NICOLINE JACOBY HANSEN

CONFERENCES AS DRAMATURGICAL LEARNING SPACES

PHD DISSERTATION

**DANISH SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
AARHUS UNIVERSITY
SEPTEMBER 2010**

"Conferences as Dramaturgical Learning Spaces"
by Nicoline Jacoby Hansen

PhD Dissertation

Doctoral School of Organizational Learning (DOCSOL)
Department of Learning
Danish School of Education
Aarhus University

Tuborgvej 164
DK-2400 Copenhagen NV.

SUPERVISORS
Ib Ravn, Danish School of Education, Aarhus University
Mette Mønsted, Copenhagen Business School

PHD COMMITTEE
Lotte Darsø, Danish School of Education, Aarhus University (Chair)
Bengt Johannisson, Linnaeus University, Sweden
Chris Steyaert, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

CONTACT
njh@agoracph.dk

September 2010

CONTENTS

APPENDICES

These are not included in this version.

I. European Conference on Creativity and Innovation X (ECCI X)
- Conference Program
- Book of Contributions
- Documentary film by Romina Carraro
- Meet the Danes Briefing
- Evaluation Form, incl. results
- Interview Guide, Photo Interviews

II. Help Desk Forum 2006
- Conference Program
- Reflection Book
- Workshop Cases
- Workshop Guide
- Guide: "Tilbage til fremtiden"
- Postcard
- Evaluation Form, ind. results

III. Annual Meeting of the Innovation Council 2006
- Conference Program
- Annual Meeting Magazine
- Workshop Guide, incl. Fact Sheet
- Evaluation Form, incl. results

IV. Creating Knowledge IV
- Conference Program, incl. description
- Conference Magazine
- Guide: Workshop II
- Guide: Workshop III
- Postcard
- Evaluation Form, ind. results and evaluation comments

FIGURES

TABLES

1 INTRODUCTION

When I graduated from university and began my professional life, I soon realized it was full of conferences, both to attend and to organize. While the conferences ranged from research conferences that lasted several days to one-day business conferences, they all had one common denominator: There was a lot of one-way communication, with back-to-back presentations and participants sitting quietly in ruler-straight rows. Most times, these conference experiences drained my energy, and rarely did I return home bubbling with excitement over new ideas or great new contacts that could expand my network. As an organizer, I had neither the resources nor the ideas required to change the traditional format, and I designed my conference programs similarly. But I felt there were missed opportunities for learning and networking.

These conference experiences conflicted with all the theories of communication, organizational psychology, and pedagogy with which I had familiarized myself during my studies. Now, this is not the first time in history that a newly graduated student finds the world to be different from the theories taught at university. But the gap between adult-learning theory and conference practice seemed more like a chasm, and I could not find any literature exploring the subject of learning at conferences. This piqued my curiosity, and I started pondering what could be done differently.

Following Lewin's (1951) suggestion "If you want to truly understand something, try to change it," this dissertation aims to change the classic conference format in order to understand it. Using a design-based research approach, my research attempts to: 1) develop a new approach to conferences as dramaturgical learning spaces; 2) implement the new approach in collaboration with four different conference organizers; and 3) evaluate the participants' experiences and analyze the results.

More bluntly, this project is an attempt to say that the classic conference format where speaker after speaker talks from a podium to a seated audience who are expected only to listen could be improved from a learning perspective, and the notion of "a dramaturgical learning space" could be an answer. Let's explore how and why this could be an interesting alternative and examine the potential and challenges involved.

Besides my personal curiosity about conferences as a phenomenon, a number of perspectives support the importance of studying conferences. First, conferences are an important part of adults' educational setup, at least those types of conferences that employees attend with the purpose of getting up to date within specific subject areas, exchanging information with peers, and developing relationships with other attendees that can lead to new insights and perspectives. In this view, conferences form an important part of continuing education; for some people, they are the only type of educational activity they can afford to or have the time to attend, which makes the idea of conferences as continuing education a highly relevant topic for further study. However, the research within the fields of adult learning and continuing education focuses solely on courses (classroom settings with around thirty people), workplace learning (*in situ*), or everyday learning, a.k.a. informal learning (Illeris, 1999; Jensen, 2005).

