

***FRILUFTSLIV AS SLOW AND PEAK EXPERIENCES IN THE  
TRANSMODERN SOCIETY***

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## **Abstract:**

This paper is an attempt to look at *friluftsliv* through the glasses of the experience society and some of the experience theory adapted from the experience economy. Identifying the basic experiences, *slow*, *flow* and *peak experiences* as central to *friluftsliv* and identifying that today's society is constituted by several generations differing in their values and world views, this paper proposes a background to the contemporary development of *friluftsliv* into a sportified "fast and furious" post-modern form of *friluftsliv*. In the contemporary "nanosecond culture" the need of *genuine friluftsliv* in the sense of Nansen, as a philosophical approach to interconnect with our original home, nature, seems to be needed more than ever, and is here suggested in the form of *slow experiences* through *friluftsliv*. The contemporary shift towards a Transmodern society with radically different values compared to the modern and post-modern society, opens the possibility that *friluftsliv* could be a Transmodern way to reconnect with nature and provide basic experiences of interconnectedness with a more-than-human world. Therefore *friluftsliv* could be a means to foster a *Generation G* for the Transmodern society.

Keywords: Friluftsliv, experience production, Transmodernity, slow experiences, peak experiences, flow experiences, Generation G.

## Background

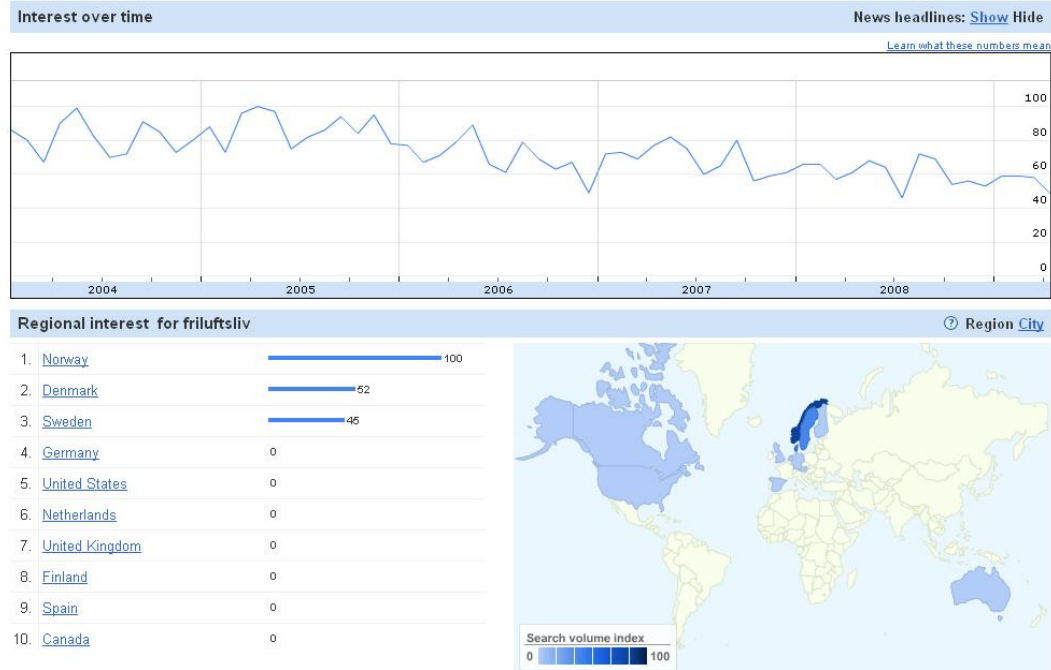
The Nordic countries' way of outdoor life, called "*friluftsliv*" has been described by many authors (Breivik, 1989; Dahle, 1994, 2001a, 2001b; Duenkel & Pratt, 2001; Gelter, 2000, 2005; Henderson, 1997; Henderson & Vikander, 2007; Priest, 1998; Repp, 1996; Sandell, 1991, 1993, 2001; Tellnes, 1993; and others), and the word has been introduced in the English language in the same way as the Scandinavian words *smorgasbord* and *ombudsman* (Vikander 2007, p. 9). The significance of the concept of *friluftsliv* is illustrated by a Google search (2009-04-20) on the word "friluftsliv", which gave 4,9 million hits. This can be compared to Google searches on the often associated words of "outdoor recreation" (11,3 million hits), "outdoor activity" (1,3 million hits), "outdoor education" (1 million hits), and "adventure education" (278, 000 hits). Looking at Google Insight for Search (Figure 1) indicates that Google searches on the Internet on the word *friluftsliv* is largest in Norway, Denmark and Sweden, but also occurs significantly in Germany, US, Canada, The Netherlands, UK, Finland, Spain, and Australia. The graph in Figure 1 reflects how many searches have been done for the word relative to the total number of searches done through Google, illustrated over time in the last five years (the country rating of zero is due to the normalising algorithm of Google, see Google Insight for Search for further explanations), and the map indicates regions with significant searches for the word.

## Web Search Volume: friluftsliv

Worldwide, 2004 - present

Categories: [Recreation \(10-25%\)](#), [Shopping \(10-25%\)](#), [Travel \(0-10%\)](#), [Society \(0-10%\)](#), [more...](#)

Totals  
friluftsliv 73



**Figure 1.** Google Insight for Search graph and regional interest map for the word Friluftsliv from 2004 to present (2009-04-20).

This quick Internet search confirms earlier conclusions about the interest in the concept of *friluftsliv* both in Scandinavia and in the international arena where it is growing in significance. Figure 1 also indicates that the word *friluftsliv* is associated to several other Google search categories (words searched together with the word *friluftsliv*), such as *recreation*, *shopping*, *travel*, *society*, and *sports*. Interestingly, the category *lifestyle* (listed under category “more” in figure 1) has a very recent origin (December 2006) and the category *health* an even more recent origin (February 2009) as an association to Goggle searches on *friluftsliv*, while the category *science* has not yet become a significant search-association to *friluftsliv*. The high association with the category of *shopping*, accounting for 10-25% of all Internet searches on the word indicates that shopping (for clothing, equipment etc.) is a

significant association to *friluftsliv*. These search categories can give us a rough indication of the reasons for people to search on Internet for the word *friluftsliv*, and thus indicate trends in the common associations to the *friluftsliv* term.

But what does *friluftsliv* stand for? The concept has been analysed from both the perspective of practitioners and educators (Henderson & Vikander, 2007) and from an academic point of interest regarding who is involved (Fredman et al., 2008a), why to be in nature (Fredman et al., 2008b), where to be in nature (Fredman et al., 2008c), what is *friluftsliv* (Fredman et al., 2008d), the economic values of *friluftsliv* (Fredman et al., 2008e) and commercial *friluftsliv* (Müller, 2008). The present paper is a non-empirical analysis of *friluftsliv* from an experiential context that examines *friluftsliv* in the “experience society”. The aim is to theoretically analyse the *friluftsliv* experience in the light of the concept of Experience Production and the Experience Society. This type of theoretical analysis can be useful to guide future research, both in respect to participators’ personal experiences of *friluftsliv* and the significance of *friluftsliv* experiences within society.

