



OUR STORIES
Sharing Experiences along
the Northern Lights Route

Timo Paukko (ed.)



The Our Stories project was financed by Interreg Nord, under the priority of “Culture & Environment” and was implemented between August 2016 and June 2019.

**The partners were from three bordering countries: Finland, Sweden and Norway.
Partners: Lapland University of Applied Sciences, Studio E-city Ky, Ihana! AS, JORD & Sverigefinska folkhögskolan.**

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Preword

by Saira Puukko

Since august 2017, the Our Stories project has collected and been inspired by stories told by locals and visitors along The Northern Lights Route. The route connects three neighbouring countries and six distinct languages: Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian, Meänkieli, Kven and Sámi.

The common culture and history are strongly represented along the Northern Lights Route, which is an official tourism route starting from Tornio-Haparanda following the main road E8 (Finland) and Road 99 (Sweden) up to Kilpisjärvi in northern Finland. From there, it goes via Storfjord to Tromsø, Norway.

The bordering countries share a growing consciousness of their common roots and identity, which was the basis of this cross-border project. The aim was to increase knowledge about the route and its cultural heritage, especially among locals. In addition, the long-term vision was to make the region more active and attractive with increasing business opportunities.

To support the story development, the project team tested the story collection and development methodologies. The locals were given a key role when the stories were collected. These stories have been brought to life through historical and modern music, short films, animations and oral storytelling.

The project partners were responsible for creating a variety of story productions, as the music bands JORD and VisaNordica (e-City) were developing the music, Ihana! AS building up the oral storytelling and, finally, Lapland UAS and Sverigefinska folkhögskolan creating multiple animations, short films and a collection of artworks with the help of students.

You will find all of our productions, together with the stories collected and documented through audio recordings, film and text, on our website. Selected stories are also collected in a Storybook as one of our main productions.

The final publication is open to everyone as an e-book, with the target being the project financiers and developers within and outside of the North Calotte region. The publication's purpose is to bring experiences together and showcase the main results of the Our Stories project. It includes the collection of articles from the project partners and collaborators who share a common goal of developing the North Calotte into an attractive place to stay and visit.

My role in the Our Stories was to coordinate the overall implementation of the project, including coordination of five partners across the borders. My background is in different national and international projects for 15 years. The main interest of mine is to develop the business opportunities of the region, especially in the creative sector. The most interesting in the Our Stories project is the large number of stories in the region. We need to bring our Northern Lights stories into live!

We are grateful for the stories shared and all the participants who took part in our activities. We also gratefully acknowledge Interreg Nord and the other financiers that decided to support our project.

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OUR STORIES

- STORIES VISIBLE ALONG THE NORTHERN LIGHTS ROUTE -

The birth and idea of Our Stories

Author: Saila Puukko

The Northern Lights Route as a base

One river, three countries and ten bridges. This is the Northern Lights Route. For many people, the route is still unknown, better known as E8. The Northern Lights Route unites three countries across the borders; Finland, Sweden and Norway, starting from Tornio-Haparanda and following the E8 Highway and National Road 99 up to Kilpisjärvi in Northern Finland. It continues via Storfjord to Tromsø in Norway.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the tourism potential of the Northern Lights Route has been studied. In fact, the route was designated an official tourist route back in 2002.

More than a decade ago, a group of students at the University of Lapland did a thesis on the subject of the development of tourism potential along the Northern Lights Route (Meriruoho, Rantala & Veijola 29/2007). The results showed that the route was almost unknown to Finnish tourists, and the thesis concluded that the route should be developed as a unified site of national cultural heritage.

Common culture and history are strongly featured along the Northern Lights Route. The route connects the northern border regions of Finland, Sweden and Norway. As an example, six languages are spoken in the region. In addition to the main languages, there are also Meänkieli, Kven and Sámi.

The local languages and common cultural heritage are an important part of our identity. In our opinion, stories are the way to increase knowledge of the cultural heritage. In the end, the stories can also increase interest in visiting and staying in the area.

The stories have been made into modern and historical music, short films, oral storytelling and animations. The project has also produced diverse art by students from the Lapland University of Applied Sciences and Svefi College. Selected stories have been published in a storybook in their original languages and English.

During the project, a number of storytelling events have been organised, as well as a variety of storytelling methods with locals and entrepreneurs. The collected stories have been divided into three main themes; “the Northern”, “the Lights” and “the Route”.

The creation of the Our Stories

For many years, I have been working with a variety of creative and entrepreneurial projects at the Lapland University of Applied Sciences (later Lapland UAS). Neither storytelling nor the Arctic region were new to me. Still, the idea of Our Stories along the Northern Lights Route gave me a new perspective on how to develop our northern region using stories and storytelling.

The actual starting point for the cross-border project was when, in autumn 2014, I hosted a visitor from Storslett in Northern Norway - storyteller and entrepreneur Inger Birkelund from the company Ihana! who presented an idea of a cross-border storytelling project.

The Northern Lights Route was set as a base for the project when it was realised how significant the route is for the neighbouring countries. It also seen as significant that the route was a tourist route passing three countries. After a little investigation, it became clear how much common cultural history and heritage there is along the route. Part of cultural heritage are the minority languages spoken in the region. These languages tell their own story of how people have lived and mingled freely across this open border of ours.

One of the minority languages of Norway is Kven. The language based on Finnish dialects and grouped together with Peräpohjo-la dialects such as Meänkieli, spoken in the Tornio valley in Sweden. The Sámi language is undoubtedly the best known minority language in the Arctic region (Wikipedia: accessed on April 30, 2016).

Cross-border collaboration

The project partners prepared an application for the Interreg Nord programme with the specific topics of culture and the environment. In addition to the cross-border collaboration, the objectives of the programme are to increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of the region and to preserve culture and the environment.

The main objective of the project was to promote the region-specific stories and storytelling by collecting and selecting inspirational cross-border stories from the Northern Lights Route.

Cross-border collaboration became a reality with five partners and three countries. The partners were both private small-scale companies and educational institutes. This also presented a challenge for collaboration, as the human resources and experience of the project partners varied. Partly because of this, it was agreed that Lapland UAS would act as the lead partner of the project.

As expected, the collaboration of three countries had its own administrative difficulties. These difficulties mainly related to issues with the language and long distances, but the problems were solved and the key activities were organised together with all five partners. For example, the project team organised the first story collection tour from Tornio-Haparanda to Storslett. The international Our Stories team consisted of almost 40 students and staff members. The trip took almost a week to visit the total of six municipalities; Tornio-Haparanda, Pajala, Enontekiö Hetta, Storslett, Manndalen and Ylläs.

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Saatavissa: https://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kveenin_kieli [Viittauspäivä 30.4.2019.]



Posti-ilmarata

Tornion ja Haaparannan välinen posti-ilmarata rakennettiin ensimmäisen maailmansodan aikana. Vuosina 1917-18 ilmaradalla kuljetettiin 27,5 miljoonaa postipakettia. Ilmarata purettiin 1919 rautatiesillan valmistuttua.

Postlinbanan

Postlinbanan mellan Torneå och Haparanda byggdes under första världskriget. Åren 1917-18 transporterades 27,5 miljoner postpaket via flyglinjen. Flyglinjen togs bort 1919 när järnvägsbron var färdig.

*Meri Nikula's performance in front of the Museum of
Tornio Valley, 5th of December, 2017.*

Photo: Timo Puukko



*Road sign of the Northern Lights Route near by Tornio.
Photo: Timo Puukko*

From a story to a song


Author: Elina Söderström

Introduction and background

Studio E-City ky from Tornio together with Jord from Pajala are two of the partners in the project Our Stories. Together, we have had the task of transforming stories into songs. While Jord has written music about present phenomena, E-City has chosen to write music mainly from a historical perspective.

Overall experience

When we perform our music, we do it as our music group VisaNordica. In addition to Elina Söderström and Esa Rautiainen, the owners of E-City, VisaNordica, consists of a varied group of fellow musicians from Finland and Sweden. The music we perform is in Finnish and Swedish as well as in English. In order to offer an overall experience for the audience, especially when we are playing music based on historical events and stories, we perform wearing authentic costumes from the era.



*VisaNordica playing together with Jord at
Tornio Valley Museum in February 2017.*

Photo: Lasse Stenman



Music process

Search for stories

The stories were collected, for example through interviews but, since we at E-City also searched for older historical events and personalities who lived in the area during those times, we also had to look for facts from various historical writings like books, the internet and museums.

A song will be created

Stories that eventually become songs often have something special that hooks the listener. It can be a feeling that gives an incentive to compose lyrics or a melody. The inspiration for a song can also come from the beautiful nature of the Tornio River valley. The fact that we at E-City can view the Tornio River daily from our windows aids in the creation of beautiful melodies and texts.

When an idea for a song is born, Esa often comes up with the melody first. The musical process continues with the writing and processing of the text as well as the fine-tuning of the melody. We often play the basic structure and melodies in our own studio at E-City, then we send the song to our partner and band member Jaakko Viitala in Skåne for further processing. Quite often we go down to Skåne to work on the songs with Jaakko at his studio.

Seven songs ended on E-City/VisaNordica's album "Sound of the Northern Lights Route". These songs take the listener on a historic journey along the Northern Lights Route and the enchanting Tornio River.

Although the project Our Stories is coming to an end, the music and the stories will survive and hopefully attract more people to travel along the Northern Lights Route and visit us here in the north.

We at E-City are continuing our work to develop new musical creations, so stay tuned!



◀
Esa & Elina. Photo: Lasse Stenman



Concert in Storslett, March 2019
Photo: Matti Pulju



*Making music at the recording studio.
Photo: Lasse Stenman*



Visa Nordica

Sound of the Northern Lights Route



JORD

VÄRLDSMUSIK FRÅN TORNEDALEN

Sound of the Northern Lights Route

The cross-border musical collaboration

Author: Erling Fredriksson

Introduction

JORD and E-City were partners assigned to interpret the Northern Lights Route with music and singing. Already at the first stage of the project, it decided that E-City would go with the historical stories, while JORD would describe the time we live in right now.

Afterwards, E-City involved some additional musicians from their own music group Visa Nordica. JORD was joined by pop artist Rebecka Digervall from Pajala and the musician Kristin Mellem from Troms. During the recording period and at the concerts, Isidor Abdelkader played percussion and Jonas Palo and Jonas Strandgård were on guitar.

Collection of stories and implementation

The first major work carried out was the collection of stories in which all the partners participated. During the first half-year, in autumn 2016, the planning and organisation of the project was implemented. This also included the planning of the story collection in February 2017. During the story collection, the team travelled along the Northern Lights Route for a week starting from Tornio-Haparanda and ending to Storslett.

JORD had the main responsibility to plan and organise the story collection event in Pajala by contacting potential storytellers and making practical arrangements. Throughout the day, anyone could visit the project team at Folkets Hus to share a story. The day ended in the evening with an open house event with some musical and storytelling entertainment.

The collected stories from the road trip became the basis for the songs and musical productions.


JORD soundchecking in Storslett, March 2019.
Photos: Matti Pulju



Musical creation across borders

We as JORD members considered it important to find musicians and composers from Northern Norway who have connections to the Kven and Sami identities. We were, therefore, extremely happy when getting in contact with Norwegian musician Kristin Mellem. She has a solid musical education on violin, and she is an experienced composer. With her own musical world connected to the Sami jojk and the Laestadian hymn, she contributed with her own sound to the project as a composer, singer and violinist.

It also felt important to find a musician especially from Northern Norway and thereby create a physical platform for a larger musical collaboration, especially because the project idea was originally born in Norway by Inger Birkelund.

Rebecka Digervall's involvement in the team was an obvious choice based on her musical connection to pop music, which is a genre JORD were missing out on. The fact that she constantly emphasises her Tornedalian background was an important factor for her and made everything feel just right. As expected, she added the modern sound and attitude to the musical production, which became the genre and age-related impulse needed.

Creation process

During the spring of 2017, the whole team gathered to evaluate and categorise the large number of stories collected on the Creative Bridge workshop. At the end of the workshop, we chose five story themes to be composed into five songs promised in the project by JORD.

In addition, it decided to create bonus material together with E-City to compose eight instrumental pieces of music describing the northern eight seasons. The deadline to finish individual compositions was set to the August 2017. When the compositions were ready, the whole music team gathered to arrange the songs together during an intensive week in October.

