Designing a conference – Cumulus Kalmar 2013

Marie Sterte
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Thanks to students and faculty at Linnaeus university, School of Design.
INTRODUCTION

Within the Cumulus network, which consists of 198 art and design educations 48 countries, two international conferences are planned and implemented annually at different member universities around the world. A secretariat is attached to the network, whose duties include disseminating knowhow about planning conferences.

The Linnaeus University School of Design hosted Cumulus Kalmar on 5-8 June, 2013. Talks with project leaders from previous host universities have demonstrated that more documentation about the design, implementation and evaluation of previous conferences is required to form a basis for further conferences.

As Linnaeus University hosts a number of conferences every year in various departments, there is additional need for such documentation. A central unit is underway for working with conference planning and department support.

The aim is to examine how the 2013 Cumulus Kalmar conference was designed, implemented and followed up as well as to increase the understanding of the importance of design for an experience like a conference in order to, hopefully, share this information for future conferences.

"While many debates in design studies might focus on whether priority is given to the production stage or the consumption stage, here I want to suggest another way of thinking about design. So this leads me to a second possible injunction: design culture without products." (Highmore 2009)

"Limited research has addressed the nature of experience in the field of events. --- Planned event experiences suggest that an event organizer can design, plan and create experiential moments that present guests with deeply valued and memorable experiences." (Berridge 2012)

How was this conference designed and implemented? What made the participants content with the experience? What made them less content?

Any following mention of “the secretariat” refers to the Cumulus secretariat, located in Aalto University in Helsinki. This is where the Cumulus secretary general is stationed together with a coordinator. By “faculty” is meant those employed at the Linnaeus University School of Design who worked with the conference, altogether comprising about 20 people.

The methods used in the design phase of the conference include an introductory workshop together with the whole faculty, monthly meetings, personal encounters and telephone conversations between project leader and area coordinators, project leader and department head and between project leader and secretariat as well as visualizations of locations and events.

During the implementation a timetable for programmes and events was used. After the conference a visualization was created of the conference days and a questionnaire was sent out to the participants.

The work with the conference is described from the perspective of the project leader cum designer. To be able to describe the largely silent knowledge used for the design and implementation of the conference, texts from areas like event design, culture sociology, liberal arts, economics and education have been studied parallel with studies in design theory and methodology.
On October 5, 2012, 8 months before the start of the conference, the faculty met for a 5-hour workshop. The aim of this was to gain a decent picture of what was desirable to do and of a theme for the conference. The desire was to involve as many of the faculty members as possible to work together towards a jointly created goal.

Figure 1 includes themes and suggested names from the workshop, emanating in what became the conference theme: “Global thinking, local action, future life”. The issue of how those of us involved in art and design should work for a sustainable future was what engaged the faculty the most.

It was also agreed that Days 2 and 3 should be structured in a similar way, consisting primarily of a number of workshops based on already existing Cumulus teams (see Figure 1). The idea was to depart from the conference “template” of parallel paper presentations and instead give the participants more time to dig deeper into their particular fields as well as providing more time for discussions and networking in small workshop groups. A further aim was to include both theory and practice in the workshops, with the emphasis on practice, in other words, on “local action”.

“As anyone who attends such conferences knows, they typically consist of a series of 15–40 minute presentations followed by 5–10 minute periods for questions and answers. Considering what is known about learning today, we may well question the efficacy of such massive one-way communication. While there has been extensive experimentation practically everywhere else in the educational world, the conference, viewed as a forum for learning, stills largely pegs the learner in the role of a passive receiver of information.” (Ravn and Elsborg 2011)

Day One was to comprise registration, keynote lectures and a dinner at Kalmar Castle. The last day would take place at Pukeberg.