### **The conceptualisation of *friluftsliv***

The essence of *friluftsliv* has been widely debated, and I have previously (Gelter, 2000) argued for two conceptualisations of *friluftsliv*, first as an older, original “*genuine friluftsliv*”, and a more recently developed superficial way of *post-modern friluftsliv*. The original word *friluftsliv* was first used to describe a thought, an idea about life, and in 1921 Nansen talked about *friluftsliv* as a philosophy and as an alternative for youth to avoid “tourism,” - the superficial acquaintance with nature (Breivik, 1989; Dybwad, 1942; see also Repp, 2007). Nansen spoke about the ability to co-operate with nature’s powers and the joy of being in nature. He believed that free nature was our true home and that *friluftsliv* was our way back home. Human interconnectedness with nature had been addressed by many authors (Abram,

1996; Devall & Sessions, 1985; Evernden, 1993; Fox, 1990, Harding, 1997; Kahn, 2001; Naess, 1989; Selby, 1996; Sessions, 1995; Wilson, 1984; and others) and is the essence of environmental philosophy and environmental ethics as well as the goal of environmental education. From this perspective, *genuine friluftsliv* is a way of interconnecting with nature where strong emotional and spiritual experiences from the immersion in natural settings result in a personal connectedness to the more-than-human world (Gelter, 2000, 2007). Therefore, *friluftsliv* can be one way to develop the strong emotional experiences that are essential for building a foundation for a Deep Ecology philosophy, according to Arne Næss (Næss, 1989; Sessions, 1995). *Genuine friluftsliv* provides a biological, social, aesthetic, spiritual and philosophical experience of closeness to a place, the landscape, and the more-than-human world; an experience most urban people today lack. *Genuine friluftsliv* thus, in this conceptualisation, is something more than plain outdoor activities such as canoeing, climbing, skiing, hunting, fishing, gathering, painting, etc. (Dahle, 2001b; Gelter 2000).

*Friluftsliv* has, however, through commercialisation and sportification, developed from an original way of thinking to today's focus on the outdoor activities *per se*. This focus on activities rather than on the human relationship to nature has resulted in a modern superficial conception of *friluftsliv*, a conceptualization I have called "*post-modern friluftsliv*" (Gelter, 2007). Today there usually has to be a reason to visit nature, such as exploring natural resources (fishing, hunting, picking berries and mushrooms etc.), collecting places to gaze at and experience (nature tourists), aesthetic exploration (photographers, painters, aesthetics spectators), searching sacral experiences for meditation, reflection and contemplation, or as a refuge and escape from urban life (such as in motor homes and cottages). But an even more common reason to go outdoors in nature is to use nature as an arena or playground for recreation and sport activities where nature functions as a big *coulisse* for competition and

personal challenges (Gelter, 2000). Today, many of these activities are included in the modern concept of *friluftsliv*. The most strongly increasing field of outdoor activities and by many included in the concept of *friluftsliv* is the use of nature as a playground for motorised recreation such as snowmobiles, water-dos, motor boats, 4x4s, and cross-country motorcycles. For example, in the last ten years the number of registered snowmobiles in Sweden has increased to a total of 262,331 from only 20,000 such vehicles twenty years ago (Gradin, 2006). This can be compared to 1,774,232 registered snowmobiles in the USA and 566,719 in Canada in 2005 (Snofed, 2005). Thus the post-modern nature contact has evolved from a low-tech interaction with nature to a high-tech activity performed in nature.

This conceptual change in our relation to outdoor life reflects the rapid change in our Western society. Our culture has evolved through transformations from a hunting/gathering society through the agricultural and industrial society to the present post-modern and post industrial society. This cultural evolution involves an increase in complexity manifested in the many labels of our contemporary society such as the information-, communication-, knowledge-technology-, dream- , post-modern-, post-industrial- and experience-society (Bell, 1976; Cartelli, 2006; Florida, 2002; Hill, 1998; Jensen, 1999; Kumar, 2004; Ohmae, 1995; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Rose, 1991). The speed of transformation of our society is constantly increasing. Today's "experience economy" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) where the major economic offerings are not commodities (as in the agrarian economy), goods (as the in industrial economy) or services (as in the service economy) but experiences; personally staged memorable sensations such as in edutainment, eatertainment, and shoppertainment. However, Pine and Gilmore (1999) and others are suggesting that our society is already evolving into the "transformational economy" where transformation of individuals for a new image according to a their dreams is the new economic offering. The emergence of the post-

modern society with its never ending search for consuming experiences and quick fixes will have fundamental, not yet fully understood, implications for our contemporary relation to nature. An interesting question is what function *friluftsliv* will have in this new society.

As a reaction to human alienation from nature in the post-modern culture, environmental education has become a major aid in restoring human interconnectedness with and engagement for nature (Dunkel & Pratt, 2001; Gelter, 2002; Selby 1996), and a variety of educational programs and curricula have emerged to educate the post-modern human to be aware of, understand, and engage in environmental issues. *Genuine friluftsliv* may have the same ultimate goal as environmental education, but does not use any curriculum or educational institution as an educational aid, except contact with nature itself. In contrast, many educational programs in *friluftsliv* have developed curricula for mastering methods and techniques associated with *post-modern friluftsliv*, but more rarely for the values and philosophy of *Genuine friluftsliv*. The overall goal for both environmental education and *friluftsliv* would be a healthy soul in a healthy body in a healthy society in a healthy world, where respect and responsibility would be the new foundation of human interactions (Selby 1996). I have argued (Gelter, 2000) that *friluftsliv* is not outdoor education, as outdoor education has specific learning goals described as a place (natural environment), a subject (ecological processes) and a reason (resource stewardship) (Priest, 1990). *Friluftsliv* it is not about teaching and lecturing or being on excursions (Gelter, 2000), but involves a form of education, learning the ways of yourself and your place in the more-than-human world, and learning the ways of every creature and phenomenon you meet on your journey through life. Traditional environmental education (Weston 1996) and natural sciences enrich and deepen the experiences of *friluftsliv*, though in *friluftsliv* the goal is not to become an expert naturalist. Rather *friluftsliv* is a link between natural history and philosophy, linking the



knowledge of yourself and your surroundings into an understanding of the world (Gelter 2000). Traditional environmental education and natural sciences enrich and deepen the experiences of *friluftsliv*, but the goal is not to become an expert naturalist or a skilled adventurer. Although *friluftsliv* is on the curriculum in Scandinavian as well as many other educational systems, its goal in the educational context has usually become that of outdoor education and not the deeper philosophical visions of *genuine friluftsliv* as illustrated by the focus in most *friluftsliv* education programs on explicit mastering of different outdoor activities, leaving the philosophical aspects and nature interconnectedness as implicit by-products of these activities (Gelter, 2000; Henderson & Vikander, 2007).