The entire artistic process was very successful, and, in February 2018, all of the songs were played in BD-pop's studio in Luleå. When Tomas Bäcklund, a producer and recording technician, was involved, the creative process developed the material even further.

When considering the dissemination of the music, it was decided to put the musical production onto a CD. It felt valuable to be able to distribute a real CD as marketing for the project even though everything is published digitally on the Our Stories website. It was strongly felt that many people still listen to a CD rather than just downloading from the Web.

Finally, the entire artistic work was ready, and the multi-artistic performance was implemented. All of the creative productions were lifted up on stage at the Feel the Northern Lights Route concerts in Haparanda (autumn 2018) and Storslett (spring 2019); the music, oral storytelling and film were all experienced.

Collaboration

We have come a bit further in getting to know the characters in these three northern countries of Sweden, Finland and Norway. Most things are very similar, but small differences exist, which is fun to discover and learn to master. New contacts are made and the existing contacts strengthened even further. This created the basis for new exciting collaborations for the future.



*JORD performing in Storslett, March 2019
Photo: Matti Pulju*



*All musicians on stage after the concert in Storslett, March 2019.
Photo: Matti Pulju*

Our Stories film productions

Author: Timo Puukko

During Our Stories project, there were dozens of short films produced in different genres, and Lapland UAS had a key role in those productions. Our core production team - Timo Puukko, Matti Pulju and Henri Finström - produced together with the students and teachers from different educational institutes interview videos, short documentaries and even a short fiction film. Of course those productions would not have been made possible without the amazing persons and stories along the Northern Lights Route.

So what makes films and videos so effective tools for storytelling? For the audience, it is easier to adapt and identify with characters and persons in films and through them to better live and experience their actions, emotions, locations, past and present presented in pictures and sounds. People have also become more and more audio-visual oriented, meaning that people are increasingly using pictures, videos and sounds on social media, at schools and work. Producing good quality audio-visual material has become easy and simple to film, edit and distribute to social media even with a regular mobile phone. Because the project's subtitle was "Experience Our Stories along the Northern Lights Route", road trips had an essential role in the productions and, through them, we were able to gather stories later on to be reproduced as documentaries and a fiction film. Our first road trip in December 2016 took our production team to Kangos in Sweden and Äkäslompolo, Finland, and during that trip, we conducted our first interviews with Lapland Guesthouse's Johan Stenevald and poem recitation with Kalervo Uttu's alter ego "Shaman Uttu-Kalle".

Filming Kalervo "Uttu-Kalle" Uttu in Äkäslompolo, December 2016.

Photo: Matti Pulju





After some months later, in February 2017, the main road trip, which took all project the partners, teachers, students, etc. from Tornio to Storslett and back via Pajala, Enontekiö, Kilpisjärvi and Äkäslompolo, was organised. During this trip, our production team filmed almost 20 interviews, concerts and other audio-visual material on the road. Themes for interviews ranged from the Pajala Pride festival to goat farming in Storvik.

The last road trip was organised at the end of May 2017 which took us to Enontekiö and we made the first short documentary film in Hetta about how the local river suddenly changed its route because of unintended human actions. Then, we continued to Kilpisjärvi where we met and filmed local villagers and elementary school students and discussed what life is like in such a beautiful but remote place.

These filmed interviews and other contacts made during the project and road trips created the storybase for our next productions: short documentaries and a short fiction film. For example, in the first day of our main road trip, we conducted an interview in Tornio with Olavi Stoor who had been organising a marathon cycling event from Kilpisjärvi to Tornio for over 30 years and instantly it sounded like a perfect example of an interesting and original character driven story which combined both Finnish and Swedish beautiful landscapes, villages, people and history in an audio-visual and attractive concept of high-speed cycling...and mostly even along the Northern Lights Route. Therefore, our production team decided to follow three cyclists' preparation for the 34th Marathon cycling over the course of 6 months and then naturally to film the whole marathon event of approx. 500 kilometres in July 2018. In the end, the short interview had developed into a 30 minute documentary film.



Screen captures from different Our Stories' film productions.

Another good example of how the stories evolved from interviews into audio-visual content was a short fiction film called Jopparit. Jopparit is based on actual events which took place in Torne Valley between the 1930s and 1970s. The word “joppaaminen” translates into smuggling and in Torne Valley it meant people smuggling different kinds of products either from Sweden to Finland or vice versa across the bordering Torne river. These products included hard to get or expensive groceries and luxury goods like coffee, meat, butter and cigarettes but even horses were smuggled over the river. Joppaaminen has been a theme I have heard in many places from many people along the Torne valley and it has become almost characteristic to the area mainly because it has had involved thousands of people both getting benefit but also suffering from this criminal activity. Those smuggling stories involved lots of interesting personalities among both smugglers and authorities trying to stop them, and that created an excellent setting and background for an interesting short fiction film production. The actual film production took place in Pello in June 2018 with a cast of local summer theatre actors. The film was adapted from real events and stories and it was set to the early 1960s Lapland; the main idea was to show a single smuggling from different point of views by various characters.

The previous two productions were examples of how films can tell and especially show different events and stories in an effective and attractive way. However, the core of these productions and even movie classics around the world have always been good stories.

Because filmmaking and sharing them is relatively easy and non-expensive, I would recommend everybody to gather and share their stories because there are surely so many great stories which have disappeared over the centuries because they have never been recorded, filmed, written down or orally passed on to the next generations. Like I said in the beginning, spectators identify and adapt stories easier via characters and through them they can feel those stories as if it happened to them personally.

▶
Screen captures from “Jopparit”.







Our Stories along the Northern Lights Route

Author: Inger Birkelund

There's something wonderful about a good story. Even better if the story tells us something about ourselves or others. In this way, stories open our eyes to the big world we belong to or illustrate the extraordinary in the ordinary here at home. Sharing stories about people, history and places along the Northern Lights Route has been at the heart of the Our Stories project.

In Our Stories we have collected, developed and shared stories as text, interviews, art, photographs, film and music stories. The stories were chosen to make both visitors and locals in the area aware of the people along the Northern Lights Route, where they come from and what they dream of. The stories were chosen to illustrate the beautiful, and at times dramatic, nature that the roads take us through, a journey with contrasting weather and light during the eight seasons of the year (eight according to the Sámi people). Stories were chosen to show how it is living that makes life unique, familiar and adored.

“The psychology behind a good story is both fundamental and complex, so a simple story can tell us a lot,” says Professor Tove I. Dahl at UiT Norway Arctic University, a mentor to the project. “It tells even more when we realise how it is connected to the other stories. That’s been the strength of the Our Stories project. It has created engaging singular stories, whilst connecting them, like pearls on a string, into a whole. In this way, they give us life along the Northern Lights Route in a special way. When we then recognise the essences of the stories as the essence of ourselves, it is easy to entwine the stories with those of our own. Then they become a part of us.”

►
Keynote by Tove I. Dahl.



The power of oral storytelling

Oral storytelling is the oldest way of passing on information, history and culture. Through stories, knowledge is passed on from one generation to the next – knowledge about hunting, fishing and surviving in our Arctic nature. The stories explain the unknown, and by connecting stories and values, they give meaning.

In our modern world, stories also have power, a power that facts alone cannot give. Stories talk to emotions, while facts talk to our common sense. Good stories find something in us that makes us realise something. Emotions create new thoughts, thoughts that help us to understand and contribute to growth. Sometimes stories can lead to a deeper existential insight – foundations for changes in the way we think and act.

The potential power of change in stories is central when sharing values. Raising children, we tell them about mythological creatures so that they will look after the livestock. By sharing stories about war, fleeing and distress, we share humanitarian values, and by sharing stories about plastic in whales, we make people care about the large, global environmental challenges. Staging emotions and thoughts can contribute to changing outspoken goals in theories about experience economy, so good stories and knowledge about oral storytelling competency are sought after in business settings.

At the heart of all of this is the good story. In oral storytelling, the story should be told with animation and credibility. Scenography, sound and lights can aid in making the story the focal point. The goal is to remove noise and lift the story up in the imagination of the audience, then the listener has the opportunity and calm to create their own imaginary and their own empathy. Sometimes the stories bring insight, create a moment that changes something inside us. That is when we are experiencing something truly magical.

Our Stories oral storytelling

Ihana! has been responsible for oral storytelling in the Our Stories project. For years, Ihana!'s founder, Inger Birkelund, has been telling stories on stage alone or together with others. She has also used storytelling to create memorable experiences in tourism. Actor and Ihana! employee Ørjan Steinsvik has also been working on Our Stories. In previous years, he established himself as an actor in performances for children and adults. Together they have contributed to stories for the Our Stories project.

Inger Birkelund has based her stories on myths and historical events from the Northern Lights Route. With her carefully chosen words, we are drawn into a world where “..The Polar morning dawned. Thousands of ice ferns blinked in the blue, blue light of day. The flock of swans awoke, wanting to raise their wings..” and “..Out in the dangerous currents, a boat lies, cap-sized. Three people are clinging on for dear life...” happens.

Ørjan Steinsvik has, on the other hand, been inspired by the modern, Nordic lifestyle – beyond borders. He has brought things to life with words like: “...It is an old primal impulse that drives you towards the wetlands and mountains, whatever the weather, to gather the treasure of the north, the gold of the plains – the cloudberries...” and “...We came into the hallway, brushed the snow off our boots, took off our coats and sat down by the kitchen table. Dad often brought a cake and my grandmother made coffee in a kettle...”

▶
Ørjan Steinsvik.



In addition, as a marketing strategy the participating businesses along the Northern Lights Route worked on developing stories for their own business. These stories have been about everything from dog-sledding and horse breeding to sauna experiences. The project has shared knowledge about how you can use storytelling as part of your marketing, something which will further emphasise the importance of business stories.

Our Stories – the business of using storytelling to draw people in

To sum up, we can say that the project has succeeded in bringing together artists and business people around the story. “The stories show the soul of the Northern Lights Route,” says Dahl, “and the oral performance makes the stories volatile in an unforgettable way. It is unique. It does something to us. I have experienced it myself, and I am not alone. I am confident there will be more too. What a project, and what an investment along the Northern Lights Route!”

►
Inger Birkelund.





Our Stories seminar in Storslett, March 2019.

The Northern Lights horse finally showed itself – through Our Stories

Author: Birgit D. Nielsen

For more than 10 years, we've been searching for an expression of the Lyngen horse's alter ego: the Northern Lights horse, and all of the sudden it is here. Anniina Kraft, Visual Art Student at Lapland University of Applied Sciences, showed it to us after a visit to Storslett.

Through the ages, the horse has been one of the most important animals to human beings. In every country, horses have been bred to be best for that specific place, so that they can help in the best way possible. One of these breeds is the Lyngshest horse, which comes from the northern part of Norway and once almost became extinct. The first time I heard about this breed, I was on the Northern Lights Route in Storslett, Norway. This breed has been helping Vikings and they are ancestors to the Icelandic horse. The Lyngshest is very sturdy, but still slender and can be used for many purposes. These horses inspired me to create this painting and story that you are about to read.

►
Artist: Anniina Kraft



Horse of the northern lights

It's a dark and frosty night. I'm standing on the slope of a mountain and gazing at the starry sky.

My breath is vaporising and cold air is pinching my face.

The sky starts to turn to green little by little, and the coloured stripes of the Northern Lights start to form over the sky on the horizon.

From far away I can hear a rhythmic sound, like some animal galloping on a frosty rock.

The sound starts to get louder, and I can see an animal in shimmering green light, running along the mountain and leaving a green trail of the Northern Lights rising towards the sky.

Finally, I can see a horse that is white as snow. His breath is vaporising and his mane and tail are blazing in different shades of green. I can hear a faint crackling sound.

What an unreal sight.

I just stand there silently as he runs towards me.

Not until he is just a few meters away does he notice me and stop.

Above us, the Northern Lights from his mane start to create the shape of a rose, as both of us just stand there.

Slowly I raise my hand towards the horse. Maybe he will let me touch him? At that moment, he neighs and runs away bucking, as if teasing me about the fact that he can never be tamed.

Lyngshestlandet has had to change its activities from offering tourist experiences itself to supporting and developing other tourist industries in the region. The knowledge from Our Stories is vital in shaping this work.