When the project leader was appointed about a week later, there was a complete workshop concept to start from. Figure 4 shows the final programme, looking roughly the same as the workshop draft in Figure 3.
### Wednesday 5 June

- **Kalmar Theatre, Larmtorget 1, Kalmar**
  - 13.00-16.00 Registration
  - New members fair
  - 15.00-16.00 Election kick-off

- **At Kalmar Theatre:**
  - 16.00 opening
  - 16.30-18.30 Keynote speakers
    - Jana Revedin, Victor Margolin
  - 18.30 walk to Kalmar castle
  - 18.45 mingle in courtyard
  - 19.15 walk through the castle
  - 19.45 *Grand opening dinner*
  - 22.00 "hang out" at Byttan

### Thursday 6 June

- **At Kalmar Theatre:**
  - 16.30–18.30 Keynote speakers
    - David Crafoord
    - Maria Nyström
  - 18.30 Mingle in Theatre café
    - 19.00 Design for All Europe
    - 19.30 SVID – Dinner on your own
    - 21.00 – "hang out" at Larm

### Friday 7 June

- **At Kalmar Theatre:**
  - 16.30–18.30 Keynote speakers
    - Lars Dafnäs
    - Thomas Markussen
  - 18.30 Mingle in Theatre café
    - 19.00 DESIS cluster – Dinner on your own
    - 21.00 – "hang out" at Larm

### Saturday 8 June

- **Maritime Academy, Landgången 4, Kalmar**
  - General Assembly of Cumulus pre-registered, one per school
  - / Free activities
  - 12.30-13.30 lunch on your own
  - 13.30 bus from Kalmar Theatre
  - 14.00 vernissage workshops and posters in Pukeberg, Nybro
  - 14.30 Coffee/Tea
  - 15.30 Panel discussion with workshop leaders
  - 16.30 Keynote speaker
    - Erika Lagerbielke

### Notes

- **Dress Code:** "Royal Vintage"
- **Music & Dance**
  - 18.00 Circus Glass Royale
  - 19.00 "Hyttssill" Hot shop herring
  - 20.45 Announcement new board
  - 21.00 Urban Turban on stage

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*Figure 4.*
Graphic profile

The next step was to produce a graphic profile. Two former Linnaeus University students, who are currently running a design office, drew up a typographically striking draft in black combined with soft pastel tones. As we were anxious to include some element from the Linnaeus University profile, we suggested the fluorescent rose colour (PMS 806) of its profile.

Fluorescent colours in advertising and graphic design are usually associated with “popular culture”, which, according to Herbert Gans, stands in contrast to “high culture” (as described in Miegel and Johansson 2010). It is argued that these colours have been used insensitively and that they have “blinded our optical sensors” (Martindill 1988). By using the fluorescent rose colour we wished to introduce an element that jars in the eyes of an artist/designer.

Because of the narrow timeframe we chose to buy the rights to the draft to continue on our own with the graphic form for the web and printed publications.

Locations

The location where a meeting is held sets the tone, so choosing a place is the biggest and most complex decision you have to make (Tate et al. 2006). It was our ambition to create a warm, unprestigious, playful and professional atmosphere for the conference.

It had already been decided to hold the conference in Kalmar. The Linnaeus University School of Design has no localities of its own, nor does it run any activities in Kalmar, since they take place at Nybro, ca 30 kilometers further east. While Nybro has no hotel or other accommodation for 250 conference participants, Kalmar held plenty of advantages: accommodation, communication, being located on the sea, history and restaurants.

Figures 5–8 display some possible conference rooms in Kalmar that we looked at. As the atmosphere of Kalmar Theatre (Figure 8) was warm, playful and professional, this was the locality we chose for the hub of the conference. This is where registration and keynote lectures were held, including the subsequent mingle.

The atmosphere was important for all the localities and places where activities happened during the conference; see Figure 9.
Figure 9. The atmosphere was essential for all localities and places where activities were held during the conference. From top left: Kalmar Castle (opening dinner), Pukeberg/Nybro (final session), Workshops were held at: the Theatre Café, Restaurant Larm, Alvaret, Kalmar Art Gallery, Capellagården, Öland’s Folk High School and at the Kultivator farm in Dyestad.
Meetings

The conference was to consist of several major events: inauguration dinner at the castle, keynote lectures, 10 workshops, an exhibition of workshop results and reviewed posters, as well as a final banquet.

During the period prior to the conference the faculty met once a month (ca. 1 hour per month for 7 months) to compare notes. The project leader’s most important task was then to visualize the work progress and the plans for how to proceed further, so as to give everyone a feeling of participation and job satisfaction. How was “our” conference marketed at the Cumulus conference in Chile? In what localities is the conference to be held and what do they look like? How to arrange transports?

For the first monthly faculty meeting, work distribution and communication channels were visualized (Figure 10). Behind the “Workshops” heading in the figure there are 10 colleagues, responsible for one workshop each, while the other headings represent one colleague responsible for each field.

