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REPORT ON THE 3RD WORKSHOP OF THE RSA RESEARCH NETWORK ON EXPERIENCE ECONOMY AND SPATIAL STRATEGIES

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REPORT ON THE 3RD WORKSHOP OF THE RSA RESEARCH NETWORK ON EXPERIENCE ECONOMY AND SPATIAL STRATEGIES

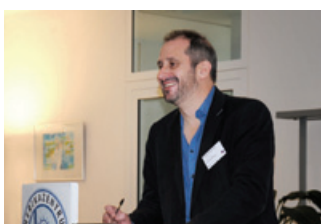
'Theorizing the Experience Economy: Toward a future agenda?,' 3rd-4th November 2011, HafenCity University, Hamburg, Germany

Gernot Grabher and Hugues Jeannerat, HafenCity University Hamburg (HCU), Germany



After already two successful events held in 2009 (Neuchâtel) and in 2010 (Aalborg), the third workshop of the research network Experience Economy and Spatial Strategies took place on 3rd-4th November 2011 in Hamburg. Organized by the research group Urban and Regional Economic Studies at the HafenCity University Hamburg (Gernot Grabher), the workshop proposed to reflect on the general question of 'Theorizing the experience economy: Towards a future agenda?'

This workshop aimed at discussing the scope and limits of the experience economy perspective for regional studies as well as stimulating new interdisciplinary perspectives on economic valuation (Gernot Grabher, HafenCity University). On the one hand, participants were invited to overcome more traditional technology-centered approaches by reflecting on the role of immaterial innovation and of symbolic consumption in territorial development. On the other hand, common fields of interest between



Philip Crang (Royal Holloway College, London)

regional studies and economic sociology around the social construction of market value were identified. More than forty researchers and students from eight countries took part in the workshop, and eighteen presentations were given by junior and senior scholars. The presentations were organized in three thematic sessions and highlighted central scientific challenges posed by the experience economy perspective.

The first session provided a reflection on the way that the experience economy spatially organizes in particular forms of stage-setting. For Philip Crang (Royal Holloway London), four particular types of experiential stages can be identified (the Theatre, the Crowd, the Interface and the Collection). Each represents different spatial and social configurations that intertwine with everyday social and economic practices. At a firm level, stage-setting does not only contribute to offering experiences directly to end-consumers, but also contributes to the valuation of authentic products or sustainable technologies, for example (Hugues Jeannerat and Olivier Crevoisier, University of Neuchâtel). In this sense, experiences are increasingly instrumental in branding processes, and shops have become strategic stages in which consumers engage in the valuation of branded products, as is the case in the fragrance industry (Bodo Kubartz, Passion and Consulting). At a territorial level, experiential stage-setting is increasingly perceived as a

strategic resource for urban or regional planning. Major German cities, for instance, are increasingly aware of their night-time economy and advertise themselves as attractive stages for night-life experiences (Jakob Schmid, HafenCity University). Also, staging experiences have in some Nordic municipalities become a resource to promote the active participation of citizens in planning processes (Line Hvingel, Lise Schroeder and Hans Peter Therkildsen, Aalborg University).

The second session explored key challenges for regional studies and economic geography induced by the experience economy perspective. For Andy Pratt (King's College London), the rise of the experience economy leads to new ontological questions that are not only related to the production and consumption of experiential products. It also implies considering new work hierarchies and inequalities that are embedded in economic and extra-economic processes. While the cultural or creative economy have mostly been addressed in productionist terms and mostly been designated as a specific set of particular industries, the experience economy directs attention to consumption-based activities occurring across sectors and industries (Anne Lorentzen, Aalborg University). Consequently, attempts of an unequivocal distinction between the experience economy and the cultural economy, for example, appear highly problematic and complicate

the development of dedicated policy support (Berit Therese Nilsen and Britt Dale, Norwegian University of Science and Technology). The promotion of consumers' experiences enables the launch of regional-specific products, for instance the 'Nordic Cuisine' that cannot be certified and protected in traditional industrial ways (Jon Sundbo, Roskilde University). In this sense, experiences are not necessarily what is directly sold, but are inextricably interwoven with the valuation of local social and economic activities at large (Sarah Kennedy, Queen's



Olivier Crevoisier (University of Neuchâtel)

University, Belfast). The latter entail private and collective rationalities entangled in local communities, which appears particularly significant for the development of rural areas (Jesper Manniche, Lene Roemer, Tage Peterson and Karin Larsen, Centre for Regional and Tourism Research, Bornholm).