In 2019, we have received a pre-project grant from eight municipalities and the county for this work. In the pre-project, a story about the horse breed from each municipality will be collected. This will also be an asset for us after the pre-project.

These stories will be central to our guidance of potential tourist industries that will use the Lyngshest horse. They will contribute to more people becoming aware that they have something interesting to offer, without having to own many horses or take people out on long treks into the mountains. One or possibly more main projects will benefit hugely from the knowledge and network from Our Stories. Lyngshestlandet may also use these stories to provide potential future visitor experiences.

The artistic process of Svefi

Author: Annika Kronqvist

Introduction and background

Svefi, founded in 1973, is a public education and vocational education institution that is located in a rural area in northern Sweden. The institution's goal is to give its students and participants the opportunity to study, broaden their knowledge in different areas and develop social skills in which the individual's conditions and interests are taken into account. Svefi offers courses in art, performance art, interior design, sound engineering, lighting design, music and more.

Svefi's role in the project is, among other things, to take care of the sound, recording, filming, lighting, arranging artistic events and exhibitions.

Documentation

Svefi have documented the project in both traditional and modern ways by filming, editing, photographing, interviewing, recording and streaming various tours, seminars and concerts. Interviews have been the starting point for many artistic workshops, exhibitions and events, which have been documented through art. A variety of artistic methods have been used for project dissemination and linking the project in Haparanda-Tornio with the surrounding area. The work is done by Svefi staff and students.

Several music videos have also been recorded. One of the videos named Searching for hope is based on the theme Norrskensvägen (=the Northern Lights Route). The students studying art and music assigned to search for information about the Northern Lights Route, its history, local culture and how these different cultures are recognised in the region. In addition, the students concentrated on the border region of Haparanda-Tornio and were inspired by various historical events along the border river. The pictures taken on both sides of the river were included in the music video edited by Stefan Fredriksson.



◀
"The Mysterious woman".

The Mysterious woman

The cross-artistic performance The Mysterious woman was made with the artistic director Meri Nikula about what is thought of as the typical Finnish demeanour and culture. Based on loads of interviews conducted by the project team, the idea of the main characteristics of the neighbouring people were created, especially regarding the way locals on the other side of the border considered the neighbouring people. The interviews revealed concepts like the Northern Lights, darkness and coldness.

As for Finland, the words rye bread, liquorice and salmiakki came up - perhaps surprising! The Mysterious woman-performance was a concept created to increase interest and desire to investigate what or who the mysterious woman is. This became the starting point for the performance. Rye bread, liquorice and salmiakki had prominent roles in the show and, obviously, a scene in the sauna was considered necessary. The Mysterious woman made the audience think and they certainly found an answer to their question, at least their own interpretation of it.

Tornedalen

“Tornedalen” and “Torneälven” were themes for the creation of sculptures – the artistic process led by a sculptor Essi Korva from the Finnish side, Pello. Students needed to think about what the river Tornio and the border means to them, what kind of phenomena exist and how students can express their ideas via sculpture. The majority of the students were not from Tornio Valley (Tornedalen) and so the border region of Sweden and Finland was new to them.

Sculptures such as The Fishing Boy, Blue and Mother Nature are examples of the artwork made by students. The boy who is fishing enjoys nature, silence and sitting by the river listening to the river flow. “Blue” describes a fairy and there are connections with Finnish mythology, in which Ahti is the god of the water. Mother Nature expresses the northern, fertile soil and shows that in our latitudes one can succeed with a variety of crops.

Learnings

The overall red thread in all of the performances, exhibitions, workshops and musical productions was to learn about the different cultures, history and today's societies, traditions and habits connecting and separating the bordering regions and people from each other. Students have also experienced a variety of art forms, and not only the forms they already knew. They also had the opportunity to work with professional artists.



►
"The Fishing Boy".



*On the road trip, Helligskogen, February 2017.
Photo: Matti Pulju*

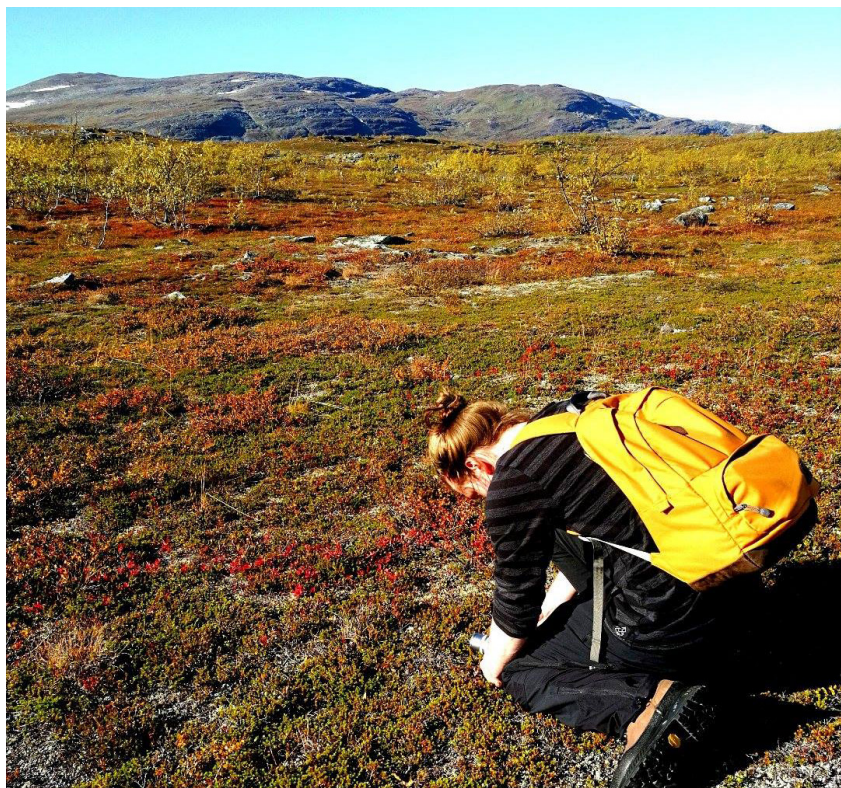


*Heading to Storslett, March 2019.
Photo: Matti Pulju*

Visualisation in storytelling

Author: Anitra Arkko-Saukkonen

Visual art students from Lapland UAS packed their cameras, pencils and notebooks and started their two storytelling trips along the Northern Lights Route.



On the road – PART 1

The first group of students travelled the Northern Lights Route in autumn 2018 and crossed the border into Norway. The aim was to research different areas and stories along the route, collect inspiration and get ideas for visual stories.

Students got possible to experience a beauty of autumn nature. They made visual notes from everything what they saw and heard. Sun was shining from the blue sky.

For the most of the student this was first time in real Lapland and for some of them in abroad. That's why rural wilderness impressed students.

◀ ▶
Photos: Anitra Arkko-Saukkonen



In the seashore of Lyngen found beautiful place to photoshoot, paint and draw nature and give imaginary to run around of stories.

During the trip were lots of stories students found about: traditional fishing (lippoaminen), preparation for visit of emperor Aleksanteri II in Aavasaksa Hill, Maupertius geophysical measurements, smuggling (joppaus), and a story behind of “Lapland hell” Pakasaivo. Interesting stories rose up about Laestadius, how Laestadius led La Recherche expedition group and who was he besides a priest. Students got taste of history in Järämä, a fortified position from the Second World War, stories about Näkki and Stállus and other mythological creatures. They also learned about livelihood in the areas by Northern Lights route and stories of people.

All these stories impressed the students and inspired them to make their own visual stories.

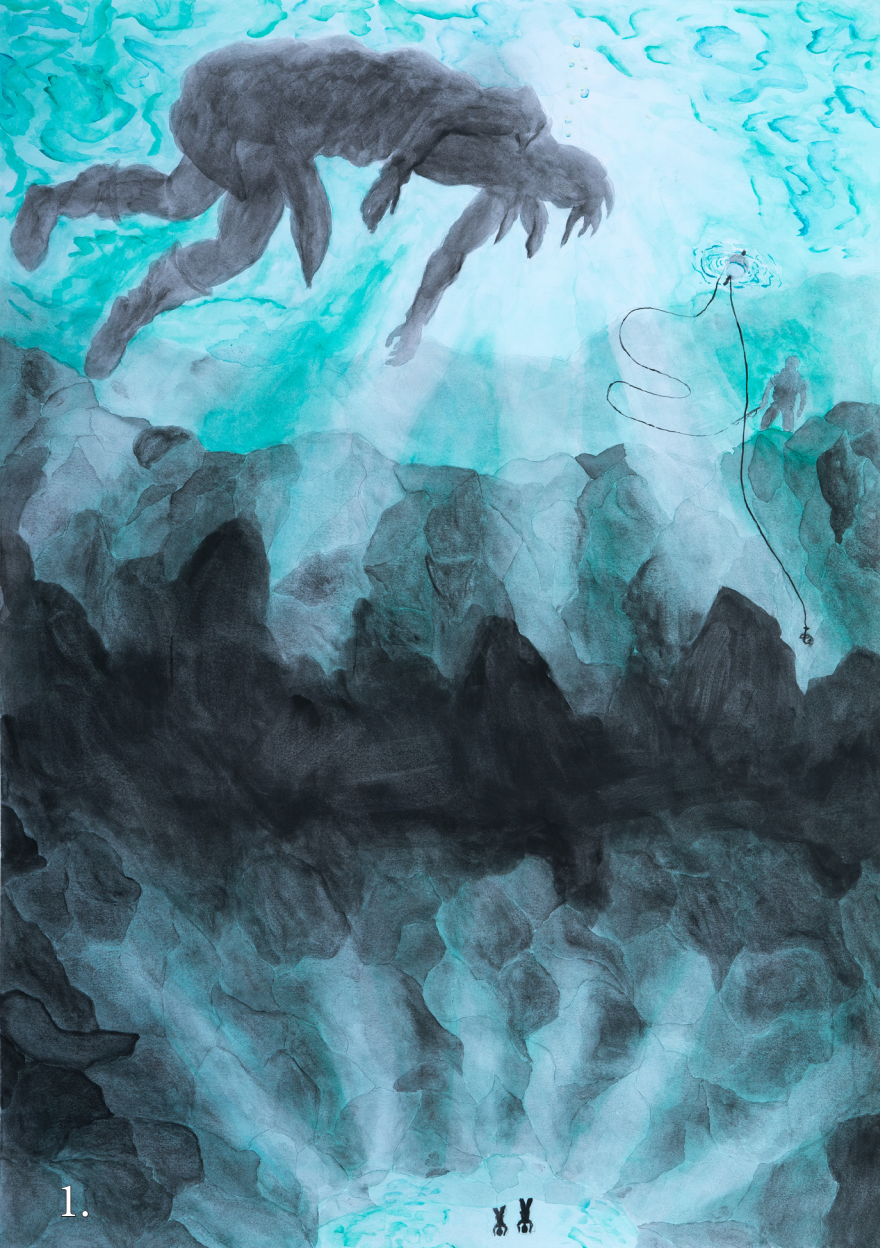


Photo: Anitra Arkko-Saukkonen



Artist: Samuel Inkilä

Artists: Juho Könkkölä (1)
Olli-Markus Latvala(2)
Eerika Pöytä kangas (3)



Along the Northern Lights Route – PART 2

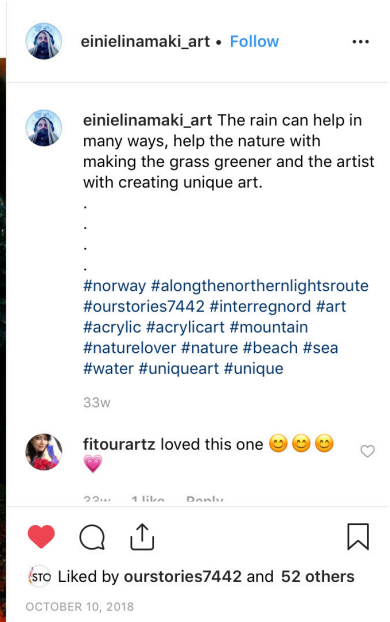
The second group had a different perspective on their trip all the way to Storslett in autumn 2019.

The key point was to upload the stories to Instagram along the Northern Lights route. At the end of the trip, the students illustrated their own experience and stories from the storytelling trip with paintings, drawings and blog texts.