Second, as alluded to earlier, research on learning has developed greatly during the last fifty years. Participant involvement, group work, and problem-based learning are often used in classroom education, while apprenticeship and communities of practice are pedagogical concepts used in workplace learning (Foley, 2004; Illeris, 2004). Although different in scope and nature, the learning approaches are all based on the premise that learners are resourceful themselves; that learning is enhanced when learners are actively engaged (preferably in a problem relevant to themselves); and that people can benefit from learning from one another. But within the field of conferences, the transfer model (i.e., teaching as one-way communication) is the most widespread pedagogical concept, building on the notion that people are like gas tanks you can fill up with knowledge, readying them to reenter the world full of energy and competence (Ravn, 2007b).

Third, society's communicative patterns have changed immensely in the last decade. In the wake of the Web 2.0 era, people are getting more and more

used to playing an active role in the communicative relationships of which they are a part; it is said that "the recipient" is dead and "the user" is here. Social media like Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace, along with debate forums on various websites and blogs, permit people to express themselves in various ways at all times. This has produced a whole new type of communicative behavior and habits that most likely produce the expectation that such versatility will play a role in other walks of communicative life—including conferences. This is especially the case in the generations born after 1980, which have grown up with these possibilities.

Along this same line, the view on knowledge has also changed immensely: Universities are no longer the world's only accepted knowledge-producing institutions. Knowledge is no longer something static, owned by experts. And knowing has become the single-most important competence and the backbone of survival in Western societies now that handwork has been outsourced to third-world countries. This focus on knowledge in today's society requires new ways of handling knowledge or the process of gaining knowledge, including changed meeting habits.

Fourth, both public and private organizations spend considerable amounts of money on hosting conferences, and their employees spend much time attending them. There are no exact figures for the turnover in the meetings industry, but the U.S. Travel Association estimates that business-travel spending that is linked directly to meetings and events in the United States amounts to $100 billion annually and provides jobs for one million people (U.S. Travel Association, 2010). Members of Meetings Professionals International (MPI) reportedly hosted and arranged meetings globally for more than €13 billion a year at the beginning of this decade (Tange & Ravn, 2003). From an economical perspective alone, it seems reasonable to explore and find ways to enhance conference outcomes, and this is something that of which organizations are increasingly becoming aware.

At the beginning of this project, I asked various people from the business sector about their views on conferences, and it became clear that conference attendees, as well as their home organizations, are increasingly focused on cost/benefit and outcome. A conference director with forty years of experience in a large global organization told me that he has witnessed a change in working behavior:

The younger employees act differently today than they did ten years ago. Back then, a conference was a break from the daily routine and was mainly used as an excuse to party and relax. But today, the young career stormers do not have time for that. They want outcome: They are focused and want to spend their work-related time efficiently. Otherwise, they prefer staying at home with their families or bringing down the workload that isn't getting smaller because they attend a conference—on the contrary.

Similarly, organizations are increasingly demanding documentation of the benefits of attending a conference, specifically: What did the employee learn from attending, and in what way does his or her attendance bring value to the company? Is the surplus value of meeting in real life so significant that it compensates for travel and accommodation costs, or can the conference activity be replaced by a virtual meeting?

In many organizations, so-called "trivial communication" is handled over the Internet through e-mail, chat, videoconferences, and other types of groupware. But this kind of communication could be characterized as "serial monologues" rather than dialogue. When it comes to sharing ideas and creating common understanding, real, face-to-face dialogue is still needed—and this is what people are willing to travel for. Despite new technology, meetings in real life will be just as relevant in the future, but the demands regarding professional content and format will probably be much higher.

Taking all these perspectives into consideration, it is surprising how little research has been carried out within the field of conferences and learning. The logistical dimension, the conference industry, and the marketing aspects have been extensively described and discussed, but scientific reflections on conference form and content are practically nonexistent. For example, in a MPI survey, professional conference organizers highlight that in the future they are more likely to succeed if they can specify expected outcomes for participants and their home organizations in their sales pitch. But this awareness is not coupled with an increased effort to explore what would actually increase outcomes; the only concern is how outcome awareness can be displayed in marketing materials in order to attract customers. Granted, concern over the lack of new meeting formats has increased in the past five years in the meetings industry and is highlighted in industry publications (e.g.

the interview with Howard Gardner in the Meeting Professional Magazine by Lattimore, 2008; the special article series on "How Adults Learn" in the Convene magazine by Ramsborg & Tinnish, 2008) and discussed at conferences (see for example the white paper from the Professional Education Conference-Europe, 18-20 March 2007 in Copenhagen by MPI, 2007; and the report by M. K. Petersen, 2007 from the same conference). Although there is increased awareness in the industry that the field of adult education might be able to contribute to meeting-format development, the most commonly cited solution for changing the existing meeting format into a more participatory format is an increased use of technology, such as by letting attendees express their opinions through polls via a response system or pose questions to a presenter through a conference system. I am not convinced that technology is the (only) answer to the question of how to increase participation and learning outcomes at face-to-face meetings.