### **The post-industrial Transmodern Society**

Society and Culture is in a constant flux of change. This cultural change includes also the practice and goals of *friluftsliv*. This change, leading to cultural transformation or cultural evolution, is the driving force of human development and civilization. Our contemporary society is changing at an accelerated speed aided by a rate of technological innovation never previously experienced in human history. Our present and future cultural transformations have therefore attracted the attention of many scientific fields and have been given many different labels, qualities, and consequences. For example, the work force is transforming towards a conceptual age (Pink 2006) where collar-less worker such as creators and empathisers replace white-collar knowledge workers of the information age, blue-collar factory workers from the industrial age, and brown-collar farmers from the agricultural age (Florida, 2002; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Pink, 2006; Toffler 1970; and others). This transformation influences the lives, habits, lifestyles, expectations, leisure activities, values, and consumption behaviours and habits of people as well as business enterprises and other aspects of society. This shift beyond the industrial society has been predicted and described in

detail by many authors. Among the early was Alvin Toffler (1970) in his book “*Future Shock*” where in a socio-economic analysis of the future, he predicted the “*psychologization*” (p. 229) of the economy and the emerging of “*experience-designers*” (p. 229) who through an “*experiential production*” (p. 234) would create new economic offerings in the coming “*experience industries*” (p. 221). Toffler concluded that, *(f)or the satisfaction of man’s elemental material needs opens the way for new, more sophisticated gratifications. We are moving from a “gut” economy to a “psyche” economy...* (p. 236). Toffler warned that this cultural shift will have a shocking effect on people if not met appropriately. This vision of an experience society was further analysed in Toffler’s (1980) follow-up book “*The Third Wave*”, and was analysed in detail in a cultural sociological context by Schulze (1992). It has also been described in a socio-political context (Bell, 1973; Drucker 1993), in a cultural entertainment context (Postman, 1985; Caves, 2000; Howkins, 2001; Wolf, 2003) and in a sociological context (Ray & Anderson, 2000; Florida, 2002, 2005; Kumar, 2004), among many other perspectives and analyses.

This faster transformational pace of society is also made obvious by the many labels of “generations” in our contemporary society (Strauss & Howe, 1997; Bennis & Thomas, 2002). Each such “generation” consists of a cohort covering a period of 15-20 years, which shares a general experience of the world unique for the time, resulting in the sharing of some common characteristics in value, lifestyle and consumption behaviour (Strauss & Howe, 1997).

Therefore in today’s complex world, several such generation cohorts coexist together. These include the post-war *Baby Boomers* (Boom Generation born 1942-1953) which generated the counterculture of the 1960s, the *Generation Jones* (born 1954 -1965), and *Generation X* (born 1965 to 1980), with the transitional *MTV Generation* (1975 to 1986) embracing the new digital technology, to the *Generation Y* (1980 to mid 1990s) born around the Dotcom Boom

and being dependent on digital technology such as mobiles and computers (also called the *Net Generation* by Tapscott, 2008, p 3). This first digital generation is followed by the presently born *Generation Z* (modern children born 1997 to present), the first generation completely born in the digital world (Huntley, 2006; Junco & Mastrodicasca, 2007; Marin & Tulgan, 2001; Strauss & Howe, 1992; Tulgan, 2009).

This “cultural diversity” within a single human generation has resulted in a “generation gap” where older and younger people do not understand each other because of their different experiences, opinions, habits and behaviours. This generation gap is also apparent in the practice of *friluftsliv*, where elderly generations seem more to lean towards the low-key *genuine friluftsliv* while younger generations appear to be more interested in adrenalin-seeking *post-modern friluftsliv* – the sportificated outdoor actions; if interested at all in outdoor life. Although problematic, controversial and in most case poorly defined, such generation labels indicate a more complex world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century than earlier times, and this has bearings for understanding contemporary *friluftsliv*. Baby boomers believe in the value of self-fulfillment and personal gratification; Generation X'rs consists of genuine post-moderns being individualistic, self-reliant, highly demanding and technologically savvy, visually-oriented, seeking community, authenticity, and ways to make a difference in the world (Craig & Bennett, 1997; Sacks, 1996; Strauss & Howe, 1992), while Generation Y'rs are fast and efficient, better educated, achievement- and team-oriented, attention-craving, and place high value on helping others, considering getting along with a widely diverse group of people very important. Wim Veen (2006) called these digital generations *Homo Zappiens*, characterized by being time limited, under high stress by constantly being digitally connected, collaborating, multitasking, creating, and under pressure to experience and seek self actualization. Such values and behaviours certainly have bearings on the view of nature and

the interconnectedness with the more-than-human world. This time-limited shopaholic generation could explain the high association in the Google search on *friluftsliv* with the search category of shopping (Figure 1), where reading about (on the Internet) and owning the right equipment and the right “stuff” may be more important than actually doing outdoor activities. When conducting studies about outdoor habits and activities, it would be interesting to relate the results to such generation contexts. Living in the digitalized era, these stressed *homo zappiens* would probably gain the most by shifting from the high speed *post-modern friluftsliv* to the low-key *genuine friluftsliv* in order to get breaks and rehabilitation from their stressful lifestyle.

This new lifestyle of globalization, easily available knowledge, and the growth of global interconnectedness through easy travel and Internet interconnectedness have changed peoples experience of the world. Based on a study of 100 000 persons and hundreds of focus groups of Americans, Ray and Anderson (2000) found a transformation of life values among 25% of the U.S. adults whom they call “*Cultural Creatives*”. Such a value shift towards creativity, authenticity, globalism, self-actualization, and culture has also been confirmed by others (Abramson & Inglehart, 1995; Beck & Cowan, 1996; Castells, 1997; Florida, 2002, 2005; Hall, 1995; Inglehart, 1990, 1997; Jensen, 1999; Kempton et al., 1997; Pine & Gilmore, 2007; Pink, 2006). According to these authors and others, this post-industrial society is emphasising personal experiences and transformations, but also values towards sustainability. This contemporary value shift has been described as the emergence of Transmodernity, a concept introduced by Rodriguez Magda ( 2001, 2004, 2007) and Luyckx Ghisi (1999, 2006, 2008). Transmodernity is conceptualised as a synthesis of modern and post-modern thinking from the critics of the prevailing modernity in contemporary Western society (se also Dussel, 1993; Cole, 2004, 2005). In Transmodernity the new emerging paradigm is the mix on an equal

basis of rational and intuitive thinking (see also Pink, 2006); a re-emerging acceptance and interest in spirituality; a global consciousness based on global networks of information technology; a celebration of “glocal” diversity and interconnectedness with greater tolerance for ethnic, racial, and sexual differences; a shift in consumption, work and leisure patterns and values; and a socio-cultural shift in value and global ecological awareness and concern towards environmental sustainability, and a desire to live more sustainably. According to Luyckx Ghisi (2006), the essence of Transmodernity means being for something, *i.e.*, taking active action towards sustainability and interconnectedness.

One of the key-values of Transmodernity is that its focus on sustainability and interconnectedness with nature and other cultures has interesting bearings on *friluftsliv*. The discourse on sustainability in society is extensive and will not be addressed here. But the recent glocal interest in sustainable issues will have intriguing bearings on the perception of *friluftsliv*, especially sustainable aspects of the motorized *post-modern friluftsliv*. The emergence of a Transmodern society could thus result in a revival of the *genuine friluftsliv* concept, especially as a means to learn about sustainability, existential reflection and anti-stress restoration.

### **Post-modern life and Slow Experiences**

Post-modern urban people spend most of their time indoors and visit nature more rarely than previous generations. In Sweden, where 70% of the land is covered by forests, more than 80% of the population lives in urban environments and have lost their every-day connection with nature. Still, 85% of adults do forest walking on an annual basis (Axelsson-Lindgren et al. 2002); thus the concept of *friluftsliv* seems still deeply rooted in the Swedish population, which has been confirmed by a recent survey (Fredman et al., 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d).

In Norway the practice of *friluftsliv* is even more a part of everyday life and spirit, but also here the young urban population is increasingly alienated from nature through the offerings of the urban consumption economy (Andrén 2001).

