The Bridging Ages Conference in Worcester, South Africa, October 2008

“... breathing life into our history with the honest intent to assist healing in our divided society.”

Welcoming speech by Clarence Johnson, Executive Mayor, Cape Winelands District Municipality.

I want to thank the international body Bridging Ages for affording the Cape Winelands the opportunity to host this “Bridging Diversity” Conference and, in so doing, affording us the opportunity to showcase our magnificent district to both local and international delegates in attendance.

The South African connection and link to the Swedish government stems back from the apartheid area and their anti-apartheid activism and support for the ANC in our fight for democracy. From that relationship flows, the inter-governmental relationship between the Baltic Region and the Cape Winelands.

Time Travels started in 2006 and is the result of the cooperation between the Cape Winelands District Municipality and the Kalmar region in Sweden. The interrogation of our historical sites and of events such as the 1976 protests, have yielded some amazing results – breathing life into our history with the honest intent to assist healing in our divided society. South Africa has a colourful past, and it has much to learn on topics of relevance such as: inequality, democracy, communication, diversity, and so on. This programme is therefore extremely relevant to our schools, museums and organisations interested in our “living history” and, we are extremely grateful to Kalmar County for including us in this venture.

THANK YOU, and once again, welcome to South Africa, the Western Cape, The Cape Winelands and the Worcester Museum!
Time Travels utilized to bridge divides and change society

Opening speech by Cameron Dugmore, Minister of Western Cape Cultural Affairs and Sport

The theme for this conference is: Bridging Diversity, which I think is quite a relevant topic given the history of South Africa. I am aware that this conference will explore the role of Time Travels as a tool in unfolding local history and the reconciliation of marginalized communities.

I think the Time Travels are extremely important in exploring historical perspectives, linking the past with the present to promote an awareness of the past and identity. Time Travels are giving us the opportunity to review our history. Due to the past our communities in South Africa are still divided along racial and social lines. We have an obligation to transcend these divides by presenting history that is meaningful to all communities. The focus on local history gives us an opportunity to develop a connection between ourselves, our museums and the environment to explore the untold histories and make the understanding of diversity easier.

Time Travels on authentic sites recreates a real life experience using all the senses. I know that in Sweden, the commitment of museums has been essential in ensuring the success of Time Travels. Being a person with a love for song, music, dance and storytelling, I am happy to note that it plays a play a large part in Time Travels. The value of Time Travels in raising the importance of local history and identity is recognized in promoting cross-cultural contacts and bridging divides that is characteristic of South African communities.

This conference is aimed at people working in museums, schools, tertiary institutions and community institutions, and will provide the opportunity for the members and interested persons to network, sharing ideas and expertise. I am told the sessions will cover Time Travel methods and educational work in marginalized communities and the role of museums and education in promoting cultural identity and the sharing of a common history.

On behalf of the Western Cape Cultural Community I want express my appreciation at these developments and feel deeply honored that you have chosen SA, and in fact this occasion, to do so. Thank you for agreeing that the 2008 conference be hosted here at the Worcester museum. Not only will this conference be a platform to discuss our challenges but it will also build and strengthen our cross continental networks and partnerships.

Some of the last San people at the Time Travel to 1773 at the conference.
Presentations from the conference

Breaking Language Barriers
- Bilingual Time Travels and working methods with several languages
Gunilla Sand, Stundars Open Air Museum, Finland

What are the special challenges we are facing and what single elements do we have to take into account when working in a multilingual setting? When working in multilingual groups or in situations where you cannot work in your own mother tongue you have to be better prepared and more concentrated. You will have to involve the audience more and in the best case, communicate more. Your own attitude and decision to function in a multilingual way is crucial. The question of what languages should be spoken in a museum deals with the concept of museums and their values. This is closely linked with the idea of the museum as a public space. Who has the ownership of the museum? This is also connected to a larger question of access to cultural heritage.

Time Travel as “counter-language”
Birgitta E. Gustafsson, Department of Education, Växjö University, Sweden

The Time Travel method is an exciting educational method full of possibilities. It creates experiences, genuine feelings and an understanding of the past time-present time. The time travel method also stress the importance of local places and their stories for peoples meaning making and understanding of the self. But to develop the time travel method further it needs to get challenged. How can a Time Travel in a local environment generate an experience that challenges the individual conception of oneself, the present time and the past?

Seen from a pedagogical perspective the learning individual needs to get challenged. Time Travels could then act like a “counter-language” to established conceptions. It could function like a challenger of prejudices and taken-for-granted ness, thereby becoming visible and possible to reflect upon and to discuss. In order to let time travels challenge the habitual ways of seeing and thinking what is then needed? To create background for time travel as “counter-language” some questions need to get remarked.

- What places are chosen for the time travel?
- What challenging potential has the place?
- How take advantage of this potential?
- What kind of story is the place carrying?
- What challenging potential has the story?
- What taken-for-granted knowledge is the story carrying that needs to get provoked?
- In what way does the story involve ambiguity and complexity?
- How can the story get staged as a time travel?
- What drama is possible to stage with this particular group of visitors or pupils?

