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Field-Configuring Events: Time, Space and Relations

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**Temporary clusters, FCEs, and the economic
geography perspective on events**



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Geography and events?

- Economic geography has long been fascinated by agglomeration and localization economies but has largely assumed these accrue through regular everyday proximity
- Economic geography tends to look for situated and stable economic spaces
- *What then of the event?*
- *What then of the wider field of endeavour?*
- *What then of the market?*



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The field of design

Where do we locate design?

Where is the field that products are
constructed within?



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Scandinavian design?



- An artistic and design school/philosophy?
- High-end design?
 - Big-name designers, including Arne Jacobsen, Verner Panton, and Jørn Utzon (Sydney Opera House).
- Mass production interiors?
 - 10% of Europeans were conceived on an Ikea bed
- A market segment or a marketing myth applied to all sorts of stuff?



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Constructing Scandinavian Design from the outside - events

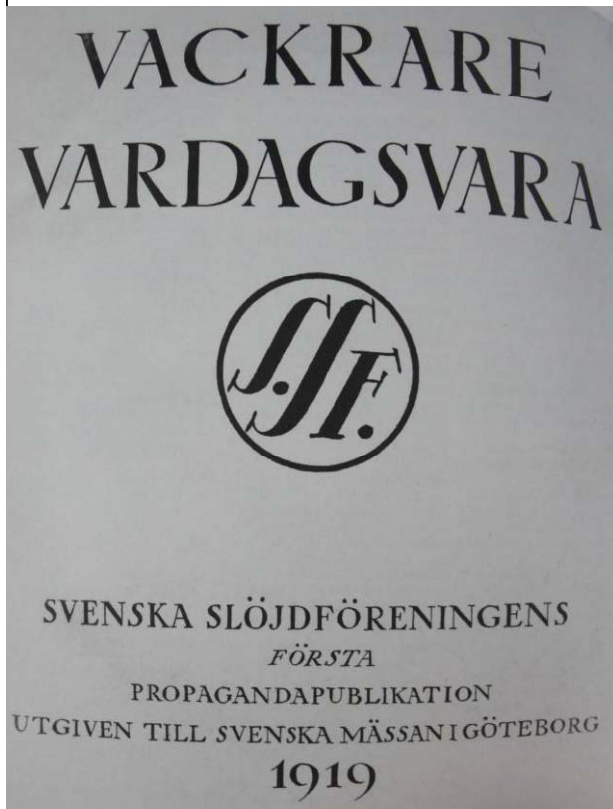


- 1951 as the title of an exhibition of home decorations and furniture – ‘Scandinavian Design for Living’ - at London’s Heal’s Department.
- 1954-1957 ‘Design in Scandinavia’ toured Canada and America
- in Milan during the 1950s and Paris in 1958 (‘Formes Scandinaves’)
- 1980 designers in Oslo conduct mock burials for the term
- 2007 travelling showcase the Nordic Council of Ministers sponsored exhibition ‘Scandinavian Design Beyond Myth’



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Where else is it constructed?



- In design texts at home and abroad
- In press and magazines
- In tourist promotion
- In other industries unrelated to art and design
- **At trade fairs**
- In a variety of spaces that overlap across time and space...





Overlapping spaces

- Exhibitions, showcases, trade fairs are less temporary clusters than they are cyclical clusters; they are complexes of overlapping spaces that are scheduled and arranged in such a way that spaces can be reproduced, re-enacted, and renewed over time.
- Examples of overlapping spaces:
 - Sales and contracts
 - Creating network capital
 - Creating symbolic capital
 - Spaces for knowledge diffusion
 - Space for careers and recruitment



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A space for sales and contracts



- Trade fairs function as market places: for production contracts; intellectual property; services.
- They help firms reach new markets: buyers and suppliers that can not be found locally and are hard to locate in one other place
- Reduced costs for closing deals
- Negotiation of rights contracts
- Sale and contracting of services



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A space for knowledge and innovation

Knowledge and innovation arise in trade fairs due to:

- Exchange: Flow of ideas, knowledge, innovations, intellectual property
- Oversight and buzz: Seeing competitors collections; getting inspiration; seeing new innovations in technology and materials; meeting new designers
- Spying





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Global circuits

- ‘The meaningless talk about local versus global’ (Dicken et al 2001).
- It seems then that we need to look not just for local capacities and practices but also to how our firms connect into global circuits.
- Temporary events should be viewed not as isolated from one another, but as arranged together in an almost continual global circuit.



Cyclical clusters

- Temporary events/clusters (e.g. exhibitions, trade fairs).
- Temporary events as microcosms of the ‘real’ industry.
- Temporary events - long lasting effects.
- Cultural industries firms – even those who are not located in successful clusters - tend to be involved in virtual or cyclical clusters.
- Cyclical clusters are absolutely vital for isolated firms in global marketplaces; but also equally vital for firms blessed by proximity to strong local clusters.



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Economic geographies and events

There are many spaces and actors involved in this these cyclical clusters and they are linked (horizontally and vertically):

- **Nodes and networks** arranged in complexes of overlapping spaces that are scheduled and arranged in such a way that spaces can be reproduced, re-enacted, and renewed over time
- **Flows and hierarchies**: nodes, networks, events should not be viewed as isolated from one another, but as arranged together in an almost continual global circuit; albeit one that is deeply hierarchal.



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Cyclical clusters, overlapping spaces and global circuits

- It's a production story but not as we know it...
- It is a story about products and indeed fields that may or may not originate in a local milieu (of localized assets and capacities), they may also originate outside the local context... nonetheless they have a geography.
- It is a geography where temporary events constitute necessary infrastructures for the diffusion of such products and fields
- One where overlapping spaces are the glue/connectors between events, local clusters etc.
- It is a space economy we are talking about, but one where globalized connections/circuits characterize, rather than the usual local-global, temporary-permanent or place-industry dialectics.