These study trips taught the students how many stories there are in the area. All the students have created their own versions and made illustrated stories, bringing their findings and experiences to life in the pictures. The route crossed borders and combined all the three countries of Finland, Sweden and Norway.

The students made plenty of visual notes and later those ideas were converted to illustrated stories for the Our Stories collection.

The viewer can enjoy his/her own experiences by just looking at these pictorial stories.



Artists: Aliisa Koskela ►
Roosa Karjalainen ►►





Artist: Kaisa Linna

*Artists: Lauri Karinoja ▶
Elmiina Orjasniemi ▶▶*



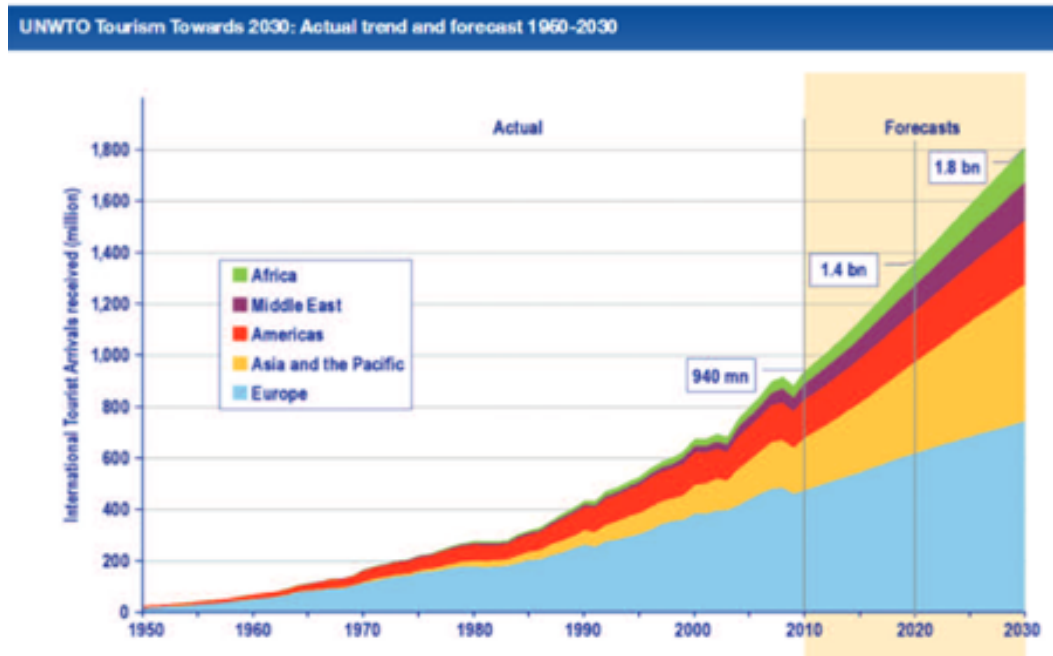


Cross-border cooperation in the Arctic and how to use storytelling

Author: Katja Pettersen

Trends in the tourism industry

International tourism has been growing continuously for decades. Growth in tourism correlates strongly with economic growth and prosperity.



◀ UNWTO Tourism Towards 2030: Actual trend and forecast 1950-2030 Source: Gaval, I. (October 6, 2016), The Economic Benefits of Sustainable Tourism, accessed October 31, 2017, <https://ecobnb.com/blog/2016/10/economic-benefitssustainable-tourism/>

Currently there are two trends creating major changes in the travel industry:

1. **Customisation/individualisation**

Travel comes in different shapes and sizes, and it is increasingly difficult to categorise them. Work and leisure are often mixed, and the combination of business and pleasure travels (so-called bleisure) is increasing. Travel creates identity and the demand for personal adaption is growing. A lot of tourists are chasing new destinations, activities and experiences, which in turn increases the speed of innovation in the tourism industry internationally. It now makes less sense to talk about summer vacation, winter vacation, city vacation or meetings to understand what tourists are chasing, want to experience or get from a vacation. Tourists want to organise their travels depending on their own wants and needs that fit with specific situations. They want customisation and adaption. The selection of travels and destinations has increased significantly in recent years.

2. **Digitalisation**

New technology gives brand new possibilities for customisation and personalisation, and this development also creates the expectation of exactly that.

We also see another trend in the industry: new actors from other sectors are looking to the tourism industry. Stable growth within tourism enables more actors to look towards the tourism industry. New cooperation constellations are being created, and actors from other industries such as fashion, interior and design are seeing new opportunities to use hotels and attractions as a display window for their products.

The explosive growth within tourism also carries some challenges. Increased volumes put pressure on vulnerable nature and lead to increased CO2 emissions. The rise of the sharing economy has created tension between the traditional actors in the tourism industry and the newcomers, which are facing resistance from locals in many places in the world.

The tourist of the future

We will move from cultivating the community to being more focused on standing out from the larger community in the future. We want to make our own decisions, live our own lives and create our own image. This affects our travel habits. Today's tourist and not least the tourist of the future will want to choose vacations based on their own interests, motivations and inner values, and will seek experiences that in one way or another contribute to a transformation of the self. It is all about WHAT you want to experience, rather than WHERE you want to travel. In this relation, the traditional "destination marketing" where you focus on highlighting everything a destination can offer becomes irrelevant and can almost be considered noise. It is no longer sufficient to communicate "visit us and look at the beautiful nature". That's like tricking customers into an empty shop. We need to fill the shelves with products the customers want: we need to have customised experiences available.

Strategic compass for Northern Norway

The Northern Norway Tourist Board has developed a strategic compass for Northern Norway. We assume that the compass also points to the direction throughout the Northern Calotte. The compass is a tool to help connect communication and delivery. It gives a structure for cooperating across geographical areas and destinations, and helps us to think about customers' motivation and "reason to go" ahead based on other segmentation criteria such as nationality, age, personality traits, etc. The compass also gives us a common language with precise terms linked to the customers' motives, which makes it easier to focus on the customer.

Strategic compass for Northern Norway



Strategic compass with personas



Target groups and personas of Northern Norway



Visit Arctic Europe (VAE)

The Visit Arctic Europe Project is a cross-border cooperation project aimed at increasing the tourist flow to the Arctic area of Finnish Lapland, Swedish Lapland and Northern Norway. The project started in 2015, and recently moved to phase 2 to continue the work. The continued cooperation between the countries means that the Visit Arctic Europe area is becoming a competitive, sustainable visiting destination all year round.

The main purpose of the project is

1. To continue developing Finnish Lapland, Swedish Lapland and Northern Norway as a year-round sustainable and high-quality destination
2. Developing new seasons – Autumn in the Arctic, as well as extending existing seasons

The main target of the project is:

1. Increased profitability for the tourism industry, thereby creating new opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship in Arctic Europe
2. An increase of 10% in guest nights from selected market areas and seasons

The project's **main activities**:

1. Marketing:

-Image marketing:

To increase awareness of the Arctic Europe area all year round towards different market segments

-Tactical marketing:

The project will follow-up on established relations, further develop them and aim for new business opportunities

2.Accessibility

- External accessibility:

Development of new traffic connections to VAE area

- Internal accessibility:

Development of new internal traffic connections within the VAE area to improve co-operation and the cross-border flow of customers

3.Competence development

- Digitalisation

- Sustainable development

- Market knowledge and product development

How Our Stories can be used within tourism

Storytelling is becoming increasingly important in the tourism industry as tourists want to travel home enriched. They want to meet local people and learn about local culture and traditions. The main trend now among travellers is the wish to experience local culture, the local population and actually take part in local traditions such as making food or crafts. I think using storytelling to attract tourists is underestimated.

There are different ways of conveying a story, something the project Our Stories has been working with. It is not necessarily easy, but I would recommend using local people such as Ihana! does and combining food and the Northern Lights in addition to storytelling in different ways. Furthermore, I would recommend making concepts based on the geographical and cultural conditions that the traditions in the area use, for example, kick-sleds and ice fishing, and connect them with storytelling using music, films and oral storytelling.

Smaller places are becoming increasingly important and tourists want to really “get under the skin” of destinations, which is something you have been very successful in through “Our Stories along the Northern Lights Route”.

The Arctic Route that Bussring has initiated, will establish bus routes between Tromsø and Rovaniemi, and what has been produced and shared in Our Stories can add value to the route and the tourists travelling the route. The stories can, for example, be displayed along the Northern Lights Route, which in turn can increase interest in the area and make tourists want to learn more. Other tour operators can also make use of the work you have done, especially the digitalisation of the stories. Storytelling is a cost-efficient investment in a tourism product. Remember that small experiences can make a huge difference for the “right guest at the right place at the right time”. Make sure to find solutions for the tourist’s needs.

Our Stories is in line with the trends in the tourism industry, and it is also important to collaborate across borders as you and we in Visit Arctic Europe do. Along the Northern Lights Route, we find culture, traditions and people who have a common history from the past and present that connects them, regardless of national borders. In Our Stories, local stories are highlighted and made visible, which is important for the development of good experiences. New digital tools are continuously being developed, something that creates huge opportunities for Our Stories. We look forward to continuing following you and possibly to growing our cooperation.



*Filming an interview in Storslett, February 2017.
Photo: Timo Puukko*



Good things happen when people meet people

Author: Lasse Stenman

On one level, the Our Stories project is a joint European creation typical of the times. Beneath the surface of extensive application forms and detailed budget claims, however, the life of the people is thriving throughout the North Calotte.

In the same way as the price of an antique goes up through so-called provenance, the addition of regional tales can make an area more attractive to tourists. Storytelling has become an accepted term in many lines of business. Along the Northern Lights Route in Finland, Sweden and Norway, Our Stories has unveiled folklore in all its forms and shapes – a bit like extracting oil, albeit a petroleum of the soul. The operation calls for a wide-open approach and an understanding of the fact that a story can present itself in numerous disguises: as a tall story, an eye-witness account, something newly written or as part of an oral tradition. A song is a story, too. Some people can communicate with a mere harmonica – music is the backbone of Our Stories. Technical development has made moving pictures easily accessible and relatively cheap. Our time virtually documents itself and the output is easily spread via various digital platforms. The Reverend Martin Luther King spoke of “a beautiful symphony of brotherhood” and in Our Stories these words come to life.

Border life is a state of mind

Truth is a relative term and no obligation within the project. Fiction is one way of depicting the elusive reality for people living in border areas. Border land is not a territory, a set of buildings or a group of individuals. Border land is a feeling, an open room, a set of vibes. And a place where we are free to create our own mythology. In literary science, the term ‘mapping’ is used to put an area on the map with prose and poetry. Here, the role of the institution is to give creative people room to move and spare the narrator or artist from worldly problems, just as it is for the creator to acknowledge the quality of competent paper work.

The world in a harmonica

As a local culture scribe, yours truly has naturally crossed paths with Our Stories on a couple of occasions during the three-year project span. To do this gargantuan display justice in just a few personal episodes is of course impossible. At the same time, the whole picture is often found in the details. In February 2017, the project anchors at the Torne Valley Museum in Tornio came up with some newly written music by regional collectives Visa Nordica and JORD. Alongside these players, Väinö Nilsen makes a lasting impression with his harmonica and interpretations of old Nordic songs. In some way, Väinö imbeds Our Stories in time, and resurrects memories of the ancient Kven people. Without having to utter a single word. Some six months later, a gala was held at Folkets hus in Haparanda with a musical extravaganza and movie screenings.



◀
Väinö Nilsen.

More than a thousand words?

For the author of this article, a simple photo session becomes evidence of inherent, collective strength. After some work in the wings, the stage troop assembles for a group shot in a side room. To create the right feeling in a portrait with many people is always a challenge – there is always someone with their eyes closed or the outlines of a person obscured by the shape of another. But in this picture a relaxed togetherness and openness towards the viewer can be seen. It is obvious that the participants have found roles they are comfortable with and that everyone is contributing to a successful end result in the project. Background and agenda are of minor importance – when people meet people, good things can happen.



- THE METHODOLOGY DEVELOPMENT -

Collecting, producing and sharing stories

Authors: Salla Puukko and Inger Birkelund

Story collection methodologies

Stories have been collected right from the beginning of the project until its end. The story collection is based on the “Story-tent” model originally used by Yleisradio Oy and the “Lapin Lisä” project. The model is based on the idea of the storyteller telling his/her own story to an interview team. Based on the stories collected, a picture of local lifestyle and culture is created.

