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For the love of experience: changing the experience economy discourse

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CHAPTER 8

Every now and then
a man's mind is stretched by
a new idea or sensation,
and never shrinks back
to its former dimensions.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES SR.,
THE AUTOCRAT OF THE BREAKFAST-TABLE,
1858

Conclusion

Chapters 3, 4 & 5:
Experience spectrum with insights into:
▸ Concepts (ch.3)
▸ Effects (ch.4)
▸ Values (ch.5)
Chapter 6:
Existential-phenomenological interviews
Chapter 2:
3 approaches in current literature on experience:
▸ Environment centred
▸ Effect centred
▸ Encounter centred
Chapter 7:
Themes emerged from interviews:
▸ Engagement
▸ Direction
▸ Investment
Chapter 8:
Sound and integrative theoretical foundation for experience economy from the individual's perspective

8.1 Introduction

Table 7.1 in the last chapter showed recommendations for experience organizers dealing with free choice learning experiences based on the themes that have emerged from the conducted interviews. In this chapter I want to draw conclusions for organizers of this type of experience based on the theories that were discussed in chapters 3 through 5 together with the interview themes, providing an answer to my last research question: "How can the insights on experience derived from the theoretical analysis in chapters 3 through 5 and the insights on free choice learning experiences derived from the existential-phenomenological interviews be related in order to construct a sound and integrative theoretical foundation for the experience economy?" This answer is the last step in obtaining my research objective: offsetting the bias in the current experience economy discourse. I will first give an overview of how the theoretical foundation in table 8.1 was constructed.

There are many ways in which the theoretical insights from table 8.1 and the interview themes from chapter 7 can be confronted with each other and I cannot hope to offer a full overview of how they can be confronted. However, in paragraph 8.3 I intend to show some hopefully valuable ways in which the theory and the themes can help in offsetting the current bias in the experience economy discourse and help organizations in making intelligible decisions when acting in the experience economy. I do this by describing connections between every subtheme, 12 in total, and the 3 different spectra reflecting the theoretical foundations for the three approaches I have distinguished. For each and every subtheme an insight into how it can help in offsetting the bias in the current experience economy discourse is thus presented, by paying attention to the concept of Erfahrung, deep effects and investments of non-practical resources and the standard of inclusiveness. For reasons of readability I will refer to the latter as Erfahrungs-investments in this chapter.

Also, from 2008 I have been in the fortunate position to experience one of the educational experiences discussed during the interviews myself, as program coordinator of the Executive Master in Information Management. Obviously the insights from this research have also helped to improve and change certain aspects of the program where needed. For each connection between subthemes and the spectra I will give an example of how in the EMIM program the insights have been implemented.

Since my intention in this research was not just to offset the biased discourse in the field of educational experiences I will generalize my findings in paragraph 8.4 for organizations that are or want to be active in the experience economy in general. In the final paragraph, 8.5, I will offer some recommendations for further research.

8.2 Theoretical foundation for the experience economy

As I indicated in the introductory chapter, I saw three types of problematizations of the intertextual field that brought me to my research objective. First of all, a review of current literature on the experience economy, as an answer to my first research question '1) What is the current state of affairs regarding theory on the experience economy?' resulted in the identification of a gap in the current literature in the sense that there exists no clear overview of what experience entails. If the experience economy, as is claimed by authors in the field, is indeed the sequence of the products and services economy, one would think that an overview of what this experience economy entails would be wise to have, so everyone knows what they are talking about and what choices to make. To create such an overview, I analyzed many definitions of the term 'experience' in chapter 2, indicating that there are three elements that are present in every experience: something that is experienced, an individual who experiences effects and an encounter between the something and the individual. However, a review of the current experience economy literature shows that usually authors focus on just one of these elements, hereby neglecting the interdependence between the three elements. There thus appear to exist three different approaches of experience in current literature. If the choice for one of the three approaches is made consciously, there does not have to be a problem, but if one has no overview of what the experience economy entails and is not aware of the fact

that there are three possible approaches and three elements to take into account, there can be unwanted consequences of this choice.

A further problem is that also within the specific approaches there appears to exist a bias. Usually the organizational perspective is dominant in the discourse. For example: in the environment-centred approach the organization seems to decide what the experience is or is supposed to be and is seen as the producer of economic offerings with the 'right' objective features. In the effect-centred approach the organization is portrayed as the decision maker of which hedonic effects to create in individuals and the manager of these hedonic effects. Finally, in the third approach, the encounter-centred approach, the organization is claimed to control which values are transacted during the experience and is dedicated the role of collecting money from the individuals. In table 2.4 the three approaches were presented with their respective foci, blind spots and related roles of organizations and individuals involved, according to current marketing and business literature in the experience economy field. The organization has a very active role compared to the more passive role of the individual as a passive consumer of stimuli and hedonic effects and as a paying consumer. Usually the individual's role is not made so explicit but it is important to make it explicit because it is a consequence of the highly dominant organizational perspective. Perhaps the bias towards the organizational perspective is due to the fact that the experience economy has for long been a marketing and business subject. These are disciplines in which one is used to a discourse about managing, controlling, making, producing etc., causing a focus on the organization's role. However, whatever the cause of the dominant organizational perspective, the individual's perspective has to be incorporated if the goal is to construct a sound and integrative theoretical foundation for the experience economy. I therefore formulated a research question for each of the three approaches, the answer to which was intended to offset the bias towards the organizational perspective: 2) How can experience be conceptualized from an individual's perspective?, 3) Which kinds of effects can experiences have from an individual's perspective?, and 4) Which types of values do individuals invest in the experience?.

The problematizations described above, the gap in current literature in terms of a lacking overview and the missing individual's perspective, are referred to as

incompleteness and inaccuracy problematizations by Locke and Golden-Biddle (1997) and by constructing my theory for the experience economy I have dealt with these problematizations. First of all the theory gives an overview of what the experience economy entails in terms of the three approaches I have distinguished. Second of all, the theory has been built by taking into account literature from various disciplines that take the individual's perspective instead of or next to that of the organization and by incorporating themes from the interviews in the theory the individual's perspective will be made even more explicit in this chapter.

Besides an incompleteness and an inaccuracy problematization, I also perceived a related incommensurability problematization, meaning that incorrect claims are made in the experience economy discourse in the current intertextual field. The economic offerings with the 'right' objective features that are currently often focused on in the environment-centred approach, are not experiences as I discussed in chapter 3, so claims made about these so-called experiences are bound to be incorrect. The management of hedonic effects, the current focus in the effect-centred approach, is too restricted in terms of the type of effects and an impossible task as I have explained in chapter 4. People are not machines and effects cannot fully be managed so claims made about experience in terms of the management of effects are also bound to be incorrect. Lastly, the focus on financial value in the encounter-centred approach, denies many other values that have a role in the experience. Furthermore, financial value is a very peculiar type of value as I have explained in chapter 5, which causes one to make incorrect claims about what happens in terms of value during the experience-encounter.

The discussion of these problems and the solution I have given in chapters 3 to 5 in terms of spectra showing which kinds of conceptualizations of experience there are (chapter 3), which effects experience can have (chapter 4) and what roles organizations can play if other values besides financial value are taken into account (chapter 5), have resulted in the overall schema depicted in table 8.1. The reader will recognize the three different components that have been presented at the ends of chapters 3, 4 and 5.