One could, of course, argue that not all conferences in working life are about learning. As the quote above from the conference director indicates, conferences can also be merely a break from routine and daily work pressure, maybe even a legitimate holiday financed by the employer as some kind of bonus or incentive. Undoubtedly, some participants' motives fall into this category; from an organizer's perspective, the goal may sometimes be as simple as "providing a good time," such as for team-building purposes. But there are many other types of conferences where organizers' ambition is to provide attendees with "something useful"—and where attendees expect this to be the case. Hence, this thesis deals only with those types of conferences where the aim is to communicate new insights or share past experiences with a larger group of people (a more precise definition will be provided later). I argue that it is within this type of conference that it becomes particularly relevant to develop a new perspective of conferences as dramaturgical learning spaces.

So far, I have explained the coupling of conferences and learning but have not commented on the dramaturgical dimension. The development—or innovation—aspect of the research project has called for experimental thinking, and Bartlett describes very accurately what this kind of experimental development entails:

> […] the experimenter cannot move beyond the point for which
> methods and instrumentation are available. He may sometimes
> invent them; more often he adopts them from some source that
> may well be outside of his own immediate interest. […] To know
> where to look, as much as how to look, is a necessary step in
> experiment. Very often, perhaps always, it is a step that becomes
> possible when methods, apparatus, hints, or established findings are
> taken over from some field different from that in which they are to
> be applied. (Bartlett, 1964, p. 133ff.)

Bartlett continues to explain that the experimenter must do more than just take over from another field; he or she must adapt the new methods and tools to his or her own field and show that these can contribute to reaching a convincing answer to current problems and specify new problems ahead.

In other words, to surpass the framing or common understanding of what is possible within a field, it often helps to ping-pong with another field and thereby get new ideas on how to expand the boundaries. I chose dramaturgy to be the domain that could stimulate the out-of-the-box thinking that was needed, both on a theoretical level and in practice. There are several reasons for this, which will be elaborated on throughout the dissertation; for now, it is enough to say that dramaturgy is the art and science of keeping people's attention through different dramatic structures, and the science of these structures has coinciding points of reference with theories of adult learning and their idea of what ignites development/learning processes. Also, dramaturgy, like pedagogy, is an applied research field, which means that it can help facilitate the adaptation of the theoretical framework into practice.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

The introduction has outlined the starting point of this dissertation, namely that research on conferences and learning is scarce but highly relevant from several perspectives: learning theoretical, knowledge production and communicative patterns in society, participant outcome, and economic/business. Also, the existing conference format, which is dominated by plenary speakers and participants who are allowed to interact only during breaks, needs to be revisited from a learning perspective: Listening is not

learning. Finally, I have introduced the hypothesis that dramaturgy can inform the field of adult learning in a conference setting. This leads me to pose the following research question:

> **How may a conference be conceptualized as a dramaturgical learning space, and what are the practical implications for conference program design and participant experience?**

The basic idea of the project is to initiate research-based development of conference formats and thereby help conference organizers to rethink the structure and format of their conference programs for the benefit of participants. The research question alludes to the project's theoretical direction and research approach: The dramaturgical learning space is advanced as a theoretical framework, drawing on adult-learning theory and dramaturgy. Within this framework, the learning-through-rhythm model is developed, which consists of three design principles: reflection, involvement, and interaction.

With this model in hand, I have collaborated with four conference organizers to apply the model in practice and develop concrete conference program designs for their conferences (four conferences in total). During the conferences, data on the participants' experiences are collected using a multiple methods strategy, and these data are evaluated in terms of the conference program elements and then analyzed according to the design principles of the learning-through-rhythm model. This research approach of testing a theoretically based design in practice and evaluating the results is handled according to design-based research methodology, where knowledge is developed in the context of its application.