The project leader has the overview and is in charge of the communication with the department head and the secretariat.

The head of the department bore the final responsibility, but also served as an “idea person” and sounding board for the project leader. Contacts between project leader and department head were held roughly every two days, largely by telephone and sms, and once a week in person.

Daily contacts with the secretariat were made by e-mail, and for more complicated issues by phone. The visual programme (Figures 12–14) was produced to explain our intentions to the secretariat, as the text-based programme (Figure 4) was found insufficient. The visual programme later on also proved to fulfil an important function vis-à-vis the faculty, the students involved, and conference participants.

Student cooperation

About 50 students took part in working for the conference. Some of them attended a course, within whose framework they designed the opening dinner at Kalmar Castle. Others attended a course designing the final banquet at Pukeberg. In one course students produced a special issue of the student paper, which was distributed to all participants (see Figure 19). Others tasks included packing the conference bags, meeting and guiding the guests, handling the registration or participating and assisting in one of the workshops (see Figure 21). All the 50 students were invited to the final banquet and to all keynote lectures.
5 June, Opening Cumulus Kalmar 2013

Kalmar Theatre
Adress: Larmtorget 1, Kalmar, Sweden
13.00-16.00 Registration, New members fair
Keynotes 5, 6 and 7 June 16.30–18.30
Jana Revedin
Victor Margolin
Maria Nyström
David Crafoord
Lars Dafnäs
Thomas Marcussen

Train station
15 min. walk along the waterfront

Kalmar konstmuseum
"Hangout" in the museum bar
22.30–

konstmuseum
"Hangout" in the museum bar
22.30–

Kalmar Castle
Adress: Kungsgatan 1, Kalmar
18.45 Mingle in courtyard
19.15 Walk through the castle and the exhibitions “Slow art” and “Royal vintage”
19.45 Grand Opening dinner
Dress code “Royal Vintage”

Figure 12.
6–7 June
workshops, “local action” on the theme “future life”
09.00–15.00, lunch included

Note: 08.30 buses from Kalmar Theatre
to workshops in Pukeberg and on Öland

Kalmar Theatre
Sustainability
Leadership and strategy

LARM
X-files

08.30 buses from Kalmar Theatre
15.30 buses arrive back
Adress: Larmtorget 1, Kalmar, Sweden
16.30–18.30 Keynotes at Kalmar Theatre

Number source 3 GJ

08.00–16.30 Theatre Gallery
Adress: Olof Palmes gata 1, Kalmar
Registration 6–7 June,
questions about the conference,
Kalmar, Linnaeus University...

Note: dinner on your own 6–7 June
“Hangout” at Larm 21.00–
Adress: Olof Palmes gata 2, Kalmar

Bus from Kalmar Theatre 8.30 and back 15.00 both days

Dyestad
Digital culture

Capellagården
Fashion and textile

Capellagården, Alvaret
Interior and furniture

Ölands Folkhögskola
Contemporary art

Kalmar konstmuseum
Design philosophy

Campus Pukeberg
Glass

Campus Pukeberg
Design and innovation

Figure 13.
8 June, closing at Campus Pukeberg

**Campus Pukeberg**
Adress: Pukebergarnas väg 61, Nybro

- 14.00 vernissage workshops and posters
- 14.30 Coffee/tea
- 15.30 Keynote speaker Erika Lagerbielke
- 16.30 Panel debate with workshop leaders
- 17.20 Future conferences of Cumulus
- 18.00 Glass circus
- 19.00 “Hyttssill” Hot shop herring
- 21.00 Music and dance, on stage: Urban Turban
- 22.00 and 24.00 Bus back to Kalmar Theatre

**Campus Kalmar**
Adress: Landgången 4, Kalmar

- 08.30-09.00 Registration General assembly (pre-registered, one person/shool)
- 09.00-12.30 General Assembly of Cumulus
- Elections of a new Cumulus President and Cumulus Executive Board 2013-2016
- 13.30 Bus from Kalmar Theatre
- 14.30 Coffee/tea
- 15.30 Keynote speaker Erika Lagerbielke
- 16.30 Panel debate with workshop leaders
- 17.20 Future conferences of Cumulus
- 18.00 Glass circus
- 19.00 “Hyttssill” Hot shop herring
- 21.00 Music and dance, on stage: Urban Turban
- 22.00 and 24.00 Bus back to Kalmar Theatre