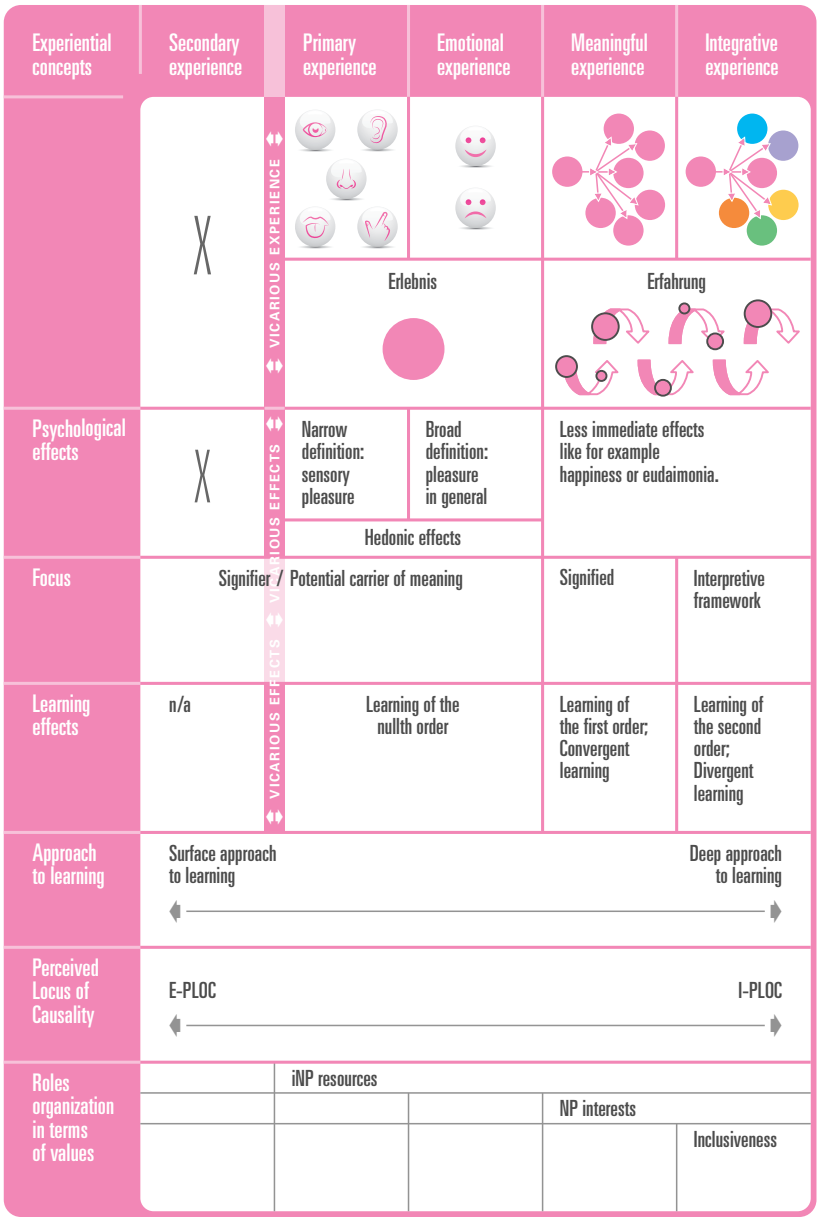

Table 8.1 — Theoretical foundation for the experience economy

8.3 Offsetting the bias in the experience economy discourse in the field of educational experiences

In this paragraph I will present ways in which the theoretical foundation for the experience economy can be connected to the insights derived from the interviews. To indicate that there are many ways to use the insights when organizers of educational experiences want to focus more on Erfahrungen, deep effects and Erfahrungs-investments, I will link each of the twelve subthemes to insights from the theoretical foundation and give short, clearly demarcated descriptions of how the insights have been implemented in the EMIM-program and –organization, to give the reader an idea of how this can be done. As I indicated in chapter 6, the aim of my phenomenological study was not to construct a predetermined set of fixed procedures, techniques and concepts for designing but to understand the essence of the free choice learning experiences that the individuals interviewed had lived through. The reader should therefore not interpret the following as rules or fixed techniques to design free choice learning experience but rather as indicators of important aspects that can be taken into account when one wants to focus more on Erfahrungen, deep effects and Erfahrungs- investments in the educational experience.

8.3.1 Offsetting the bias in the experience economy discourse: attention for Erfahrung

Engagement & Erfahrung: Talking about it

By paying attention to the importance of primary experience, not only in work forms and the selection of teachers but also by having participants actively engage with the topics at hand, participants get in touch with the raw material. By actively engaging with the topic at hand and noticing how things can be applied in practice, the topic can become meaningful in more than just the context of a specific lecture or exercise. Listening to someone else telling about certain insights is different from applying those insights in practice, even if it's just in the form of an exercise. By actively engaging oneself, the topic at hand can get connected with one's frame of reference and can

become part of the individual's Erfahrung more easily, so the individual can tap into the insights when needed in the future.

> In the second semester of EMIM the students get acquainted with methods and techniques like the vision deployment matrix and laddering. By practicing with these insights they learn how easy it is to understand how they work in theory but how hard it can be to implement them in practice. However, time and again we see that students, after they have practiced, continue to use these insights in different assignments, and also outside of the program in their own work situation. Also topics like creative and out of the box thinking, which are discussed in the context of innovation, lend themselves perfectly to become part of the Erfahrung of students. You can explain the definitions of creativity and have someone talk about it for hours but by practicing certain techniques students can notice of themselves how creative they are and how they can tap into their own creativity. This knowledge and the creative skills they learn are of course not just meaningful in the context of the exercise but for the whole educational experience and even well beyond the experience.

Engagement & Erfahrung: Relation versus calculation

By paying attention to the experience of participants and their perspective, it becomes clear that they may have a completely different view on what the experience is. It is less important what organizers see as the beginning and end, the important thing is what the individual perceives. It is the individual who has the experience and frankly he or she is the only one who can know where it all started and where it all ends. To arrive at the level of Erfahrung there should be a sense of consummation and the ending of the experience in the perception of the organization is not what demarcates this consummation; rather it is the perception of the individual that counts.

> I can imagine that someone would think that the EMIM-program starts with the first introductory session and ends when the students receive their degree, but the realization that the experience can start earlier and end later from the viewpoint of the individuals is reflected in the fact that before the start of the organized experience future participants are

encouraged to get acquainted on their own blog, study materials are handed to them so they can start reading beforehand and via social media they can get glimpses of what happens during the program. In the same way we keep in touch with alumni of the program by organizing meetings, for their own year or for everyone, the blogs remain active indefinitely and we urge them to stay in touch via various social media. The end of the program thus does not have to be the end of the experience, and by making an effort to stay in touch with alumni in different ways there are more contexts in which there is contact, with the aim of having the experience become integrated in the alumni's Erfahrung. But consummation is not only important in the context of the whole program. Also modules and semesters have a definite ending. Every module is closed afterwards with a presentation that sums up what has been presented during the module and every semester is closed with presentations by students and feedback from the examination committee. In this way we try to demarcate different elements of the educational experience so they can become consummated and can become part of the students' Erfahrung. However, whether the elements are consummated or not in their perception is not in our hands. One former student found closure of the semester only days after the final presentations because he still had questions on the feedback he had received. By asking for an explanation of the feedback and by having his questions answered he could finally close the semester, find consummation and move forwards.

Engagement & Erfahrung: Being pulled by your feathers

If you confront people with their own personal characteristics, they cannot help taking these things with them. Educational experiences aspiring the Erfahrung-level of experience, by definition have to engage students in a type of learning that transcends the mere absorption of facts. If people are confronted with their own behaviour, attitude, mode of thinking etc, they can choose to learn from it within the original context or they can learn from it transcending the original context. They can for example decide that they want to behave in a different way whilst present in the

program or they can realize that that behaviour is not something that they just exhibit in the program but also outside, in other contexts, and decide to change it in general.

> Especially education is an area where meaning can transcend the original context. Of course also in the EMIM-program participants learn things they can directly apply in their work situation but many of the topics discussed are topics that transcend contexts. This is an inherent aspect of learning that connects professional and personal development, but we also stimulate this transcendence in content and work forms. In the second semester we teach participants to gain an understanding about the problem they want to tackle in their projects by getting in touch with the people who have the problem and not just basing their decisions on abstract descriptions of the problem in business reports and the like. The ethnographic principles we discuss in this context don't just have to do with the project they work on but are also applicable well beyond the assignment, beyond the master and perhaps even beyond their work situation. The encounter of people with this type of skills and techniques that is still not the everyday way of thinking and working in the field of management, can be very confrontational and often the first impression students have is "what can possibly be the use of this?" However, by practicing with the techniques in their own environment they usually discover the value, often not for the assignment alone but in more general terms.

ENGAGEMENT & ERFAHRUNG: KNITTED CLOTH

Everything participants learn in the experience becomes part of a bigger whole, in which also their background is incorporated, which is exactly what Erfahrung entails. The issue then is that the focus on memorability has to become less prominent. Not everything is or can be memorable anymore, which may make it very difficult for participants to express what their Erfahrung has been.

> During the study trip, which is part of the program, students learn many things on many different levels, sometimes connected to insights they have obtained in the program, sometimes to insights from elsewhere. The

connection between insights from these different contexts is what makes it an Erfahrung. But if students make these connections, it becomes very difficult to report what their experience has been like. If people learn so much on such very different levels, the last thing we want to do is to have them deconstruct their insights into a rational and structured report. By asking them to tell stories on what their experience has been like, what has made the greatest impression, what they will take with them from the trip, their reflections, at least more of the connections that make up the Erfahrung stay intact than would have been the case if we had asked for a straightforward descriptive report on the trip.

Direction & Erfahrung: Not getting on that bus

As difficult as it is to contribute as an organization to the process that students go through to incorporate whatever they learn in their Erfahrung, as easy is it to hinder this process. By using excessive direction, one risks breaking the Erfahrung. Strict adherence to rules, times and structures can be useful but one always has to keep in mind that the learning process of the students is what comes first in the experience.

In the EMIM-program groups are formed at the beginning of the experience since the first semester-assignment is a group assignment. We form the groups since the students don't know each other yet so we try to take into account where students live and work (should they wish to meet in-between modules to work on their project it is convenient if they don't have to travel far) and the sector they work in (to have as much variety as possible in the groups). Since learning by sharing, or the idea that students don't just learn from teachers but that students and teachers all learn from each other, is an important focal point in the program, an idea would be to change groups and supervisors after every assignment. This way they would work together in different groups and have a different supervisor for every project. However, although from an educational point of view this breaking up of groups would seem logical, students themselves indicate time and again that they prefer to stay with the groups they have been assigned to at the start of the experience. After some time they are used to working together and have embarked on a

collective experience together. Breaking that experience up is rather seen as damaging than beneficial to their Erfahrung.

