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## Båstnäs car graveyard: A place that seems to live in its own “time and space bubble”

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### Abstract

The article serves to highlight the growing trend to visit abandoned places, presently existing without purpose and external actor, but with remnants of previous activity which was ongoing for a limited time. There is a research gap regarding abandoned places which have fallen into oblivion and which have therefore become a tourist attraction. It is therefore important to discuss how non-planned tourist places are expressed and challenged in the process of gradually ceasing to exist. The aim of this article is to discuss how former activity in rural places expected to disappear can develop from being a problem to becoming a tourist attraction, without a clear producer perspective driving the process. Our overall focus is to highlight visitors' experience of place that involves a transition from the expected disappearance to a "legal", non-planned attraction with a preservation tourist value. The article is based on qualitative interviews with key individuals because they were expected to be able to summarise and represent various perspectives. The article concludes that this form of tourism represents a substantial deviation from the traditional relationships that constitute the tourism industry but is perceived to have a potential in the tourism industry.

**Keywords:** Tourism, landscape, place, authenticity, last-chance tourism, non-planned attraction and memories

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## Introduction

It is becoming increasingly apparent that places, objects, and processes that are gradually ceasing to exist are nowadays being developed into interesting sights. This general sense of time running out, as a result of the current dominant discourse on societal sustainability, also applies to tourism. Therefore, it is clear that places, objects, and processes that are expected to be gone within a not too distant future have attracted attention, which in turn has meant greater demand for visiting these places. As a result, travel agencies tend to highlight attractions with a definite time limit in their marketing, which predictably raises interest in certain destinations among tourist consumers.

Places previously marketed in terms of beauty and uniqueness are now increasingly described in terms designed to evoke a sense of urgency – “visit before it is too late!” Like the more established tourist destinations, small-scale attractions are beginning to be marketed in the same thematic terms, with the difference that the focus is on a specific place which has not had a clear tourism profile so far. Such places are made visible and upgraded in the tourism industry, although their power of attraction paradoxically stems from places, objects, and processes under destruction. Our intention is not to argue that this is a new form of tourism; tourism actors have for a long time chosen to emphasise building constructions, for instance, and other artefacts whose origins have not held any value to tourist actors, but have gradually developed into a significant destination. However, the phrasing “visit before it is too late” is rather new in the marketing of certain attractions.

In various ways we can observe people’s desire to visit, experience, and see places and attributes that used to be a natural part of daily community life, but over time have become more unusual and thus attracted public interest. This is reminiscent of the trend in society to take an interest in antique objects, as evidenced by TV shows such as *Antiques Road Trip*, *Antiques Roadshow*, and so on. Such shows sustain and reinforce the already established trend to value places, objects, and processes characterised by past times and the centrality of narratives. The economic historian Jan Jörnmark has in various contexts pointed to our fascination for abandoned places fallen into oblivion, where the passing of time has given the place patina (see for instance Jörnmark, 2007). Chernobyl / Prypjat is one of the more globally known places because of the abrupt nightly evacuation on 26 April 1986 in connection with the nuclear plant disaster and because of the metamorphosis taking place in this region. Presently, stories of Chernobyl and the “Dead Zone” are produced in popular culture via meta-stories, films, blogs, series, images, and social media. These stories all represent the degeneration of place, the perceived abandonment, and the potential health risks of being there, which by extension creates an interest and contributes to developing the tourist attraction value of the place (Stone, 2013; Sharpley, 2018; Hannam and Yanakovska, 2018).

Against the background of the discussion above, there is reason to suggest that contemporary society as regards tourism is constituted by individuals looking for places that may develop into a kind of memory capsule of past events. However, what attracts and affects us depends on our own memories and experiences as well as other people’s stories. This clearly resonates with the attraction of narrative in the discourse of tourism, as its core involves creating memorable experiences (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). Regarding this orientation in tourism, we can see that there is a desire to relive events generated by our memories and the attributes remaining in the landscape, which do not need to relate to a previous, but rather to our past daily life. We are not primarily referring to a physical journey, then, but the significance of experiencing places and objects that can momentarily take us back in time to recreate mentally what is lost or has changed over time. However, we do not identify this phenomenon with nostalgic tourism which usually focuses on questions such as where my home is and what my identity is, which is consistent with Bandyopadhyay’s (2008) discussion of nostalgic tourism.