**Free time on saturday until 13.30 (if you are not registered for the General assembly), to explore Kalmar or take a trip to Öland.**

**Figure 14.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08.30</td>
<td>Registration General assembly (pre-registered, one person/shool)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.00</td>
<td>General Assembly of Cumulus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.30</td>
<td>Bus from Kalmar Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.30</td>
<td>Coffee/tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.30</td>
<td>Keynote speaker Erika Lagerbielke</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.30</td>
<td>Panel debate with workshop leaders</td>
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<td>17.20</td>
<td>Future conferences of Cumulus</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>Glass circus</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>“Hyttssill” Hot shop herring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.00</td>
<td>Music and dance, on stage: Urban Turban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.00</td>
<td>Bus back to Kalmar Theatre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EAT LUNCH ON YOUR OWN BEFORE ENTERING THE BUS AT KALMAR THEATRE 13.30!
Contents and communication

To introduce the conference for presumptive participants the contents needed clarifying textually and visually. For the main conference text we cooperated with a journalist and writer within the design field. We shared our ideas with the writer about the contents of the theme “Global thinking, local action, future life”, which would include keynote speakers from various fields like economics, philosophy, art and design as well as 10 different workshops with mainly practical contents, which were to result in an exhibition on the last day of the conference. The writer suggested that we should heighten our ambitions with regard to the result with the following:

“After the poor results of the Doha Climate Change Conference, action is our main goal. The joint results of the conference will be presented to Swedish politicians together with a clear call for action. Attention will be drawn to design as an important tool in making necessary changes for global, sustainable development.”

When the above text was introduced at the following monthly meeting, the faculty agreed that this constituted a challenge which gave an extra dimension to the conference.

It was also important to communicate via the texts what the participants could expect, for instance that this conference would not be structured the usual way with paper presentations, but would primarily consist of keynote lectures and workshops, where all participants were expected to contribute both theoretically and practically with their knowledge. Citing Ravn and Elsborg: "Participants arrive at the conference expecting the usual string of lectures and passive listening. If the conference organisers want to stimulate learning in new ways, participants must be nudged and goaded to do things which at first may seem odd, contrived or even unpleasant" (2011).

One way of reaching out would have been to publish the information on the Linnaeus University website, but the possibilities seemed limited as it would be difficult to create the atmosphere wished for. We therefore chose to engage a local company which makes web publications that are easy to edit. After they had built up the basic frame after our sketches, we could quickly add and change information (Figure 16).

The secretariat had large experience from previous conferences and knew which information was most important to communicate: a programme with exact details of time and locations (addresses, buildings), clear instructions of the
Figure 16.
The easiest way to reach the conference destination, links to hotels/hostels and, not least, a registration system (see Figure 15 for the registration website).

As a website largely entails one-way communication, we started early on with a Facebook site, where organizers, students, participants and others could follow and comment on work in progress. This required a great deal of work, involving publishing pictures and comments every day to keep the Facebook site updated. Still, it was rewarding, because it gave immediate response from the world around. Via Facebook those who used Twitter and Instagram were invited to follow and publish under “cumuluskalmar”.

Cumulus is “a forum for partnership and the communication of best practice” (http://www.cumulusassociation.org/cumulus/about/cumulus) with a focus on networking and learning. As academia is still a hierarchic world, it may cause insecurity and form an obstacle to networking and learning.

Berrige (2012), referring to Turner (1969), states that an event, i.e., a brief condition whose participants come together outside their ordinary life for a common goal, may bring about “communitas”. By the way an event is designed a special space can be created where those who take part feel equal.

We tried to attain communitas by creating a warm, unprestigious atmosphere fostering networking and learning by avoiding, for instance, titles in publications (Figure 17) and on the web. Another way was strolling after the inauguration in Kalmar Theatre to Kalmar Castle dressed according to the royal vintage dresscode (Figure 18). On arriving in the castle all participants received a card with a picture of a royal person, so that all who got the same royalty card were randomly seated at the same table during the dinner.