Direction & Erfahrung: The image of the sower

When learning, people give meaning to what happens and connect what happens to one or more contexts. These links with contexts are made anyhow and the organization does never have full control over how this takes place. A better decision would be to let it happen and to use the connections that students make for getting to know them better. This way one can discover students' blind spots, sensitivities etc. After spending time together you get to know the students and learn how they react to things. Some try to bring everything to a more concrete level, some prefer abstractions, some are more standoffish, others are very enthusiastic and see opportunities everywhere. These are attitudes that can't be changed easily but organizations can make an effort to get to know about the attitudes and preferences so they can deal with them during the experience, by either enhancing them or trying to have the student try out a different attitude.

> One of the teachers during the study trip asks students to write down what kind of person they think he is. How old he is, what he has studied, if he has even studied, whether he is married, what his hobbies are, everything they can come up with. Afterwards he shows that we all assume a great deal of things without any knowledge on the object of these assumptions. The awareness of how students reacted to this teacher's question gives them some impression of how they assumed things without having any facts. If they see a pattern in their behaviour they now can reflect on what the consequences of this behaviour are and whether and how they want to change this. The teacher just asks a question, it is up to the students to discover how to react and to do something with their realizations.

Direction & Erfahrung: Here's a bike and go

Erlebnissen of the moment can be integrated in the student's Erfahrung. People need space and freedom to express their own input in the experience but there are also

blind spots of which they themselves are unaware and as outsiders others can help the individual in this respect. This can count for the organizers as well as for the students amongst each other.

> When preparing for the Master Proof, supervisors have already gotten to know the student. In the mode of supervision they can take the personality into account. Is someone inclined to expand his or her horizon ad infinitum, in the end losing grip of reality or getting lost in all the details? Then it's good to keep this in mind and help him or her with framing. Learning how to frame and to bring structure in one's work may not just be helpful in the process of making one's Master Proof, but can also be helpful in the rest of the individual's life.

Direction & Erfahrung: What movie you're in

For an Erfahrung consummation is needed. But to be able to consummate the experience students have to be able to put things they experience in a context. They have to understand what is happening and why things happen so they can interpret it and give it a place.

> It is always a matter of searching for balance between not telling too much, so that students get taken outside of their comfort zone and can explore and discover for themselves what things mean, and to give them some sort of context so they don't get the feeling they're lost. A combination between openness and context can be achieved by creating criteria referring to things like integrative thinking, not succumbing to preliminary conclusions and remaining open to insights from other disciplines, or a divergent attitude, being able to cope with an open-ended process. By using criteria focused on this type of skills and attitudes, one indicates the importance of the students' own input while at the same time laying down some specific requirements.

Investment and Erfahrung: Knowledge from out of the wall

The knowledge that is developed during an Erfahrung is more difficult to describe than knowledge from out of the wall. This knowledge is never complete and is in a constant state of flux and development. But this takes time, which makes it hard to evaluate or measure it. For Erlebnissen there is a definite end to be determined but Erfahrungen are continuing processes so they don't have a finishing line. For educational experiences it is thus possible to organize for certain specific measuring moments but the end result may not become apparent for a long time afterwards.

> During as well as after the EMIM program it often becomes apparent that there are other learning processes at stake than simple linear learning processes, in which the organization transfers information to the student, the student absorbs it and the organization can evaluate whether the student has taken the information in. There have been many examples of this like students who at first expressed their annoyance for the academic speak in articles and books and who after some months inquired about possibilities for doing a PhD, or a student who a year after finishing the program indicated that she now regularly speaks in public while at the beginning of the program this was her biggest obstacle according to herself. Where for surface effects a standardized evaluation form suffices, I now notice with the growing focus on this type of deep learning in the program that these don't suffice anymore. Asking people immediately afterwards what they have learned and how they grade a specific lecture or workshop gives very biased results which are only partially useful to base decisions for the future on.

Investment and Erfahrung: Pressure cooker

In an Erfahrung different elements are connected. Erlebnissen are connected with other Erlebnissen and with the individual's background and personality etc. and everything is made into his or her Erfahrung. Making these connections is what Erfahrung is about and it can therefore be helpful to support students in making or

restoring these connections. Students can support each other in doing this of course but organizers can surely have a role in this process.

> With these connections in mind we have added an element to every module: a roundup presentation to summarize the content of the module and to connect topics that were presented during the module with other topics from other modules and with the overall aim of the program. Such a presentation of possible connections is intended to help students with keeping the bigger picture in view and they can be personalized by also making connections with former experiences, questions and comments from the students themselves.

Investment and Erfahrung: Climbing frame

Students don't appreciate a too rational attitude in their fellow students. If they just come to the modules but don't invest more than they need to this can hinder the learning experience of those who are actively involved. People have the freedom to invest what and where they want to but in the methods of evaluation organizations need to incorporate this issue, to be able to confront students who just go through the motions. Otherwise students end up just having Erlebnissen instead of incorporating the Erlebnissen in their Erfahrung.

> Especially since the program was accredited there have been more people who want to apply for the program with the sole purpose of getting the MSc title. We could reason that they pay so they should be allowed to participate but in our opinion this would not be a wise decision in the long term. If students are in it just for the title this may disturb the other students who want to invest everything they can in the program and also take from it everything they can. It is therefore very important to find out beforehand whether someone is applying with the sole motive of getting the degree, or if he or she can be expected to invest in the experience and the group process related to it.

Investment and Erfahrung: New oxygen

When the education ends, it doesn't stop. As an Erlebnis it has a beginning and an end that can become part of the Erfahrung of students if they continue to do something with it. It can become raw material for the students' Erfahrung.

> Often it is difficult for students to keep the experience alive when a module or the whole program ends and the 'normal' working life continues. Therefore it is extra important to provide some support for students to continue with the experience and to use the program as a basis to build upon. Contact in-between modules and of course after the program is very important in this sense. Not only via social media en by organizing meetings and events but also by keeping up to date on what they do so you can see whether also after the program you can help them in some way, for example by helping them implement what they have learned in the program in their work environment.

8.3.2 Offsetting the bias in the experience economy discourse: attention for deep effects

Engagement & Deep effects: Talking about it

The use of the available resources in the group can help to motivate people in a more intrinsic way. For deeper effects an internal perceived locus of causality helps and by having people voluntarily use their resources to co-construct the experience this helps them also to connect what happens during the experience with their own resources that may originate outside of the educational experience.

> For the assignments that students have to complete we urge them to find topics that they are intrinsically motivated to tackle. Things that keep them up at night so to say, in a positive way. One of the groups became intrigued when a teacher in the program used the term discourse quite often. One of them asked what this term meant exactly and since there was no clear universally accepted definition they started to look into this topic. When they had an understanding of what it meant they started to

recognize the term in the literature they were supposed to analyze so they took the concept of discourse as the focal point of their assignment. Also in the practice-assignment in the second semester we motivate students to try to stay in touch with the raw material of the issues they want to tackle by urging them to find an issue in one of the organizations they work in. This way they are in close contact with the reality of the issue and they have access to richer sources they perhaps would lack in other projects.

Engagement & Deep effects: Relation versus calculation

If deep effects are the aim of the experience then a distant and rational approach of organizers won't suffice. Organizers have to be prepared and if necessary trained for this. More personal levels of learning are different processes and supervisors and teachers should therefore also be prepared for more emotional reactions from students for example. It is not a matter of transferring knowledge anymore but in the experience the interpretive framework with which students give meaning to what happens to them is at stake. And if the organizers ask students to invest themselves in the process, to attain those deep learning effects, then this counts for everyone in the experience; students, teachers, everyone.

What struck me related to deep effects is the change in the reactions to feedback. In the past a member of the examination committee, whom the students had not yet met, communicated the feedback on final presentations in the executive program. However, constructive criticism and where needed negative feedback was met with strong emotional responses since we started to work with different media and a greater personal involvement in the projects. I suspect that feedback on a report written about a rational process of inquiry can be perceived by students as feedback on the report, whereas feedback on a piece of work you have invested yourself in, in which you are personally involved, is perceived as feedback on the person. Since students are learning and have to be evaluated it is not an option to not give them the critiques, comments and feedback anymore but it obviously becomes much more important who could best deliver the message and in what way.

Engagement & Deep effects: Being pulled by your feathers

The use of confrontation to challenge and mirror the attitude or behaviour of students will not always be welcomed by everyone. However, it is needed to involve the individual on a more personal level if deep effects are what one is aiming for. Hedonic effects, mere fun and pleasure, will not require the same level of personal engagement. Students also appear to watch each other in this sense, to see whether no one is taking the easy road.

> Also in the executive master we always try to find a balance between the different effects the participants and we want to attain. We try to get people out of their comfort zone and deliberately cultivate uncertainty by shaking up some of their strongly held beliefs and worldviews and by motivating them to make less probable choices, like in the form they choose for their Master Proof. Given the reactions of participants, this is not always a fun process for them but the positive effects result from overcoming the obstacles we confront them with. People don't just expect to be entertained when they sign up for an educational experience.