The reason why tourists go on a journey to view certain childhood places and objects is not a new thing per se. Rather, interest is linked to what happens in places where the previous range of activities was not designed to attract and did not attract, but which, subsequent to gradual transformation, have developed into tourist attractions mainly because human influence in the place has ceased and been superseded by natural degradation. In line with Dawson, Stewart, Maher, and Slocombe (2009), we argue that this form of tourism should be seen as a *last-chance tourism*, based on a desire to visit places and view objects perceived as symbolising something slowly disappearing from society in general and from a certain place in particular.

Despite various studies in geography which have presented different perspectives concerning this area of tourism, there are still aspects that have not been examined. Reviving activities and/or buildings has become a means of recreating and re-experiencing particularly urban places as vehicles of the past. To date, research in geography has mostly focused on reusing former industrial areas transformed into a part of the experience values in urban environments. This trend has meant that industrial buildings, for example, have not been demolished as they could be reused in a new form. Our contention is that the understanding of how non-planned tourist places are expressed and challenged in their progress, in terms of a socio-spatial context in a rural environment, is limited. There is obviously a gap in the discussion of this development based on the original idea of the place/activity and the present development. We want to redress this gap by studying the meaning of a contemporary attraction important to a place, but historically speaking an ignored space.

The starting-point of the present study, serving as an example of this research field, is a rural landscape touched by structural changes and at the same time a reflection of the development affecting and changing the social and cultural context in our society generally (Amcoff and Westholm, 2007; Brown and Argent, 2016). The overarching aim of this article is to discuss how places can develop over time from being a problem to becoming a tourist attraction, without a clear producer perspective driving the process. This article also aims to explore how *last-chance tourism* is understood from the ownership, administrative, entrepreneurial, visitor, and resident perspectives in relation to a minor destination in which tourism has not been established professionally.

We consider the landscape interaction and its historical, economic, social, and environmental aspects to be important factors in this process. Our empirical material is a closed-down scrapyards, a so called "car graveyard", in the municipality of Årjäng, Sweden- a scrapyards which today constitutes a passive collection of metal. In symbiosis with the landscape, this scrapyards has developed into a place of considerable tourist attraction. A more or less undesired museum location has been created, lasting until its expected disappearance through the agency of nature. So far, studies in this particular area of tourism have been scant regarding this focus on the perspectives of ownership, politics, entrepreneurship, visiting, and local residency. There is, in fact, only one study by Blom and Nilsson (2019).

The article is structured in six sections including the introductory section above, followed up by the methodological procedures and concerns. In the third section, we present a brief discussion of authenticity in tourism. The following fourth section is a short introduction to the history of the site, and finally the results and the conclusion.

## **Methods**

This article rests on a qualitative approach with an explorative and descriptive purpose (Eisenhardt, 1989). Place observations, document studies, and interviews with key persons have been carried out to

understand tourism and (re)imagined and (re)used space in rural areas. Seven key persons, with various relations to and knowledge of the car graveyard tourist attraction in Båstnäs were interviewed. The respondents were selected because they were expected to be able to summarise and represent various perspectives in a fruitful way. Interviews were semi-structured in character and should be seen as contributions to our theoretical discussion of places in transition. The selected respondents should be seen as representatives of the different “actor groups” with some form of relationship to the place. Therefore, we have no ambition for interviews to provide a complete representation of all the different actors who have a relation to the place. Instead, we want to listen to information-rich cases that in different ways give the place a meaning. The actor groups, from which interviewees were selected, were: cultural developers in Årjäng municipality, previous municipal commissioners in Årjäng municipality, tourist entrepreneurs in the neighbourhood, residents near the car graveyard, residents in Årjäng municipality, the author of the book on the car graveyard (largely based on photos), a photographer frequently visiting the graveyard, and the owner of the graveyard. See summary in table 1, connected to citation.

