



OUT TO SEA

How the traveling exhibition “Out to Sea: The Plastic Garbage Project” ended up in Stockholm, Sweden, and how it impacted our community and the world.

Stockholm

MARCH 23 – JUNE 30, 2017



The story

“Out to Sea” is a traveling exhibition about the rapidly growing flood of plastic garbage that ends up in the sea. This report tells the story of how we brought the exhibition to Stockholm, Sweden, with the help of friends and supporters around the world – and participated in a global wake-up call about taking action to save our global oceans.

It is scientifically well documented – and increasingly widely reported – that plastics are accumulating in our oceans in the form of garbage, ranging from large visible pieces of flotsam to nano-scale micro-plastics. About 5 million tonnes of plastic flow into the sea every year.

But the problem still suffers from being out of sight, out of mind. “Out to Sea? The Plastic Garbage Project” turns this problem into a powerful physical experience – turning the reality of ocean pollution into a visible and tangible reality for people on land.

First conceived by the Museum für Gestaltung Zürich in 2009, and first launched in 2012, “Out to Sea? The Plastic Garbage Project” is a global traveling exhibition designed to bring awareness to the problem of plastic garbage in our oceans, and inspire people to take action.

The exhibition presents facts about plastic garbage in visual and video format and illustrates the vast dimensions of this ecological catastrophe in an extremely graphic way: with an enormous pile of actual plastic garbage, collected from the world’s seas.

The texts, videos, posters, as well brand new plastic objects (“future garbage”) that make up the rest of the exhibit also examine questions such as the advantages and disadvantages of using synthetic products, the role of product design, the potential of recycling, and the impact of plastics on health. Possible solutions are grouped around a series of R’s – reduce, reuse, recycle, recover, rethink, redesign – with the aim of encouraging plastic consumers to reconsider their own behavior in relation to plastic. “Out to Sea” is accompanied by a locally-focused education program, created by its local hosts, that complements the more general and global story told by the exhibition itself.

1

Bringing the exhibit to Stockholm

On March 23, “Out to Sea” opened in Stockholm, Sweden at Tekniska museet (The Swedish National Museum of Science and Technology) and remained open to the public until July 3. But the process of bringing it to Stockholm started months earlier.

Why Stockholm?

We wanted to bring “Out to Sea” specifically to Stockholm because having the exhibition here would provide a unique opportunity to engage people with the reality of ocean plastic in a powerful way. We believed that “Out to Sea” had the potential to attract attention to this enormous problem via traditional media, social media and other channels – not just nationally, but even internationally.

Stockholm has been a world leader on global environmental issues since 1972, when Sweden hosted the first global United Nations conference on environment and development. The city is host to numerous international institutes, conferences, and experts; and the Swedish government has long made sustainable development a high priority in both domestic and foreign policy. In many ways, Stockholm seemed the perfect staging ground for an exhibition of this kind, because the message had the potential to spread through multiple of channels.

The timing was also a critical factor. In 2017, Sweden was once again demonstrating global sustainability leadership by committing, together with Fiji, to take the lead on the implementation of UN Sustainable Development Goal 14, which focuses on conserving our oceans and making our use of them more sustainable. SDG 14 includes, as its first objective (or “Target” in the language of the UN), the prevention and reduction of marine pollution.

In June 2017, Sweden and Fiji were to act as the co-sponsors and co-hosts of the first-ever UN High-Level Conference on the Oceans and Seas in New York (Sweden was also the main financial sponsor for this international event). Bringing “Out to Sea” to Stockholm during the period March–June 2017 presented a unique opportunity to link the exhibition in Stockholm to the UN conference in New York – to raise awareness about the conference locally in Sweden, and to strengthen Sweden’s message to the world globally.

We believed Out to Sea would also be relevant to numerous other Swedish organizations. Government agencies, NGOs and educational institutions would be able to use the exhibition to raise awareness on ocean and sea-related issues – which is exactly what happened. For example, unbeknownst to the exhibition team at the time, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (Havs- och Vattenmyndigheten) had recently decided to partner with the prominent NGO Keep Sweden Tidy (Håll Sverige Rent) on a national campaign on marine litter. Bringing Out to Sea to Stockholm turned out to be an excellent opportunity for both these organizations, because it helped them to introduce the topic of marine litter to the public in a powerful way.