Engagement & Deep effects: Knitted cloth

Positive and negative aspects of the backgrounds of students can have an immense influence on the effects they will experience. Knowledge of their background can thus be taken into consideration, by finding a balance between reinforcing aspects by playing into what they are already capable of doing or what they like, or going against it by confronting students with negative or counterproductive aspects, depending on what's needed at a certain moment in time.

> An often-heard problem with theses is that hardly anyone reads them and they finish in some drawer. In an information-intensive society in which we have to deal with an overload of information this is hardly surprising. Most of the information is textual so more textual information may get lost in the already massive supply of texts. By combining the professional learning with personal development there can be a win win situation. The entrance level for participants is a degree from higher education or university. For most of these educations students have had to write a

thesis at the end so the question is whether they will learn more from writing yet another thesis at the end of this executive master or from learning to communicate in a different form? The student's background is thus an important factor in deciding what kind of Master Proof he or she will make.

Direction & Deep effects: Not getting on that bus

For surface effects it may be enough to provide the students with signifiers but not if the aim is to attain deeper effects. Providing more with the aim of attaining more is based on an idea of more is better: the fuller the program, the more value students receive. But for deeper effects less can be, and often is, more. A full program means that one has to pay attention to new things all the time and that leaves no time for reflection, while reflection is of the utmost importance for deep effects.

> In the past the study trip had a much fuller character than it does now. Students experienced many lectures and visits, one after the other. This is logical from a perspective of sending students for a week and a half to the other side of the globe and trying to give them the most experiences they can possibly have during that period. However, with such a full program by itself it is hard to digest the experiences and reflect on what it means to you, let alone if the program takes place in a completely different environment with all its strange impressions you have to get used to. The new programs are much less dense in terms of presented content and much more attention is paid to the connection between what happens there and what has happened and what will happen during the other modules. Less time spent on absorbing content, more time on being actively engaged with the content presented.

Direction & Deep effects: The image of the sower

Signifiers are seeds that depending on the circumstances come out or not. Organizers have no full control over those circumstances; they can create conditions but there

will always be influences from outside that codetermine the effects so you have to be prepared for that all the time.

> Not feeling well, issues at work or at home, the temperature in the venue or seemingly small things like the voice of a teacher can have a strong influence on how students perceive the lecture or workshop. By paying attention to these situations and giving people room to find out why they feel the emotions that they do and to express these feelings, you can work with them on the level of their interpretive framework. They may then recognize that they always do certain things and try to change it if it hinders them. If someone has a habit of blocking out certain input because of small and superficial reasons like a voice or temperature, you can make them aware of the fact that by doing this they miss out on a lot. This awareness may create an opening for change, but again it is up to the student him or herself to do something about it.

Direction & Deep effects: Here's a bike and go

Especially when effects are more open-ended and dependent on the actions of students, it is important to provide some context within which they can act. After all, these are educational experiences and certain results are expected from the students. The challenge is to find a balance between providing students with a context and creating space for their own input.

> The designerly way of thinking we promote in the program revolves around being open for developments and to not work towards convergent solutions right away. This made it quite difficult to provide a clear context for students since at the beginning it is not clear where the process may lead them and the last thing we wanted to do was to force students to converge their ideas because of the context we gave them. The whole principle of open-ended thinking had to be incorporated as part of the context by providing criteria that on the one hand give direction and on the other provide space for input. Needless to say that the context and norms we provide are a work in progress, in the future they may be adapted if developments require us to do so.

DIRECTION & DEEP EFFECTS: WHAT MOVIE YOU'RE IN

Surface effects are easy to make explicit and measure but this is not the case for deep effects so organizations have to be very clear on what they expect. Norms and criteria can be a useful means to do this in the field of education. But besides explicit norms and criteria there are also implicit norms that should be scrutinized. Especially when one wants to make a more traditional educational program more focused on deep effects, it is important to watch closely for implicit norms that communicate the old ways of working instead of the new, more Erfahrungs-focused ways. If you tell students one thing but behave in a different way, they will sooner follow your example than listen to the explicit information you give them.

> The different definition of Master Proof and the fact that we try to motivate people to choose different forms for their Master Proof also means that we had to look carefully what implicit and explicit messages we were sending during the program. Telling students that they are most welcome to make movies or organize conferences, and at the same time only having at your disposal supervisors who have expertise in theses and written assignments during the rest of the program, would be an example of a contradictory message. Especially in the situation of an important choice like the Master Proof most students then opt for a safe choice: a written thesis. This is what you implicitly communicate to them. This is why we ask participants to use visual aids like film and photos in their presentations and to find creative ways to express their results and findings also during the program. The reason for renaming the final project, from thesis to Master Proof also had to do with implicit communication. The word thesis has a strong connotation of written text, while Master Proof leaves the form in which the message is communicated more open. It could be written text, but it might just as well be a movie, a symposium, an exposition, a performance or something else. Obviously students need supervisors with extra expertise if they want to use other forms of communication. Professors who are very able and used to supervising thesis projects don't necessarily have the proper knowledge and experience to supervise a Master Proof in the form of a symposium or movie. We therefore have installed a Creative

Board and a more extended network of professionals who are able to supervise the Master Proofs based on their expertise.

Investment and Deep effects: Knowledge from out of the wall

Providing knowledge from the wall leads to surface learning. The type of learning that students adopt depends for the greater part on the teacher. If he or she seems to have ready-made answers this leads to the absorption of those answers. If teachers succeed in taking the students with them in an explorative search for answers, for example because issues are discussed for which no ready-made answers exist yet, then this leads to deeper learning and the common development of a vision on the issue at hand instead of a superficial absorption of givens.

> Especially in the fields of information and ICT there are many developments of which no one really knows where they may lead. In these cases it is more important to know what questions to ask than to provide answers that may very well be outdated soon. For this reason we ask students questions on literature that have less to do with for example what the definition of x is according to author A and more with whether the literature has been useful to them and for what reason. We ask for critical reflection and for people's own opinion.
>
> The second semester of the program starts with a phase in which students are challenged to discover the real problem or situation they want to focus on for their assignment. In this tangibility-phase as it's called, students are invited to find out about the real situation and not just accept the accounts of the problem or situation in business reports and the like. Again we challenge them to not just accept whatever is provided in terms of information or answers, but to go out and explore, to find the right questions to ask.

Investment and Deep effects: Pressure cooker

Pressure is not always pleasurable but it can help in forcing the breakthroughs that are needed for deep learning.

> Permitting students to make mistakes, resulting in them having to change directions along the way, may lead to stress and pressure. But people learn from mistakes, and possibly on a deeper level than if you had prevented them from making the mistake. Sometimes people have to experience for themselves what it means to make a mistake and especially in the designerly way of thinking this is an important aspect. By explicitly having designers make very rapid and rudimentary prototypes that certainly won't resemble the end-result, they learn what will work and what won't. In this phase mistakes are a source of ideas and insights, not something to prevent.

Investment and Deep effects: Climbing frame

Deep effects can't be evaluated in the same way as surface effects. Even the still quite superficial level of application can't be evaluated in a standardized and objective way. But individuals are personally involved in deep effects and their actions are reflected in them so it is very important to communicate clearly about the principles underlying the criteria, to have students understand what the criteria have to do with their learning process. If those principles are not clear and they see other students pass when they expected them to fail, or vice versa, this leads to misunderstandings.

> Defining criteria for the program that contains many aspects derived from designerly thinking has been an elaborate learning process for us as organizers. Partly because of feedback from students it became clear that we had to be more explicit on the principles underlying our criteria, because they couldn't understand, based on the criteria we had, why one assignment passed with compliments for certain aspects, while another assignment also passed that lacked those aspects in their eyes. We knew that the other assignment also contained those aspects although presented in a completely different way but to avoid misunderstandings we had to define clear guidelines. With the new guidelines and criteria students not only understand how different projects can pass while they seem completely different but students can also take these guidelines and criteria into account when working on their projects.

Investment and Deep effects: New oxygen

When deep effects are the goal it helps people to have a network of support of people who have lived through the same experience. This makes it easier to communicate because you can skip the sensory level. You don't have to explain what you have experienced on the sensory level, something that is very hard to explain, and you don't have to repeat all the presentations and lectures and workshops etc, and to make explicit how these have brought you certain insights that have had an impact on you. The other person has lived through the same experience and you can immediately continue to communicate on a different level.

> With our focus on learning by sharing we indicate that students don't just learn from teachers but that they learn with teachers and also with their fellow students. After a certain amount of time a common repertoire develops so that one word or image can come to represent some complex theory or a lecture that took several hours. Especially images and metaphors work well in this context. For deep effects it is difficult to explain how one got to the effect and where it came from so it helps when students have a common repertoire based on which communication can take place.