As the contemporary modern society is transforming into a post industrial society an ever-increasing information flow and “busy-ness” results in a faster pace of existence (Hill, 1998; Toffler 1970). This information technology society with its flood of information through growing numbers of different information highways has profoundly reshaped our daily lives into a global culture of “fast living”. This information society has during the last 30 years produced more information than the 5000 preceding years. Every day there are thousands of new books produced worldwide. In addition, thousands of daily newspapers, journals and magazines, and the exponentially increasing information production on the Internet through news sites, blogs, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and other social medias, have resulted in an information-fatigue-syndrome. The negative physiological consequences of a constant high stress level caused by the information-noise of the information society, have resulted in a rising number of stressed people with stress symptoms – named as SOSHO - Stressed Out, Survival-Oriented Humans (Hannaford, 1995).

In addition, speed has become the icon and essence of our time, and determines our behaviours and consumption. All our technological development is oriented to increase speed and “save time”, resulting in an ever quickening pace of life. We want to travel faster, to save time through speedier cars and aircrafts, higher speed railway lines, and faster highways. We wish to communicate faster through more rapid networks and quick communication aids. By demanding faster computers and technology we see ourselves saving time in order to fill our life with even more activities and experiences. In this “*nanosecond culture*”, speed-signalling

efficiency and professionalism has become the icon of the urban 20<sup>th</sup> century. Speed has been promoted as “best practice” for competitiveness in business (Jennings & Haughton 2002), and our attention has become a new resource for business in the “attention society” (Davenport & Beck 2001). This “nanosecond culture” is probably one reason for the increasing popularity of motorized *friluftsliv* as people feel the need to race through nature to find experiences. The faster travel over large distances in the landscape, the more experiences we obtain according to this view.

Our post-modern lives ruled by speed has resulted in a new trend, the longing for an alternative to this hectic life, a search for “slowness” to get a break, to breathe and regain energy for the speedy every-day life. Several counter-trends to this “fast culture” have emerged, such as yoga and other Eastern meditation techniques as well as many New Age alternatives to modern life. A fast growing counter-trend is the “*Slow Movement*” (Honoré, 2004; Parkins & Craig 2006) which includes designing “*slow environments*”, “*slow products*”, “*slow information*”, “*slow experiences*” and even “*slow design*” as refuges from pulse and intensity (Huxley, 1954; Honoré, 2004; SlowDesign; Slowlab; Shetty, 2005; Wood, 2003). A recent trend in tourism is selling *Slow Experiences* – the perception and experience of slowing down time and tempo in the form of “impulse-free” zones for peace and quiet such as retreats, health resorts and spas (O’Dell, 2005; Gelter 2006). These *Slow* concepts have their origin from the “*Slow Food*” movement (SlowFood; Wood, 2003) which developed into “*Slow Cities*” and the “*Cittaslow Movement*” (CittaSlow), a global network of cities promising improvement of quality of life of their citizens as an alternative to ever faster urban conditions. People are complementing the urban quick-meal with a *slow food* experience in a *slow city* environment where the time waiting for and consuming the food is an essential experience, a reaching for a flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1991) where time ceases to

be. A Google search on the Internet shows that the *slow movement* has become a significant cultural concept (table 1).

**Table 1:** Internet search (2009-04-16) on Slow Movement components

<b>Search word</b>	<b>Google.com</b>
slow environments	223
slow experiences	737
slow activities	3 190
slow places	1 680
slow design	35 600
slow information	6 310
slow cities	13 000
slow food	2 110 000

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This emerging Slow movement indicates an increasing need for urban stressed-out people searching for *slow experiences* designed to temporarily “stop the speed” in every-day life. Interestingly, the ancient Greeks talked about a dual time concept, with *Kronos* – the Greek word for linear time that now rules our lives, the chronological ticking of time that creates order in chaos and facilitates our interpretation of the past and our planning for the future. In contrast, *Kairos* – the Greek word for vertical time or experienced time, “the right moment” that makes time stand still, was similar to the optimal moments in the Csikszentmihalyi’s *flow experiences*. It is the “now and here” that cannot be defined; the harmony and balance of body and mind; time that cannot be planned for but rather time you must be open and sensitive for; to be touched by the moment.



I have previously (Gelter 2006) proposed that *genuine friluftsliv* can generate such *slow experiences* of *Kairos* with the capacity of restoration of exhausted urban people, as the concept of *slow experiences* characterises many qualities of *genuine friluftsliv* (Gelter 2000). It is most likely that Nansen also had the contrast of *Kairos* and *Kronos* in mind when he introduced *friluftsliv* as an alternative to the tourist's superficial acquaintance with nature. Such tourist gaze of hastily observing and consuming places (Urry 2002), contrasts with the deeper interconnectedness with the landscape, and the immersion into the experience; the *flow* and the *Kairos* of *genuine friluftsliv* (Gelter 2000).

### **Peak and Flow Experiences**

In contrast to *slow experience*, the word *peak experience* has a longer history founded by Maslow in the 1960's to describe a rare state of the mind. As the concept of *friluftsliv* has changed in the postmodern society, so has also the conceptualization of *peak experience* been transformed from its original meaning towards a more adrenalin action-oriented sportified meaning, such as expressed in many articles in outdoor magazines and even in the sport-wear brand "Peak Performance". Maslow's (1962, 1968, 1971, 1983) original meaning of *peak experience* was an unique human state of the mind where in some brief moments, from seconds to minutes, one feels the highest levels of happiness, harmony, and possibility - temporary moments of self-actualization. These experiences range in degree from intensifications of everyday pleasure, to apparently "supernatural" episodes of enhanced consciousness which feel qualitatively distinct from, and superior to, normal every-day experience. The *peak experience* makes the person feel good, relaxes the mind, recharges the body, shifts modes, releases emotions, sparks creativity, creates ego-transcending and even changed attitudes; giving a sense of purpose to the individual. These experiences, Maslow argued, result in a *peak state* of mind leading to *peak performance*; thus he felt that *peak*

*experiences* could be therapeutic, as they tend to increase free will, self-determination, creativity, and empathy.

The *peak experiences* may be primarily emotional, as in an unusually touching experience of connectedness to another person or to the world; they may be brought on by intellectual understanding and deep insight; or they may be what you might call a spiritual experience, of being close to something holy or sacred. More likely, they contain a combination of these.

According to Maslow, *peak experiences* have some (but usually not all) of the following characteristics:

- very strong or deep emotions
- a deep sense of peacefulness or tranquillity
- feeling in tune, in harmony, or at one with the universe
- altered perceptions of time and/or space
- a feeling of deeper knowing or profound understanding, a "noetic" quality
- a greater awareness of beauty
- a feeling of being close to a powerful force that seemed to lift you outside of yourself
- a sense that it was a very special experience that would be difficult or impossible to describe adequately in words.

Wuthnow (1978) used three operational definitions of *peak experiences*:

- The feeling that you were in close contact with something holy or sacred
- Experiencing the beauty of nature in a deeply moving way
- Feeling that you were in harmony with the universe

Some people regard *peak experiences* as pointing the way to what ought to be the norm in a truly healthy, ideal human life, thus regarding normal everyday life as a disease state during

which we function at a lower level. Everyday life is seen as semi-human, and only during *peak experiences* are we fully awake, alert, aware, conscious, alive; living an enlightened life. This interpretation of Maslow's *peak experience* as a window into a transcendental reality which represents a higher state of consciousness has become popular in the New Age movement. Maslow, however, was looking for a way to do good psychological research on mystical and other extremely positive experiences as part of his studies of psychological health.