From left to right: Gunilla Hedén, Alan AtKisson and Stina Axelsson, the initiators of bringing Out to Sea to Stockholm.

The Project Initiators

“Out to Sea” was brought to Sweden thanks to a partnership between three individuals working closely with sustainability in Sweden (operating out of their respective small firms): Alan AtKisson (AtKisson Group), Stina Axelsson (Plimsoll), and Gunilla Hedén (Art.27 Gunilla Hedén).

This team brought a wide range of relevant skills to the project. Stina and Gunilla had extensive experience organizing international exhibitions on the theme of water and environment. Alan had extensive experience working with sustainable development strategy and communications. The three partners came together out of a deep concern for issues related to water, the oceans, and sustainability. They wanted to raise awareness about the rising tide of plastics in our oceans, and they saw “Out to Sea” as a dramatic and timely way to contribute to the global process of sounding the alarm.

All three individuals (and their firms) donated significant time and effort to the project. In addition, AtKisson Europe AB, the Swedish subsidiary of Alan’s global firm AtKisson Group, managed the project administration and contributed as a lead financial sponsor.



The facade of Tekniska museet – The Swedish National Museum for Science and Technology, Stockholm

Our Museum Partner

After searching for months to find a museum that had the necessary space as well as enthusiasm for the project, Tekniska Museet (The Swedish National Museum of Science and Technology, called “Tekniska” for short) emerged as the perfect partner. Tekniska exists to foster interest in technology and science, especially among children and young people, in a fun and inspiring way. As Sweden’s biggest museum of technology, Tekniska also has a national charter to preserve the country’s technological and industrial history as part of our cultural heritage. Tekniska’s galleries cover around 10,000 square meters and the Museum attracts more than 300,000 visitors every year.



A container full of plastic garbage from the world's oceans – as well as the display cases for the rest of the Out to Sea exhibition – arrives in Stockholm on a snowy day in March.

Financing the exhibit

Transporting, installing, marketing, and running an exhibition of this size and complexity, together with its related public education programs, is a large undertaking. The financing for the project evolved in a unique way: it was supported by a combination of crowdfunding and organizational sponsorship (see story below), in addition to many donated hours of work.

Lead financial sponsors

Havs- och Vattenmyndigheten (Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management), AtKisson Group (International consultants on sustainability) and Skroten (Cafe and vintage nautical equipment shop).

Additional major sponsors

Plimsoll, Art.27 Gunilla Hedén, Change Agent Inc. (Japan), Coalition Clean Baltic, e's Inc. (Japan), Galatea, Hållbarhetscirkeln, Invest Stockholm Business Region and WWF Sweden.

Lead financial sponsors

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The story of crowdfunding “Out to Sea”

When we first began to raise funds for the exhibit, we approached over 50 Swedish companies to ask them for sponsorship. To our astonishment, not one said yes. By the time the disappointing results of our corporate sponsorship campaign were finally apparent, we had only two weeks left before we would be forced to cancel the exhibit. The clock was ticking!

But we were not willing to give up. Instead, we turned to our friends in Sweden and around the world.

On extremely short notice, we organized a “home-made” crowdfunding campaign, using personal mailing lists as well as Alan’s Facebook page, Twitter account, and global newsletter.

We are deeply grateful that our crowdfunding campaign received such a positive response – bringing in nearly 35,000 USD (over 300,000 SEK) in less than 10 days. Donations ranged from young people in Stockholm donating 100 SEK out of their allowance money, to friends in the US and Australia giving 100 USD, to Swedish donors “Swishing” 10,000 SEK via their mobile phones, to Japanese colleagues donating several thousand US dollars.

The success of this international crowdfunding campaign also helped to attract several large organizational donors. They offered (or confirmed) their

sponsorship when they could see that there so much grassroots support for the exhibition, both in Sweden and internationally. The campaign also inspired the Drosos Foundation in Switzerland – the owners of the Out to Sea exhibit – to reduce the exhibition fee, which allowed us to expand the local impact of the exhibit through complementary educational programming.