Other community-creating factors during the conference included having a professional master of ceremonies (Figure 19, bottom left) who calmly and confidently guided the participants through the major events. The conference bag contained, besides printed materials and a map, an embroidery kit with suggestions of how to embroider the bag on its blank back either with the help of pre-printed dots or by using one’s imagination (Figure 19, top left) When registering, the participants got a glass bottle (Figure 19, bottom centre) and a pair of socks or a pantyhose (Figure 19, bottom right). The participants were able to refill the bottles from jugs of water during the conference.
Conference days
At 1 p.m. sharp on the opening day of the conference the theatre was filled with participants arriving from all corners of the world (Figure 20) and the conference could start.

About 2 months before we began working with a more detailed timetable for the four conference days (see Figure 22 with examples for days 1 and 2) with headings for time, issue, measure to be taken/location, principal coordinator and activity coordinator. We kept adding to the timetable as we discovered details that required somebody to take responsibility for. At the last monthly faculty meeting we went over the timetable and mailed it to everybody involved with the conference.

To document the conference visually we engaged a photographer who is well acquainted with the design field. Conference team and participants kept adding pictures from workshops (Figure 21), keynote lectures and social events to facebook and instagram.

Figure 20. The Theatre lobby at 13.05

Figure 21. Student participant.
### Onsdag 5 juni

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tid</th>
<th>ärende</th>
<th>Åtgärd/plats</th>
<th>huvudansvarig</th>
<th>ansvarig</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hela fm</td>
<td>Anländande gäster</td>
<td>Ta emot vid Flyg, buss, tåg</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Studenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.00-</td>
<td>Cumulus board meeting, hämta dem, Konstmuseet vattenkaraff och frukt</td>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Studener: Tim Broberg Marie Ahlberg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09-12</td>
<td>Iordningställa teatern</td>
<td>Ljud mm / Teatern</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Therése</td>
</tr>
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<td>12.00-</td>
<td>Ta emot new members</td>
<td>Kalmar Teater</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Studenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>Jenny, Kalmar Vatten</td>
<td>Installera</td>
<td>Miguel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.30</td>
<td>Jana revedin Mötta vid buss</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-16</td>
<td>New member fair Election kick off Vård / Teatern</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Adam Sunefors Frida Bobäck</td>
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<tr>
<td>13-16</td>
<td>fika</td>
<td>Kanel te/kaffe</td>
<td>Teaterkaféet</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>Sista soundcheck</td>
<td>Ljud / Teatern</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.55</td>
<td>Fösning Få in alla salongen</td>
<td>Alla Lnu</td>
<td>studenter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>Opening Lena Fritzen</td>
<td>Johan Signert pres Teatern</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16.05</td>
<td>Welcome Sara Hyltén-Cavalliüs</td>
<td>Johan Signert pres Teatern</td>
<td>Marie</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lnu tröja t. Christian Ge bort</td>
<td>Johan Signert pres Teatern</td>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>A-K</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.10</td>
<td>Cumulus Christian Guellerin</td>
<td>Johan Signert pres Teatern</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td></td>
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<td>16.15</td>
<td>Info konf.</td>
<td>Johan Signert</td>
<td></td>
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<td>16.20</td>
<td>Keynote Jana Revedin</td>
<td>Johan Signert pres Teatern</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17.10</td>
<td>20 min</td>
<td>PAUS</td>
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<td>17.30</td>
<td>Keynote Maria Nyström</td>
<td>Johan Signert pres Teatern</td>
<td>Marie</td>
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<td>18.20</td>
<td>Fösning Få ut alla salongen</td>
<td>Alla Lnu</td>
<td>studenter</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18.30</td>
<td>Promenad Slottet</td>
<td>Teatern-Slottet Flaggf</td>
<td>Therése, Lena</td>
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<td>Tidigare</td>
<td>Borggården</td>
<td>Utsmyckning Borggården</td>
<td>Ivar</td>
<td>Stundenter</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.45</td>
<td>Drink/snittar</td>
<td>Servering Borggården</td>
<td>Slottet</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.15</td>
<td>utställning</td>
<td>Slow art, Royal Vintage, Slottet</td>
<td>Ivar</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19.40</td>
<td>Sista fösning</td>
<td>Kvarv.borggård</td>
<td>Sara</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Tidigare</td>
<td>mndag</td>
<td>Slottet</td>
<td>Ivar</td>
<td>Studenter</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.45</td>
<td>mndag</td>
<td>Johan Signert Slottet</td>
<td>Slottet/Ivar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promenad Byttan</td>
<td>upplevelse</td>
<td>Ivar</td>
<td>Studenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.30</td>
<td>Hangout</td>
<td>Musik, Byttan</td>
<td>Ivar</td>
<td>Student</td>
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### Torsdag 6 juni Swedish National Day