Following this, I will provide an overview that describes the structure of the thesis and the steps taken to answer the research question.

1.2 OVERVIEW

The operative words in the research question reveal what lies ahead in the dissertation. First of all, *conferences* are the subject area of interest. The study of conferences is an interdisciplinary field in the sense that although conferences alone are rarely seen as an object of study, they lie at the margins of a wide range of related subject areas. Chapter 2: The Context of Conferences opens by mapping some of these areas and then moves on to deal with the context of conferences in three ways.

First, conferences are structurally affiliated to "the meetings industry," and I will briefly introduce its main actors and highlight a number of the challenges that the industry faces (which underscore some of the reasons already outlined for conducting this research project). These insights will serve as a backdrop for understanding some of the challenges I face when planning conferences in practice in collaboration with the conference organizers.

Second, even though research on conferences and learning is scarce, the interdisciplinary nature of the subject field welcomes a wide range of literature that could inform the study of conferences. I will therefore present what I call a conference-related literature review, well aware that it is by no means exhaustive and that it does not give justice to all the peripheral subject fields that might be of interest. I have also chosen to include literature of a more practical nature than what is the norm in research literature reviews since the practice of conferences (or conferencing) seems to be further ahead than the theoretical explorations of the subject.

Third, the term *conference* does not have a standard definition; consequently, the word *conference* covers many different types of meetings. I will provide a typology of conferences and define what is meant by the word *conference* in this particular study.

Chapter 3: Methodology describes and discusses the overall research design. I've utilized a design-based research approach, which implies going from research problem to research opportunity: The idea is to envision how to improve a current state of affairs based on relevant theory, i.e., develop a theoretical framework that can guide the design of a new conference format in practice. I will first introduce the basics of the design-based research approach and explain why this methodology has been employed. Then I will present the

four case conferences that form the empirical basis of the research project, including how they were selected and the nature of the contract drafted. One of the conferences is my primary case, and the three others are auxiliary. The primary case is The European Conference on Creativity and Innovation (ECCI X), hosted by The Initiative for Creativity and Innovation (IKI) and Copenhagen Business School (CBS) on behalf of The European Association for Creativity and Innovation (EACI). The conference ran over four days in October 2007, and the participants were a mix of researchers and practitioners. Examples from the three secondary cases will be included when they yield interesting perspectives to the discussion.

Design-based research shares common ground with other applied research methodologies like intervention research and action research, most notably the point that the researcher takes on a consultant-like role. From a methodological point of view, the central question is: How can you as a researcher meaningfully and in a trustworthy way make sense of empirical material that has been constructed with your help, while you were acting as a consultant? I will discuss the similarities and differences between the design-based research approach that I have chosen and intervention research and action research, respectively, and thereby clarify the question of validity.

In Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework I introduce and develop the notion of conferences as dramaturgical learning spaces, which basically is the idea of combining adult learning theory and dramaturgy in a conference context. I will specify how a conference can be characterized as a learning space and what the purpose and role of using dramaturgy in the conference learning space is.

The perspectives of adult learning and dramaturgy are integrated through the learning-through-rhythm model, which consists of the three design principles of reflection, involvement, and interaction. These three elements are the components through which learning-through-rhythm is created. The three design principles will be defined and described, and I argue why and how they are relevant when aiming to increase participant outcome at conferences. I conclude by providing some reflections on the theoretical framework and its view of human nature and pinpoint what the impediments may be when attempting to implement the theoretical framework in practice.

The theoretical model is applied to practice in Chapter 5: Designing the ECCI X Conference Program, which demonstrates how the design principles can be translated into a concrete conference program. The chapter will focus both on the development of the ECCI X program (the process) as well as the final conference program (the product) and explore the critical incidents of the conference planning process in order to understand why the program turned out as it did. The entire program structure, as well as each program element, is presented and described.

The evaluative data on the participants' experience have been generated through a multiple-method approach combining both quantitative and qualitative data and both visual and semantic data forms. The data-collection methods are described and discussed in Chapter 6: Data Collection and Analytical Approach. The data have been coded in the software program ATLAS.ti and analyzed according to Kvale's three levels of analysis—self-perception, critical common sense analysis, and theoretical analysis—which are equivalent to the transcription process, the participant evaluation in Chapter 7, and the analysis based on the learning-through-rhythm model in Chapter 8.