**Table 1.** *Selected respondents*

Gender	Age group	Position	Code #
Woman	20-29	Resident in Årjäng municipality	1
Man	40-49	Author of the book on the car graveyard	2
Man	40-49	Owner of the graveyard	3
Man	40-49	Photographer frequently visiting the graveyard	4
Man	50-59	Tourist entrepreneur in the neighbourhood	5
Woman	60-69	Cultural developer in Årjäng municipality	6
Man	70-79	Previous municipal commissioner and resident near the car graveyard	7

Interviews focused on trying to capture various divergent and common key themes from different perspectives. In the first phase, we expected the interviews to include areas such as acquisition, recreating previous business, challenges, balancing cultural memory and previous business, and the relationship between tourists and local residents. The interviews were carried out in locations chosen by the interviewees. The interviewer noted keywords in connection with the interviews and summarised the interviews immediately after completing them. This approach included qualitative analysis of the interview material one interview at a time, before analysing the interviews together on the basis of the common themes emerging after the first analysis. In addition to the common themes, we chose to highlight emerging individual themes. A case study was also carried out at the place where observations were made and documented in text and photographs. The photographs taken for the case study aimed to imitate the motifs that visitors chose while visiting the site. Both observations and photo motifs were primarily used to support what the interview material displayed. The purpose of the three methods was to capture and understand the ambiguous and different worlds existing in present activities, not least to clarify the difference between past and present use of the place.

### **Negotiable authenticity**

Throughout history we have encountered a number of different attractions which have appealed to us in various ways and contributed to our choice of destinations. The question is if there are attractions that can be considered time-bound in some ways. The simple answer is - yes! The next question is if there are time-bound attractions constituting clear markers of a time spirit. The answer to this question is also yes, at least from the historical horizon of tourism. Regardless if the attractions highlighted are

new, old, or modified, there is a never-ending stream of attractions evoking associations and tempting us to visit. This is evident not least in tourism marketing, which invariably focuses on place-related attractions, environments, and expressions signalling novelty and difference for the purpose of attracting new as well as old visitors (Ram, Björk and Weidenfeld, 2016).

Irrespective of our knowledge of the questions above, it is clear that we cannot know in advance what might become a future tourist attraction. The number of tourist investments that fail despite good intentions and expected success indicates the prediction problem. A look in the tourism rear view mirror to give a simplified view of the general development of tourism over time reveals, however, an element remaining significant over time, namely the quest for places and attractions lacking a sense of here and now and including some form of conscious journey in relation to our home environment (Blom and Nilsson, 2019). This often takes the form of culture-related (time)travel to a remote time and place where we wish to relive something of our past, or experience something in a past we did not share (Timothy 2018). Conventionally put, we can say that we pursue the non-ordinary and something perceived as lost in contemporary life.

Whether what is attractive is authentic, has the appearance of authenticity, or is not authentic has been a key issue for a long time in tourism research (see for instance MacCannell, 1973; Andersson Cederholm, 1999). The quest for "the real thing" and the unique experience for the individual is a significant element of the tourism industry as a whole. However, we have also identified a problem in using the related concept of authenticity in this context as its meaning should rather be seen as more negotiable than being independent in its own right. The subjective room for interpretation of authenticity related to a place or activity is de facto intimately connected with the individual tourist's experiences and expectations. Typical of tourist places is that they contain a number of symbolic values, which in various ways and with varying emphasis emerge as significant. We all have valuable place contexts in our symbolic tourist backpack. Palmer (1999) observes that symbolic values are so important to our own experiences that they are not only expected to be part of a place context to fulfil our experience, but are also regarded as a must.

Based on their experiences, tourists create their own narratives when they recount their journey. Narratives of place and experiences are central in tourism research and at least three strands should be mentioned here, namely those related to marketing, tourists' narratives, and narrative interpretations of the staging of experience (Morgan, Lugosi and Ritchie, 2010). Tourists' narratives must not be neglected as their narratives of experiences provide an important foundation for the continued attraction value of a place (Bosangic, McCabe and Hibbert 2009). Not only expected authentic places are recreated in their contexts, but also places specifically arranged to attract tourists. Even if the bulk of what tourists encounter on arriving at a destination is "stage props" and tailored pseudo-events, the tourist is still satisfied (Wang, 1999; Edensor, 2000). This satisfaction is directly linked to the correlation between expectations of the place and our concrete experiences in the place, and this must not be ignored or underestimated. Only the tourist can determine to what degree a place or attraction can aspire to authenticity. Authenticity is also often associated with uniqueness in tourism contexts. So, the long-standing discussion in tourism research of what is expected to be, really is, or is staged authenticity is reasonable (see for instance Cohen, 1979; MacCannell, 1976; Cohen, 1988; Zhou, Wu, Zhou and Zhu, 2007; Morgan, Lugosi and Ritchie, 2010).

