

The Scientific Poster Session - a space for conversation and its adaptation to a new environment

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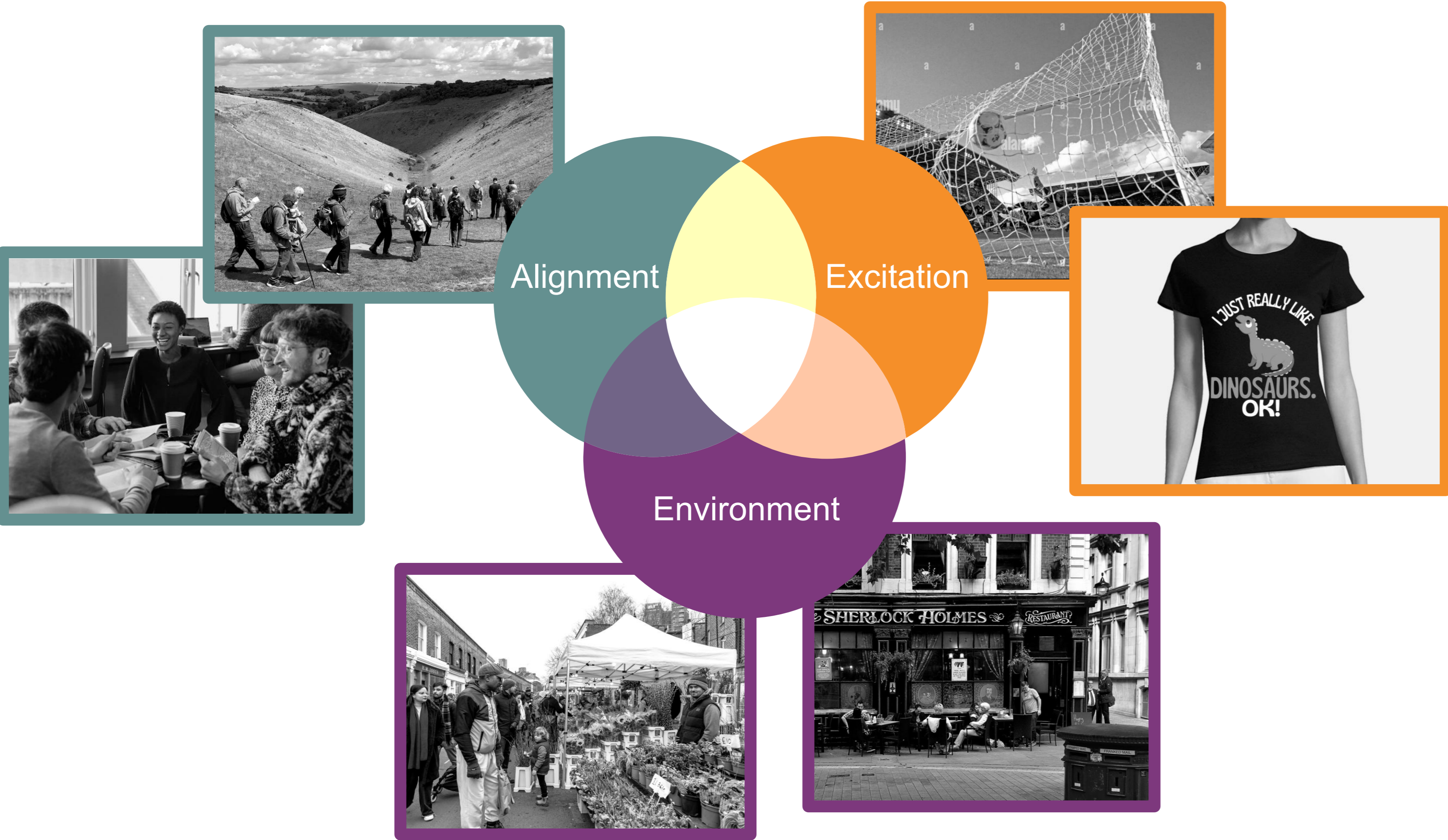
Introduction

The scientific conference is a great place for conversations to start. The barrier to exchange is lowered owing to three factors discussed below and people are often able to chat openly. Within the conference is “**the poster session**” - a space for academics to display and talk about their finished storylines – with posters acting as an informal backdrop for people to discuss their work and create a space to move freely.

In this poster I want to highlight the benefits that poster sessions bring as well as their problems. Namely the walls of text and fully completed storyline that can inhibit genuine conversations. In doing so I introduce the task of the workshop that will take place at Locarno BaseCamp where we will deconstruct the scientific poster and begin to reimagine what it could be to a wider audience as a facilitator of conversation.

How to lower the entry to conversation

Conversation can be aided by three factors: **1. Alignment** – This is the unwritten social contract of a situation. It’s a shared reason or way of thinking which makes people to be receptive to certain types of interaction. **2. Environment** – The location of the event first and foremost but must have one key element - it cannot be static **3. Excitation** – This is a motivator, it can be an external event or an internal drive that precipitates the conversation.