8.3.3 Offsetting the bias in the experience economy discourse: attention for Erfahrungs-investments:

Engagement & Erfahrungs-investments: Talking about it

Traditionally one would think that the more students have to do and the more they have to invest, the more they would expect to receive in return. This idea is reflected in study credits. For a certain amount of time invested you receive so many credits. But for non-practical resources the relation is different. It's not that people invest these with the expectation to receive something in return, on the contrary: investing these resources often is its own reward.

> For some it may seem that making a movie or other more creative endeavor is easier than writing a thesis, but I can assure, as can the

students who have graduated based on a creative Master Proof, that the contrary is the case. The executive master is an accredited program so we have to keep up high academic standards. The academic argumentation underlying the Master Proof still has to be in order, like it has always been required for a thesis. But now we require students to also critically reflect on the most suitable form of communication for the message they want to convey and learn about how the chosen medium works. What makes for a good documentary or symposium or exhibit? The required investment in time from students has remained the same, since this was expressed in credits, but for what I have heard the creative forms require more effort on their behalf. Then why would anyone choose for a more creative form? Because the extra investment of non-practical resources can be its own reward.

Engagement & Erfahrungs-investments: Relation versus calculation

If as an organization you want to focus more on the roles of facilitating the investment of non-practical resources and the students' standard of inclusiveness then you also have to take into consideration that the roles of the team have to change. Practical resources like time and money are 'hard', they can be measured and enforced, and so you can take a quite rational stance when it comes to the investment of these resources. But when you are dealing with non-practical resources and the standard of inclusiveness, then also in the organization you have to adapt to these new roles.

When you ask people to truly find new ways to communicate their message and to think outside of the box, then as an organization you should show flexibility when students ask for props or other things that they need for their presentation or project. It is about mirroring the values that you ask students to invest. If you want them to be flexible in their thinking and to accept that they don't know what to expect when they invest their resources, you have to also show flexibility when they do find out what they want and need. In the project students work on in the second semester they often don't know until a month before the final presentations, how they are going to present their findings. It can thus happen that they request 20 pillows a week beforehand or a completely

different setup of the venue. Obviously not everything is possible but if you can reward their flexibility in keeping all options open until the very end by making an effort to help them where you can, this will not only reinforce the flexibility message but it can also reinforce the relationship.

Engagement & Erfahrungs-investments: Being pulled by your feathers

The confrontations to challenge and mirror the actions of participants can help them with their standard of inclusiveness. Difficult situations with which they are confronted can help them in making choices and prioritizing what they find important. Of course the first thing they have to do with such an experience is to find their balance between the experience and the rest of their life but also within the experience there are choices to be made.

The balance between professional and personal learning is an important aspect of the program. EMIM is not a self-development program but we don't want to merely educate officers either. By confronting students during the program with their own thoughts and behaviour, we try to provoke effects that are not just useful professionally but also for the students personally. For example in the second semester that starts with a phase we call tangible. Here we challenge students to find out about the real issue they want to tackle in reality, by talking to the people who experience the issue or by placing themselves in the position of those who experience the issue. The principle of getting to the real issues by finding out how it is experienced in reality is of great value for the students' professional life, how they deal with issues in their work. However, it can also result in personal effects in the sense that stepping out of the professional comfort zone and getting away from the desk to step into the reality of real individuals confronts students with their own communication or social skills.

Engagement & Erfahrungs-investments: Knitted cloth

The background of students has much influence on what people can invest in the experience and what they can take out of it. Non-practical interests play an obvious role in what they like and what literally interests them. These are things that are part of the individual and that he or she brings with him/her in the experience. But you also have to ask the question: is what they bring into the experience enough? Are they 'adequate' in terms of Schumacher's adaequatio?

> In EMIM we have always had selection criteria in terms of previous education and experience, but you also want to take the applicants' background into account. Obviously you can ask applicants for a CV, for a letter of motivation, have multiple interviews with them, ask for letters of recommendation and have them do a psychological test but all this still won't tell you everything about this person. There is always a risk involved and there always will be. You will get to know the individuals better by experiencing them in the program. However, we find it important that applicants have an understanding of the philosophy of the program and understand that we value certain skills and experiences. We have therefore expanded our selection process: everyone who applies for the program has to complete an assignment focused on his or her creative and critical thinking skills. This communicates to the applicant that these are some of the skills we deem important in the program so they can decide whether they are looking for this way of thinking and learning and at the same time we can get an impression of their adaequatio in this context.

Direction & Erfahrungs-investments: Not getting on that bus

If you don't allow people space for investing their own resources, having some input in the experience and sharing resources together, they may resent this. The experience should be an encounter and not just a one-directional transaction of utility, time and money. Because of developments in for example social media people get more and more used to sharing and investing non-practical resources and to the fact that investing doesn't always have to be a cost: it can also be its own reward. For

organizers of lengthy learning experiences this also has implications for their selection process if they have one. Especially when personal development is an element of the experience, the process is bound to become emotional at one point in time or another. In the selection process it would be wise to verify whether people are up for this. Are they able and willing to go through this process or do they just want to absorb the contents and get 'a piece of paper' at the end like some respondents aptly called it. When participants have an influence on each other's experience, it in fact becomes a responsibility of the organization to make sure that participants won't limit each other's learning during their experience. If people for example have to work together and one of the group members hinders the experience, this can cause problems for the other group members.

> Especially when individuals or groups get separate assignments or have to work on separate projects, it is important to have them share their experiences with each other. However, this sharing process has to be clearly communicated as an interactive exercise of sharing and not of just consuming and absorbing what others have done. Learning by sharing is an important aspect of the program and the sharing is not just intended to keep everyone informed about each other's work but also for the ones presenting to get feedback on their work and for the others to learn about the different ways in which people tackle their projects. At the end of one of the study trips there was a meeting scheduled in which the different project groups would share their experiences with each other. However, apparently the importance of sharing and the value for the separate groups had not been communicated clearly enough since one of the groups decided to not participate. They were done absorbing information they said and apparently hadn't understood that the sharing session was not intended for just transferring information from one group to another but for learning from and especially with each other. For the groups who were present the absence of this group was a sign of their disinterest and understandably they reacted negatively to it. In future programs we have therefore reserved regular sessions dedicated to this sharing process. Also we communicate the underlying intentions more clearly to prevent situations like these and to indicate that sharing is an integral process that has value for both parties involved.

Direction & Erfahrungs-investments: The image of the sower

Organizations can present all sorts of information and organize all sorts of meetings, lectures and workshops but in the end it is up to the students to do something with what they experience. The organization can sow but the students have to harvest. Harvesting takes effort and energy but if the students' curiosity or other non-practical interests have been raised then people usually are glad to invest more energy in it because of the pleasure this gives them.

> During orientation talks or intake interviews with prospects they often express their worries about the investment of time that is required for the program. The irony is that many of the students who upfront were worried about the time investment end up doing much more than we ask of them. One of the students who had serious doubts about how much time the study would require decided to register and after three months he indicated that based on the contents of the lectures and workshops and literature he and his group had chosen a theme for their assignment, for which he had started to read the works of Foucault. Foucault is not part of the curriculum of the program and he invested lots of time in studying Foucault to get to the basis of the theme for the assignment. I now use this story in conversations and interviews with prospects to indicate that not only is it very hard for an outsider to predict how much time the student will have to invest in the experience (for example, someone who is used to read scientific journals in English will need less time to read an academic article than someone else who is not used to this at all) but also time is less of an issue when people feel they absolutely want to get into the depth of a topic because it fascinates them.

Direction & Erfahrungs-investments: Here's a bike and go

If one wants to connect the values that students invest in their education and the value they derive from it one needs to support them with the standard of inclusiveness. Especially when students are supposed to learn from each other, from each other's experiences, it is important that this process is in some way directed. Lectures and workshops and the like need to be integrated if they are to have effect so organizations

should keep a close watch on this process. When Erfahrung and deep learning are involved it is difficult for students to take what they have learned in a course and apply it in practice since it has been the result of the encounter of the individual with everything he has experienced. Different persons with different experiences will find it much harder to understand what he or she is talking about.

In the second semester students present the findings of their projects up to that moment in every module. This way, they can get feedback on every step of the way and all groups keep informed about how the other groups deal with their projects, from which they can learn. At the end of the semester, when students do their final presentations, not only the other students and the supervisors are present but also other people like members of the Creative Board and members of the examination committee. These have not been present at the periodical presentations so they are not familiar with how students have come to the final results of their project. This is why we ask students to walk through the whole process in their presentation so also persons who see them for the first time can share in the raw material of the project. An additional challenge of sharing is that the sensory aspects of primary experience are often hard or impossible to explain and communicate to someone who hasn't experienced these. A nice example in this context is the lemon exercise. This exercise has proven time and again that when students are given a lemon and have to find points of reference that can help in finding back the lemon in the pile, almost everyone finds the proper lemon back. By pairing people up and giving one a lemon with the request to explain what it looks like to the other person, the difference between using one's own senses and hearing someone else explain his or her sensory impressions becomes clear. Some people still manage to find the right lemon but it is much harder. By having people live through the same experience, they all have a certain basic encounter with the raw material. This shared encounter can help people step over to other levels like the emotions evoked, the interpretations made or the changes experienced. The theme of the third semester in the program is focused on this standard of inclusiveness, to help students integrate their learning in the organizations they work in by working on their knowledge and skills in

the personal, organizational and systemic aspects of change processes, so they learn how to share their experience on a broader scale.