The critical common sense analysis and the theoretical analysis are combined in an analysis matrix that depicts the common points of reference in the data between the two levels of analysis. This clarifies how the participant evaluations of the various program elements have led to the analytical conclusions that are structured according to the learning-through-rhythm model.

In Chapter 7: Participant Evaluation, I look at the implications of conceptualizing conferences as dramaturgical learning spaces from a participant perspective and evaluate the potential and challenges of the main conference program elements of the ECCI X conference as expressed by the participants.

Chapter 8 presents the analysis, where participant evaluations are assessed in light of the learning-through-rhythm model. This means that the chapter is structured according to the design principles of reflection, involvement, and interaction. Two or three points regarding each design principle are raised for discussion with the intent to clarify what kind of potential each of them have in relation to increasing participant outcome and learning in accordance with the notion of the dramaturgical learning space.

The chapter concludes with general reflections on the use of rhythm in conference program design, including to what extent the learning-through-rhythm model shows robustness.

Chapter 9, the conclusion, sums up the thesis's main points and highlights its contributions.

2   THE CONTEXT OF CONFERENCES

The study of conferences and learning as an independent research field is nonexistent in the sense that there are no journals and conferences devoted to the subject. One might say that the field is defined by its otherness to other domains. This means I must address other subject domains in order to grasp the subject of conferences. Figure 1 illustrates some of the domains from which conference research may potentially draw and clearly demonstrates that the study of conferences is a highly interdisciplinary exercise.
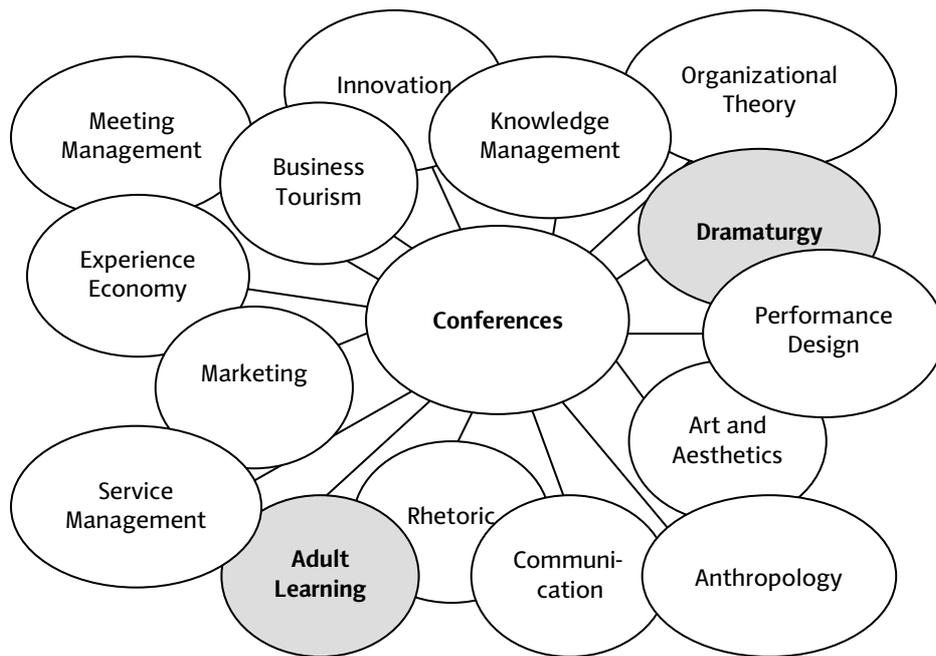
Figure 1: Some of the fields that constitute the research field of conferences

The fact that the study of conferences is related to so many different fields does not make the task of defining the present project easier; perspectives from all

angles provide enlightenment or even answers to some of the issues raised during the research process. As already indicated, I have chosen to explore how the combination of adult-learning theory and dramaturgy can produce a new conference format that will enhance conference participant outcomes. In the following sections I will explain how conferences are situated in the meetings industry and expand the list of reasons for choosing this particular subject by adding the industry perspective. The industry faces a number of challenges, and, in my perspective, these are linked to the premise of this project: that the field has not developed or innovated on its core business for many years. Then follows a review of conference-related literature, i.e., literature I deem important for drawing a map of the existing perspectives on conferences. Finally, I will offer a framework for defining conferences: which parameters define what a conference is, how different types of conferences can be characterized, and the definition of the conference type that is dealt with in this project.