Without the donations received as a result of this crowdfunding campaign, it would simply not have been possible to bring Out to Sea to Stockholm.

Read the full story behind our crowdfunding efforts here:

<https://www.greenbiz.com/article/why-i-used-crowdfunding-bring-truckload-plastic-trash-stockholm>

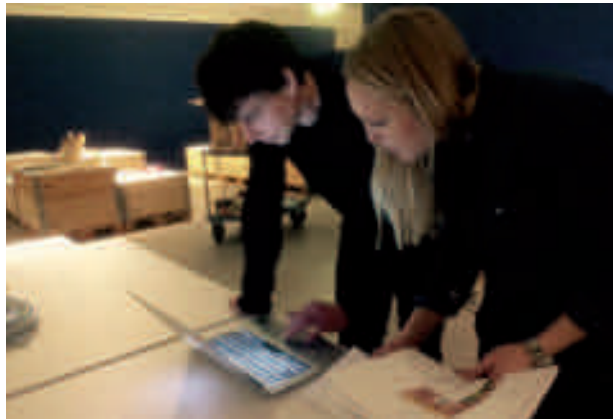
Thank you for your individual contributions!

Lawrence Molloy, Australia / Kathryn O’connell, Cambodia / Douglas Worts, Canada / Lotta Desbordes, France / Markus Will, Germany / Sanjay Prakash, India / Anonymous, Japan/ Lisa Hladnik, Malta / Robin Al-Salehi, Sweden / Maria Nordenson Carlgren, Sweden / Daniel Mensch, Sweden / Anders Söderlund, Sweden / Karin Karlsson, Sweden / Sakip Murat Yalcin, Sweden / Sara Skrtic, Sweden / Sarah Cornell, Sweden / Eva Strömfelt, Sweden / Shawn Westcott, Sweden / Jakob Granit, Sweden/ Åsa Nordstrand, Sweden / Jaana Nyfjord, Sweden / Erika Svensson, Sweden / Mike Schragger, Sweden / Rikard Hård Af Segerstad, Sweden/ Anna Bokström, Sweden / Magnus Emfel, Sweden / Ulla Wandemar, Sweden/ Lisa Baumgartel, Sweden / Helena Ek Tidstrand, Sweden / Mats Ek Tidstrand, Sweden / Marie Neeser, Sweden / Christine Jakobsson, Sweden/ Annika Piirimets, Sweden / Eric Usher, Sweden / Sonny Johanson, Sweden / Barbara Evaeus, Sweden / Helena Ek Tidstrand, Sweden / Alexander & Marilyn Mehlman, Sweden / Victoria Ronge, Sweden / Christina Von Bergen Wessman, Sweden / Fabian Wrede, Sweden / Andreas Kuntsel, Sweden / Rebecka Dahlén, Sweden / Jenny Ingeborg Maria Wrede, Sweden / Soerine Kierkegaard, Sweden / Birgitta Wrede, Sweden / David Sommervell, UK / Alexia Muscat, UK / Pam Lippe, USA / Aki Namioka, USA / Joel Makower, USA / David Berry, USA / Peg AtKisson, USA / Denise Knight, USA / Richard Norgaard, USA / Jeanne Bragdon, USA / Mike Kensler, USA / Susan Gibbons, USA / Ernest Hughes, USA / Nora Grafton, USA / Diana Wright, USA / Austin Spinella, USA / Denise Benitez, USA / Lenore Meadows, USA / Pamela Ramadei, USA / Monica Nogara, USA

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Running the exhibit

From installation and opening night celebrations, to adult educational programming and school class visits, there was constant activity around the Out to Sea exhibit – and a sense of growing public engagement with the issue of ocean plastic.



Museum staff at Tekniska unloading and installing the Out to Sea exhibit. It took them all day to unload the same amount of plastic that pours into the sea every 30 seconds.