Direction & Erfahrungs-investments: What movie you're in

An educational experience is not a product with clear search characteristics. This makes it difficult to communicate what it exactly is. You thus have to do some expectation management without knowing what people expect or even might expect. The experience and credence characteristics are not clear upfront so there is an element of surprise involved for the students.

> In the selection process before the program starts, we were used to asking prospective participants for their learning objectives. The question for explicit learning objectives implies that one is dealing with an experience with search characteristics: what do you want to learn, to be able to evaluate at a later stage whether they had in fact attained their objectives. However, the more personal and impactful the experience is, the more difficult it is for the organization to set clear expectations and the more difficult it is for the participant to form clear expectations. In an offering characterized mainly by search characteristics the surprise element is limited, while this is an element to be cultivated during an explorative experience. The learning objectives should therefore be expected to change along the way. When learning becomes more personal people connect what they learn to their frame of reference and it is hard to predict what they will learn. The learning objectives are now used to make students aware that their objectives change during the program and to have them make explicit in what areas they want to develop themselves further.

Investment & Erfahrungs-investments: Knowledge from out of the wall

To discover the effects that take more time to emerge, students have to continue with their experience. The experience doesn't end at the end but if things go right

something has started growing. Of course you can just sit back and wait for whatever happens but the wiser decision would be to see whether there is some role in this process for the organization. This could help the students/alumni and it gives the organization an opportunity to stay in touch and add value even after the experience has 'ended'.

> Besides staying in touch via social media and events we are also designing a new alumni program intended to have alumni work together on important themes and developments in the field of information management. Alumni are also asked to be involved in the program itself by presenting their experience of the whole process of completing their Master Proof. By staying in touch they become part of an extensive network of professionals who can indicate which developments are relevant in practice.

INVESTMENT & ERFAHRUNGS-INVESTMENTS: PRESSURE COOKER

When you present students with lectures, materials, exercises and workshops with the intention that they themselves have to make meaning of it, you ask a bigger investment from them than if you had the intention of just having them absorb whatever you present to them. They now have to make dinner with all the ingredients you give them.

> Especially the designerly way of thinking we propagate in the program is a very open way of thinking with lots of space for insights and ideas from unexpected areas and various disciplines. However, because of this openness it also requires a lot of input from students in that they have to explore and discover things for themselves. In this process we are nothing but a catalyst, we bring content and people together and try to help people find the spark that gives them ideas but the direction in which the process leads the students is always unknown upfront. Unknown to them but also unknown to us. This is inherent to the idea that we believe that many situations with which our students, and others, have to deal are new. To try to deal with these new issues in the same way as always doesn't always result in successful outcomes. They have to be able to

> think of new ways to deal with new problems and situations and we can be a catalyst in that process.

Investment & Erfahrungs-investments: Climbing frame

Students expect from each other what most expect from themselves: that they give it their best and not just do what is necessary. This is an important thing to keep in mind when people are dependent on each other for their learning process and result. If someone does little or nothing this hinders the others' process.

> When there was a student who didn't invest in the experience this became immediately apparent. Not only were assignments handed in late or even overdue but also the contribution to the group assignment was too small. Obviously the program is part of a whole life of students so first we tried to find out what was the problem. But after some time this student decided to leave the program. Issues like these cannot linger on for too long because they put the burden on others who are in the experience for their own learning process.

Investment & Erfahrungs-investments: New oxygen

If the students are supposed to continue investing, then it is important to know how to facilitate this process. Some alumni keep in touch and come to meetings, others don't. But what makes someone stay in touch and continue with the post experience and others to see their graduation as the end of the experience? For the organization of post experiences this is important knowledge to keep into account.

> The first group I have experienced from nearby has finished their modules in 2010 so I can't say much about how the contact with former students will evolve, whether they will stay in touch with each other and us as organizers or not and in what kinds of post experience activities they will participate or not. At the moment it seems that groups, whether they have done projects together or have been in the same peer groups while graduating or whether they stayed in the same accommodation during the study trip, stay in touch with each other.

8.4 Implications of this research for experience organizations in general

I want to start off with an important insight on what experience is and what it is not. As I indicated, there are many incorrect claims about the experience economy because of a faulty understanding of what experience is and is not. In the environment-centred approach scholars focus on producing economic offerings with the 'right' objective features as if organizations produce, stage, sell and make experiences, as they do with products and services. However, these scholars focus on so-called secondary experiences. Reed (1996) made a distinction between primary and secondary experience in this respect. Secondary experience is "processed - selected, modified, packaged, and presented" (p.3) and provides second-hand or indirect information at best. True experience begins with primary experience, where there is contact with the raw material and the individual acquires information from his "environment by looking, listening, feeling, sniffing, and tasting - the information, in other words, that allows us to *experience things for ourselves*".

Traditionally it seems that organizations have a predominant focus on secondary experience, in the sense that they have always been used to being in control of what they offer their customers. They indeed are the ones who decide which information or products are "processed - selected, modified, packaged, and presented". As was discussed by some respondents during the interviews though, the focus on what the organization can offer to their customers can also be exaggerated. Organizations can even hinder the experience by their desire to offer more and more features. They can for example offer too many activities causing a very full program and no space for the individuals to process what happens or to reflect on what they experience (theme 9). But also an excessive focus on the communication and direction from the side of the organization (themes 10 and 11) without sufficient attention for the individual's experience can hinder the process. The organization's role then has to change from staging or producing a secondary experience to supporting or at least not hindering the primary experience.

Even when primary experience with a subject is impossible or undesirable, organizations can create ways to have individuals experience the subject vicariously by presenting them with someone who has or has had the primary experience, or with

a simulation or model or one of the other options that were shown in figure 3.5 (theme 1). Vicarious experience is not the same as primary experience, but technological advances enable organizations to create ever better and more life-like vicarious experiences, which offers many advantages in situations when primary experiences are not an option. A new challenge is how to deal with the constant and growing flood of secondary and vicarious experiences that people are confronted with on a daily basis, a problem that is often named information overload or infobesity. But also in the context of primary and emotional experiences, people run the risk of being bombarded with stimuli.

For experience to become 'an' experience, Dewey (1958) claims, it has to reach the phase of closure, or consummation. In this way the experience becomes a whole that enters our memory and shapes our view of the world. Everyday experiences, the occurrences and sensations we experience daily, that are disjointed and incomplete, are too ill defined to offer a foundation for the future (Jay, 2005). If organizations fire all sorts of disjointed stimuli at individuals, the individuals have to find out for themselves how elements fit together; otherwise the occurrences and sensations remain disjointed and incomplete. It is the completeness of an experience that gives it its uniqueness; it demarcates the experience from the everyday stream of experience and makes it memorable. This demarcation in my opinion has less to do with a demarcation in time than a demarcation in terms of the meaning individuals give to their experience. The demarcation in time is usually forced by the organization, in the sense that the organization determines when the experience starts and when it stops. This may literally happen in terms of time, in the sense of an event that lasts for a certain amount of time, but it may just as well be more variable in that it starts when the individual for example enters a building and it ends the moment he leaves though the exit. But this is the perspective of the organization, not necessarily that of the individual. It is very well possible that for the individual the experience starts long before he enters the building, for example the first time he hears or reads about it, and ends long after he leaves, for example when the discussion on the experience that he participated in via an online forum dies off. The individual's perspective of the experience may thus differ widely from the organization's perspective and it would be wise for organizations to take this fact into account since the organization may be in control of what they organize between the entry and exit points but in the eyes of the individual many more aspects determine the experience, aspects that may have

nothing to do with what the organization has organized, but that may positively and negatively influence the individual's experience. Making a so-called experience journey or customer journey may help to see where for the individual the experience begins and ends, since it is this beginning and ending that demarcates the experience in the sense of Dewey's consummation. For an Erlebnis to become Erfahrung this consummation is needed.