2.1 THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY

The business of conferences forms part of the meetings industry, also referred to as the MICE industry (meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions). On a larger scale, the meetings industry forms part of the tourism industry or, more specifically, the business-tourism industry. Therefore, the national tourist organizations in some countries play an important role in the meetings industry, as they help promote business tourism. The main roles within the meetings industry can be characterized as follows:

- **Corporate and association meeting planners**
  These are employees in companies, public organizations, and associations. Planning meetings is not necessarily their primary function (full-time, in-house meeting planners are rare in Denmark), and the task is often given to a secretary or a similar support function in the organization. These meeting planners are the main buyers in the industry.
- **Professional meeting planners**
  These include professional conference organizers (PCOs) as well as other types of conference and event bureaus and consultants. These are normally

hired by conference organizing committees either to take charge of the entire meeting planning process or to assist the corporate/association meeting planner with selected tasks.

▪ **Venues**
These may be hotels, congress/convention centers, or other places. Their staffs work closely with the professional and organizational meeting planners.

▪ **Other suppliers**
This group includes everything from transportation, catering, and A/V to the graphical production and printing of conference programs.

▪ **Conference corporations**
These are professional conference organizations that develop, organize, and sell conferences within all subject matters. They locate the current business issues and challenges (often within specific industries) and market these conferences to the relevant target groups, often using massive amounts of direct mail.

The actors listed here are not restricted to conference activities; most of them would also be involved in planning the following:

▪ **Exhibitions**
"[…] also known as trade fairs, trade shows and consumer shows [where businesses] display their products—from farm machinery to wedding dresses—to potential customers."

▪ **Incentive travel**
"Comprises those trips—usually luxurious and often to attractive destinations—that employees receive from their employer as a prize for winning a competition related to their job."

▪ **Corporate hospitality events**
"Consists of the often lavish entertainment that companies extend to their most valuable clients or potential clients at prestigious sporting and cultural events." (Davidson & Cope, 2003, p. 3)

Most industry players are organized in enormous global industry associations. The purposes and activities of these associations are somewhat overlapping, and some associations function as umbrella associations for a number of

smaller associations. Nevertheless, many industry players are members of several associations at the same time, which suggests that association activities are an important business channel and a primary source of professional development within the industry. Some of the main associations (from a Danish perspective) are the following:

- **Convention Industry Council (CIC)**
  This is the organization of organizations: Thirty-two organizations from the meetings industry are represented in CIC. In their capacity as an umbrella organization, they head a number of industry initiatives:
  - Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) program. The certification is granted by passing a written exam. An online preparation course is offered but not compulsory.
  - Accepted Practice Exchange (APEX). According to CIC, the aim of APEX is to "bring together all stakeholders in the development and implementation of industry-wide accepted practices to create and enhance efficiencies throughout the meetings, conventions and exhibitions industry" (Convention Industry Council, 2007). This means CIC seeks to develop industry standards, such as regarding vocabulary which provides app 4,000 industry-approved terms, acronyms and abbreviations and their respective definitions, and by providing various templates, e.g., requests for proposals from providers, meeting site visits, post-event reports, etc. (Convention Industry Council, 2010)
- **Meetings Professional International (MPI)**
  This organization consists of suppliers and organizational meeting planners. It has nearly twenty-three thousand members in sixty-five countries/local chapters. The Danish chapter has approximately two hundred members (60 percent suppliers and 40 percent organizational meeting planners). MPI offers a Certification in Meeting Management program (CMM), which consists of a five-day residency program, an online exam, and a take-home project.

- **ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association)**
  ICCA represents the main specialists in handling, transporting, and accommodating international events and comprises over eight hundred member companies and organizations in eighty countries worldwide.

A comprehensive overview with statistics and definitions of the meetings industry is found in Rogers (2003) and Davidson and Cope (2003). What is striking is the fact that the conference industry, despite its important role in the area of continuing education, is such an inherent part of the tourism/event industry yet is not embraced by the educational industry at all. This is probably a contributing reason why learning at conferences has not yet been properly addressed.