Maslow (1971) also introduced the concept of *plateau experience*, characterized by serenity, peace, serene and calm, a deep sense of knowing, rather than the charge or "high" of *peak experience*. It is less intense but with longer duration. Meditative states might be examples of *plateau experiences*. The concepts of *peak* and *plateau experience* are very appealing to describe the experiences associated with the *genuine friluftsliv* experience – the deep emotional interconnectedness with the environment and the moment (Gelter, 2000). This spiritual feeling of connectedness to the landscape is probably the deep experience that Arne Næss described in his philosophy of *Deep Ecology* (Sessions, 1995). Næss, himself a mountaineer and outdoor person, proposes that a deep experience of nature creates deep feelings that lead to deep questions and results in a deep commitment for nature (Harding 1997). These similarities between Næss' deep experience, Maslow's peak experience and my experiences of the *genuine friluftsliv* experience (Gelter 2000, 2007) has often struck me as being of similar qualities and nature. There is probably a common foundation for the three, with a basis in human nature, which would be important to investigate.

The *Peak* and *Plateau Experiences*, as well as the *slow experiences* result in a state of flow, where time and place evaporate, resulting in the immersion of the person in the experience. The concept of *flow experiences* was introduced by Csikszentimihalyi (1991) from studies of

happiness, enjoyment, and play. *Flow* results in a holistic sensation when we act with total involvement. *Flow* arises from a balance of ability and responsibility, control and uncertainty, skill and challenge. Consciousness is greater in flow than in panic (challenge > skill) or boredom (skill > challenge). In both panic and boredom, consciousness reverts to automatic or automatized actions. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1991) *flow* includes:

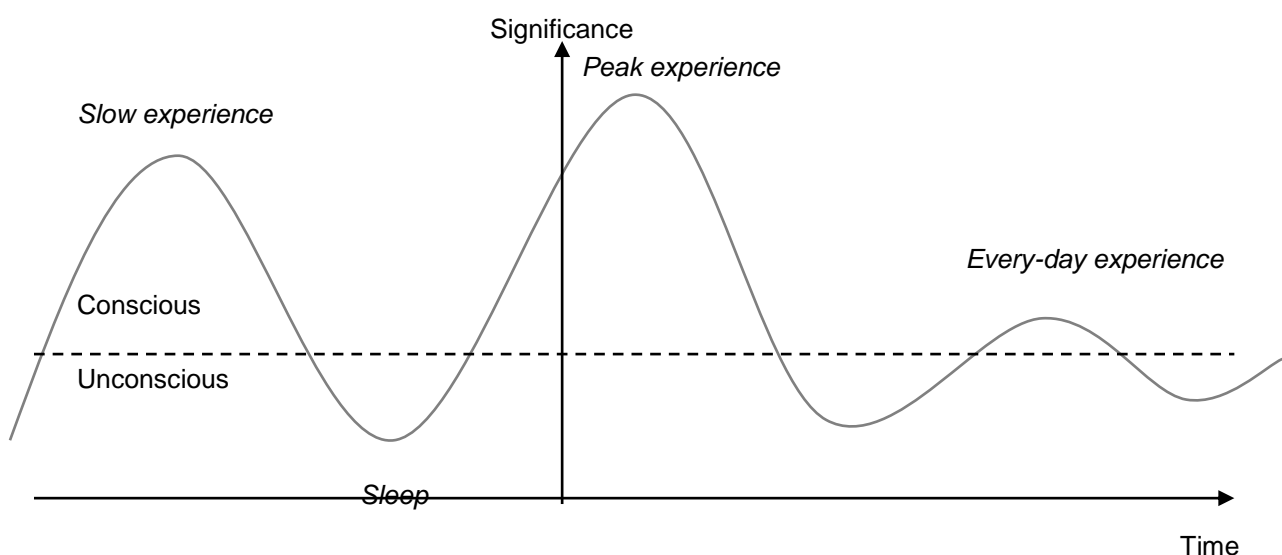
- Personal transcendence: Sense of self as separate is gone; there is little distinction between self and environment or self and activity. Action and awareness merge; there is no self-awareness. Present-centeredness and mindfulness take the stage.
- Intrinsic rewards: Activities are done for their own reward and are not goal-oriented.
- Involvement: There is full involvement in the present moment and activity. Awareness is fully involved in the moment.

These qualities of *flow* are recognised by most people involved in any form of *friluftsliv*, although the rewarding aspects of the sportified forms of *friluftsliv* may in addition to intrinsic rewards also include external rewards and gratifications, such as from audience, media, or fame as such. Kaplan & Kaplan (1989) pointed out that *flow* usually involves high-stakes outcomes and they contrast *flow* with *compatibility*, or the sense of close fit between one's needs and one's experience, a lack of effort, a sense of resonance or coherence, reflectivity, a profound sense of relatedness, a sense of reality, and *a sense of union with something that is lasting, that is of enormous importance, and that they perceive as larger than they are* (p. 194-195). They relate this to a sense of *coming home and resting comfortably* (p. 200) which they compare to enlightenment. Thus *flow* and *compatibility* seem to be somewhat different kinds of transpersonal experiences.

The association of *peak experiences* with strong experiences has resulted in the popular association of *peak experiences* with the strong experiences encountered in outdoor activities (Davis et al. 1991), where *peak experiences* may be triggered by physical accomplishments such as an athletic achievement, climbing a mountain, or deep relaxation. The outdoors has in this sense been used for self-actualisation by offering avenues for self-renewal, escape from stress, teambuilding, and practice in problem-solving and group decision-making. Through white water rafting, rock climbing, wilderness backpacking, backcountry skiing, and other outdoor activities, both individuals and groups often discover ways to realign values, restructure priorities, and develop a community of sharing that can profoundly affect personal and professional lives. In nature, we are constantly confronted with circumstances and events over which we have little control, where we are forced to call upon resources and act with a decisiveness from which we are normally divorced. Such experiences seem to help individuals and groups to recreate the feeling of belonging to the whole, the mystic oneness with actions and environment which can profoundly affect the ways we view ourselves and our potentials to be in harmony with our surroundings, such as in the wholeness we experience on a mountain top or watching a sunset over the ocean. The associated feelings of such interactions with the wholeness can create *peak experiences* which strongly affect us. I, therefore, guess these are the feelings Næss meant in his deep experiences. However, we still lack strong empirical evidence for how values and attitude are affected by nature-based *peak experiences* and other experiences associated with *friluftsliv*.

The word experience is usually associated with extraordinary events, events that have high significance and will be remembered. Such experiences have been labelled “*extraordinary experiences*” by Arnould and Price (1993) who, when describing the white water rafting experience, depicted the *extraordinary experience* as constituting an active dynamic- and

context-dependent process, with strong social dimensions creating meaning and feelings of enjoyment, resulting in absorption and personal control, and having some uncertainty and novelty, and overall contributing to life satisfaction. The more generic concept of *extraordinary experience* has now become a popular expression for staged experience offerings within the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Mossberg, 2003), and is most often used in a highly undefined sense. In a similar way “*meaningful experiences*” (Snell, 2005) has become a buzz term in the experience industry. So far, no comprehensive nomenclature or taxonomy for different experiences has been developed.



