

DECOMPRESSION: MYSTICAL CREATURES 2021

REPORT

Decompression: Mystical creatures was an out-of-this-world event organised a few months after the annual Burn in Lithuania and run entirely by volunteers following the 10 Burning Man principles.

It was a smaller scale gathering than the annual burn event in Lithuania (Amber Burn) as there were fewer theme camps and less effigies burned. Nonetheless, the never-ending love was present as always. We spent 48 hours turning a rustic retreat location into a mystical burners' bonanza and it took us over 24 hours to put it all back as it was.

DETAILS:

Date: November 5-7, 2021

Location: Ažuolynė Entertainment Park, Lithuania.

Tickets sold: 130

Attendance: 111

Theme camps: 3

Burnable effigies: 2

Mutant vehicles: 1

Performances and workshops: 14



HIGHLIGHTS

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers gifted a tremendous total of ~3,600 hours!

Decompression wouldn't have happened without volunteers, so we were all ecstatic to watch so many burners stepping up and dedicating their time and creative ideas as a joint effort.

PLANNING

Planning started in August 2021. There was a risk of government quarantine, but we hoped for the best.

Most of the Decompression planning was done online by email, weekly Zoom meetings; Discord and Facebook for internal communication; Newsletters, Facebook, and Discord were used for external communication.

TICKETS

We used Quicket for registration and ticketing.

We had attendees from over seven countries! The event was sold out a week before the due date.

LOCATION

We were tossed between two ideas: running it as a one-night, urban get-together somewhere in the city vs more of a countryside weekend in the woods. In the end, the decision was made to gather at Ažuolynė, a wild location approximately 50km away from Vilnius.

Ažuolynė, a rustic retreat surrounded by forest became our home for the time being. Amenities included a heated sleeping area, pond, hot tub and sauna.

COMMUNAL EFFORT

Decompression event was organised by The Crew Team and three theme camps: The Crew camp took care of the workshop space and the bar; Nox Lumos camp, who created an luminous music and dance space; Zirga Galva camp, who took us to Cloud 9 with their chillout zone; Yellow Green Red camp, who illuminated a space in the forest and shared food with hungry burners.

Besides the theme camps, many burners took things into their own hands and scattered magic creations across the area – from toilets with whale sounds to a magic path in the forest leading to an art installation. It was a communal effort through and through, which was beautiful to see!

WORKSHOPS & PERFORMANCES

We had an overall of 14 workshops ranging from sewing your own Mystical Creature to meditation practices. There was a plethora of DJs spinning decks for almost 48 hours straight – both in the bar area and Neon Jungle stage.

ART

A variety of different art projects decorated the Decompression, including a mutant vehicle donated by a burner Jurgis Didžiulis. Two effigies were built, loved and enjoyed, and finally burned.

CONSTRUCTION

The crew worked from 3-5th November to metamorphose the location, and then from 7-8th November to transform it back to its original appearance.

COVID-19

One of our greatest concerns planning the event was the Corona pandemic. We adhered to the Lithuanian government rules, which meant all of the participants had to have either a valid Opportunity Passport, vaccination proof, or negative antigen/PCR test upon entering. There were no cases reported after the event.



REFLECTIONS



TICKETS

Only a few minor issues with the tickets:

- One ticket apparently sold twice. We are analysing the situation with Quicket.
- Not all Early Arrival (EA) volunteers received an EA pass from Quicket (though they could retrieve it from their Quicket account). We are analysing the situation with Quicket.
- Due to Covid travel restrictions, possible risks and many ticket holders falling sick right before the event. We agreed to transfer tickets after the deadline as we didn't want people to completely lose the money that they have paid for their tickets. Extended deadlines created stress and working overtime for those who were responsible for the tickets.

LOGISTICS

We needed better communication regarding loading/unloading the truck and deciding what and how much stuff we really need to bring. Next time we'll designate 10-15 people ahead of time to load/unload the truck and confirm three days ahead of time that their plans did not change.

COMMUNICATION

We tried to keep the communication short, straight to the point yet informative and educational.

Unfortunately, there was too much irrelevant information in the Lithuania Burners/Amber Burn participants groups before the event, and too much on social media afterwards. Furthermore, internal communication was not always on time, and the same messages were too often repeated on numerous channels.

A number of solutions could be these:

Main discord channel for communications

FB event page for communication

Link to FB event is included in the confirmation email when a ticket is purchased

No sensitive information posted in Lithuania burner groups

No posting illegal things on instagram and hashtagging



INFRASTRUCTURE

Overall we had everything that we needed and a bit more.

Due to the fact that the detailed work plan was not prepared in advance and there was no clear division of responsibilities, our walkie-talkies arrived too late (on the first day of the event), it would have been useful to have it during the 2 days of build, but it was not the end of the world.

Solution: plan plan plan in advance and better communication between department leads.

KITCHEN

We confirmed what we knew already – it is necessary to organize meals during build/preparation for the event, otherwise volunteers would be left without food and strength. We are greatly thankful to our kitchen lead that she gifted this to the community.

Next time – if we want our early arrivals to be fed and strong, we should definitely plan a sufficient budget for it. And for the event so short, we could definitely survive without organized meals and take care of it individually.

GATES

Overall the gate did it's mission – checked in all participants.

Due to miscommunication not all relevant information was shared with participants. Next time the Crew will agree on information that needs to be shared with all participants on gates and make a memo card.

VOLUNTEERS

Despite our great efforts to educate people about the power and importance of participation, and contacting people individually, we still had more than 50% shifts unfilled. And those people who are responsible (in general) and understand the importance of volunteering still cannot resist the temptation to fill in what is unfilled and by doing this find themselves overworked and sometimes even in a burnout.