Opening Night

On March 22, 2017, World Water Day, friends and representatives of the Stockholm sustainability community gathered at Tekniska museet to mark the official opening of Out to Sea. The evening commenced with speeches from museum director Peter Skogh, WWF Sweden Chairman Axel Wenblad, and Keep Sweden Tidy CEO

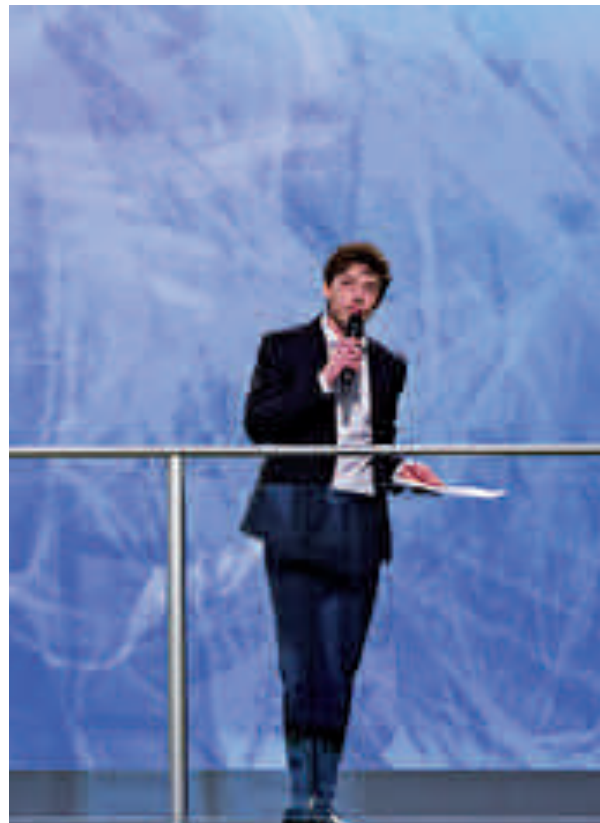
Johanna Ragnartz. The crowd then proceeded to the exhibit for an inaugural tour, followed by a special dinner for the sponsors and invited guests prepared by Skroten (one of the main sponsors). The dinner program included table discussions about how we could best engage our community in the exhibit and, most importantly, inspire positive action.



A panorama shot, taken with a smartphone, captures the crowd gathered in the main exhibit hall of Tekniska Museet to celebrate the opening of Out to Sea in Stockholm.



Above: Museum Director Peter Skogh (far right) introduces the Out to Sea project team (left to right), Gunilla Hedén, Alan AtKisson, and Stina Axelsson.



Right: Roman Aebersold, Vice-Director of the Museum für Gestaltung Zurich and the designer responsible for creating Out to Sea, gives his introductory remarks.



Scenes from the opening night dinner for Out to Sea. The food was sponsored and served by Skroten, the cafe and catering firm associated with Båtskroten, Sweden's national recycling program for pleasure boats. Both were started by Josefin Arrhénborg och Maria Rindstam (above). The drinks were sponsored by Galatea, one of Scandinavia's leading beverage distributors.

The exhibit

The centerpiece of Out to Sea is its infamous giant installation of plastic flotsam, sourced from different seas around the world (including the nearby Baltic Sea). The rest of the exhibit consists of posters, videos, and everyday plastic objects that convey scientific facts about the plastic garbage problem, including information on micro plastics, plastic garbage gyres, and the effect plastic pollution has on the animal world. For the Stockholm exhibition, Keep Sweden Tidy (Håll Sverige Rent) provided a set of short films in Swedish to illustrate the problem from a local perspective.



Scenes from the opening night of Out to Sea in Stockholm. Above: Visitors take in the part of the exhibit focused on our use of plastic today.



Left: Mariana Back, an educator who works for Tekniska Museet, considers the giant garbage pile. Mariana later created the educational materials that were used with school classes who visited the museum.



Below: Friederike May, a volunteer from Uppsala University who helped assemble some of the new plastic materials for the part of the exhibit that deals with plastic in our economy, introduces the old plastic in the garbage pile to an opening night visitor.