**Figure 2.** A model of continuous experiencing with the experience significance plotted against time (after Gelter 2006, p. 34)

As experiences usually are associated to specific events, I have previously (Gelter,2006), based on a phenomenological approach to understanding experiences, suggested a dynamic temporal model of experiences where internal and external sensations are creating a continuous temporal stream of experiencing, or “film of our life” with varying degrees of meaning and significance (figure 2). In this view we are constantly experiencing, sometimes unconsciously as in dreams, sometimes consciously with varying intensity (significance),

where peak experiences are highly significant for us and will be remembered. In contrast, low-intensity every-day life experiences usually have low significance and will quickly be forgotten. In this context we can view *peak*, *slow*, and *flow experiences* with high significance (meaning) and memory-anchoring as *extra-ordinary experiences*. In the *friluftsliv* context we can understand our stream of experiences with differing significance during our outdoor activities, where some moment are peaking into emotional *peak experiences*, other are just *slow experiences* creating wellness, while yet others need our full attention creating *flow*.

### **Friluftsliv as experience realms**

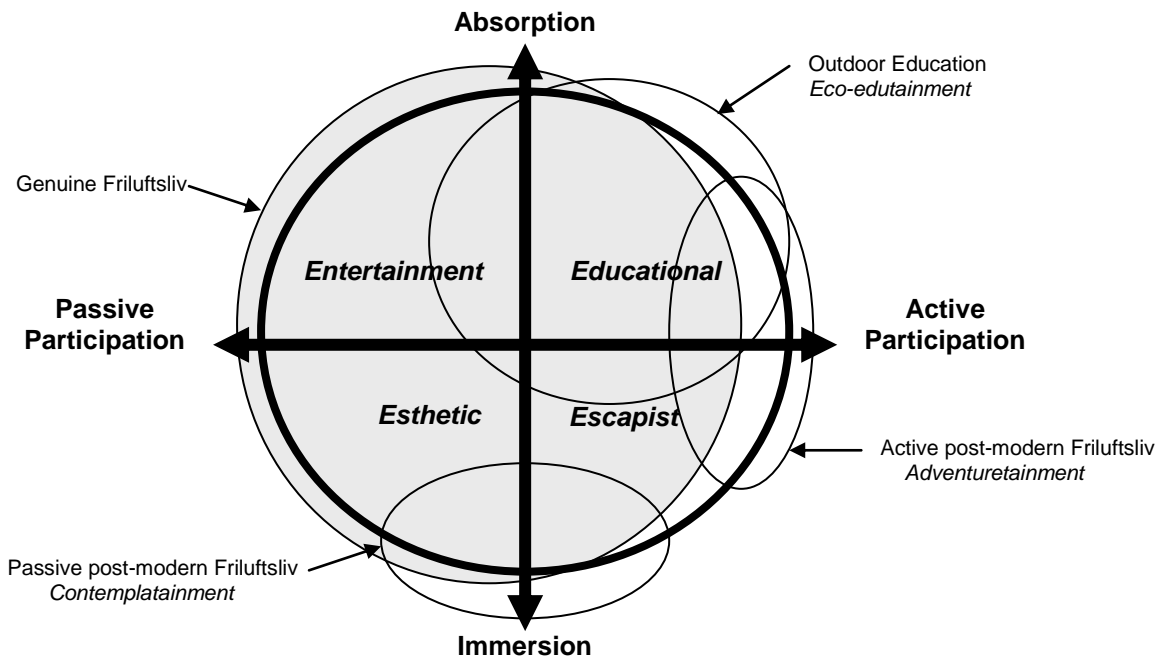
*Friluftsliv* is about outdoor experience, as in the Latin meaning of *experientia*, meaning “knowledge gained by repeated trials”, and the related *experiri*, “to try, test”. This meaning is expressed in the German word *erfahrung*, which correspond to the English noun *experience* meaning the skills, practices, understandings, familiarity, know-how and accumulated life knowledge and wisdom that make up a human being and that can be communicated (Gelter, 2006; Kolb, 1984). This is our *epistemological experience* according to Lash (2006) - our accumulated skills, familiarity with places, artefacts, and methods, and constitutes our entire empirical knowledge. *Friluftsliv* is about building such *erfahrung*, skills, knowledge and wisdom of interacting with nature. But *friluftsliv* is also about *erlebnis*, the German word for the English noun *experiences* as incident, encounter, event, happening, etc., as well as the English verb *experience* as a feeling, emotion, what we come in contact with, what we face, live through, suffer, undergo, be subject to, or come across. This is according to Lash (2006) our *ontological experiences* - a cognitive happening restricted in space and time resulting in a physical or physiological stimulation of the brain – our phenomenological interaction with the world. Thus *friluftsliv* is both about *erlebnis* in the outdoor environment, and from that building *erfahrung*, our outdoor experiences. These two conceptualisations of experiences are

closely interlinked and mutually interdependent and correspondent to the two ways we experience the world by our two brain hemispheres; as a right brained phenomenological comprehension (*erlebnis*) and a left hemisphere analytical apprehension (*erfahrung*) (Damasio, 1994; Edwards, 1979; Gelter,2006; Kolb, 1984; Pink, 2007).

Another way to understand the *friluftsliv* experience is to use the 4E experience realm model of Pine and Gilmore (1999). This model was developed to stage experiences within the experience economy, but also offers an interesting way to analyse and understand experiences, such as in *friluftsliv*. According to Pine and Gilmore, staging experiences is about engaging people, thus their primary dimension, engagement in the experience, is in our context the personal engagement in *friluftsliv* (figure 3). At one end of the engagement spectrum lies passive participation where you do not directly affect or influence the events in the experience; you are only an observer. At the other end of the spectrum lies your active participation where you personally affect the events of the experience and actively create your own experience. At this end we find most forms of the *post-modern friluftsliv*, such as snowmobiling, downhill skiing, rafting, and climbing. In the passive end we find activities often associated with *genuine friluftsliv*, such as watching the dance of the flames in the fire, sitting admiring a landscape, observing a wildlife interaction or passively drifting with the river by a raft or canoe. Such passive nature experiences may evoke emotions and philosophical thoughts that can strongly interconnect you with place in the landscape and nature (Gelter, 2000). However, *genuine friluftsliv* can also involve non-sportified activities, such as climbing and canoeing, where the goal is not the activity *per se*, but rather the reward of the experience of being in the landscape and interacting with the forces and rhythms of nature. Thus *flow experiences* evaporating time and space, and *peak experiences* engaging you deeply emotionally and spiritually in the experience, can occur at both ends of this



dimension. In contrast, my definition of *post-modern friluftsliv*, being focused on the activity *per se* and on external rewards, always involves an active participation in the experience.



**Figure 3.** *Friluftsliv* analysed through the 4E Experience realms model (modified after Pine & Gilmore 1999, p. 30). The grey area represents the realm of Genuine Friluftsliv.