Stories are captured by filming or recording and most of the stories are published on the Our Stories website. On the website, a visitor can also share his/her own story. Social media channels have also been used in the story collection. One of the channels is Instagram, where followers were able to share photo stories.

Visual art students from Lapland UAS shared their photo stories from the story collection tour organised by the project in autumn 2018. In these stories, Pirjolohi (Pirjo the salmon) is venturing along the Northern Lights Route.

One of the story collection methodologies was also literature research, which was used to explore already published local cultural heritage. However, the project team primarily wanted to focus on unpublished material.

The distances between the places along the route are very long. The overall length is more than 600 kilometres from Tornio-Haparanda to Tromsø, so this was a challenge when collecting stories. It was important to locate the storytellers at their hometowns and visit a variety of locations along the route. That is why the team organised several story collection tours.

The stories were eventually gathered from the locations that the partners were originally from. Suitable facilities and good collaboration with local stakeholders were also decision-making factors. Our collaborators were, for instance, nature parks and culture centres offering help and facilities for our project events. Activities in Norway focused on Storslett, which is the hometown of the Norwegian partner, Ihana!

In total 80 stories were collected by visiting for instance, nursing homes, elementary schools and immigration centres. Small-scale musical and storytelling performances were also organised during the tour. JORD from Pajala and VisaNordica from Tornio carried out the music performances. Ihana! performed the storytelling.

Selection of stories and the production process - Overall theme

In April 2017, the Project Team gathered in the middle of the Taiga forests, at Pinetree Lodge in Särkimukka for the Creative Bridge workshop, which was developed as a tool for selecting stories for a variety of story productions. At the workshop, the team shared with the rest of the group stories that had moved them. The basic idea of the method was to arrange all the story topics on the wall with the help of “static stickers”. The project team then arranged the stories in different categories, which were the basis of three themes and several sub-themes.

Many Post-it notes and colour codes, a lot of thinking and discussions eventually resulted in the Northern Lights Route as the collective theme for all the stories:

NORTHERN – stories about Nordic ways of life and identity, stories by the majority population and ethnic minorities, processes where languages have been lost, traditions, religion, crafts, work in addition to the challenges of living in an area with a small population and strong centralisation.

LIGHT- stories that express our connection to the Arctic landscape, how nature makes us want to live in the region, how the eight Sámi seasons have influenced our lives, how the light – the midnight sun, the polar night and the northern lights – affect our myths and our culture and make it attractive to visitors. Stories about the lack of light, how myths and superstitions have affected our mindset, and how it can be to live in the shadows of society.

ROUTE – stories that travel along the Northern Lights Route, both historically and today. About feeling stuck, leaving the north, leaving the countryside and the region behind, moving to the city, encounters with the big world. Stories about longing to go back. Many told us stories about coming home.

The final selection of story productions made in production teams and individually was then made. The workshop made it possible to organise the stories by themes and to ensure that the stories produced a wide range of topics covered by all the selected themes.

After the workshop in Kangos, the teams started to work on story productions. Separate teams worked with the production of music, film and oral storytelling, in addition to the Storybook, which was produced jointly by all five partners.

The duration of the process varied according to the production. With the film productions, challenges were presented by the Arctic climate and seasonal stories. It is basically impossible to film a summer movie in the middle of the winter. Another issue slowing down the production process was translations. It was very time-consuming to translate the material from its original language into English.

In the case of music and oral storytelling, the development of stories was better timed and the final music productions were published in August 2018 in Luleå. This gave a chance to market the music productions well before the concert *Feel the Northern Lights Route*. Stories produced in the form of music were published on two separate CDs. There are also story texts in their original languages and English. The music partners were JORD and VisaNordic/E-City.

Website development

The project team developed the website three times during the project period. Development work started in autumn 2016 with a simple information page, a place where visitors could find project information and contact details of the project partners.

Version two, based on the illustrations made by Anna Koivukangas, was published during the first press launch in January 2017. This version was developed to be more interactive. The target group was locals in the region. The basic principle of the site was to gather and publish stories collected by the project. The colourful illustrations were developed into a visual profile of *Our Stories*.

At the same time, the development of *Our Stories* website version number three started together with Creative Bridge. The idea of the website was to serve both visitors and locals in the region; to help them travel on the map from story to story.

Selected themes - the Northern, the Lights and the Route - were taken as the basis of categorising the *OurStories* website, which was also a tool to organise and manage the growing number of stories on the site.

The front page was built as a map of the Northern Lights Route and selected visual images were used as “map keys”, pinpointing the stories on the map. Animations were added to increase the attractiveness of the page. Language versions have also been seen as important. In addition to the English pages, most of the material on the site has been translated into Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian. The stories are presented both in English and in the original language: Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, Meänkieli or Sámi.

Inger Birklund (Ihana!) and Saila Puukko (Lapland UAS) were responsible for the new website. Gnist Design in Tromsø developed the website in collaboration with designer Anna Koivukangas. The newly designed website was published and launched for the press in August 2018.

By April 2019, 108 stories are freely available on the site in the form of text, music, interviews, film and artwork. The Our Stories main productions are categorised separately under featured items. All stories are published under the categories: NORTHERN LIGHTS ROUTE. Ihana! owns and will run the website for five years after the end of the project period.

Visual image of the Northern Lights Route

In recent years, the project has tested different ways to develop the Northern Lights Route trademark with an appealing visual image. The visual image is based on the stories and local cultural heritage of the region. Illustrations aimed to create the northern catalogue of the Northern Lights Route. An example of the visual image of the Northern Lights Route is the colouring postcards, which were based on the collected stories. So far, cards have been distributed along the route to the nature and cultural centres and libraries. Anna Koivukangas has created the overall visual image for Our Stories.

A need was also discovered to test and develop the illustrated Northern Lights Route map. The map was designed during spring 2019, and will be available for companies via the Our Stories website. The map is designed to serve the needs of companies like tourism enterprises sharing information about the area to their customers. The idea was to illustrate the cultural heritage objects on the map. An example of those illustrations is lippous, a traditional fishing method of the Tornio valley.

Experience Our Stories along the Northern Lights Route

[Show all](#) ↓



Featured



Film



Interview



Music



Visual



Written



[The Northern Lights Route](#) goes from Haparanda to Tromsø.

These websites are a combination of stories and photos, presenting the rich culture and diverse landscape along the route. Our stories are shared by people living & loving the area.

Visit our places and experience our stories on the map or [select from the list](#)





Do you have a story to share with us?

We're looking for more interesting nordic stories; do you have a song, short story, film, music or other material you'd like to publish on our site?

[Send us your story →](#)

Storytelling to capture and enlighten

Common culture and history are strongly represented along the Northern Lights Route, combining the Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian borders. There is a route, but more activity is needed along the route.

[Learn more about the project →](#)





Stories featured along the Northern Lights Route

The Our Stories project has spread awareness of the Northern Lights Route stories among locals and visitors. However, long distances and the transnational nature of the project have required large marketing efforts and committed partners. Nature centres, libraries and tourism companies have provided their facilities and equipment for the events also made sharing the stories possible.

From the sharing point of view, the Our Stories website plays an important role in locating the selected stories and story productions along the route. It is also a place for people to share their own stories. It is particularly important that stories can be easily added to the website, even after the project has ended. The stories have also been shared in the social media channels of the project, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

All the story productions were gathered together and presented at “Feel the Northern Lights Route” concerts in Haparanda in October 2018 and in Storslett in March 2019. In total, more than 200 guests attended the event. The concert consisted mainly of the music made by JORD and VisaNordica, but short films were also presented, as was oral storytelling.

The story productions, especially the students’ artworks, were also compiled for an exhibition that has travelled from the Museum of Torne Valley to the North Troms Museum. The Experience Our Stories exhibition has been going for almost six months and has attracted more than 2,000 visitors.



Artist: Maria Makkonen

From Storytelling to Story-design

Author: Saira Puukko

When starting to study storytelling, I became familiar with the term story-design. Story-design has been presented, for example, in the book *Tarinallistaminen - Palvelukokemuksen punainen lanka* (Kalliomäki, 2014). This book is based on the idea of story-design as part of service-design, where the whole business is based on a story. This means creating a cross-cutting story for a company.

Utilising local and culturally significant stories in the tourism business seems to be exactly what the development of the Northern Lights Route requires when creating a unified national cultural scene. This means a potential positive result for both a company and the Northern Lights Route.

The positive thing is that we already have examples of successful story-design. One of those is Mustaparta located in Tornio. The story of Mustaparta has been successfully utilised by several local companies. The Mustaparta Hotel and Restaurant are good examples of the power of stories.

Maybe in the future, stories can also be used in digital marketing, as part of digital storytelling.

Entrepreneurs as storytellers

Many entrepreneurs in the area are familiar with stories and storytelling. Some have already used stories in their own businesses. This was the result of a project survey carried out in spring 2019. However, more ideas, inspiration and new tools are needed especially for the digital storytelling.

The Our Stories project has had a long-term vision of contributing to the storytelling of companies along the route. It has also been noticed that stories of local culture heritage spread most effectively in the region via companies, especially those operating in the tourism business.

“The Heart of a Story” and “The Heart of a Business” - seminars were held to give ideas and inspiration to companies to develop their own stories, but also to take advantage of already collected stories. The events took place in Storslett in 2017 and Haparanda in 2018.

Companies also viewed the cross-border activity as a good reason to participate in the events. The events were a place to learn about the differences between countries, even if those differences were eventually rather small. Overall, it seemed the events helped to give the participants the confidence to continue with storytelling.

Storytelling methods

One of the goals of the Our Stories project was to test and develop storytelling methods. The idea of this was mainly to support local companies, but also to give ideas and inspiration to local inhabitants about the stories of the Northern Lights Route.

Perhaps the most interesting storytelling method is the “Living Story library”. In the story library, the visitor borrows a storyteller rather than a book. The stories can concern the storyteller’s personal experiences or historical events. Together storytellers tell a story of the Northern Lights Route. The storytellers were from the Tornio RajaTeatteri.

The Living Story library was held twice in 2017 and 2018 in the libraries of Tornio and Halti. In total, 116 books were borrowed. Stories were especially popular among the children. The library was a natural place to hold the event, as it is the home of stories. Later on, RajaTeatteri continued the Living story library as part of its own programme. It is encouraging to see how activities implemented in the project can live on after the project.

One of the methods developed and tested for companies is the “Your Stone & Story” - workshop held in Storslett in 2017. The method is based on the simple idea of a stone used as an aid to individual storytelling. Every participant was asked to bring a personally selected stone. Based on this stone, they created a story based on each company’s values and motivation, a story bringing out the heart of the company - the core story of the essence of their businesses.

To give a broader perspective to the storytelling, the “Storytelling by Food” - workshop was organised with the help of Björn Ylipää (Måltidsvision). This workshop was also held twice, once in Storslett and once in Tornio. The idea was to create and taste stories in the form of local food. One of the workshops was held in conjunction with the Tornio Valley Summer White-fish project in April 2018. The event celebrated the day of a migrating fish.

References:

Kalliomäki, A. Tarinallistaminen: Palvelukokemuksen punainen lanka, Talentum 2014.

►
*The keynote speaker Frida Boisen giving concrete
examples on how to build a brand on a social media.*

Photo: Henri Finström



Climbing to a business story

Author: Elina Stoor

When I was a child, I loved to perform - so much so that I decided to become as an actress. I participated in every kindergarten music performance and play and shone like a star in party spectacles. I was so passionate about it that I finally made it to show business. I was born in a high-rise suburb built in the 1970s where people knew their neighbours. My best friend Anu and I noticed at the age of five how easy it was to earn tit-bits from older people simply by making a small performance for them. This became our daily routine.



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*Elina as a child.
Photo: Olavi Stoor*

Why do people write business stories?

Imagine you are standing at a wine shelf in a liquor store. There are hundreds of similar bottles side by side and you have to pick one of them. How can you make the decision?

Some of us decide according to the beautifully designed labels. Some read the labels and try to figure out the bouquet and flavour. There might even be a story about the producer or the area where the grapes were grown. The rest of us ask the opinion of the store staff or our friends in order to find out about user experiences. The staff may know about the ethical values of making wine and can describe the flavour, and friends can recommend their own favourites.