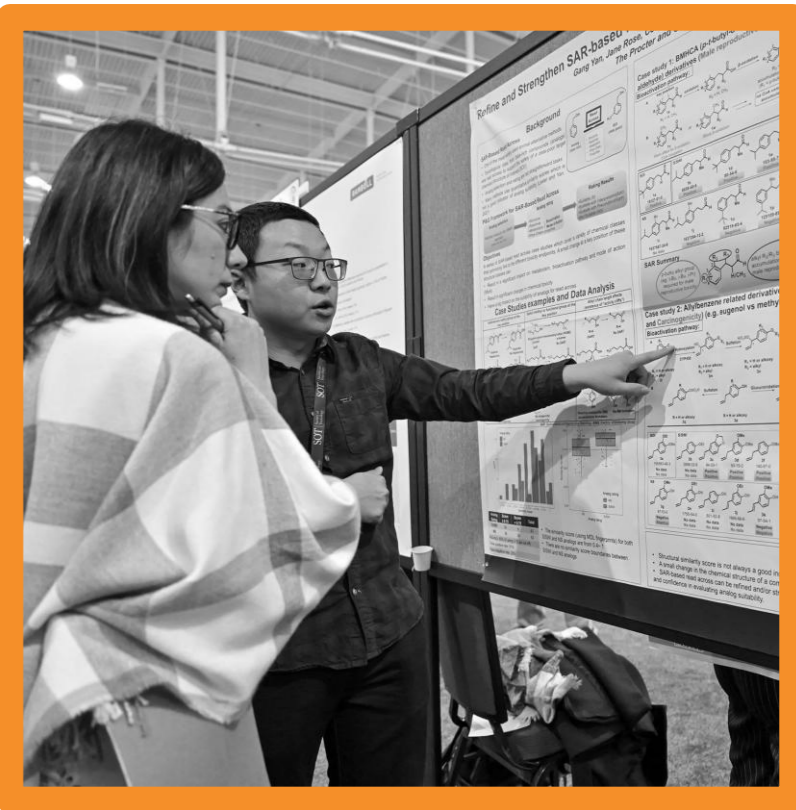
#InConversationWeTrust

BaseCamp was born from the need to foster new connections between the Locarno Film Festival and the next generation of talents. Over the festival, BaseCamp welcomes 200 talents from different disciplines (filmmakers, designers, musicians, writers, performers, thinkers) under one roof to live, experiment, and exchange ideas. BaseCamp functions as a temporary community where participants collaborate in proximity.

I wanted to create a *poster session* that works for *BaseCamp*, taking the spirit of both and providing a space for people to bring their ideas to the table in a structured setting. This experiment reimagines the poster as a *starting point*, rather than a conclusion. A space to show ideas in motion. With the visual backdrop providing a structured, playful dialogue. Built for BaseCamp → Open-ended, interdisciplinary.

Why is the poster session a powerful space?

- Alignment**
- The talks throughout the day align the participants into a similar way of thinking.
 - You assume that the participant is going to speak a similar language to you (domain-specific), for example chemistry talk at a chemistry conference.
 - There is a certain expectation of networking / conversation.
- Environment**
- The space allows for a flow, if a conversation stagnates you can easily move on to the next poster and come back later if more information/questions come to mind.
 - The posters provide a passive/active backdrop for holding attention and divides the space without strong barriers.
- Excitation**
- The title of the poster encourages you to ask a question.
 - You have time to be in each others presence as you read a little bit of the poster.
 - There is a source of information that you can refer to.
 - Presenters have an inherent desire to talk about their own work.



Some Problems

Walls of Text

Walls of dense text make the poster impossible to follow without the author present. Too much information is compressed into a single A1 space. Ironically, this is often done so the author *doesn't* have to be there – but it ends up ensuring that only they can explain it.

A Complete Story

- The presentation of entirely completed works can limit the conversations.
- Monodirectional** – I am telling the story, you're listening.
- Stagnation** – The story is finished, you can leave.
- Closed** – Collaboration is not allowed to reshape or challenge the finished storyline.

Performative Presence

Authors often “stand guard” at their posters, ready to defend rather than discuss. This can create a transactional feel: ask a question, get a summary, move on.

