy (2019), is not self-evident. But it can be put into practice, if encouraged and supported in appropriate ways.

5 Output and impact

5.1 Collaboration
The initial aim of the project to kick-start new partnerships and regular collaboration between academic researchers and key stakeholders in the local and regional visitor economy, turned out to be difficult to realize.

Despite the seven seminar discussions we had, the fact that, due to the COVID 19-pandemic, we were obliged to hold them on zoom rather than physically meant that it was difficult to build new personal connections, as these would normally emerge from or be strengthened by informal discussions during breaks or after the end of meetings.

It was clearly visible that the project partners most regularly taking part in the seminars, were those, with whom we had already previously established contacts with. The seminars thus served to renew and maintain existing contacts more so than establish new ones. Nonetheless, both members from the tourism and archeology research groups got in meaningful conversations with a few new visitor economy stakeholders. A few informal Zoom-coffee meetings alongside the seminars helped explore common interests beyond the immediate project.

At a university level, the project aimed at initiating an interdisciplinary and cross-Faculty working group collaborating on issues of mutual interest at the interface of cultural heritage and archaeology on the one hand and business studies and tourism research on the other hand. The eight internal project meetings went some way in achieving this, partly benefitting from several of us knowing each other already and having collaborated previously in various ways.

Until the end, we still experienced in our discussions that interdisciplinary collaboration is not easy. We come from different research cultures in our respective academic disciplines, with different expectations and values. Here too, physical meetings would no doubt have allowed to build more than understanding for our differences than was possible digitally.

That said, however, some new relationships and a mutual sense of appreciation have been established. Informal conversations between meetings over different channels did help building new ties and have resulted in members of the tourism research group contributing to a new project proposal lead by Anders Högb erg in archaeology and conversations about joint interests in building LNU ‘knowledge environments’. Building an inter- or even transdisciplinary understanding is a multi-year process which we hope to continue.

Finally, the project was also affected by delays caused by the impacts of the pandemic that were dragging out much longer than initially expected. Specifically, the futures workshop had to be postponed several times and when it was eventually held not all interested were able to participate, partly because of different interpretations of the remaining anti-pandemic employer recommendations. We thus have to state some project outcomes were negatively affected by home office and a lack of physical meetings.
5.2 Conference presentation

On 11 September 2021, Cornelius Holtorf presented a paper entitled "Post-Pandemic Tourism Development for the Long-Term" for an audience of 20 participants in a session on *COVID-19: Assessing the Impact and Planning for a Different Future for Archaeological Heritage Tourism* held at the virtual 26th Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists organized from Kiel, Germany. The session’s agenda was summarized as follows:

At the time of writing (November 2020) it is virtually impossible to imagine the longer term effects of the global pandemic. For many archaeological sites and other cultural sites open to the public, a vital stream of income has been disrupted. For some this is due to the loss of international cultural tourism visitors, local visitor activity and temporary closure. The collapse in income has resulted in job losses, loss of critical staff infrastructure and, by association, loss of knowledge. The impact on many local community economies has also been felt, sometimes acutely. For some destination sites, however it has offered welcome respite to get some conservation works done and the possibility to review the impact of visitors, how visitors are managed and who their target visitors are. ‘Stay at home’ tourism provided some welcome relief during the summer months and provided an indication of the potential for future marketing focus and future development. The home market, a link to rural tourism development, eco-tourism, and green-route tourism initiatives are all areas of increased interest as uncertainty grows about the future of international mass tourism.

This session seeks presentations from archaeological site managers and regional museum managers on how they have coped during the pandemic and how they see the way forward. It will also seek participation from destinations that are partners in European cultural routes and World Heritage to learn of what new promotion strategies that may be envisaged. It also seeks contributions from academic researchers in cultural heritage management, cultural heritage tourism.

In the introduction to the session, Margarete Gowen Larsen reviewed the drastic implications of the COVID19-pandemic for the global tourism sector which saw a dramatic decline resulting in substantial losses.

In his contribution to the session, Fergus Maclaren (President of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Cultural Tourism) argued that new strategies, orientation, focus, mission, and ethos are needed to ensure that the tourism sector is able to adjust to the new normal of constant, destabilizing threats. He called for the development of planning and resilience approaches that will improve systems, supply chains and sustainability in global cultural tourism. Several other papers in the session presented concrete examples from various parts of Europe of how archaeological heritage management responded to the pandemic and its impact on tourism.