A good business story helps in the making of a decision. It

- gives background information, CREDIBILITY
- makes or company or product seem HUMANE
- delivers important VALUES
- arouses FEELINGS, like success, positive surprise, empathy

Companies can be convincing and stand out with a good story.



Wine shelf.

Photo: Elina Stoor

Authentic and fictional business story

There are millions of companies in this world and each one of them has its own story. That's why it isn't easy to categorise different kinds of business stories, but I've tried to come up with a theory about it.

First of all, there are fictional company stories that are mostly used in the tourism business. Companies create a fictional world, like Disneyworld, where every single detail is based on a story, even the smallest one. You totally sense that you are living in this fictional world.

Then there are fictional product stories. Companies raise product value with a fictional story. These stories are often used with goods the target group of which are children.

Authentic stories are my heartfelt passion. One of the easiest ways to start writing a business story is usually based on history. The story can describe the entrepreneur's struggle to start the business or tell about the history of its location. Sometimes the story is based on how a new product or service was created. Business becomes flesh and blood through a historical story.

Some companies think that motivated and happy staff are the most important resource in business. In these cases, it is easy to make a story about them. Personnel give companies spirit. Story is an effective way to make a deeper connection between the staff and customers.

Things can also be the other way around. A company that has refined products and small target group can also write a story about its customers. This is an ambitious thing to do but can be a rewarding process for the company.

Of course, there are also stories based on real life but spiced with nice, fictional details. In such cases, it is typical to use symbols or art to give flavour to it.

How to make a story come alive?

Aristotle, the Ancient Greek philosopher, was the first man to analyse the structure of stories, especially the plot in poetry. He discovered the theory of tragedy, which inserts three parts into a drama: a beginning, middle and end.

This theory was augmented by German writer Freytag more than 2,000 years later. He split the story into five different sectors: introduction, rise, climax, return and catastrophe. In other words, to Aristotle's three parts he added the rising and falling of the action.

Based on the doctrines of these two wise men, I also developed the idea of story line a little further, splitting and naming the sections the way I understand them in the field of business stories.

Storyclimbing

Storyclimbing is only one way to write a business story, and might be an easy start. In a storyclimb, the story begins by introducing the main characters - let's call them heroes - and by describing their backgrounds. This makes the business seem HUMANE.

On the next level, something happens inside our hero and he/she becomes dissatisfied with the current situation. This usually indicates the MOTIVE and VALUES of the business. The hero starts to grow, but real change only happens when radical change comes from outside. The hero fights back and starts to work like a maniac. This proves that the people behind the company are CREDIBLE.

The hero plods on until something big happens, which turns the entire company around. The whole story has hopefully aroused FEELINGS, so this is the part when tears are shed. The hero finds a solution and things calm down.

Now our hero is ready to see the bright future, or perhaps another radical change from outside is looming. The hero overcomes the crisis again and finds a solution so many times that the situation becomes stable.



The value of the story

When I was five, I visited an older couple. They gave me bag of potatoes to take to my mother, but I had a better idea and decided to sell them. I had no idea what potatoes cost so I made up price in my mind, which was expensive, maybe six times higher than the price at the greengrocers. People naturally refused to buy such expensive vegetables, but one sweet granny asked me the story behind of it. I don't remember my full answer but I remember saying that the potatoes were from a countryside farmer and were high-quality. My story wasn't quite truthful but I got my audience.

So, the lesson I learned was that you can get six-times better value with a good story. A story is an effective way to strengthen the brand of a company and its products. Okay, I also learned that you shouldn't ever tell a lie, but that's another story.



Photo: Iina Askonen



Photo: Iina Askonen

Content for tourism from Tornio riverside stories

Authors: Iina Askonen, Outokaira tuottamhan ry

Laura Hokajärvi, Leader Tunturi-Lappi ry

Travellers do not want to be mere ‘tourists’ anymore. Instead, they want to experience the authentic life of the locals. What, then, does authenticity mean in tourism? It can simply refer to the real local lifestyle and culture but, in the end, authenticity is defined by the customers themselves. If the customers feel that the product is credible and authentic, it is authentic – even if it is completely made up. The most relevant element of this call for authenticity is the fact that authenticity creates demand where the product contents and their meaning outweigh its price.

The Our Stories project serves tourism in Tornio Riverside by producing materials that we can use as inspiration for creating contents and also for strengthening our own identity. Stories could be used much more in contents for tourism, but this requires much more help from and cooperation with travel companies.

Memorable experiences form the core of tourism today, and inauthenticity further increases the demand for authentic experiences. Today, when science can explain and create virtual versions of almost anything, nothing feels special anymore. We need something unique, mystical and mysterious, vast and wondrous, which is demonstrated by the popularity of the Northern Lights. Local stories can thrill people in a similar way. They stay in people’s minds, and people like to tell them to others.

For many travellers from faraway countries, winter is the most exotic season, but the light summer nights of Lapland with their midnight sun are also sure to offer unforgettable experiences. However, their wonder is more difficult to describe and market than that of the Northern Lights or snowy landscapes. After all, the world is full of stunning places where you can admire summer sceneries and sunsets. How to communicate through photos or videos that you can see the sun both set and rise within one moment, and witness one day turn into the next right in front of your eyes? Or how mystical and dreamlike our white summer nights can be? Stories could be a solution for this, too.

One major reason for the success of winter tourism is its effective and successful productisation. There are various safaris (reindeer, husky, snowmobile) available, as well as snowshoeing or ice-fishing excursions and trips to see the Northern Lights, etc. Somehow, we should also figure out now how to illustrate and productise this magic of summer nights. Even in productisation, stories based on our culture could serve as sources of inspiration.

Many long-discarded events or travel ideas connected to our culture or Arctic conditions that never quite took off could work today, with a little fine-tuning. Interest would not have to be drummed up from nothing because it already exists around the world.

It would be amazing to see the naturally hospitable communities of the Tornio Riverside come alive again thanks to opportunities created by tourism. By combining forces, we could be a more attractive and visible entity; a network of small operators that could offer individual, authentic and high-quality experiences far away from busy resorts and cities. The prices of products could also reflect this. We already have this shared travel route: the Northern Lights Route.

“Väylänvartta tunturiin ja takaisin – Alkuperäinen Lappi” (“Travel to the fells and back through the Tornio Riverside – the original Lapland”) is an international village tourism development project by three Leader teams of the Tornio Riverside that seeks new partners for travel companies among authentic Lapland villages with special culture and services that should be better productised. The project carries out actions connected to cross-border village tourism and advances the activities of operators on the Finnish side.



Photo: Iina Askonen



*Jessica Wennberg, Iina Askonen and
Laura Hokajärvi, Original Lapland*

- THE FUTURE -

Using Storytelling in Business and Tourism through AR Technology

Author: Rada Jutrakul

“Since people first sat around a fire and recounted their hunting expeditions, stories have been used as a means of entertainment, engagement, instruction, and communication (Baker, 2007).

Baker has described how storytelling is not just a way used to entertain, but is also a way to share ideas and memories (communicate), to educate (instruct) and bring connections (engage) within the community, yet storytelling is often undervalued although it actually exists as part of our everyday life. One of the reasons storytelling have been frequently used and is incredibly diverse is because people are wired to connect and storytelling creates that desired momentum.

In this era, digital storytelling must be mentioned when discussing storytelling methods. Digital storytelling has been one of the most used methods in every aspect of life from education, work training and advertising to media and games. This is because we are currently most reachable through the digital world, and storytelling can be delivered digitally with much greater impact. One of the most suitable tools used to deliver high-quality and relatable storytelling is Extended Reality or X Reality (XR) technology. In this paper, we will explore a branch of XR reality - AR (Augmented Reality) which is a scalable, affordable and easily implemented tool for both business and the tourism industry. The use of AR technology has supported the impact of storytelling in business and tourism, and will also bring tremendous growth and a sustainable market channel if it is utilised sensibly in the near future.

Branding through Digital Storytelling

Although storytelling has evolved into different shapes and forms due to the development of innovation, the core purpose of storytelling still remains the same. Shonda Rhimes of TED has stated about the future of storytelling that: “We all feel a compelling need to watch stories, to tell stories ... to discuss the things that tell each one of us that we are not alone in the world,”

Apart from the fact that storytelling can be used to “share” and “be heard” or to connect, it is a great tool for uniting myth-like ideas with reality. With the use of high-technology tools and innovation, our creativity can be supported with no limit how much you can share a story you like, or even persuade your readers to enter into a make-believe idea or world. There are numerous possibilities through the multimedia elements, which are now used to create stories and also as a channel to spread digital storytelling (Kotluk & Kocakaya, 2015). A good relatable example is the moment you realised that the product you purchased was not something you simply “needed”, but was rather purchased from a “want” or desire created by a sales video or advertisement on a crowdfunding campaign platform!

According to Klaebe, Foth, Burgess, and Bilandzic (2007), digital storytelling is an assembly of skills such as language, literature and art in a virtual setting with technology integrated to deliver the story in a virtual environment. This is why different companies and brands pour their resources into creating “a good story” to brand their products or services, because who does not like a good story? Storytelling can create an image and identity, which is revealed through the “Brand”, which can also be described as the face of the business. A brand is described as a series of signs that expresses the destination of the organisation: “the visual, verbal and behavioural expression of a destination’s unique business model” (Knox & Bickerton, 2003, p. 1013). According to Balmer (2004), brands are composed of three elements: values, promises, and behaviour. This means that, if a company utilises a well-rounded appealing experience that communicates a relatable message of the value of the product/service, the brand campaign is considered successful. Through this method, it is more likely for people to remember the experience when they are personally connected through a story (Simmons, 2001). All campaign marketers want a sustainable result and a memorable encounter through digital storytelling can easily help them achieve the love-term “Love” and not a short-term “Buzz” as referred in Forbes (Walter, 2013).

As companies and businesses begin to see the power of storytelling, it becomes clear that it has often been underestimated in the tourism and destination marketing sectors (Baker, 2007, p 134). It is without question that the tourism industry too can highly benefit from utilising storytelling as part of its “destination branding”. According to Morrison & Anderson (2002), destination branding is defined as a means to communicate the unique identity of the destination through differentiating their destination from its competitors. The reason storytelling goes hand-in-hand with the tourism industry is that both have the same goal, which is to provide a memorable experience. A good story is powerful if carefully used, since it can turn myths into a tangible consumable experience.

Utilising AR in Storytelling in Business

One of the most engaging tools used for storytelling in business is currently Augmented Reality (AR) technology and, according to Digi-Capital fundamental: “Augmented /Virtual Reality Report Q2 2015”, the AR/VR market is going to expand to up to \$150 billion by 2020, and augmented reality will have the lion’s share of the market at \$120 billion, whilst VR will have only \$30 billion (The App Solutions, n.d.). This is because the value of AR has been recognised due to the scalability, although it cannot really yet give a full-immersive experience. Due to the limitless possibilities of utilising AR through the mobile phones that most individuals own, AR technology has more users than any other technology under Extended Reality (XR). The technology is being adopted not only in entertainment industries but also in education, medicine, the military, business and tourism. There are currently four main types of AR which are: Superimposition Based, Marker-based, Marker-less, and Projection-Based (Reality Technologies,” n.d.). According to Rands, K. (2017) there are five main uses of AR technology through different sectors to engage users: 1) Increase duration of stay 2) Experiential events – at home 3) Explaining complex concepts 4) Try before you buy 5) Training. To explore the potential of AR in business and tourism through this paper, a few examples of brands with the successful use of AR must be mentioned. Brands that have used AR technology successfully from different categories of business are IKEA, Zara, Tesco, New York Times, Disney Parks, Burger King and Netflix.

Ikea customers use AR technology through their mobile device's camera to visualise how virtual IKEA items will look in any given space. This type of AR technology is called "Superimposition based". Through this, Ikea was successful in helping customers answer the biggest question: Is this the right item for me? Zara or other clothing brands such as Lacoste and Adidas also started to adopt AR technology to allow users to experience the "try before you buy" phenomenon. While Marker-based AR is mostly used in image recognition or visual markers such as QR or 2D code, companies such as Tesco or major publishers such as the New York Times can easily bring products or images to life. Projection-based AR uses the senses of human interaction (i.e. touch) in contact with projected light onto a real-world surface. In April 2017, the well-known company "Where dreams come true", Disney, filed a patent for projection-based augmented reality for its amusement parks. Although Disney realised the limitation of a fully immersive environment, it is still a great function for interaction and engagement (Mindsight, 2017).