Reimagining for a general audience

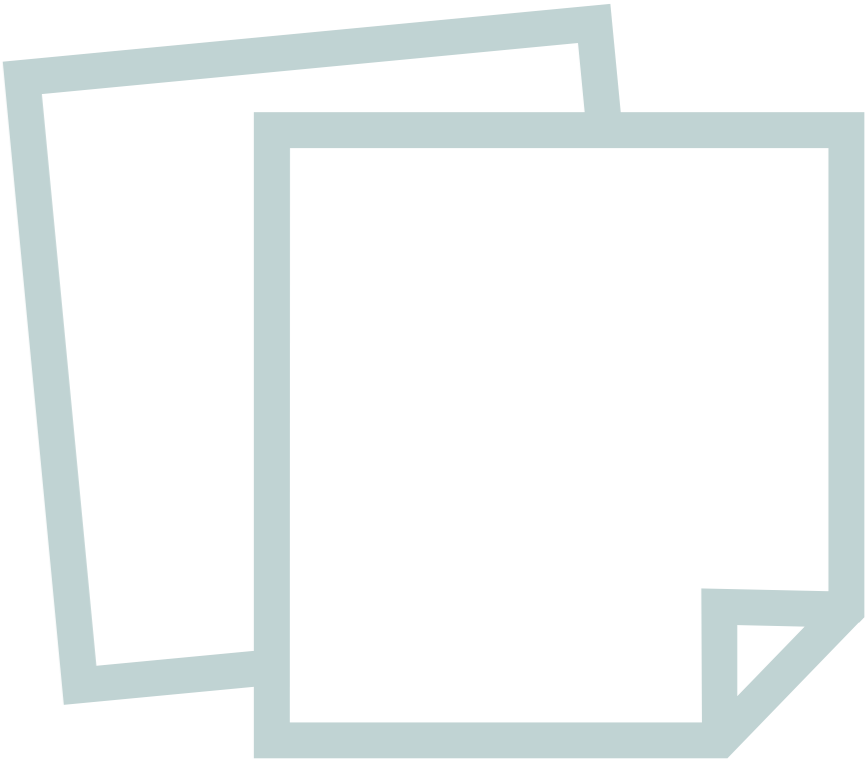
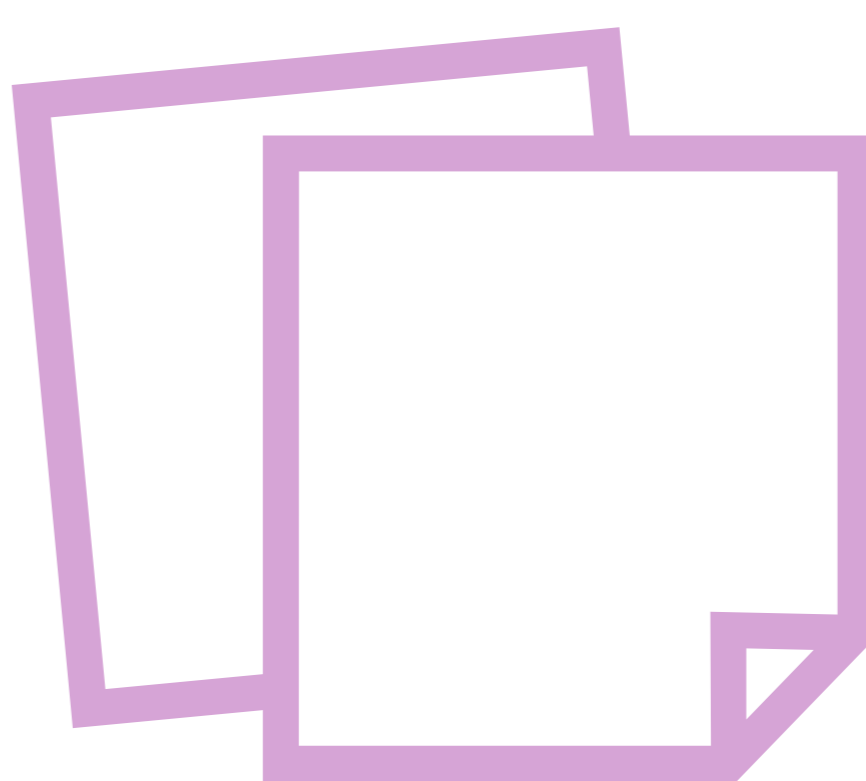
- Science relies on completed narratives to show you're not making it up.
- If we are reimagining this space to engender conversations of all kinds, do we need completed storylines?
- Should a general poster session be limited to completed works or can we display ideas or incomplete works?
- What narrative structures can we introduce in this space that we can't in an entirely academic conference?

What to keep and what to leave

- Do we need the title?
- Should the work be interpretable as a standalone article?
- Should it be an individuals work, a group work?
- What kind of stories can be told in this space?
- How do we format the posters, all one size and shape?

Goals of the workshop

- Deconstruct the scientific poster to its main components.
- Decide what we should keep, what we should leave behind.
- Reconstruct the poster to be relevant for a more general audience.
- Create a set of rules to be rigorously adhered too.
- Create a set of guidelines to enable people to contribute a poster at the next Basecamp.
- Attempt to create some posters.
- Define what space the poster session should occupy? Public? Private?
- How should the space be arranged?



Acknowledgements:
I would love to thank Locarno Film Festival Basecamp for the invitation to create a project for the 2025 iteration of the festival. It's been a great pleasure to think and establish the work for this year's festival and I hope I have provided a worthwhile project.

Selected references:
1) Are references required in this kind of space?
2) Could we use this section to expand our conversation and ask some more questions we don't want in the main text.
3) This is the fine print, someone has to be really invested to read this.
4) Most of this work is done through experience, should I reference every conversation and book I've read?