But can the industry alone create and at the same time plan authenticity? Or do today's tourists to a greater extent choose to abandon the planned and tailored places to discover something for themselves? These issues are worth considering as we see an increasing demand for the kind of tourist experience

that only develops through the passing of time and the absence of human impact. The reason for the birth of an attraction, in other words, should not be contrived but be the result of a value developed over time on the basis of the tourists' experience of perceived authenticity, which is the very reason for the attraction.

### **Memory capsules in concrete and metal**

Tourism in places that were formerly closed but are nowadays open has become an attraction. The interest in visiting this type of place tends to grow in spite of the increasing number of commercial and tailored attractions. There are many examples of popular attractions that we can refer to as "the quest for frozen time". Pripjat in northern Ukraine is probably the most abandoned city in the world. Many of the workers at the nearby power plant in Chernobyl lived in Pripjat and were forced to leave their homes at short notice the night of 26 April 1986, never to return. Pripjat is today a plundered and vandalised ghost city which is possible to visit with a guide, and which gradually developed into a commercial attraction (Östresor, 2019).

A second example of an abandoned place developing into a site to visit is Hashima Island off the coast of Japan, near the city of Nagasaki. Hashima was a coalmine, owned by Mitsubishi and inhabited by the company workers from the 1890s until 1974. At its peak, around 5 200 persons lived in the densely built concrete blocks of flats. When the mine closed down, the island was deserted for 35 years. In 2009, some parts of Hashima were opened to tourism and was a site for filming scenes in the James Bond film *Skyfall* (Japan Cheapo, 2019). In addition, there are a great number of places in the world, more or less organised, where different types of vehicles are parked, attracting visitors. Many of these are inaccessible and only open to the public in varying degrees, such as for example Maunsell Forts off the coast of England, built in the Second World War as protection against attacks. In Bolivia's Uyuni desert, there is a train graveyard, abandoned when the mine closed down in the 1940s, and outside the city of Nara in Japan there is an amusement park with merry-go-rounds and shops still standing as they did when it was closed in 2006. A further example is the harbour in the town Nouadhibou in north Mauritania where around 300 corroded ships are gathered in what is called the biggest ship graveyard in the world. This place came about after harbour managers let ship owners dump their ships there for a fee (Svenska Dagbladet, 2019; Atlas Obscura, 2019).

Among the most spectacular vehicle graveyards in the world are the aeroplane graveyards in the US, the biggest being the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, which is also the only one open to the public and offering guided tours (Airplane Boneyard, 2019).

At Kyrkö Mosse in Ryd, outside Tingsryd, in the south of Sweden, there is also a scrap graveyard attracting many visitors every year, originating in a scrapyards owned by Åke Danielsson (1914-2000). Danielsson started his business in the 1940s. In 1974, Danielsson bought his last car wreck and then the municipal discussion on the 130 cars intensified as they were considered a threat to the environment. In November 1998, the municipality issued a fine of SEK 10 000 to Danielsson, "if not all car wrecks were removed on 30 November 1998 at the latest." This was followed by a discussion among the actors in the municipality whether to sanitise the area or protect and preserve it as a culture reserve. The matter was concluded in August 1999 when it was decided to recall the fine imposition to Danielsson, and the site owners were spared the cost of sanitation. Since then, the number of visitors has increased steadily and the place and the cars serve to inspire writers and artists (Bilkyrkogården, 2019).

This form of tourism can be said to open the door to places and attractions previously not available to tourism as they were forbidden areas to enter, but now have become more or less established tourist attractions through gradual individual trespassing and increasing interest.

### **Study area: Båstnäs scrapyards**

The tourist attraction in Båstnäs, Årjäng municipality, situated around 25 kilometres south of Töcksfors near the Norwegian border, is a former scrapyards business, which since the closing down of the business has gradually transformed into a car graveyard with tourist values. The vehicles, however, remain scattered across a wide area including arable land and forest. Nature has now shaped the place by disintegrating the vehicles and environing them in vegetation.