Another important aspect – being sober at your volunteering shift – is the rule we mutually agreed on to be safe, but sometimes forgot to follow it, so next time – if we agree on something, we follow it and no excuses. We praise and celebrate our fantastic volunteers, but we do not tolerate putting others at risk and we do not forget those, who are not guided by the same values.

BURNS

Somebody did manage to jump over the fire once it had died down, after the burn was almost over. Some attendees were upset by this, but after our reflection meeting we decided that we can't control people: after the structure collapses and burns down to mostly embers, perimeter team can stand down.



EARLY ARRIVALS

Enough super active and helpful people, so the build/preparation was successful. Registration for EA pass on time rate was great – only 2 people did not register on time.

DECOR

Even though we didn't have a decor lead, individual teams decorated the whole location and did a great work. It was unique, eclectic and fun; this way more than a few people could realize their ideas.

PLACEMENT

The team started to sell the tickets without knowing the exact number of sleeping places in different areas and a technical map. Thus, the sleeping arrangements were crowded and settled up upon arrival of the participants.

Solution – to start selling the tickets only knowing the exact no. of sleeping places in different areas and prepare the technical sleeping places map with not so modest measurements.

STRIKE

Due to the fact that we started the strike quite late in the afternoon of Sunday (participants were in a hurry to go home and rest and most couldn't stay on Monday), also not having a dedicated department lead, it was quite chaotic and unfortunately the same people who prepared the location had to step up and put everything back to places.

Again – educating people about the importance of volunteering, having a lead who would make the strike plan, gathering volunteers earlier in the day would help to have an efficient strike time.

LEAVE NO TRACE

In the end we left no trace, but that included cleaning up after many people. One theme camp in particular left quite a trace, leaving boxes full of left-over packaged food; trash on tables outside and all over the sleeping area.

Many of the smaller communal rooms and some spots outside were left in various states of trashed. We cleaned the burn site out without leaving a single screw or nail.

Next time we'll communicate more, forming LNT teams during the event and informing people what LNT is regardless of where we are with workshops and fun games. We'll eschew crew bins and instead specify bins for particular teams, as well as forbid personal rubbish in common bins. At the end of the event, we'll collect all burnables and turn it into an installation.



CONSENT

Being around so many friendly people for few people might have given the idea that it's okay to embrace/touch others without their consent. Unfortunately there were a few claims of unsolicited contact whilst grabbing and embracing after a clear "no" was conveyed as well as spoken explanations of what lies ahead, "like it or not."

It is one of the most important topics, which is now on the table to discuss - during reflections of the event we agreed to communicate clearly that it's mandatory to get consent before acting and it's not okay to make anyone feel unsafe. We also agreed to come up with a plan, how do we act/react in/to these situations. We think it would be a great idea to seek for experienced guidance (training, lectures, literature on the topic) so that all participants would have important knowledge in advance.

As for the situation we had during the event, we are solving it by talking with all sides and coming up with a solution that would be fair, adequate, and satisfying the side that felt insecure.

When we come up with the plan, we will let everyone know, what's not tolerated (seems that it should be clear, but..) and where to turn/what to do if anything unwelcomed happens. Need to create a clear protocol for org shifts/rangers on how to handle these cases. Warning/expulsion from the event/community.

MISCELLANEOUS

There were minor issues in these areas:

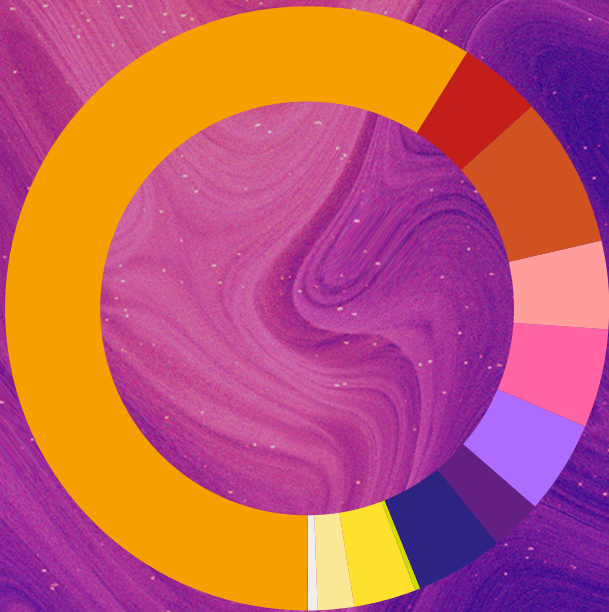
Lights & Sound department: let's have the owner of the system take responsibility for correct setup check on it during the event



BUDGET

The budget wasn't planned well enough in advance. For example, sometimes VAT may or may not have been included in estimates or agreed upon prices. There was some miscommunication from department leads, especially regarding whether they should pay by the association card or place orders online.

We should plan the budget more thoroughly in advance and be more clear about who can spend what. We'll also create finance@lithuanianburners.lt.



● Location	€4,000.00
● Art	€300.97
● Infrastructure (Generator fuel)	€546.06
● Insurance	€330.00
● Lights & Sound	€349.57
● Liquor expenses	€337.07
○ Fire art	€199.87
○ Decor, bar	€309.97
● Greeters	€26.56
● Logistic	€217.80
● Wristbands	€142.03
● Admin	€27.50

Total income	€6924.00
Total expenditures	€6787.40
Residue	€136.60

LESSONS TO BE LEARNT

We face a continuous issue which calls for a deeper discussion – should we have departments/things when we don't have a dedicated lead for them? How to correctly assess our own capacity?

Solution – one serious responsibility per person per event; a department lead that volunteers because they want to do it, and not because we are short on leads.