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<th>ansvarig</th>
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<tr>
<td>08-16.30</td>
<td>Teatergalleriet</td>
<td>bemanna</td>
<td>Therése</td>
<td>Studenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.00</td>
<td>Vallning</td>
<td>hotell-buss</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>En student per hotell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.30</td>
<td>Buss avgår</td>
<td>85 pers Oland</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Studenter resp. WS följer med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09-15</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>WS-ansvarig Lnu</td>
<td>Studenter</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>Buss tillbaka</td>
<td>85 pers Oland</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Studenter resp. WS följer med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.30</td>
<td>Keynote</td>
<td>Johan Signert pres Kalmar Teater</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16.30</td>
<td>Keynote VICTOR MARGOLIN</td>
<td>Johan Signert pres Kalmar Teater</td>
<td>Marie</td>
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<td>16.40</td>
<td>Paus</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.30</td>
<td>Keynote</td>
<td>Johan Signert pres Kalmar Teater</td>
<td>Marie</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.30</td>
<td>Drink teater cafeet</td>
<td>Servera</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>Design for All</td>
<td>pres. Teater cafeet</td>
<td>Sara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.30</td>
<td>SVID</td>
<td>pres. Teater cafeet</td>
<td>Sara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-21</td>
<td>Desis int. Meeting</td>
<td>Lokal teatern Projektorer</td>
<td>Therése</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.00-</td>
<td>Hangout</td>
<td>Larm 21-01</td>
<td>Studenter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 22.
POST THE EVENT

Evaluation

Sixteen days after the conference, an evaluation form was mailed to 170 participants, out of which 69 responded. The questionnaire enabled respondents to write at liberty and contained statements and questions which could be answered by:

1. No, I don't agree
2. Partly true
3. Most of it true
4. Agree completely
5. Don't know

The questionnaire consisted of the following 8 items:

1. Expectations and content. Do you agree with the statements below?
   - The contents of the conference were made clear on the website.
   - I had enough time to network.
   - I had enough time to exchange knowledge and ideas.
   - Keynotes met my expectations.
   - The workshop I participated in met my expectations.
   - Social events met my expectations.
   - The conference content corresponded to the content presented in advance.

2. This is the place to explain your answers, give feedback and also make suggestions for improvements.

3. Organization. Do you agree with the statements below?
   - Programme and information about the conference worked out properly.
   - The administration of the conference was handled properly.
   - There were clear guidelines to what time different events started.
   - There were clear guidelines to where different events took place.
   - I had printed the programme from a pdf in advance.
   - I used the printed programme from the bag.

4. This is the place to explain your answers, give feedback and also make suggestions for improvement.

5. Workshops. Do you agree with the statements below?
   - The workshop situations were characterized by openness and participation.
   - I took part in creating an active and engaging situation.
   - We were able to keep an open dialogue.
   - I was given possibilities to influence the workshop.

6. This is the place to explain your answers, give feedback and also make suggestions for improvement.

7. Due to the conference, I have improved my knowledge in the field of:
   - Sustainability
   - Global perspectives
   - Local perspectives
   - Sweden
   - Småland, the region of Kalmar
   - Linnaeus University

8. This is the place to explain your answers, give feedback and also make suggestions for improvements.

Feedback via photos

After about three weeks, the official pictures (see, e.g., Figure 23) from the conference were laid out on the website together with links from the Cumulus website and the conference Facebook team. The link to the photo documentation was mailed to all Cumulus members and contacts via the secretariat.

The published pictures were selected so as to make as many of the participants as possible (keynote speakers, workshop leaders, participants, students, team workers etc.) find themselves and their new contacts in the pictures.

Working Paper

To further document the conference the secretariat and the project leader collected material from keynote speakers, workshops and also from Linnaeus university School of Design a text “The Good Society – yes please!” on how to present the results of the conference to Swedish politicians. The material was published in "Cumulus Kalmar Working Paper" and also found as a pdf on http://www.cumulusassociation.org/news/downloads/all-downloads.
DISKUSSION

The Cumulus Conference organizational tips from the secretariat state: “One of the main aims of Cumulus conferences is networking. People do appreciate places and situations with good networking opportunities. A main gathering hall, joint meals, semiformal meetings are highly valued. Think of longer breaks between events.”