The second dimension (vertical in figure 3) of the experience realms describes the environmental dimension of the experience that unites you with the events of the experience. At one end of this spectrum lies your *absorption* of the experience, your attention to bring the experience into your mind. Absorbing the events, the *erlebnis*, is like a sponge absorbing water. The experience goes into you. In most learning situations, such as outdoor and environmental education, the content of the curriculum, such as climbing skills or skiing technique or “ecological understanding”, has to be actively absorbed in the learning process. On the other end of this dimension lies *immersion*, the ability to become physically part of the experience; to immerse into the experience. Here you “go into” the experience such as when you are in a great outdoor environment such as Grand Canyon or when you powder-ski down

a big mountain and immerse into the alpine snow-landscape. When combining these two dimensions we can define the four “realms” of experiences; *entertainment*, *educational*, *escapist* and *esthetic* (figure 3).

The realm of *entertainment* involves the passive absorbing of the experience through our senses, generally visually and auditory. It may be the joy of seeing your friends mastering the white water with their canoes or a nature drama such as pups playing in front of a fox den, or more subtle experiences such as following the whirling path of a leaf in a creek, or lying on your back in a meadow forming figures of the cloud formations in the sky. These can be regarded as part of *genuine friluftsliv*, as an absorption of the surrounding nature drama.

The *education* experience realm involves your active participation and absorption of the events unfolding before you in the experience. This includes active learning as in formal education systems or more informal learning systems as when educational experiences have merged with entertainment business producing what is called *Edutainment* (Kotler, 1978; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Both outdoor and environmental education involve experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) through active absorption of experiences. When combining ecological learning with the true joy of learning in the outdoors together with friends, I call this *Eco-edutainment* (figure 3). Here the fun and effectiveness of learning through experiential learning in the outdoor setting strongly contrasts to traditional learning indoors. As a reaction to post-modern human alienation from nature, environmental education has become a major aid in restoring human interconnectedness with and engagement for nature. A variety of educational programs and curricula have emerged to educate the post-modern human (*Homo sapiens*) to be aware of, understand, and engage in environmental issues. *Genuine friluftsliv* may have the same ultimate goal as such *eco-edutainment* programs, but does not use any curriculum and is not about teaching and lecturing or being on excursions. Its only educational aid is being in nature

itself. Thus the *erfahrung* from *friluftsliv* does not follow any educational program but rather is the outcome of the *friluftsliv erlebnis*.

The third realm is *escapist* experiences that involve your complete immersion and active involvement in the experience, often resulting in the *flow experience* of Csikszentmihalyi (1991). In contrast to passive entertainment experiences watching others act, in escapist experiences you become the actor affecting the actual performance in the experience often in a quest to master an outdoor activity. Escapist experiences in the outdoors are usually based on adventures and playful and fun interactions with the environment and its elements. Staged adventure experiences where the real risk is minimized and apparent risk optimized to create a fun, active and challenging experience could be called *Adventuretainment* (or *soft adventures*) to distinguish them from serious and often very high risk adventurous expedition experiences. When rafting, mountain climbing or hiking in the wilderness you become deeply immersed in the environment and through this escapism completely forget everyday life at home. This escape from modern life has as a consequence of post-modern individualisation and commercialisation trends, become a popular form of *friluftsliv*, the new “*active post-modern friluftsliv*”. Although *adventuretainment* is most often performed in groups, it is still strongly focused on individualism through personal performance and development.

Escapism through outdoor activities, such as mountaineering, has been around since industrialization, but is today driven by strong sportification and commercialisation with a focus on equipment technology, extremism and high-risk activities, as well as strong promotion from agencies staging such experiences. This trend has in addition been boosted by the emergence of “outdoor action-heroes”, our post-modern “adventurers” and high-risk takers who strongly strive for media attention to satisfy their heroic self-image and their

sponsors. As media is primarily interested in profit and extreme news and less in social development and environmental responsibility, it has developed what Dahle (2001b) calls a “symbiosis” between such “nature acrobats” and “narcissistic journalists” promoting an extreme and glorified picture of outdoor activities as “*fast and furious experiences*”. Such *peak experiences* strongly contrast traditional *friluftsliv* and the original conceptualisation of *peak experiences* as strong, emotional, and spiritual experiences. Despite this glorification of the extreme, the increased interest in outdoor activities is positive in the sense that this non-motorised form of *Adventuretainment* brings out people to healthy physical activities in an otherwise increasingly immobile culture of passive media and virtual world consumption. Whether or not *adventuretainment* also contributes to environmental concern and true interconnectedness with nature is an area for further studies.

The fourth experience realm of Pine and Gilmore is the *esthetic* experience, where you immerse yourself in an event or environment but you have little or no effect on it, leaving the environment of the experience untouched. Such experiences include visiting nature scenery where the main goal is not to learn as in educational realm, or to do as in escapist experience, or to sense as in the entertainment realm, but just to be there, being passively immersed in the experience. Such esthetic experiences of nature have often a touch of spiritual or existential experience with strong emotional effects (Gelter 2000), such as in Maslow’s *peak experience*, and this can be called *Contemplatainment*. When esthetic nature experiences involve a restorative escapism from urban life they can be conceptualized as *passive post-modern friluftsliv*.

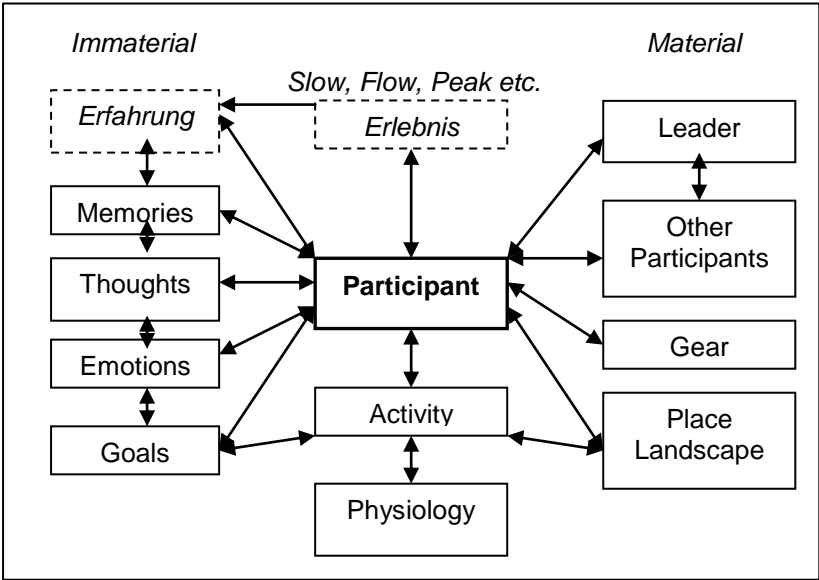
Restorative escapism to nature is not a new concept. Nansen’s “way home to nature” from urban life through *friluftsliv* was adopted early during the emergence of organized *friluftsliv* and early nature tourism for the urban working class in Scandinavia and elsewhere to

“strengthen the people”. New today is that this “way back home to nature” has been individualized as a personal way to cope with post-modern speedy urban life. These quests for slow experiences to de-stress and regain power, focus and energy, to “detox your mind”, is an important part of *genuine friluftsliv* (figure 3). Nature’s power as generator for “mental energy” and well-being is empirically and theoretically well documented (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989) and constitutes a solid theoretical basis for *contemplation*. This search for *slow experiences* through *genuine friluftsliv* and *contemplation* will probably increase in the future as the urban population grows and urban speedy-life escalates.