Utilising AR in Storytelling in Tourism

When marketers are assigned to brand a destination, communicating the expectation of what the destination will provide is the most important goal. Whether the business sells products, services, or experiences, it is looking to add great value to the destination. A destination brand can only come into existence through messages recognised by the destination stakeholders. A promised experience made specifically for a consumer, visitor or tourist is what identifies a destination brand (Schmitt, 1999), so the use of positive stories to attract tourists is a powerful method for destination brand marketing.

AR technology has been popular among travellers, mainly to assist in the planning and to make the journey itself more seamless, interactive and easy. The four components of how AR technology has contributed to tourism industries are: 1) Interactive, Virtual Hotel Room Selection and Booking 2) Quick, Easy Access to Information 3) Reliable, Real-Time Navigation 4) Easy Translation Capabilities While Abroad 5) Access to Interactive Dining and Entertainment Choices (Augment, 2016). All these possibilities help travellers to save time and energy, and have a more carefree holiday on a more affordable trip. They no longer have to worry about whether the accommodation, restaurants, transportation or attractions will reach their expecta-

Through the most widely used type of AR technology, storytelling for tourism can utilise the “Markerless” method, which seamlessly connects users to their current location. Markerless augmented reality uses data based on your location, which is retrieved by functions such as GPS, digital compass, accelerometer or a velocity meter situated in the user’s personal device (The App Solutions, n.d.). Some examples of mobile applications for tourists with markerless technology are Yelp’s Monocle feature, which shows the businesses and restaurants surrounding you in real-time with compass-based Google Maps giving a directional map, and Lonely Planet AR City Guides, which gives you advice on places to visit with complete augmented reality camera views and GPS maps incorporated.

Many AR applications also include different features such as augmented reality, geo-location, drawing and painting tools, image streaming, sharing features, photo camera and a comments section to engage the users and at the same time fulfil the purpose of the application. Some other examples of AR applications for travellers that are currently widely used are Google Translate, HISTORY Here, CityGuideTour and WallaMe. Many of these applications are useful tools such as Good Translate or CityGuideTour, while the HISTORY Here app is more educational, yet still engaging. Lastly, WallaMe is all about leaving messages or telling your story and leaving it in different locations for it to be discovered.

To conclude, to benefit from the use of AR technology through storytelling in business and tourism, one must understand the message the business wants to communicate and the purpose of the technology selected for its use. Digital Storytelling can be done through many channels, and creativity and passion can be the key to ideas for your market plans. AR may not sound relevant to you due to the nature of your business, but it may be used to create something more relevant to connect customers to your company in ways you cannot imagine. According to Ekaterina Walter “Long-term commitment from you can build long-term loyalty from your customers and fans. So stop managing campaigns and start building movements!”

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Needs of digital storytelling along the Northern Lights Route

Author: Jenni Kemi

Based on the survey results, entrepreneurs and stakeholders along the Northern Lights Route are willing to utilise digital storytelling and to work transnationally. Digital storytelling creates new opportunities to experience and spread stories. By offering varied support methods to entrepreneurs and stakeholders in the region, there is a chance to create more digital storytelling along the Northern Lights Route and thereby to make the region more active, vivid and attractive with increasing business opportunities through stories.

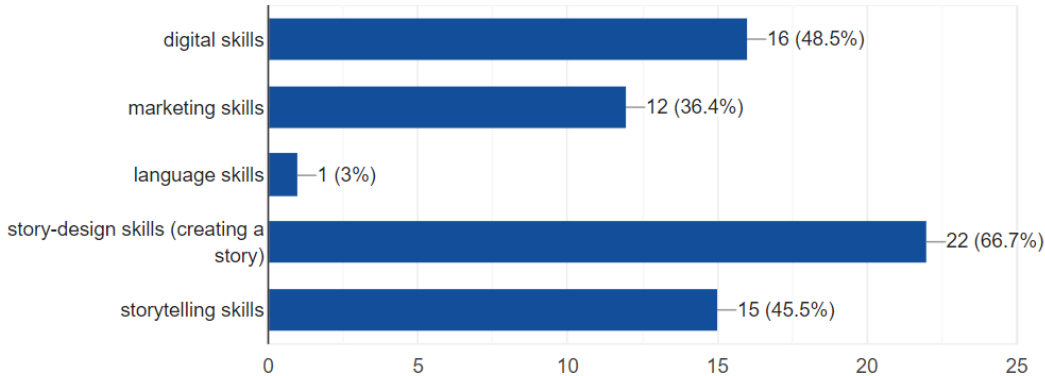
Storytelling through digital marketing channels

Storytelling as a method is used variably by businesses (Alexander 2017, 12) and the value of storytelling has not been fully identified in the field of tourism, even though it can have a positive effect on the emotion and meaning of a brand (Baker 2007, 134). For marketing, storytelling is an opportunity and, using technical solutions, it is possible to tell stories digitally (Alexander 2017, 3, 12). Digital storytelling comprises wide-ranging forms including visualisation of film or social media content (Dunford & Jenkins 2017, 2). To gather information about the needs of digital storytelling for the entrepreneurs and stakeholder along the Northern Lights Route, a survey was designed and implemented by the Our Stories project in spring 2019. This survey was mainly intended for entrepreneurs and other stakeholders along the Northern Lights Route. It provided valuable information about the regional needs, and the outcomes of the survey can be utilised when planning the future development activities of the region such as possible continuation projects. There were 35 respondents to the survey and most of them were working as entrepreneurs (27%), as employees in companies (21%), at educational institutes (24%) or in associations (9%). The survey reached respondents from all three countries along the Northern Lights Route: Finland (59%), Norway (32%) and Sweden (6%).

The results of the survey showed that storytelling in digital marketing, cross-border cooperation along the Northern Lights Route, story development support for local companies and storytelling and sustainable development are seen as the most interesting and relevant topics. Almost half (47%) of the respondents had already shared their stories via digital media and most of them (59%) were interested in developing a story for their company based, for example, on origin, local history and culture. The respondents were asked to identify the support needed to share stories via digital media, and the most important matter (67%) mentioned was story-design skills. Additionally, the respondents expressed a desire for support to develop their digital skills (49%), storytelling skills (46%) and marketing skills (36%). Individual or a group support by social media consultation, workshops with a social media expert and peer support from entrepreneur colleagues were mentioned as the best methods to improve storytelling skills through digital marketing channels. Social media and digital advertisement in particular are seen as the most relevant digital marketing tools to get support for. The majority (72%) of respondents see videos, films and animations as the most relevant and useful forms of storytelling.

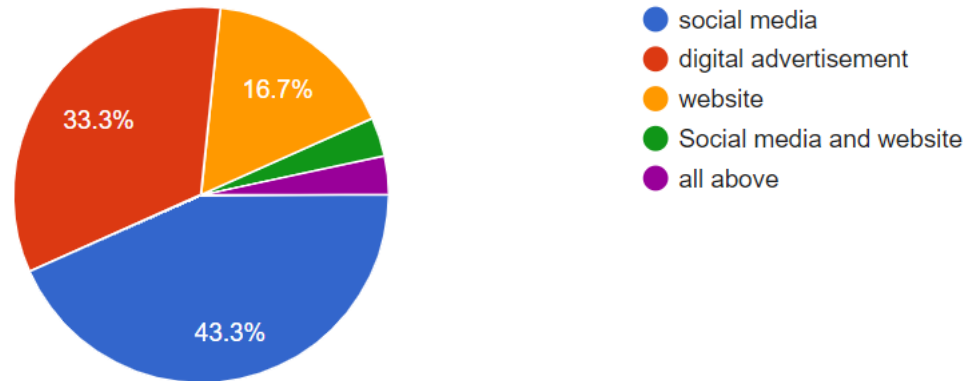
What kind of support do you wish to have? (choose one or several)

33 responses



Through what digital marketing tools do you wish to have the most support?

30 responses



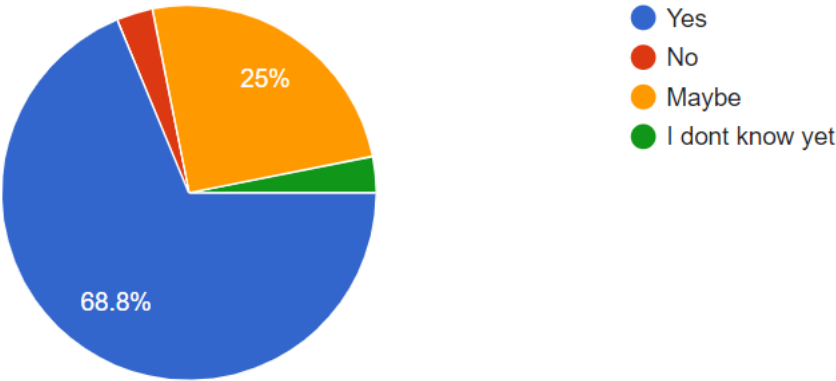
Cross-border cooperation by a common story

When asked about the willingness to create a common story together with peer companies, one-third (35%) of the respondents said they would be immediately ready for that and half (50%) said 'maybe'. It should be noted that the majority (87%) of respondents would like to work both at regional and transnational levels. Naturally there are some obstacles to face when working transnationally with peer companies, such as finding common goals, managing distances over the borders and overcoming language barriers. To create stories together with peer companies, most (58%) of the respondents would like to take part in training and workshop events. Matchmaking and networking (19%) and seminars (10%) are also seen as important elements of the success of cooperation among the respondents.

The respondents see that there could be a chance to promote the Northern Light Route via social media, on websites or by using new technology solutions like augmented or virtual reality. One-third (33%) of respondents already see new technology solutions like augmented reality as a relevant option for their companies. Technologies might help to capture the attention of potential customers and act as a means for providing the service. Technology solutions are seen as a really good way to bring customers together and closer to the region, and a majority (69 %) of respondents are willing to take part in testing new technologies for digital storytelling.

Would you be interested in taking part in testing new technologies?

32 responses



Storytelling combined with different digital solutions could contribute to increasing the attractiveness of the rich cultural heritage and history of the region. The results of the survey indicated that entrepreneurs and stakeholders along the Northern Lights Route are also able to use digital storytelling by means of cross-border cooperation. The results will be considered while planning the next steps of the development of digital storytelling along the Northern Lights Route. In order to get more digital storytelling over the borders, it is necessary to provide varied support methods for stakeholders. Higher education institutes are able to meet the needs of region by offering a framework for digital solutions.

The Our Stories project team has carried out multiple story productions presenting the rich culture and diverse landscape along the Northern Lights Route. To more strongly represent the common culture and history along the route, there is a need for more digital storytelling activity in the region. The results of the survey showed that most of the respondents (80%) see the stories gathered in the project as relevant or inspirational content for their story development. All the Our Stories story productions can be utilised for further use, and perhaps the stories could also be a source of inspiration to create a common story together with the stakeholders of the region.

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▶
*Opening of the Our Stories exhibition
at Museum of Tornio Valley, October 2018*

OUR STORIES

Along the Northern Lights Route



How do you utilise the results of the stories?

Authors: Saila Puukko & Jenni Kemi & Inger Birkelund

To be inspired by stories

Over the past two and half years, hundreds of stories have been collected along the Northern Lights Route. Tens of people have travelled and visited the places “in between” the Route; the places reflecting the rich and unique cultural heritage in the region. The stories are based on local languages, showcasing the local identity and the northern way of life. The story themes have guided us along the way, making their distinctive traditions and heritage clearer than before.

The origin of the project idea was to gather stories, which would inspire local companies to make use of the stories in their own marketing campaigns. It was strongly believed that, with companies, the stories would continue to live, making the Northern Lights Route more vivid and attractive. The website itself - as attractive as it is - is not a sufficient solution to keep stories alive.

The variety of story productions illustrated how stories can be transformed in different ways, especially digitally. The produced stories can be an example for new digital stories created by companies along the Northern Lights Route. Storytelling events have been a way to inspire local companies to use stories, but the survey results indicate that more individual support is needed.