Educational Programme

“Wednesday is Ocean Day.” This phrase is a play on words in Swedish (“Onsdag är oceandag”) and it referred to a complementary educational program that took place most Wednesday evenings during the Out to Sea exhibition’s time at Tekniska (On Wednesdays, Tekniska is open in the evenings, and it offers free admission to the public).

These Wednesday programmes consisted of lectures, film showings, and seminars addressing various aspects of our relationship to the sea that were reflected in the Out to Sea exhibit. The exhibit was also frequently visited by school classes, who also participated in a specially designed lesson plan, created by Tekniska, that helped them deepen their learning about the problem of ocean plastic.



Scene from the film “By the Ocean We Unite,” which had its premiere in Stockholm in connection with the Out to Sea exhibit.

1/ Film premiere: **By the ocean we unite**

Out to Sea Stockholm hosted the Swedish premiere of a new documentary film by the Dutch anthropologist and filmmaker Anouk van de Beek: “By the ocean we unite: An awareness journey into plastic pollution.” The film tells the story of a new NGO created in the Netherlands by a sailor who just could not ignore what he was seeing on his cross-Atlantic journey.

2/ Lecture on plastic – challenges and possibilities

Karin Odelius and Emma Strömberg, teachers and researchers at the Royal Institute of Technology, talked about different kinds of plastics, their positives and negatives, the challenges we face, and ongoing research on new solutions to the problem of plastic pollution (Note: this lecture was organized by the “Friends of Tekniska” in concert with Out to Sea, but independently from the exhibition itself).

3/ An Ocean of possibilities: **New solutions for a sustainable blue economy**

The event was a seminar that highlighted the work of some of the exhibition sponsors. Alan AtKisson of AtKisson Group described his firm’s work to support the development of a sustainable “Blue Economy” in the oceans. Ulrika Siira described Sweden’s commitment to Sustainable Development Goal number 14 and the UN Ocean. Båtskroten founders Josefin Arrhénborg and Maria Rindstam told an inspiring story of vision and entrepreneurship that led to the creation of Sweden’s first national recycling program for pleasure boats. Metta Wiese of WWF Sweden described that organizations campaigns and projects under the title, “Taking action for change: What can we do to save the ocean?” Finally, the effects of fish farming on the sea were detailed by biologist Björn Olaviusson as well as how new, closed-system aquaculture and hydroponic technology can change the way we produce food in urban settings.

4/ Lecture: Why is water so unique and important?

Professor Anders Nilsson, a world-renowned scientist who focuses on water, spoke about exciting discoveries about how water touches our lives and why it is so important to take care of the ocean. He even performed a live experiment to demonstrate water's counter-intuitive behavior.

5/ Film “A plastic ocean”

Out to Sea Stockholm presented a free public screening of this extraordinary “adventure documentary,” about an international team of adventurers, researchers, and Ocean ambassadors who go on a mission around the globe to uncover the shocking truth about what is lurking beneath the surface of our seemingly pristine Ocean. The film was followed up with a question-and-answer session, supported by ocean plastics researcher Patricia Villarubia (who also appeared in the documentary “By the ocean we unite”).

6/ Sustainability and plastic in the ocean: Do they go together?

This was an inspirational evening of information for action, with exhibition partner Håll Sverige Rent (“Keep Sweden Tidy”), who outlined the risks of plastic for about 75 participants, including how it spreads through the food chain and ultimately ends up on our plates – and what we can do about it.



School Class Visits

Many classes visited the Out to Sea exhibit (Tekniska estimates that 8,000 students saw the exhibit). At least three classes in the 8-9 age group were confirmed to have utilized a lesson plan that was especially designed for visiting classes by Tekniska's education department, but many more may have downloaded it from the website without registering their actions formally. The lesson plan included guidance on how to engage students in discussion about the issues presented by the exhibit, before, during, and after the visit. Representatives from Tekniska observed that the exhibit engaged even the younger visitors (aged 6–7) who were emotionally impacted by the immense heap of plastic garbage.



One of the additional events connected to the Out to Sea Stockholm program (but arranged independently by Tekniska and the NGO Global Action Plan) was specifically designed to engage teachers. The session encouraged teachers to learn more about the issue of plastic in our ocean, and learn more about how they can teach it.