In the evaluation, 68% agreed completely (26% most of it true) that they had enough time to network during the conference, and 78% agreed completely (20% most of it true) that the social events met their expectations.

The participants also considered that the contents of the conference were made clear on the website and that the actual contents on site corresponded to what was presented in advance.

We had the feeling during the conference that we reached our goal to create a warm, unprestigious atmosphere fostering networking and learning. Respondents writing at liberty confirm this, as can be seen from a couple of examples from the evaluation:

"You managed to create a perfectly welcoming atmosphere - it seemed very relaxed even though it must have been planned to the very detail. The most impressive conference I’ve attended. Just showing, registering, getting delicious and fun presents and my own water bottle was such an impressive experience."

"It was a peaceful place with a lot of advantages for this kind of meeting (a good choice). It was also conducted by very warm people which is essential."

"The digital workshop I attend was mad and eclectic, and funny - not entirely digital but it was good just unusual ... I really enjoyed the mad aspect to it others not so much. the weather made it – if it had been raining would have been quite different."

The weather – five days of bright blue sky and sunshine – was definitely to our favour. Kalmar and Öland showed their best side, like Lilla Torget full of people outdoor dining in the evenings.

Cumulus’ main goal is to be “a forum for partnership and transfer of knowledge and best practices”. Of the participants, 64% agreed completely with the statement “I had enough time to exchange knowledge and ideas”, while 30% answered most of it true.

From the respondents’ writing you can tell that the participants in the more practical workshops were more content than the participants in the more theoretical ones:

"The workshop I participated in met my expectations: It was beyond expectations! I expected a more theoretical workshop (interior and furnitute), but the approach of this workshop on the island made it a true experience where networking stayed possible between the same 'souls'."

"Fantastic conference especially the workshop part was great – we had a chance to talk and use our hands at the same time! not often seen at conferences. and most of all, in my workshop at least, no yellow post-it."

"The workshop I participated in was not a workshop at all, but consisted of presentations and talks, with no time at all for discussions except for day 2 when a presentation contained a discussion task that went wrong since all of the participants were longing to discuss other topics than the one proposed."

"The idea of making people active through workshops more than passive conferences was really great. The workshops themselfes were really interesting and the one I followed (glass) was fantastic. Some keynote were a bit disappointing. Social events were generally great: wonderful first night in the castle, good to have a bar to finish the evening, beautiful circus show in Pukeberg [...]"

To the statement “keynotes met my expectations” 40% answered partly true and 13% no, I don’t agree. Our ambition was to have keynotes also from other fields than art and design, but here we had a hard time to engage people from other fields to come to a “design conference”. One of the keynotes called in sick and a mistake from our side was that we had not planned for a backup.
The participants were in general, according to the evaluation, satisfied with the organization of the conference.

In the last statement “Due to the conference, I have improved my knowledge in the field of” the participants had improved their knowledge of global and local perspectives, in Sweden and in Småland. They had not improved their knowledge that much in the field of Linnaeus University other than, as one of the participants states:

"Not enough time to learn much [about Linnaeus University] – except that the people of Linnaeus University are smart, charming, and knowledgable"

CONCLUSION

The “luck factor” of 5 days with fantastic weather is high and contributed greatly to the outcome of the conference.

The work to find the right locations paid off. The time spent before the conference in meetings face to face with the person in charge of Kalmar Theatre, the food suppliers and with the master of ceremonies was important for the outcome.

For work distribution (figure 10) we would have benefited from one group or person in charge of keynote speakers. It’s a huge job to find the right ones, make them come and make them comfortable before and during their stay.

We would also have benefited from one person in charge of “visa invitation letters”, in this case mainly for participants from China. Here maybe Linnaeus University could find a “standard letter” for conferences and maybe find a safe and fast way to post them.

The visual programme (figure 12–14) proved to fulfil an important function vis-à-vis the faculty, the students involved and conference participants in their understanding of the structure of the event.

It is possible to create a warm, unprestigious atmosphere fostering networking and learning by the way you design a conference.

References