Erlebnissen can become part of the Erfahrung of individuals when they perceive the connections between what they have done and undergone, between causes and consequences of their actions, and when they can reflect on their actions and act based on these reflections. If there are many loose ends in the experience, it will become more difficult for participants to perceive the connections that are needed to incorporate the experience in their Erfahrung. All the time that organizers can save the individual by supporting him in understanding how elements are connected, the individual may use for this process of reflection. The time it may take for connections to become apparent is also an issue one should take into account when thinking of measuring the effects of experiences. It may seem obvious to ask people for their opinion when for example exiting the venue, but then not all effects may have shown yet (theme 24) and the timing is inappropriate if the goal is that the experience becomes part of the individual's life. One could investigate the sensory or emotional effects at that moment, on the level of Erlebnissen, but for effects on the level of Erfahrungen time is needed to discover on which contexts the experience has had an effect. If the individual incorporates what he has learned from the experience and takes this with him after he leaves the experience-venue, the experience can be called meaningful. But if the organization succeeds in supporting the individual in creating or restoring the connections between the experience and the rest of the individual's life, we can speak of a true integrative experience (themes 26 and 27). The different stimuli the individual encounters then become connected with his own lifeworld. But for this to happen, the organization should know or learn about the individual and his lifeworld and provide space for the individual to influence his own experience. The individual always influences his own experience in the sense that he is the one that gives meaning to it, but providing room for his influence in this context means that there is room for him to act on his own interests and goals. Themes that emerged from the interviews indeed showed instances of the influence of individuals on what

they experience: positive and negative aspects in the background of individuals (themes 7 and 8), the goals and intentions that individuals have for the experience (themes 13 and 28). Obviously not all organizers need a full bio on the individuals participating in the experience. The more the effects of the experience are dependent on the individual, the more important this becomes. But organizers should always know something about their visitors or customers. Falk and Dierking gave a wise piece of advice in a description of an exposition for children. The exposition had deliberately been made a little bit complex for them so they would have to involve the adults they came with, but it was not accessible for the adults because of the size. These are simple things one can think about upfront. In the same way it's good to have some idea about what the individuals who will come find enjoyable if your goal is to evoke pleasurable emotions and how you are going to attract the right people.

If no room is provided for this influence and the organization only focuses on its own role of offering objective features, the organization runs the risk of hindering the experience. As I indicated earlier: organizations have been used for a long time to be in charge of what they offered when they were producing goods and services, but experiences differ from products and services in the sense that the subjective components are more influential. Experiences are of a more intrinsic nature, as defined by Addis and Holbrook (2001), than goods and services, in that the relative weight of the individual's subjective response is greater than that of the objective features of the experience. One can plan and program all sorts of activities but in the end it is up to the individual whether he will participate and what he will get out of it. Respondents in fact indicated that there should be room for the individual's input in the experience so they can express their ideas, insights, solutions and answers (themes 12 and 14), and make use of their knowledge, experience and whatever other resources are available (theme 2), instead of just taking in what the organization offers them. The further one shifts to the right in the spectra in table 8.1, the more important the influence of the individuals themselves becomes. The influence of the individual's subjective response also means that one can never know for sure what is going to happen, making clear why the premise of the effect-centred approach, that hedonic effects can in fact be managed, is flawed.

If the influence of he individual is ignored, one can become overly confident in one's influence, while for example also aspects in the individuals' background (themes 7 and

8) can have a great influence on the effects that result from the experience. Former education and experience can determine what the individual will learn, what pleases, surprises, impresses or irritates him or her. But it may just as well be that the background is lacking and the individual is not fit for the experience, an issue that was termed adaequatio.

The realization that organizations may not have as much control over the effects that individuals experience as they might have thought or hoped, may sound problematic and risky for those who want to always stay in control of the situation, but one can also look at this fact in a more positive manner. By paying close attention to what happens and how individuals behave, one can play into this and support individuals in ways that they were not even aware of that they needed to be supported, by helping them with their so-called blind spots (theme 16). But in general, as was explained under the theme 'The image of the sower': like the growth of plants, one cannot control the ideas, insights, answers and solutions of participants, and organizers have to be aware of their inability to direct this process. An example that was given in this respect by one of the respondents was that the organization had planned a visit of participants to the homes of people in a country they visited during a study-trip. However, what exactly happened during these visits and the effect the visit had on participants was not under the control of the organization. Also the story of one respondent about a survival trip that the group had undertaken was an example of the impact of unplanned events. The survival trip had been planned but the emotional reaction of the respondent to the actions of one of the other group members, the memory of which still gave her goose bumps at the time of the interview, could not have been planned in advance.

Again, the uncertainty about what will happen and what people will exactly get out of the experience may sound negative for organizations that want to be in control of everything, but there is a way of looking at this uncertainty from a much more positive perspective. In general, if organizations can accept that in experiences the individual has an important influence on what happens, they can also recognize that they are not the only party that is responsible for producing added value. If they were the only ones in charge of delivering added value, they would have to make sure to present something new or changed for the individual to experience each time he

would come back. This would mean that the objective features would have to be changed, as is often done by rearranging the interior, painting the venue in new colours etc. However, when one recognizes that experiences are not just about the objective features that are under control of the organization, but instead that the individual's subjective response is more important, it becomes clear that an experience is never the same as the time before. Experiences in an experience economy are co-productions between organizations and individuals and organizations don't have to act like they have to add value and renew and change their offering every time to keep their customers coming back, lest they provide enough room for the individuals to renew and change their own experience.
Also, by thinking that one is in charge of continuously adding features to the experience to make it bigger and more spectacular, organizations run the risk of putting off certain individuals. Not everyone wants to have big experiences all the time. Obviously not everyone wants to have life changing experiences all the time but this issue goes for every conceptualization of experience. Not everyone appreciates impressive sensory stimulations or big emotions all the time either.
Organizations should also recognize that not everything has to be fun. There are many more positive experiences one can think of that are not fun at the moment itself but that give gratification because of some other reason. Quitting smoking is no fun per se but may, when succeeding, be very gratifying and in fact people seem to respond well to challenges in general. During the interviews, some respondents in fact indicated that they expected to sometimes be placed in an uncomfortable position, since this would make them learn more, or at least they suspected this. By confronting them with their actions, they expected to be challenged, to be made more aware of their own actions and of their blind spots (themes 5, 6 and 16).

The challenge of surpassing the fun and going towards deeper effects is that the more personal nature of these effects requires a different role of the organization.
One of the differences is that deeper effects are much harder to measure. I already discussed the fact that it takes time for these effects to emerge so there are timing issues when one wants to study this type of effects, but the entanglement of what has happened during the experience and the effects this has on other contexts in the individual's life makes it very difficult to describe and because of this it is more difficult to evaluate the effects (themes 23 and 29). How does one evaluate effects if these are dependent on the individual's own input, and if everyone comes from a

different place in terms of prior knowledge, experience, background, etc.? This also has consequences for the way in which the organization can communicate about the experience. Communicating the search characteristics may be one idea but to truly explain what the experience is, one has to focus on the experience and credence characteristics. Search characteristics can be published on a website or in an ad or brochure but the other characteristics are much more difficult to communicate. This is an important topic since individuals find it hard to form clear expectations of the deeper effects of experiences and one should be very careful with the expectations that are evoked by the communication (theme 19), to make sure that the right people are attracted by the experience, people who are in fact looking for what the experience can offer them.

Deeper effects are per definition more personal which causes the need for a more relational attitude of the organization. Negative feedback on a wrong answer to a mathematical question will usually have less impact on a person than negative feedback on an assignment in which the individual is personally invested. How should the organization deal with this?

By relating to the individuals one gets to know the individuals and their personality and reactions but in general the spectrum of experience concepts shows that experience is never something that stands apart from the organization and individuals involved. It is a process in which both organization and individuals play their part. Therefore it is important for organizers to relate to what the individuals experience, what they do with the raw material they encounter (themes 3 and 4). The relational attitude of the organization is important if one expects a relational attitude from the individuals too, because as was shown in the discussion of deep and surface approaches to learning, the role of the teacher often determines the expectations of the learners, so teachers, or organizers in general, should be conscious of what they express and which expectations they evoke. One cannot force individuals to have a relational attitude so this exemplary task is very important. One cannot force individuals to invest themselves in the experience and monitoring this is much more complex than checking whether one satisfies some objective criteria or behaves according to some objective norm (theme 15). However, a relational attitude and personal investment are not the only things that cannot be forced. In chapter 5 I discussed the different types of value that can be invested in the experience and

explained the role that organizations can play in terms of providing opportunities for the investment of internally non-practical resources. Internally non-practical resources are resources of which the investment does not come at the expense of other investments. So learning to like A more, does not mean that B has to be liked less. Becoming more interested in a certain subject does not mean that the interest for other subjects has to diminish. The investment of these resources cannot be forced or prevented. You cannot force someone to rake a cognitive or an aesthetic interest in something and in the same manner you cannot prevent individuals from having a cognitive or aesthetic interest in things and investing their internally non-practical resources. Organizations can only choose to facilitate these investments and provide opportunities for them, or not. The question is not whether individuals will take a positive or negative interest in things and whether they will invest their internally non-practical resources, but the only question is where they will do this. Organizations that recognize the value of these resources may decide to offer opportunities for their investment themselves, other organizations may ignore the whole issue, with the risk of people finding or constructing their own opportunities, positive, like a fan page on Facebook, or negative, like an online complaint-forum.