The brothers Rune and Tore Ivansson established the scrapyards in the 1950s. Customers mainly came from Norway, where there were strict laws on importing cars at that time. The brothers demounted a car into three pieces and then transported the pieces to Norway, where they were reassembled. Presently, the scrapyards comprises around 1 000 vehicles and enjoys the reputation of being the only scrapyards of its kind in Northern Europe (Ekengren, 2014). Most of the cars and buses are from the 1950s and 60s (see Figure 1).



Photo: Thomas Blom

**Figure 1.** *Memories in metal I.*

The former scrapyards has today been transformed by visitors and can be redefined as a car graveyard. This car graveyard can be seen as a monument over passed time and is currently something of an art installation with nature as an active curator. Årjäng residents have previously had different opinions on what to do with the car graveyard in the future, but lately its importance to the tourism industry has turned it into an acknowledged resource. Årjäng municipality and the regional tourism organisation Visit Värmland both highlight the scrapyards as an unusual tourist attraction worth visiting (Visit Värmland, 2019; Årjängs kommun, 2018; Tingsryd, 2019).





Photo: Thomas Blom

**Figure 2.** *Memories in metal II.*

### **”End of public road” – being and becoming**

Båstnäs scrapyard was initially seen as a problem from the perspective of public authorities and, according to several respondents, there has been an ongoing but varying intense discussion in the municipality on the potential environmental impact of the vehicles. Today, neither oil nor any other harmful substances remain in the vehicles – only metal slowly corroding. According to residents, the position of the authorities was initially to sanitise the car graveyard and restore the area to its original condition. This has not been officially verified. The increasing interest in visiting the site has grown considerably in the last decade and the scrapyard is now such a significant tourist attraction that it is a resource also for the region.

Usually tourist attractions develop in close interaction between consumer and producer, but in respect to the type of attraction that Båstnäs scrapyard represents, such a relationship is conspicuously absent. It is clear that no one has been willing to take on producer responsibility for developing a tourist attraction here. The situation has rather been one of non-action and non-involvement since the owners of the abandoned business have chosen to do nothing. In response to a direct question on how the site, from the owner perspective, could be developed to increase the number of visitors, the answer was that *“no development should take place, but time would run its course. This includes no entrance fee to visit the site, no forms of café business, and no measures to preserve the vehicles for a distant future.”* (#3) The respondent also objected to protecting the place from a cultural environment perspective. Instead, the respondent emphasised that the place with its vehicles should be allowed to age with dignity inasmuch as no concrete measures should be taken and the place should remain accessible round the clock, the whole year. There is, in other words, no tourism producer perspective involved, so far.

The respondent (# 3) also emphasized that his father had the ambition that the place should be accessible to everyone for free. The place lives its own life and should according to respondent (#3) be viewed without making money from his property. The current owner (# 3) has the ambition to keep it

the same way also in the future. At the same time, commercialization of the place may mean that the visitors can demand various facilities and service, which at the same time entails costs and more commitment for the owners. These commitments are not relevant for the owners today.

As tourists, we often seek out places to satisfy one or more needs. We long to learn something about the destination and the attraction, and wish to experience being present in a place through all our senses. This demand is usually met by tourism producers, who ensure that the place and the attraction have a structure in various ways adjusted to the objective of satisfying our wishes. Regarding the Båstnäs car graveyard, in contrast, there is no such organisation, in line with the owners' wishes. The owners can, however, agree to the need for *"an information sign telling the story of the scrapyards and there are plans to create an official home page with its history"*. (#3) Beyond the specific attraction, tourist producers are expected to provide information material and details on transportation, as well as accommodation, if required. Taken together, such aspects are expected to create a positively perceived atmosphere, which is an important element in efforts to strengthen the appeal of an attraction. These aspects are also absent in the case of Båstnäs scrapyards. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that the absence of all that we normally expect of a tourist experience can increase the value of visiting because the scaled down format generates a sense of authenticity. A respondent also noted this saying that *"an important ingredient in the total experience is the authenticity of the place"* and that *"there are no commercial interests related to the place. A further ingredient increasing the appeal is the relatively narrow gravel road leading to the car graveyard and on arrival visitors meet a sign saying 'END OF PUBLIC ROAD'. All in all, a sense of origin, melancholy, and authenticity are evoked."* (#1). As another respondent added, *"the place in its seclusion and symbiosis with nature is one of the most prominent destinations in its genre"*. (#2) See Figure 3.