In many ways we face a challenge to care about diversity, polyphony and uncertainty that reflects the time we live in. This requires that pupils/visitors at the museum are offered opportunities to be challenged in their imaginary world in order to strengthen the critical and self-critical ability.
**Comments from the conference**

_“The success....”_  
_Tizzie Mangiagalli, Worcester museum_

The success in which Historic Environment Education and Time Travels has taken root over the past three years in the Western Cape is reflected in the conference at the Worcester museum on 8 – 10 October 2008.

The conference attracted a diverse group of international and Southern African delegates and the sponsorships from the Winelands Regional Municipality, the Department Cultural Affairs and Sport and Bridging Ages International contributed much to the success of the program. The conference presentations and workshops gave the delegates the opportunity to share their experiences of working in their communities. It also served to inspire those who are new to time travels.

I also wish to thank the Worcester museum staff for their willingness to take on the additional tasks to make the conference a reality.

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_“I was impressed with how schools and museums in South Africa have embraced Time Travels”_  
_Jon Hunner, Vice President of Bridging Ages, Department of History, New Mexico State University,_

South Africa is a complex and wonderful country -- that is the consensus of the “foreigners” that I talked with at the Bridging Ages conference in Worcester. With approximately 150 participants from three continents and seven countries, the multiple conference presentations and the two Time Travels provided a wealth of opportunity and experiences to learn about Historic Environment Education even for those of us who are veterans of the technique. For me, I was impressed with how museums and schools in South Africa have embraced Time Travels. I wonder if this due to the ability of Time Travels to recapture the lost history of South Africa, that history lost to colonialism and Apartheid. Granted, since 1994, South Africa has undertaken an extensive revision of its educational curriculum, but as those changes slowly address the lost history of South Africa, perhaps Time Travels is a more immediate and accessible way to present this past to learners and the museum public.

Ebbe often asks us at the end of these conferences what we remember the most. Out of the many moments, two emerge. One is the healthy debate that arose over how the contested history of South Africa should be interpreted. We all have contested histories. How South Africa settles this will be instructive for us all. The other is looking at Nelson Mandela’s prison cell on Robben Island and wondering how anyone could keep his or her sanity after being held captive for 27 years in such a small cement and metal box. I look forward to working with our friends in South Africa to help make history come alive.
“The most important for our survival is being able to share.”
Bo Hellström, The Global School, Sweden

In October the Swedish state sponsored programme “The Global School” was represented in the international seminar on the theme “Bridging diversity” organized by the organization Bridging Ages. Teachers from different areas of the school system including the museums were invited to Worcester in Western Cape, South Africa. In total there were about 100 participants from Nicaragua, USA, Uganda, South Africa and quite a few European countries. We were gathered for three days in the museum in Worcester listening to lectures, participating in workshops and being part of a time travel.

Time travels
During the seminar week there were two time travels possible to take part in. The first one to the year 1773 with a meeting between the settlers and the indigenous people and later in the week a time travel going back to the San culture 2000 B C.

Wolwekloof 1773
The time travel back to 1773 showed the situation for a group of settlers with slaves and servants during a one day stop in the pass giving maintenance to vehicles and repairing things before the next day’s very tough continuation of the journey through the mountain pass Wolwekloof. During this day slaves, servants and indigenous people meet. There are also some drosters from the mountains and even a foreigner from northern Europe namely the disciple of Linnaeus, Thunberg who actually came through this pass in 1773. The key questions to discuss and try to answer after the time travel are how to solve the conflicts between the different groups and can they be solved without violence?

250 kilometres - 4000 years
The second time travel takes us back to 2000 years BC to the area of the San culture some 250 kilometres north of Cape Town on the way towards Namibia. The setting of the time travel this time means we are two different groups within the San people, one group coming from the sea and one from the mountains. We meet at the river to see our relatives and friends, to socialize and maybe to meet your future partner.

The key questions now are how to use our resources, how we depend on each other, that we need each other knowledge and experiences. The most important for our survival is being able to share. Apart from us, participants in the time travel, a group of local school kids 10-11 years old join us. This immediately makes it more real and it doesn’t take long until both adults and youngsters go into our roles. Myself, I’m Kurri-Ten and a good trekker and very skilful using bow and arrow. I’m also the father of the girl twins Tsau and Neisha. We are divided into groups and our group begins with testing how to make arrowheads and other sharp material of flint. Our teacher is Qing who is a very skilful craftsman and a good rock painter. After some time he asks us if we would like to see some paintings he made in a cave last week.

“Qing’s” real name is John Parkington and he is a professor of archaeology at Cape Town University and one of the greatest experts of the San culture and of the thousands of paintings in the area we are in and the surroundings. The paintings “he did last week” are real rock paintings and maybe as old as 4000 years. For us, as well as for the students, it’s the first time we see it. Lying on the ground in the cave “Qing” asks the pupils what they think the paintings symbolize, how they were made and why.

When we return to our hostel in the light of the full moon over this historic soil it feels like we’ve gained some more knowledge about from where we come because it’s from this area man develops.
“The first thing I did when I came back to La Dalia was to talk to my boss and the teachers about the Time Travel method.”
Marlon Rivera Aldana, Olof Palme Secondary School, La Dalia, Nicaragua

Hello everybody.
I am still surprised for the long trip I have made to South Africa. It was very interesting to meet old and new friends and to see very nice places.