Especially with interest growing for developments like co-creation and customer generated innovation and the like, the investment of internally non-practical as well as internally practical resources deserves more attention. More and more individuals become active as pro-ams, or professional amateurs by voluntarily investing their resources in projects. If organizations organize experiences, they can make use of this development by thinking about how the investments can continue after the Erlebnis has finished. This way, the Erlebnis may become part of the individual's Erfahrung. Another insight deriving from the investments of resources by individuals is that the competitive field is changing. The fact that another party does not make money on what they do is not a reason to ignore them. It is very well possible that individuals don't invest their money in what they do with or for that organization but other resources that may be just as valuable but more difficult to measure. Also, by not asking money these organizations or initiatives may end up being a nuisance to organizations that do ask money of individuals and may even destroy whole business models. If other organizations offer opportunities for individuals to invest their resources in non-practical interests, often resulting in more value as Ratchford's (2001) cycle shows, individuals will enter into a relationship with these organizations and not

with the ones that ask money and close off the experience. Money, like all excludable and practical resources, is scarce, while the realm of non-practical interests, the realm of most immaterial values, is the realm of abundance. Organizations thus have to adapt to the new situation of dematerialization and learn how to deal with abundance instead of scarcity. Therefore, it is wise for organizations to cater for this continuous Erfahrung by facilitating the catalytic function of the experience, by facilitating or organizing a post-experience and to make sure that the individuals can continue building on the experience with their investments (themes 25, 30 and 31).

Besides the facilitation of investments in non-practical interests, organizations could go a step further and support the individual's reflection on his standard of inclusiveness. This reflection makes it possible for individuals to compare their interests, to make wise choices for where to invest their resources. Some organisations could forsake the role of experience facilitators and decide that they focus on helping individuals to connect their own experiences, and their experiences to other contexts or to other individuals. These connections are very important, because "the measure of the value of an experience lies in the perception of relationships or continuities to which it leads up" (Dewey, 2004, p. 114). The more interests that are served by the experience, so the more interests for which a connection is made, the more one can say that the experience appeals to the whole person. The organization would then actually be helping individuals to have integrative experiences with more mergence in Seamon's (1979) words. In a time in which individuals are bombarded all day long with so many disconnected bits of information and sensations, this role of helping the individual find the connections between things that he experiences so that he can make meaning from them would be very valuable.

8.5 Discussion and recommendations for further research

Now that a theoretical foundation has been constructed in this study, I would like to finish by proposing some recommendations for further research that can build on this foundation. Of course there is still much left to be studied since although attention for immaterial aspects of consumption has been present for more than half a century, attention has boosted in the last decade only, which makes it a very new field of study.

Also the fact that I have extended the field of experience economy, by incorporating a wider variety of conceptualizations of experience, of different effects that can happen and a different interpretation of value, increases the amount of topics that scholars can choose from when they want to study the experience economy. I have grouped some recommendations for further research based on 5 themes that have been discussed in this study: experience conceptualizations (chapter 3), experience effects (chapter 4), experience values (chapter 5), interpretive research (chapter 6) and the role of organizations in an experience economy (chapter 7).

Experience conceptualizations

Because of technological developments more realistic vicarious experiences become possible. It would be valuable to learn what the success factors are for these experiences and how they can resemble primary experiences as much as possible.
Studies cited in chapter 2 indicated that there is still a dominance of Erlebnissen in the Western world. Since over a decade has passed after the publishing of Pine and Gilmore's article "Welcome to the experience economy" (1998): has the ratio of Erlebnissen and Erfahrungen changed in the mean time?
Most of the current theories on the experience economy are focused on cases in the Western world. What is the current state of affairs regarding the experience economy in other parts of the world, for example in emerging economies?
In current literature on the experience economy I perceived a bias towards the organizational perspective. Are there, and if so, what are the gaps between how individuals interpret their experiences and how organizations think individuals interpret their experience?

Experience effects

With the information overload present in the Western world there is much debate on how to design new educational programs in which the focus is not so much on providing more information but on supporting individuals to deal with the large

amount of available information. Can Erfahrungen help in education, to make it more meaningful and to stimulate deep learning instead of surface learning? Research shows that Erlebnissen are perceived in a negative way by certain groups of people. Do Erfahrungen truly help in making people feel more wellbeing?

Experience values

Because of the incorporation of the individual's perspective it has become clear that individuals do not necessarily have the same interpretation of what the experience consist of as the organization. Experiences can go far beyond the boundaries of what the organization provides and it would therefore be interesting to understand how organizations can and do work together in an effort to support the experiences of individuals and what success and failure factors are.
With the dominant focus in business on financial value and a growing awareness in social sciences that other values are becoming more important: how can businesses deal with the new types of value and how can the valuation of these values be stimulated?

Interpretive research

The development of dematerialization in the economy causes a need for more attention for qualitative research since these are often values that cannot be measured. Which approaches and methods are suitable for which research problems in this context?
As I explained in chapter 6 my first intention was to use case research as my main research strategy. Because of a lack of triangulation that appeared during the interviewing process I changed my strategy and chose to adhere to the principles of grounded theory. Grounded theory is a very suitable strategy for generating new theories but for scholars who with to build upon the theoretical foundation I have constructed in this research, or who wish to verify certain parts of this foundation, the use of case research, exactly because of its requirement of data triangulation, would be a wise choice. Knowledge is needed about which other sources besides interviews and perhaps observations, if the experiences under study take place at the moment of

study, contain information on the individual's experience. One could think of journals, reflective documents, audio-visual materials, focus groups and the like. It would then also be valuable to have an understanding of how one can get the respondents to provide these sources of data without too much direction from the side of the researcher.

THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONS IN AN EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

It is difficult for individuals to form expectations on experiences. One of the areas that deserve attention of scholars for this reason is the communication of what individuals can expect from experiences. What are the most effective ways of communicating? Are different forms of communication more effective for different types of experiences? Also the way intake procedures are designed is very important because together with communication, these roles have an effect on which individuals will participate in the experience and which will not. Especially because of the increase in social media and the impact of these, these roles become more important. Positive as well as negative feedback by participants can explode overnight and reach unprecedented amounts of other people. Knowledge on appropriate communication and intake procedures would therefore be very valuable.

Social media can also help in supporting the post experience and social resonance that was desired by respondents and in this way help them in coming to an Erfahrung. How social media can be applied with this aim has yet to be studied.

Related to employees of organizations in the experience economy, it would be important to understand how individuals with the right relational attitude can be found and hired and how individuals, if this is possible at all, can learn to have a relational attitude.

For experiences with a specific goal like educational experiences, we need knowledge on how norms and criteria can be formulated for the often-abstract effects and how one can evaluate this type of effects. Also, because of the temporal dimension of certain effects, it is valuable to understand when the timing for measuring effects is appropriate.

Yet another issue related to research into the effects or perceived quality of experiences: in the analysis of my research data it appeared that many respondents had a bias towards their negative experiences. Is it normal hat respondents tell more

about their negative experiences and if so: why can this be? One could have respondents read the transcript of their interview and interview them on this, which could resolve this issue and perhaps clarify why perhaps otherwise very satisfied participants, are more prone to focus on their negative experiences.

If as a conclusion I would give one piece of advice to organizations who want to participate or continue to participate in the experience economy, it would be to let go. Organizations have to accept that they have actually never had full control over people's experiences, but that has never been so much of an issue. When the economy revolved around commodities, these, except for the weather and health conditions and the like, were under control of organization. The same went for the goods economy. In the services-economy things became more complex, because here the customer had to be involved in the service delivery and/or specification. But in the experience economy the situation becomes even more complex since the customer is part of the experience. He is not only present and involved but he decides what happens. Organizations can do all sorts of things to stage or direct the experience but in the end some minor detail that is out of the span of control of the organization, like a negative review by some other customer, personal circumstances, a traffic jam on the way to an event, can ruin the experience. In experiences everything is connected. The idea that organizations should be in control is founded on the assumption that organizations are responsible for providing the added value. But in experiences the individuals determine the added value. If organizations think they are responsible, they have to come up with something new, something bigger, something better, every time. Otherwise the customer may get bored. The problem is that one doesn't know when the customer will come back, and what he or she has experienced the last time he or she was there. By accepting the individual's involvement and role in the experience, you accept that the experience per definition is different every time, and that individuals make it different by participating. What's more is that by trying to direct the individual, it is possible that organizations restrict the individual in shaping his own experience.
What is needed then? First of all: be aware that everything counts. Although in the experience economy the focus is the experience, the commodities, goods and services are the basis upon which everything else is built. If these aren't in order, the experience will most likely fail (although sometimes there can be a compensating

force). Following blueprints like recipes is not a solution because it they were then everyone would follow them and there would be no competitive advantage.
Second of all: be aware that not the organization but instead the individual is the centre of the universe. Scarcity is not on the supply-side anymore but on the demand-side. Organizations have to think about what role they can play in supporting the individual in shaping his own experience. No full control, no zero control, but shared control. Organizations provide the raw material and it is up to the individual what they want to do with it.
A third lesson is to think from the individuals' perspective. The experience does not begin when they enter the building and does not end when they pass the cash register. The experience may start well before and end well after those moments, and this may all be perceived as part of the experience. Organizations have to think more in terms of chains and to look for opportunities to be of value to individuals in those processes before the enter and after they leave. Those processes are part of the experience and neglecting this is a great loss of opportunity.
All in all a mindshift is needed. Organizations are not producers but facilitators in an experience economy, they should think more in terms of support than in terms of direction and they will have to get used to a more modest role in the experience economy than the full-control mode they have been used to for so long.