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Outcomes, reflections and packing up

Out to Sea's time in Stockholm was brief, just a few months. But it left a deep impression on this city and on many members of our community. It's impossible to measure all the ways the exhibition made an impact. However, here are some of the results we could observe and measure, along with some final reflections and pictures of the exhibit being packed up again – ready for travel to Hamburg, Germany (where it is scheduled to be refurbished), and then to continue spreading its important message of alarm, hope, and action.

Out to Sea inspired local dialogue

Out to Sea attracted the Swedish media, including the leading morning talk show, which broadcast a

report on ocean plastic live from the exhibit. It was often referenced in meetings and seminars outside the exhibit, and contributed to rising tide of attention and engagement to the problem of marine plastic waste.

Estimated Number of Visitors

School Visits:	8,000*
General Visits:	30,000*
Total visitors:	38,000*

*Approximate count based on exhibit visits between March 23 – June 16



The popular Swedish morning news show “Nyhetsmorgon” on Channel 4 interviews marine plastics expert Therese Jacobson, from the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (Naturskyddsföreningen), live from the Out to Sea exhibit at Tekniska. The news show gave its thousands of viewers a 3-minute visual tour of the entire exhibition. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=To-tDBQIKvw>

Local press coverage

The Out to Sea exhibit attracted the attention of many local media outlets, including membership newsletters for large organizations, specialist publications, and independent websites. Information about the exhibit, and about the problem of plastic in the oceans, reached many thousands of people through these additional channels (though exact numbers not available). See the links below for a few examples.

<http://www.batliv.se/2017/03/14/sea-aktuellt-utställning-om-plastskrap-till-havs/>

<https://vegoeco.se/2017/03/14/out-to-sea-en-utställning-om-plastskrap-till-havs/>

<http://www.inredningsnyheter.se/20170315/14730/utställningen-out-sea>

<http://inrikesmagasin.se/2017/03/13/utställning-om-plasten-i-haven/>

Engagement on social media

In addition, Out to Sea was featured in numerous social media postings, including a new website and social media channel, SDG14.net, created by the AtKisson Group partly to help publicize the issue of plastic in the oceans. The project was extensively covered in the Twitter, Facebook and other feeds of the Plastic Garbage Project, Tekniska Museum, AtKisson Group and others.

Because of the international funding support received via crowdfunding, Out to Sea in Stockholm also influenced the social media feeds of our global sponsors in Japan, Australia, France and other countries.



Final reflections

“In connection with the exhibition’s time at Tekniska museet, we have developed contact with the Swedish organizers for further cooperation. We have furthermore deepened earlier contacts with organizations Global Action Plan and Maja Brisvall from Vaxholm Kastellet. We are planning collaboration this summer around the UN Sustainable Development Goal number 14.”

Tekniska museet, the hosting museum

“The ‘Out to Sea’ exhibition we sponsored in Stockholm has closed now, but the impact lives on: I simply cannot enjoy time on a beach until I have cleaned the plastic off it. Here, on the beach, I recreated my own little ‘Out to Sea’ exhibition. While collecting it, people asked what I was doing and were appropriately appalled when I (briefly) explained the problem. One family noted, ‘that issue is getting more attention now, isn’t it?’ Yes, thankfully, it is. I’d like to hope we – and all our contributors and crowd funders – helped a little. The world is finally waking up. Plastic waste is terrible, and the ocean is the new climate.”

Alan AtKisson, sponsor and member of the initiating team

Alan AtKisson created this “Mini Out to Sea” exhibit on the beach at Gotland, Sweden, and posted it to his Instagram account just as the Out to Sea exhibit was closing in Stockholm.





Time to pack up!

Thanks for supporting,
visiting, and participating
in Out to Sea Stockholm!





drosos (...)

Out to Sea: The Plastic Garbage Project
was created by the Museum für Gestaltung
Zürich and the Drosos Foundation

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Detta projekt har medfinansierats av Havs- och vattenmyndigheten genom anslag 1:11 Åtgärder för havs- och vattenmiljö.