Photo: Thomas Blom

**Figure 3.** *"End of public road"*

#### *Silent narrative as enticement*

In spite of, or perhaps thanks to, the absence of a producer perspective, a growing form of tourism has developed, untouched by commercial interests, and gaining value through experienced authenticity of the unspoiled and the not yet adjusted. We can therefore talk about a "silent narrative" created by the individual visitor's own thoughts and experiences in symbiosis with the attraction and the place. One of the respondents, however, suggested that *"the place is an important attraction for the municipality and its attraction would increase further with a refreshment facility in the form of a small café in the summer"*

*months*". (#7) Although the car graveyard is unique in its kind and perceived as a great potential to attract more visitors, there are currently no plans made by the municipality or the owners to develop it in any way. Instead, the place will age in a natural way, which very likely will increase its power of attraction.

Similarly, the usual place marketing which aims to create positive associations to a place or a single symbol is absent in this case (Ward and Gold, 1994). Admittedly, other organisations than the owners have chosen to mention the car graveyard as an attractive site to visit. The municipality, however, does not primarily highlight the Båstnäs car graveyard, although it is, according to the municipal respondent, the most visited site in the municipality even without marketing. The reason for this lack of action is that the municipality wants to respect the owners and their wishes, which means no official marketing although this is normal practice when it comes to tourist attractions in Sweden. In other words, we note that the tourist attraction Båstnäs car graveyard represents a form of tourism that to a great extent deviates from the traditional and characteristic relationship in the tourism industry between consumer and producer.

Despite the absence of formal marketing, there is an informal marketing of place through visitors, books, documentaries, and social media. A property owner of a municipal accommodation facility in Årjäng reported that in recent years more and more guests staying there have come to visit the car graveyard from countries in Europe and the rest of the world. A respondent stated that *"more and more people got information about the place via a documentary and what it could offer in the form of experiences. This meant that the number of visitors in the next years increased considerably."* (#2) The interviewed municipal representative said that *"it was difficult to estimate the number of visitors to the car graveyard as there was no actor on the site and therefore no one responsible for any kind of visitor statistics"*. (#6) Several respondents, however, reported that at certain times of the year there can be so many visitors that it is difficult to find parking. There are no official statistics for the number of visitors to Båstnäs. However, in a newspaper article that highlights the place as a tourism destination, it is mentioned that the number of visitors can be counted in thousands per year (NWT, 2016).

To a great extent, tourism is about expecting attractions to provide experience and satisfaction. To meet these expectations, producers have created attractions that in many cases are perceived as staging and as tailored pseudo-events (Wang, 1999). At the same time, the tourist is often aware that the attraction is not always authentic, but accepts the situation since it provides a positive experience. This argument is contradicted by Pine and Gilmore (2008), Ram *et al.* (2016), and Loureiro and Sarmiento (2018) who stress the importance of place authenticity and the tourist's invariable quest for genuine experiences at the destination. In addition, it is up to the individual tourist to decide to what extent the attraction may aspire to uniqueness and authenticity. Authenticity is sometimes also associated with something perceived as unique in a tourism context. One of the respondents indicated this by emphasising that *"the primary attraction for visiting is not the car wrecks but how these relate to nature in constant change and thus a unique place identity is created by those two things together."* (#4)

The owners' intention regarding the Båstnäs graveyard is that the attraction should rest on the fascination of place, kept exactly as it is with the vehicles as one of several ingredients in the whole. This requires the attraction to remain untouched and the fact that the landscape changes, combined with the gradual corroding of vehicles that eventually disappear, remains a significant part of the total experience. Another interviewee pointed out that *"the place in this way is a form of a museum in constant transition. This also means that there will be a point in the future when interest in the place will gradually subside as the vehicles more or less disappear through corrosion."* (#3) A factor strengthening the place

attraction is the fact that it is in a constant state of change, which means that there will be nothing left to experience regarding the vehicle–nature symbiosis at some point in the future. One respondent argued in similar terms that *"the interaction of vegetation and metal is an extraordinary experience as it has an inbuilt time limit because the vehicles are decaying."* (#7). Another respondent emphasised that *"We can see the place as a combination of scrapyards and museum"*. (#5)