Inspiration and ideas - many faces of the stories

Our Stories are freely available to be used. The productions are in the form of music, short film, animation and text. Not only companies, but also municipalities and tourism associations, can utilise the story collection as part of their digital marketing strategy, integrating stories into their website or on their social media platform. Through the story productions, the featured stories combining the rich culture and diverse landscape along the region was made possible and, therefore, created added value for the engagement of customers. To get visitors familiarised with our local culture and history, the material is shown at regional museums, nature and culture centres. As for now, there has already been several events where the productions have been presented.

There are many existing practical examples of ways to utilise the story productions. The “Our Stories” website and YouTube channel can be connected with the company’s own website. In the near future, it will also be possible to promote the company’s stories on the website and locate them on a map. The tour operators and tourism centres could showcase the productions to introduce the region to the visitors in an attractive way with short films as well as with the illustrated map representing the Northern Lights Route. The map creates an opportunity to tell about the route and the local culture and traditions, events and places in the Arctic region.

Another practical example of using the produced materials could be the transportation companies by showing selected videos when touring along the route. Today, many bus companies have small display screens on the back of the seats enabling the travellers to see the materials individually. The Arctic Route established by Bussring is one example of a bus route mentioned also by Katja Petterson in the following article: Cross-border cooperation in the Arctic and how to use storytelling. The Arctic Route is a bus route from Tromsø to Rovaniemi.

One option is also to follow the stories individually for people travelling by car or by bus while visiting the local companies offering oral storytelling or story experiences. As an “hop on - hop off” story experience along the route, as treasure hunters or explorers looking for stories of northern heritage and culture. The additional services, like horseback riding, can be offered in between the places.

The future vision is to integrate the mobile app solution into the website in order to get visitors and locals to follow the stories based on where they travel. The stories with rich content could be added within the route and thereby travellers could get information on the region in a memorable way. One of the aims is to connect the “Our Stories” website to other regional websites and digital solutions administered by local stakeholders, such as Visit SeaLapland. Several regional developers are already working with digital solutions with a possibility to incorporate modern features, such as gamification, to attract users.

Platforms created for Our Stories

The stories are visible along the route in different ways. One of these ways is The Storybook, which is available as an e-book or printed version available for order from the website, the price only covers the printing, delivering and publishing costs. Companies can order the printed storybook and offer it as gifts to their visitors. The book and website can be used by libraries, museums and schools to increase the knowledge of our northern culture, history and languages.

The Our Stories website is seen as a place to find and be inspired about the local stories transformed into music, short films, animations and texts. The website is a combination of stories presenting the rich culture and diverse landscape along the route. Our Nordic stories are shared by people living and loving the region. Ihana! will host the website from July 2019.

Our vision for the future is for the people living in the region along the Northern Light Route - as well as visitors and tourists - to have the possibility to travel from story to story through their journey. The future tourism can be digital, clicking from story to story on our digital map - every story linked to a specific location along the route - the places in between.

Common Northern Lights Route Story-Arc

As the stories and storytelling is the basis of the project, the idea within a cross-border project was to create connections across the borders, especially between local companies. Through the journey, it has helped us to learn from one another and gather great storytelling examples worth preserving. In a way, the project was also a learning experience for both the participating companies and the project team on how much local stories can be composed into a common Northern Lights Route Story-arc.

Often having been acknowledged, collaboration is crucial when developing common products and services. This is also what Our Stories has initiated, as some participating companies have already started working together for a common goal. One example of a collaboration is the horseback trips across the borders. It seems that the stories can be based on a common ground for the collaboration by giving its very attractive and useful storyline of two-countries cooperating.

The project has also supported local cultural initiatives, like Kyläpeli in Storslett, which premiered in autumn 2017. Kyläpeli is based on common, cross-border historical heritage. It is a huge project which includes the participation of public actors, amateurs as well as cultural and tourism companies. Several partners and companies of Our Stories contributed to this rendition as Kyläpeli is inspired by Bente Pedersen's story which was collected by the Our Stories team.





About authors

Inger Birkelund is educated as teacher and has an MBA in economy and leadership. Her company ihana! offers storytelling experiences for travel industry, she performs as storyteller and actress in various performances, both with her own stories and in collaboration with other performers. Inger writes stories herself, often in a personal approach, based on her historical and cultural background in North of Troms. She has produced theater, films, festivals and exhibitions.

Katja Pettersen is originally Russian and came to Norway in 96 as an exchange student. Things turned out unpredictable way and she never left. Now, 22 years later, she is enjoying her family life and hectic days at work as Travel Trade Manager at Northern Norway Tourist Board and Project Manager for Visit Arctic Europe Project on Norwegian side at the same time. Obviously, Katja loves to travel, to meet and connect people with each other. She gets inspired by meetings with dedicated people and by being a part of new beginnings.

Birgit Dorothea Nielsen is a trained veterinarian, originally born in the southern parts of Norway. She fell for North Troms because of her love for a man, the wonderful nature, the people and culture, and not least because of a small horse with a great personality. Along with her husband she has run a company called Lyngshetlandet. Previously, the company's main product was long mountain tours on horses, but now their main focus is to increase the interest of the breed in the public domain. Storytelling naturally plays a significant part in this work.

Annika Kronqvist is a teacher and responsible for art, performance art and interior design courses at the Svefi Academy and also work with graphic design and have planned and created brochures, advertisements, posters, business cards etc. She has a long experience of international and national art and design projects.

Lasse Stenman has worked as a freelance writer and photographer for nearly twenty years, mainly as a contributor at local newspaper Haparandabladet. His main target is local cultural events, but also sports and general subjects. Over the years, he has amassed a profound knowledge of people and life in the Torne Valley – in both Sweden and Finland. At home, he likes to relax with a glass of Beaujolais wine and the warm sound of vinyl records.

Elina Söderström is a Landscape Architect (Msc), artist, singer and a tourism entrepreneur from TornioHaparanda. She has a long experience in leading various kinds of projects. In the Our Stories-project she has been working as a project manager for own company, Studio E-City, which she owns with her husband Esa Rautiainen. They also make music and organize cultural projects together, and perform with their own music group VisaNordica and other bands. In her spare time and when she wants to clarify her thoughts she likes to do some gardening, or go out for a walk with her dog. She also likes to swim, ski, dance and spend time with her family.

Elina Stoor is a creative person who is thirsty for touching/moving experiences. Elina's passion is to develop customer experiences by using storytelling.

Saila Puukko works as a project manager in Lapland University of Applied Sciences. Saila holds M.Ed. on Adult Education and has a teacher's pedagogical qualification. Saila has long expertise on international project management in the higher education industry. She is skilled in management of international networks, developing project in the fields of business, marketing and arts & design. She is the project manager / lead partner of Our Stories.

Timo Puukko works as a screenwriter, producer, cinematographer, editor and a lecturer in Our Stories project at Lapland UAS, Digital solutions unit. He has a professional background as a film maker and he has been working in different kinds of film productions including both fiction and documentaries, commercials and music videos.

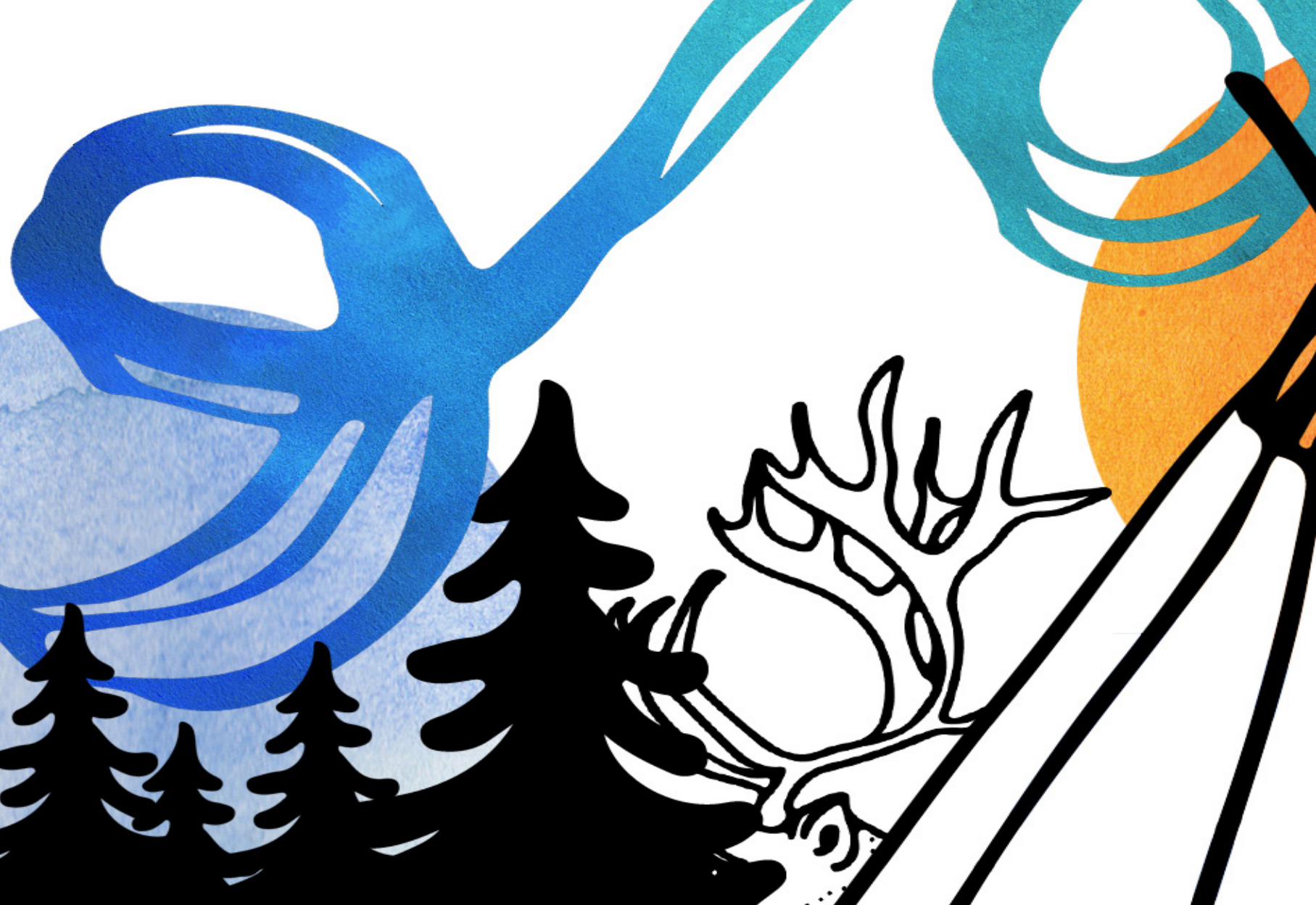
Jenni Kemi works as a Project Planner in Lapland University of Applied Sciences. Her projects are mainly related to business development.


Erling Fredriksson has been educated at the Academy of Music in Piteå / Stockholm and is a full-time musician, composer and artist since 1991. Erling has worked in music groups, been employed at cultural institutions. He lives with his family in the village of Tärendö in Pajala municipality. Erling is the project manager of the group JORD. The other members of JORD are Johanna Lindgren, Jan Johansson and Susanne Rantatalo.

Anitra Arkko-Saukkonen is a multi-skilled expert in the creative field and works at Lapland University of Applied Sciences in the field of Digital solutions as a senior lecturer in visual art studies. Storytelling is important and because one picture tells more than thousen words, that is why visual storytelling is important.

Rada Jutrakul works as a project planner at Lapland University of Applied Sciences, Digital solutions unit. She has a strong background in Education and Learning Sciences. Her experiences in planning different development projects have been revolving on designing education and training for expertise development.





A stylized illustration featuring a large orange sun in the upper left, a black silhouette of a tree on the left, and a person in the lower right holding a blue flower. The person has a wide, toothy grin and is wearing a striped shirt. The background includes green wavy lines.

There is something wonderful about a good story.
Even better if the story tells us something about
ourselves or others. In this way, stories open our
eyes to the big world we belong to or illustrate
the extraordinary in the ordinary here at home.
Sharing stories about people, history and place
along the Northern Lights Route has been at the
heart of the Our Stories project.

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