Holtorf’s paper was entitled “Post-Pandemic Tourism Development for the Long-Term” and summarized as follows:

This paper is about the outcomes and lessons learned from a now ending project at Linnaeus University titled “Post-Pandemic Tourism Development: Navigating Uncertainty in the Visitor Economy.” Running from one year until September 2021, the project was a collaboration between Tourism Studies and Heritage Studies at Linnaeus University. It also involved active participation of 10 regional organizations and companies as project partners. The project comprised a series of joint discussions, formal interviews, and a full day-futures workshop. The project’s goal has been to understand how stakeholders in the visitor economy make sense in the short- and long-run of the uncertainty induced by the corona pandemic. It also aimed at building futures literacy and providing support to stakeholders in their decision-making. Besides these aspects, the project group believes that for addressing the challenges of post-pandemic tourism development much can be gained from strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration between our two research areas and from building lasting partnerships between the University and regional stakeholders. In this paper, I will discuss where we are near the end of the project and what we have learned thus far.

The content of the paper corresponds in part to parts of this report.
The discussion in the session focused repeatedly on long-term structural changes that appeared necessary because of the pandemic, in particular resulting from changing audiences/visitors and different demands from tourist destinations. Generally, more flexibility will be needed throughout the sector, and it can probably not continue with ‘business as usual’. Among tourism consumers, there may be less interest in education and an increased emphasis on recreation and wellbeing. There may also be a growing demand among visitors for high-quality digital applications. The required capacity to create such applications may provide increasing work possibilities for digital natives.

On June 9, 2022, Stephan Reinhold presented a paper entitled “Managerial sensemaking in tourist destinations: Riding the COVID rollercoaster” for an audience of about 40 academics and professionals at the 5th Advances in Destination Management Forum at Linnaeus University in Kalmar. The session centered on contributions related to COVID and destination resilience. The abstract of the paper co-written with Per Pettersson Löfquist and Mariann Strzelecka is included below:

The COVID-19 pandemic presents an unprecedented context of dynamic uncertainty for managerial sensemaking. Reliant on tourists’ and local visitors’ mobility, the travel industry has been particularly hard-hit by the implications of constantly changing regulations, rules, and recommendations as to how and where visitors can travel. Yet, tourism enterprises have not just been facing the worst market conditions in decades; some found themselves experiencing unprecedented demand and pressure nearing overtourism. In this paper, we use these extreme conditions to study underexplored aspects of sensemaking. We present the preliminary results of an interview-based case study of a Swedish tourist destination.

The content of the paper corresponds in part to parts of this report. Yet, it focuses particularly on perceptions of the development trajectories of the pandemic crisis (i.e., the rollercoaster metaphor). The crisis required actors to update their visualization of their crisis mental model from a linear “usual crisis” model to a non-linear “pandemic crisis” model. This highlights that “the mental model of the gestalt of a crisis (i.e., what it is and how it develops) is a relevant reference point for tourism business owners and managers to author their narratives and determine plausible courses of action in response to the pandemic” (Reinhold, Strzelecka, & Pettersson, 2022, p. 8).

5.3 Artwork
In order to leave a lasting legacy, the project commissioned the glass artist Björn Friborg (https://www.bjornfriborg.com) to create an artwork reflecting on some of the central themes of the project while at the same time creating a (minor) local attraction for visitors in Kalmar. The work will reflect:

- Change over time;
- Long-term thinking;
- A global perspective.

His installation is provisionally entitled “Post Pandemic.” It has to date not been delivered. Our intention is that Linnaeus University will lend the work to Kalmar County Museum to display it in their building.

5.4 Website
The project created and maintains a webpage presenting the project at https://lnu.se/en/research/searchresearch/research-projects/project-post-pandemic-tourism-development/.
6 Discussion and conclusion

6.1 Short-term perspective
As part of this project, the research and partner group have come to understand that there are many legitimate reasons why immediate urgencies of the present corona crisis negate the room or mind-space to engage with the long-term post-pandemic future – albeit some interviewees reported using forced own-time to think about their long-term plans. The corona pandemic has presented a kind of uncertainty and problem complexity for actors of the visitor economy that trumped professional and academic expectations (see chapters 3.2.1 and 3.2.5).

The activities stakeholders engaged in to navigate this uncertainty were grounded and framed in three main rationales: economic interest, the wish to contribute and adhere to public health and safety guidelines, and the motivation to support partners, stakeholders, and respective communities. Chapters 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 have summarized how stakeholders in retro- and proactively adapted their behavior to mitigate the immediate effects of the crisis summarized in five categories: (1) digitalization related projects and activities; (2) renovation of existing infrastructure or building new facilities; (3) request funding or support checks from government and public authorities; (4) invest in and develop outdoor activities; (5) activities to improve the customer experience.