The third session addressed interdisciplinary approaches to market valuation in the experience economy. For Patrik Aspers (Stockholm University), the valuation of experience goods involves particular market structures

and collective judgment devices that enable consumers to identify, compare and classify different experiences. For instance, ratings and appreciations provided by private collectors, gallery owners and public museums structure the market valuation of contemporary visual art (Melanie Fasche, HafenCity University). Also, place branding is a way for regions to advertise a unique experience that differentiates the region from competing localities (Rebecca Richardson, University of Newcastle). Crucially, expectations, experiences and valuations are genuinely social processes (Sjanett de Geus, Tilburg University). Most often, the economic value of an experience builds on the relational

performance between producer and consumer that is often situated in a specific place. This leads to particular forms of legitimacy but also to vulnerabilities on the labour market. For instance, 'temporary venues' contribute to establishing and legitimizing the market value of designers' activities (Elke Schübler and Bastian Lange, Free University Berlin and Humboldt University, Berlin). In the music industry, the imperative of mobility between the various stages implies particular forms of vulnerability for the creative work force (Oliver Ibert and Sunitje Schmidt, Leibniz-Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning, Erkner).

The workshop ended with a final discussion opened up by David Stark (Columbia University, New York) who reflected on key issues raised during the two days of the workshop. For him, the experience economy fundamentally implies 'being moved'. This might refer to a spatial movement at particular stages, to particular producers or to particular consumers. However, experiences are

also about being moved in a personal or collective way through experiencing surprise, amazement or even anxiety (Michael Hutter, Wissenschaftszentrum, Berlin). In this sense, the valuation of experience and surprise in markets entails the management of consumer's expectations. David Stark also indicated that the affordances provided by social media deserve more attention within the experience economy research agenda.

During the final discussion, the experience economy was regarded not only as a challenge for regional studies, but also for social sciences at large. It was argued that a broader and interdisciplinary conceptualization of market valuation is needed to understand how particular experiences are framed in the economic valuation of places, products and activities. To be held in Bornholm in 2012, the next meeting of the research network will build upon the insights and propositions generated during this workshop in order to advance the research agenda on the experience economy further. The workshop

website is: [https://www.hcu-hamburg.de/master/stadtplanung/arbeitsgebiete/gernot-grabher/event/seee/#!prettyphoto\[name52912\]/0/](https://www.hcu-hamburg.de/master/stadtplanung/arbeitsgebiete/gernot-grabher/event/seee/#!prettyphoto[name52912]/0/)

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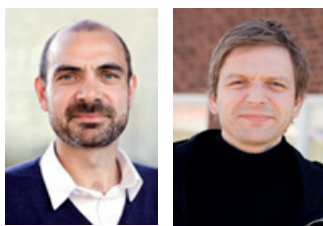


David Stark (Columbia University)

REPORT ON THE THIRD RESEARCH SEMINAR OF THE RSA RESEARCH NETWORK ON CREATIVE REGIONS

Creative Regions in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities, 18-19th April 2012, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

Lars Winther and Hogni Hansen, University of Copenhagen, Denmark



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The third research seminar took place in Copenhagen at the Department of Geography and Geology, University of Copenhagen,

with a focus on the role of local and regional policies and policy frameworks for creative regions. Of particular interest were best practice and lessons emerging in different European contexts and the challenges and opportunities for the development of creative regions in Northern Europe. More than 30 people attended the seminar and 18 papers were presented over the two

days reflecting the interests above in different contexts and from different perspectives. The main conclusion of the two days is that creativity matters for urban and regional development but the event also revealed that the impact of creativity in terms of creative and cultural industries, creative people, highly skilled workers and bohemians, institutions and regional and local policies

varies by geographical contexts including the potential for more peripheral regions and medium-sized cities outside the main growth regions. Several studies combined various perspectives and emphasised the interrelationships between creative and cultural industries, labour and institutions in making creative regions.

The first day was the PhD and young researchers'