I have learned many things from this, trip specially with the Time Travel Method, it’s really nice to be and feel part of a story, wherever and whenever.

The first thing I did when I came back to La Dalia (my school) was to talk to my boss (Martin) and the teachers about the method (Time Travel), they were very interested in it, and they told me they are also interested in take part of a Time Travel in La Dalia. Now I think they understand what the Time Travel Method means.

I have also talked to Claudia, she is the Ministry of Education Representative in La Dalia, Bosse has met her some times in La Dalia. The good thing is that she told me we can put this method in our local programs (curriculum). When we were in the meeting in South Africa, I explained you that we are working in this project (to have a local curriculum to work with, according to our own necessities in our own community, La Dalia), so that’s a possibility. The positive thing is that I am a member of this project, with voice and vote, because I am the General Secretary of the Teachers’ Union in La Dalia.

I want to tell you that it was really nice to meet you and I hope we can meet once again some day, somewhere, because every place has a meaning.

Today about 8-10 % of the inhabitants in Sweden are born in other countries and Sweden is since 1975 declared a multicultural country.
Bridging Ages on TV all over Africa

October 30th SABC Africa, one of the five national TV Channels in South Africa broadcasted a one-hour program about Time Travels and Historic Environment Education. The program, African views, was broadcast live all over Africa on prime time, between 20-21 in the evening. Probably 20-40 million people in different countries in Africa watched the program live.

Ebbe Westergren and Helen Eklund from Kalmar Läns Museum together with Louis Marais, Wolseley Secondary School and Brenda Matsau, Worcester Museum and sat in the panel in the TV studio in Johannesburg. They discussed, together with a small audience in the studio, about historical sites, time travels, historical perspectives, identity, education, whose history, everything from the African point of view. They also presented the Bridging Ages Organisation and the Kalmar Läns Museum’s work in South Africa.

Time Travels in Turkey

Kalmar County Museum co-operates with three municipalities (Bornova, Karisyaka and Manisa) in Turkey in building an organisation for time-travels and cultural landscape pedagogy. The project is part of the Tusenet project concerning Democracy, Human rights and closer relations between Turkey and the European Union.

The Turkish municipalities are located in, or in close vicinity, to the city of Izmir on the Aegean coast. The focus of the three time-travels is:

- The Neolithic site of Yesilova (6500 BC) where we discuss climate change and immigration.
- The city of Smyrna (590 BC) where the key-questions is equality, religion and distribution of wealth.
- Manisa (1955 AD) focus on the person Ahmed Bedevi, also known as Manisa Tarzan, and his environmental work and the conflict between modernity and tradition.

In September 2008 the delegation from Turkey visited Sweden and participated in time travel and seminars in Kalmar and gained experience about how to utilize and teach local historic sites in schools and for tourists and the public in general. In November 2008 three persons from Kalmar County Museum arranged workshops about heritage education and time-travel methodology in and around Izmir. The actual time travels is planned for the spring of 2009.

Christmas preparations in the Smith’s cottage

Gunilla Sand, Stundars Open Air Museum, Finland

At Stundars Open Air Museum (Korsholm, Finland) we travel 100 years back in time and prepare for Christmas. The time travel is suitable for children aged 6-7 years. After changing clothes and the children has been given "new" names the time travel can begin.

There is a lot to do before Christmas and help is needed to get ready. Together with the Smith’s wife Maria Smeds the children clean the house and prepare a meal consisting of traditional rye bread, butter and porridge. Towels need to be ironed as well as many other small tasks.
Outdoors, wood for the fireplace and baking oven needs to be carried to the Smith’s cottage. There are also errands to run, the shopkeeper has ordered eggs, the carpenter wants potatoes and the miller needs more grain to the windmill. The cowshed has to be thoroughly cleaned and the animals fed. Finally, the Christmas tree is brought to the Smith’s cottage. We end the time travel by gathering for a light meal before returning to present time.
Invitation to Bridging Ages Conference in Finland 2009
"Bridging Local History in a Global Context"
10-13.9.2009

Welcome to the next Bridging Ages’ conference in Ostrobothnia, Finland for exciting and inspiring days with the theme: “Bridging local history in a global context”. The theme will be discussed in seminars and workshops with participants from all over the world. We all have a local history! But how do we interpret, communicate and learn from it?

The conference will take place on the western coast of Finland, at Stundars Open Air Museum (10-11.9.2009) and in the surroundings of the city of Kokkola (12-13.9.2009). The latter part of the conference will be in cooperation with Finnish-Swedish Museum Association. The Market Square in Kokkola will be the scene for a big Time-travel back to 1809 and the dawn of a new autonomous nation, Finland... During the conference we will also take you to the first natural world heritage of Finland and other interesting sights along the coast. There is a possibility to join already on Wednesday 9.9.2009 and participate in hands-on archeological project with school children. There will be a Call for papers in February and the detailed program will be ready in March.