While we did not see signs that these activities have fundamentally shifted the trajectories along which stakeholders from the visitor economy have been thinking about the post-pandemic future (see chapter 3.2.6), they have accelerated development in areas of digitalization. Activities in other areas such as outdoor product development and the investments infrastructures and services might potentially attract additional visitors or help near-term future destination competitiveness. What seemed, however, a given for our research partners at this point is the need to account for future health-related crises in their future strategic planning. Building resilience for future crises of this nature in the visitor economy might require further engagement with ways to increase flexibility in Swedish furlough and support schemes as well as with career development opportunities to attract talent and retain staff through crises in limited season destinations (see chapter 3.2.7).

All of this is not to say that there is not recognition of long-term changes that will affect post-pandemic tourism with the visitor economy stakeholders we interacted with as part of the project at a fundamental level. There is recognition that long-term sustainable tourism requires engagement with fundamental drivers of change and a rethink of priorities to build resilient, sustainable, and inclusive tourism. Yet, the challenge is to make those concerns and opportunities part of the path to recovery and to transition (for global agendas see OPSTP, 2020 and UNWTO, 2021) when the immediate concerns are to make up for lost revenues and income.

6.2 Long-term perspective
The lack of developed futures thinking noted earlier concerning the study of Kalmar County Museum’s perceptions of the future visitor economy (Johansson 2021) corresponds with results of research conducted a decade ago, in 2012. At that time, Gustav Wollentz interviewed 23 staff from Kalmar County Museum and the County Council on future perspectives related to managing cultural heritage and the historic environment (Wollentz 2016, in parts based on Wollentz 2012). From the responses he got, Wollentz gained the

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8 We understand legitimacy in this context as the boundedly rational logic that provides the grounds for assessing the validity of arguments, choices, and actions within stakeholders’ relevant peer groups.
distinct impression that the staff had not previously had joint discussions on such topics. He also found that future perspectives, both among the staff and in relevant strategic documents, commonly consisted of projections of the present onto the future. In his conclusion, Wollentz (2016: 8) noted that there is a lack of joint discussions about the future and of strategies relating to future issues. Some of the changes in the respondents’ concerns, for example regarding the impact of digitalization, are probably not a result of increased futures literacy but rather of shifts concerning the issues which were on the agenda in contemporary politics and society in 2012 resp. 2021 (Johansson 2021: 20).

The recent Development of UNESCO Natural & Cultural Assets (DUNC) project funded 2017-2020 by the EU-Interreg South Baltic Programme included World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserve Areas, and related organizations in the South Baltic region, among which the municipalities responsible for the World Heritage sites on Southern Öland and in Karlskrona. The project’s webpage stated as the main intention that

In-line with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UNESCO Sustainable Tourism guidelines, DUNC is working on behalf of the World Heritage sites across the South Baltic region to connect people and develop tourism strategies that help build inclusive communities, provide ‘future-friendly’ economic growth and safeguard heritage assets for future generations (https://www.dunc-heritage.eu/about-us/).

Despite this explicit focus on long-term development and the needs of future generations, the project failed to incorporate any discernible emphasis on foresight or training for increased futures literacy.

None of these observations are really surprising given that foresight and futures literacy are generally little developed in the cultural heritage sector (Högberg et al 2017; see also Wollentz 2021, Holtorf 2022a).

Having said that, the post-pandemic period can be seen as a time for innovation and alternative futures, seizing opportunities, embracing emergence, and turning uncertainty into an asset rather than a risk (Larsen et al 2020: 80). Such innovation is valuable because it can lead to creative and challenging results in many different sectors including higher education and research (Butler et al 2021). For making such change possible, we are advised that we need three key skills (Larsen et al 2020: 82):

- **Narrative capacity**: the ability to tell stories that make sense of the future.
- **Collective intelligence**: the ability to map out potential avenues of change.
- **Reframing capacity**: the ability to imagine and make sense of different futures.

As mentioned earlier, this is the agenda of ‘futures literacy’ which is of significance for archaeology and cultural heritage too. Today’s practitioners in tourism and heritage need the ability to understand and navigate in a world of uncertainty and fast change. In post-pandemic tourism and heritage studies and management, there is thus a clear need to build global capacity for future thinking among professionals.

The post-pandemic period may be the time to reconsider in fundamental terms what it means to be a human being now and in the future. Post-corona, as pre-corona, there are grand human questions to be answered: of identity and belonging, well-being, interhuman relations, values, and priorities in life. All these issues affect how we perceive who we are and who ‘the others’ are, what we expect and appreciate in our lives, and how we treat each other.

After the pandemic, how do we want to live on this planet, together with each other as well as with the many non-human occupants? What might a stronger focus on care and wellbeing entail in practice? All these issues have a relation to tourism. This becomes clear to the extent that tourism is perceived as a part of culture rather than part of the economy.
7 References