The place is in a constant state of change, a process that gives it a characteristic patina and thereby adds fascination. This is reinforced by seasonal change, a further contribution to the attraction. Several respondents reported that more and more people interested in photography have come in recent years, along with artists, to capture the composition of the place with the light, seasonal changes, and the vehicles. A respondent who was an amateur photographer had so far visited the car graveyard eight times, *"often in spring and autumn to get the desirable light and colours in the photos."* (#4) He also said that whenever he visited he always found something he had not seen before. An interesting aspect of the attraction is that its value also lies in attracting people to visit more than once. Another respondent asserted that *"the potential of Båstnäs is that it is genuine and not arranged and that the place is in a constant state of change through the intervention of nature."* (#6)

What happens at a destination should be regarded as a cooperation between place and tourist? The tourist creates value for the place individually or together with others (Chathoth, Ungson, Harrington and Chan, 2016). This means that the Båstnäs car graveyard represents a longing to experience the vehicles before they disappear, but also to follow the ongoing process of nature taking over a place previously devoted to an operation involving artefacts clearly representing a cultural antithesis of nature, even a threat to it. It is also evident that it is a tourist-driven attraction as it is created and maintained by the tourist's "action", from outside, to a higher degree than local action, from inside, since the local authority has chosen to respect the owners' wishes, which can be defined as a laissez-fair principle. A further important aspect from a producer perspective is the "encounter", involving how our relationship with employees in tourism and the local people develops. Beyond the producer-related aspects of creating customer satisfaction, there is also a control system based on the foundational factors required to run a tourism-related economic operation (Gustavsson, 2004).

### *Place and identity*

Taking the Båstnäs car graveyard as the starting-point, the primary attraction is the more or less corroded vehicles and the various memories evoked in the beholder. The individual experiences are central inasmuch as they are lodged in the individual's life context. Nevertheless, reliving experiences is not the purpose of every visitor. One of the respondents clearly stated that *"he considers himself to be too young to have a direct relation to or nostalgic feelings about the vehicles in the place"* (#4) but emphasised instead the motifs for his photographs. A single attribute in the form of the make of car or a small detail can trigger a whole process of memories in an individual, and in another no memories or feelings at all. A recurring theme among the respondents was the opinion that it is the aura of being *"untouched that creates the attraction and the municipality benefits from the visitors because they stay in Årjäng eating, shopping, camping etc."* (#5) *"The municipality makes a profit even if there is no entrance fee. Many foreign tourists visit the place, as there are various home pages focusing on untouched places and interesting photo objects highlighting metal scrap and making the place known internationally."* (#6) We can also see a creative progression towards a wholeness in which the landscape with its characteristic features contributes to strengthening the force of the attraction. In tourist contexts, such places have been shown to develop a strong identity, but we still know little about their geographical spread in terms of attraction. Internet searches reveal similar objects in several places around the world. The interesting issue is whether this form of tourism development requires the combination of social

media and a high degree of mobility as these attractions are often located outside major cities and the popular main tourist areas, which admittedly is quite an essential factor in the tourist attraction perspective. With our concrete example in focus, the landscape with its flora gradually gains more importance in relation to the tourist attraction, at the rate of the growing symbiosis between the vehicles and the vegetation.

In the increasingly globalised world with more offerings and easier access to experiences, this form of mental journey initiated by concrete and metal may provide an important part of our recreation. The tourists pursuing this kind of attraction are seeking the unexplored, seclusion, and a novel experience. The absence of the usually important arrangement of attractions in the tourism industry does not constitute the strength of this attraction. We refer to a developed "Urban Exploration", aiming to explore abandoned places and often forbidden places in urban environments (Pinder, 2005; Garrett, 2014; Kindynis, 2016). Inspired by "Urban Exploration", this trend has been taken one step further and moved from the city to the countryside and in some cases developed into an accepted form of rural tourism. Other examples of places and attractions that initially were not planned for tourism are to be found in rural regions, in the form of abandoned factory premises, housing and public buildings where buildings can be preserved to a greater extent than in city regions where the demands for sites for reconstruction and new constructions are more pronounced. This may well be the beginning of a new form of tourism which can be termed *Rural Exploration*, aiming to find abandoned places which are unintentionally encapsulated to begin with and then presented as contrasts to contemporary society.

