Notes and lessons

We frequently look back on this work as a source of three important lessons for ourselves and our client.

1. What's better than researching the future? Personal immersion in the forces influencing the future. The sparks of insight that made this project so valuable to the client happened in the field, NOT while people were reading reports.

2. However much you believe in it, however much you've invested in it, your current question might not be the right question. We see this over and over again. In fact we sometimes structure client workshops around the question, "Are we asking the right question?"

3. Experiences like this bind multidisciplinary teams into a single group culture. Planning, engineering, and design: before the trips, they were three very different cultures, with different language, values, priorities and expectations. After these amazing travel experiences, they were one group having one conversation.

The Rest of the Story or, "what we WISH had happened...."

The biggest difficulty in this work came from lack of executive involvement. The team had an experience that transformed how they saw the company's place in the world, and which let them to them a new kind of strategic direction.

But then the team found itself having to persuasively communicate unconventional ideas to executives who hadn't been through the same experience. They had remained in the same institutional structure and old everyday conversation, while the team had been shaken into a new realization by their travels, new friendships, and serious reflection.

What do we wish?

The good news is that the executives were persuaded. But we wish we had been able to convene a more extended network of stakeholders around this work. That would have given the work great internal legitimacy and power, preserving not only the ideas that made it into the final presentations and designs, but also kept alive and spread the understanding, energy, and sense of connection that will be necessary for the company to act on the strategy.

P.S.

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We're aware that both of our stories so far end with an executive saying, "Let's do it." We're trying to keep these brief without just turning them into fairy tales, but hey, that's really what happened!

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