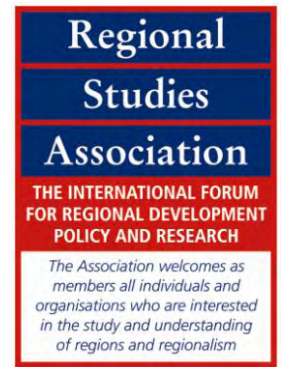




**port of the 2nd workshop of the RSA Research Network  
on Experience Economy and Spatial Strategies.**



**‘The Experience Turn in Local Development and Planning’**

**15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at Aalborg University, Denmark.**

Local politicians and planners increasingly focus on quality of place and quality of life local development and as a tool for attracting citizens, tourists and businesses. Businesses, on the other hand focus increasingly on non-material features of their products such as narratives and images, which relate to the customers perception. The aim of the workshop was to explore, compare and analyze critically how the experience turn in planning and development is constructed and how it materializes as strategies, projects and innovations.

The workshop hosted 29 participants from Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Denmark. The participants worked for two full days and presented a total of 15 papers. The sessions were organized as 20 minutes presentations, and each paper presentation were discussed by a special discussant as well as in plenary. Discussions were lively and in particular the discussants contributed substantially to the progress of the debates. The institution of discussant, and the relatively long time dedicated to each presentation, was thus something to be remembered for other workshops

Among the participants were not only researchers, among which were many young researchers, but also a number of participants from different sectors of Danish regions and municipalities, as well as consultants. The researchers represented different scholarly backgrounds and approaches, and this variety in itself stimulated discussions.

The papers and the discussions were organized according to six themes which all had to do with the relationship between experience and culture economy and space. The opening session dealt with ‘*Experience and culture economy and place*’. Trine Bille and Carlos Freire-Gibbs talked about the emergence of experience economy as policy in Scandinavia and Denmark. Bille showed how in Denmark the experience economy is a construction which is rather directly connected to the goal to create market economic growth. Policies thus take for granted that experiences, creativity and culture create economic value, however without being very specific about why or how this should take place. At national policy level experience economy seems to be related to culture and creative branches, but evidently other branches do provide commodified experiences such as e.g. pets and pornography. The field seems to be fuzzy, and this is a challenge for policy making. Freire-Gibb supplemented by showing how experience economy has become a key notion in Danish research, and how the notion has travelled to become important in local economic development policy.

Under the heading of '*Places in competition*' May Hald & Tone Haraldsen and Anne Lorentzen explored the role of experience economy in place making in the Norwegian capital of Oslo, and in Danish municipalities respectively. The experience economy discourse seems to be more rooted in Danish than in Norwegian spatial development policy. Hald & Haraldsen thus on the one hand showed that in Norway Oslo is the only place in which the location coefficient of the cultural industries is higher than unity. The fact of Oslo thus being a creative city is on the other hand not exploited in the place marketing of the city which is rather traditional with its focus on the natural environment as well as on high tec. The situation is quite the opposite in Denmark, where regional and local development strategies integrate concepts of leisure, culture and experiences related to businesses as well as to amenities. Local strategies are ambitious and it could be argued that some of them are in need of a reality check, the actual resources taken into consideration. Perceptions of identity were in play in both cases, and this was developed further in the section on '*residential location and leisure*'. In this section Vincent Pandolfi and Christian Schubarth looked at two different locations, namely Maastricht and Gros-de-Vaud in Lausanne North. The future of Maastricht is being negotiated among different actors and coalitions and a creative city agenda is emerging, although with difficulty. Such an agenda is still to be developed in Gros-de-Vaud which is characterized by urban sprawl. The locals could learn to benefit more from the local natural environment and enhance their local identity, through a development of tourism, according to Schubarth.

'*Experience economy and tourism development in regions*' was discussed in three papers. Food is much in focus on the rural island of Bornholm, where consumption is enhanced by experiences, often developed in networks. These can be attendance based (visits, tours) or distributed (cultural identity of products). The potentials can be exploited further by a more systematic and regional approach, according to Jesper Manniche. Like many other cities the Swedish city of Gothenburg is in need of alternatives to the resource based industries. Anders Larsson and Kristina Lindström explored the potential of developing the service sector and in particular the experience economy of this city, drawing from the lessons of other European cities. Based on lessons from research on sustainability Søren Kerndrup argued in favor of integrative approaches to experience economy and showed how the life and living of citizens can be an important perspective for understanding and promoting spatial or regional development in the experience economy.

A group of papers dealt with '*innovative networks and projects in the experience economy*'. Thomas Østergaard reported from the work being done in the small Danish municipality of Frederikshavn under the name of Karizma, which is a cultural policy initiative of many dimensions. It entails enlightenment, empowerment, entertainment and economic impact. It has a clear focus on social inclusion and authenticity. The initiative is inspired by the Anglo-Saxon approach to culture policy. A more common approach to local culture policy in Denmark is culture heritage projects. Lise Schröder reported from an ongoing culture heritage project related to the two Danish municipalities, Aalborg and Gribskov. Cultural heritage can be exploited as a strategic resource as in Aalborg or as a creative collaboration process in local development as in Gribskov. The relationship between food and culture was explored by Isaac Kwamena Arthur, who showed how culture is used as experience offering in the food sector in three small municipalities of the Danish

periphery, where e.g. music, interior decoration and storytelling is part of the offering of many food products. Atle Hauge explored the role of experienced quality in innovation and illustrates his point by the renowned Norwegian sports and outdoor equipment industry in which the natural geography as well as imagination is important.

*'Governance in the experience economy'* was the last session of the workshop. Arthur and Daniel Galland discussed how the production of events in can be seen as an outcome of network based governance practices, in which different actors have taken different roles in the creative production of these. Finally Hughes Jeannerat approached the overall topic of the workshop from an integrative perspective. He argued how globalization has called forward the experience economy as a new source of regional competitiveness and residential attractiveness. Compared to earlier, consumption processes and the way these are staged have gained importance, and this should be reflected in the way, we approach the new experience turn and its potentials. Lessons from studies of the experience economy can on the other hand enrich theory building in related areas as a lens to approach new socio-economic issues.

There are still many issues to discuss, such as: What kind of growth does the experience economy lead to? What kind of regions are able to boost the experience economy and what regions are not? What is the role of local government in the development of consumption based growth, and how does this relate to quality of place considerations from a citizen's perspective?

Discussions will continue in the gateway on Cultural and Experience Economies at the next general conference of the RSA from 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2011 in Newcastle

The next event of the Research Network on Experience Economy and Spatial strategies will take place on November 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> 2011 in Lillehammer University College, Norway. Organizer will be Tone Haraldsen and her team.

As a follow up of this workshop of the network on Experience Economy and Spatial Strategies we intend to edit a special issue of European Urban and Regional Studies.

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