

ABSTRACT

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The experience economy in an island region: More than just for the tourists

The Experience Economy is still a poorly defined and fuzzy concept, both theoretically and empirically. For instance, as emphasized in the call for papers for the present conference, it is still a debated question whether the economic relevance of experiences should be constrained to certain economic sectors like it is usually done in ‘Creative/Cultural/Tourism Economy approaches’ or if the demand and staging of experiences are more general phenomena characterizing late-capitalist economies and markets like it is imagined in Pine and Gilmore inspired ‘Experience Economy approaches’. A third and quite different approach to the EE concept which in recent years has become increasingly common at least in a Danish and Nordic context (Lorentzen 2008; Lorentzen and Krogh 2009) and inspired by Richard Florida’s theory on the ‘creative class’ attracted by the ‘people climate’ rather than the ‘business climate’ of places, is to apply the Experience Economy concept in policies for urban and regional development to attract new citizens and firms.

In an attempt to contribute to this third approach to the Experience Economy - but maybe also with a risk of adding to the conceptual confusion about the Experience Economy by extending its reach to include also public sector, non-commercial activities - this paper will discuss the possible content and implications of the Experience Economy from a perspective focusing on economic and demographic development in rural areas. Using concrete study project examples from MOLLY, a Master education in “Experience Management in Rural Areas”, supplied by Centre for Regional and Tourism Research on the island of Bornholm in cooperation with the Roskilde University/Denmark, the paper outlines and discusses the understanding of the Experience Economy - unfortunately not yet fully theoretically grounded - on which the MOLLY education is based. The critical element characterizing the ‘MOLLY way’ of developing rural experience products and activities, distinguishing it from the more business-oriented, non-territorial experience management education, supplied by Roskilde University for students mainly from urban areas, is the collective, network-based, public/private sector-crossing, local community perspective as well as the point of departure in place-bound resources. Concrete study project examples to be presented in the paper include cases about development of experience of private enterprises (e.g. internet-based flower-shop) as well as cases about public sector activities (e.g. experiences in the waiting room of a hospital emergency department).