## Conclusion

This article centres on a phenomenon that is slowly disappearing but also gaining importance in terms of attraction value judging by the number of visitors. A clear trend in tourism is denoted *last-chance tourism*. There is also an ongoing discussion on what can be classified as authentic. Several research groups in the field argue that tourist experiences are seldom provided by something authentic, even if the tourist is pursuing the real thing and not the tailored attraction. A strong reason for not considering contemporary tourism to be authentic in form is that the core of tourism is strategically designed to meet the demands of the modern tourists. We refer to "staged authenticity", which is a common development in tourism (Edensor, 2000). The attraction Båstnäs car graveyard was not developed according to the standard tourism rules of continuous interaction between consumer and producer. In addition, regarding the form of the attractions exemplified in this article, they share, at least initially, the absence of an active producer as the development was consumer-driven. Likewise, the standard place marketing, contributing positive associations to a place or an attraction, is absent (Ward and Gold 1994). This form of tourism, in other words, represents a substantial deviation from the traditional relationships that constitute the tourism industry.

The existence of this deviation, in our opinion, reflects a form of *resistance movement* – a reaction from tourists opting for a total experience free of commercial interest. Extensive searches for "abandoned places" (and Sw. "övergivna platser") on the internet, using various search engines, yielded a great number of links, which indicates a growing demand for and supply of this type of tourist destination. These attractions are usually former industrial businesses, left standing as memorials to an epoch gone by. A characteristic feature of the former businesses is the existence of some form of problem in their regional location. Plans were made, or still exist, to demolish, remove, or destroy them, but this has not been implemented for various reasons. Often, there are also restrictions regarding access to these attractions for environmental and/or safety reasons, which means that visitors are guilty of trespassing. With the passage of time, however, these places, individual buildings, objects, and monuments have developed into a uniqueness beyond societal control. These places seem to live on in their own "time

bubble". This form of tourism can create new opportunities to open hitherto non-available places and attractions for tourists, letting the places gradually develop into more or less established destinations. Interest in this form of tourism tends to grow at the rate of the increasing offering of commercial and variously tailored tourist attractions.

In spite of, or perhaps thanks to, the absence of a producer perspective, a growing form of tourism has developed, untouched by commercial interests. This type of tourism is experienced as providing authenticity, which is the primary attraction, involving the perceived unspoiled and the not yet adjusted. A "silent narrative" is created by the individual visitor's own thoughts and experiences in symbiosis with the attraction and the place. In this context, we would like to highlight the role of tourism as landscape preserver in the sense that the geographical place and its attributes combine to create a specific landscape with varying intensity over time. Like the tourist, the landscape is in a constant state of change in which interpretations and practical applications shape the structure and the tourist's experience of the landscape. This is in line with Saltzman (2001), who argues that landscape is in constant movement through which we can understand societal development. Passi (1999) underlines that the landscape and all its components affect regional and local identity, thus creating meaning, which, as Passi (1999) adds, is a result of cultural and social constructions.

Our specific contribution is to highlight visitors' experience of place as involving place authenticity and uniqueness, and their understanding of the concepts, but also to understand the views of tourists, residents, and authorities on the type of tourism that involves a transition from the expected disappearance of a "wild" attraction to a "legal", non-planned attraction with a preservation tourist value, embodying the gradual surrender of artefact to nature determinism. Our case in point is the Båstnäs car graveyard in Sweden, which also serves to highlight the growing trend to visit abandoned places, presently existing without purpose and external actor, but providing remnants of previous activity for a limited time. However, there is still a lack of knowledge about the benefits and possible downsides of non-planned attractions and their significance for the local entrepreneurs and the wider community. One aspect in this context, that it is still too early to see the result of, is how the Covid-19 pandemic that spread in 2020 has increased the interest in visiting natural sites and places that not many people visit at the same time. As travel is currently limited for a large part of the world's population, we can also see an increasing interest in visiting attractions in our local environment and a new demand for nature experiences. How we travel and where we travel can be said to be a mirror of our society and characterize our patterns of behaviour. It may thus mean that the travel behaviour that we as tourists had pre-corona is changing. Therefore, what is important for further research is to examine the multiple ways and perspectives in which non-planned tourist attractions affect local entrepreneurs, communities, and different stakeholders.

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