These four experience realms of Pine and Gilmore (1999) are not each exclusive, but can rather in planning the outdoor experiences be combined to form an all inclusive experience. For example, a day of rafting may start within the educational realm when you learn the skills of paddling a raft in white water, and when combined with joy and fun and including environmental issues constitute the *eco-edutainment* (figure 3). When going down the river, reaching a *flow experience*, you enter the escapist realm and the *adventuretainment* with its challenges, excitement, fun and adventure. After the rafting the group gathers round the camp fire for reflection and immersion in the social interdependence and interconnectedness with the river, the flames of the fire, and the surrounding more-than-human world. Now you experience the essence of *genuine friluftsliv*. After the collective dinner, you may take some time alone by the river or watch the sunset, immersing yourself in the natural setting, experiencing a strong spiritual and emotional experience in the esthetic realm of *contemplation*. Your inclusive outdoor experiences have taken you from passive to active involvement in the experience, from slow to fast and furious experiences, from absorbing to immersing experiences, from learning to expressing skills, from social interdependence to individualistic performances, from practicalities to philosophical issues; a complete mind and

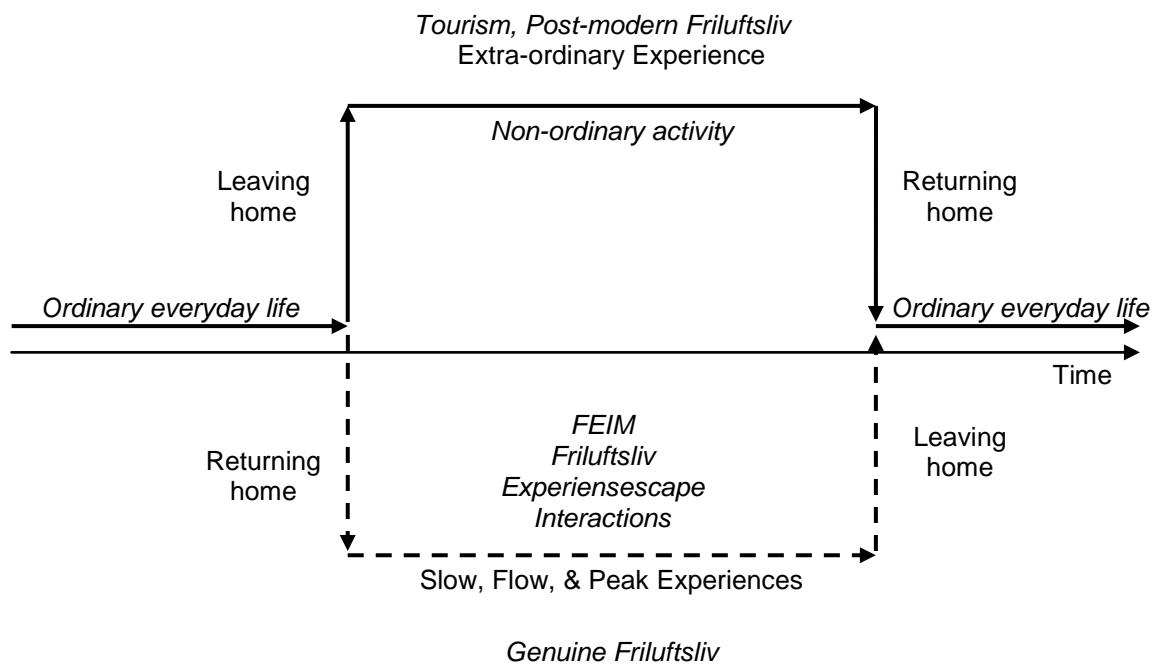
body experience we rarely meet in our every-day urban life. Therefore with the help of the model of Pine and Gilmore we now can describe and understand *friluftsliv* experiences in greater detail.

Having looked at some of the many dimensions of the outdoor *friluftsliv* experience, we can form what O’Dell (2002, 2005) call the *Experiencescape*, the landscape metaphor of shaping the experience of people. In the *experiencescape* of *friluftsliv* the experience is formed by the social interactions between people and the interaction with the structural features of cultural artefacts such as outdoor equipment, and the physical environment, the landscape. This experiencescape is composed of the external material and the social world such as other participants and leaders/guides, but also of the internal immaterial psychological world of feelings, memories, daydreams, goals, visualisations and thoughts, as well as the internal physiological world of pulse, fatigue, thirst, hunger, etc. These dimensions can be summarised as in figure 4 as what I here call a *Friluftsliv Experiencescape Interaction Model (FEIM)*.



**Figure 4.** FEIM Interaction model of the *friluftsliv* Experiencescape with some factors, immaterial and material, that affect the *friluftsliv* experience, the *erlebnis* building

This FEIM interaction model in analysing the *friluftsliv* experience lacks a temporal component – the dimension under which the experience unfolds (as in figure 2). We can therefore borrow the tourism trampoline metaphor of Jafari (1987) where the “tourist” leaves the everyday ordinary life to have an “*extraordinary experience*” as a non-ordinary activity, after which the “tourist” returns home to the ordinary everyday life (figure 5).



**Figure 5.** A temporal experience model integrating FEIM with the trampoline metaphor of Jafari (1987) and Nansen’s “returning home” to nature through *friluftsliv*.

This trampoline metaphor resulting from adapting Nansen’s “returning home” to nature in *friluftsliv*, will create a counter model to the tourist extraordinary experience, where the person leaving “ordinary post-modern hectic life” returns home to nature, and experiences *slow, flow* and *peak experiences* within the *experiencescape* of *friluftsliv*. From this “home in nature” the individual leaves and returns to our post-modern life (figure 5). Instead of the tourist “excursion” to exotic places and extra-ordinary experiences, *genuine friluftsliv* brings us home to our original home, our nature. In this conceptualisation, we have produced a model for Nansen’s original meaning of *friluftsliv*.

## Conclusions

This paper was an attempt to look at *friluftsliv* through the glasses of the experience society and some of the experience theory adapted from the experience economy. Identifying the basic experiences, *slow*, *flow*, and *peak experiences* as central to *friluftsliv* and identifying that today's society is constituted by several generations radically differing in their values and world views, we can find a background to the contemporary development of *friluftsliv* into a diversified and sportified "fast and furious" post-modern form of *friluftsliv*. In this "nanosecond culture" the need for *genuine friluftsliv* in the sense of Nansen, more as a philosophical approach to interconnect with our original home, nature, seems to be needed more than ever in the sense of *slow experiences* through *friluftsliv*. It is always dangerous to generalise and draw broad conclusions about trends, cultural phenomena, and human behaviour, and even more difficult to predict their future. However, the contemporary shift towards a Transmodern society with radically different values compared to the modern and post-modern society, opens the possibility that *friluftsliv* could be a Transmodern way to reconnect with nature and basic experiences of interconnectedness with a more-than-human world. The high search-interest as illustrated by Google searches and the international spread of the deeper meanings of *friluftsliv* is a serious indication that *friluftsliv* is not an old concept, only for the *Baby Boomers* and the *Generation Jones* and those older, but seems to be of importance also for *Homo sapiens* within the generations X, Y and Z. Therefore, *friluftsliv* could be a means to foster a *Generation G* (green, generous, global, etc.) for the Transmodern society. Trying to understand *friluftsliv* in a Transmodern context opens up new exciting questions and areas of research within the academic disciplines that study *friluftsliv*.



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