2.1.1 BARRIERS TO INNOVATION IN THE INDUSTRY

The meetings industry in Denmark faces a number of challenges. Copenhagen is at the top of the list of the most popular conference cities in world, between number five and number ten, depending on which list you consult. But the competition is getting fierce, because new destinations in Eastern Europe are ready to jump in and provide the same services for less money. They have appropriate venues; the logistics for handling large, international conferences; and attractive tourist attractions. Some cities even have more air carriers (especially among the budget airlines) flying in to the nearest airport. This means that Copenhagen does not have a safe spot on the most-popular-conference-cities lists.

As a result, the Danish industry (along with many other destinations facing the same competition) has to find something new to sell in order to stand out. Some industry players believe in the blue-ocean strategy and that new meeting formats are the most promising way of differentiating Denmark as a meeting destination, while others do not think this is relevant. Skeptics often claim that they have never experienced a pull effect from customers demanding new meeting formats and that, on the contrary, their customers want business as usual. On the other hand, customers complain about the lack of skills in the industry and that they have never been challenged or helped to

do things differently, which they would highly appreciate (Vestergaard & Hansen, 2003).

And herein lies another challenge of the industry: the educational level. As mentioned earlier, the industry forms part of the tourism industry, where friendly smiles and professional service play the biggest roles. Staffs are often young people who have been acting as guides on package-tour destinations or who have worked at tourist agencies or similar organizations. Managers are often educated as chefs and have advanced in the hotel hierarchy, and it is not unlikely that the CEO and CFO are the only ones with an academic background at conference venues or other kinds of supplier organizations—if they have an academic background at all. This is not to imply that an academic title is absolutely the only thing that counts, but it may explain the defensive routines (Argyris, 1992) that managers in the industry display toward continuing education for their staffs and involvement in research projects; they question their own abilities in heading this type of development. This creates a culture where there is no acknowledgement of the educational and research efforts needed to innovate and gain competitive advantage by offering something different than competing on price only.

On the client side, there are often two types of people involved in organizing a conference: the experienced professional, who is an expert within a subject field, and his or her administrative assistant, who is supposed to take care of the practical details. This means that the client/supplier relationship is asymmetrical. The supplier represents a tourism idea of a good time and excels in the logistics involved when arranging a meeting, such as registration, venue management, and catering. The client is an expert on the content and is therefore left alone with the planning and communication of the conference program. In this respect, the suppliers place themselves in a reactive role (fitting the logistics to the program planned by the client) rather than a proactive role (taking the lead in the conference program planning).

In some respects, this may seem like a reasonable division of labor. But just because the client is an expert on content does not mean he or she is an expert on meeting formats and learning processes. And when the supplier almost refuses to have anything to do with content and focuses purely on logistics, attention to format is missing out. This problem is reinforced by the fact that professional, full-time organizational meeting planners (clients) are

few compared to the number of meetings and conferences held. The practical planning is often done by a secretary or the latest newcomer who has never arranged a meeting before and also has other important job tasks to perform. Another scenario is the association conferences where local organization committees (on a national level) take turns hosting the conference. Here, there is often a lack of continuity when handing the stick from one country to another, and the vast majority in the local committee has never organized a conference before (and will probably never do it again in the future). This makes the client-side preoccupied with understanding how a regular meeting is planned and executed. Therefore, continuity is lacking, and resources for innovations are scarce.

So, conferences are often planned by clients with scarce resources and little planning experience but with expertise in the conference subject, in collaboration with suppliers, who excel in the logistics. This way, conferences continue to be what they have always been.

There may also be some industry barriers to innovation. In my preliminary discussions with industry players, some indicated that gate-keeping takes place in the sense that start-up companies or communication companies that may want to expand their business into conferences are not granted access to the prosperous contracts involved when large-scale events are held in Denmark. But these types of companies often have new ways of approaching the market and novel solutions, and this innovation capacity and renewal of the industry gets lost if they are not admitted.

2.2 A REVIEW OF CONFERENCE-RELATED LITERATURE

In the beginning of this chapter I introduced the argument that the field of conferences and learning is nonexistent in the current scientific landscape and that the study of conferences is made up by numerous other, related fields. Additionally, the practice of conference organizing and attendance seems much further ahead than the scientific studies thereof. This has consequences for the way that the standard literature review can be done and I have therefore chosen to present a review of conference-related literature; this includes literature of both theoretical and practical nature that I deem important for demonstrating how the current landscape of conferences and learning looks like.

Since there is tremendous ambiguity in the group of words used to describe the social act of gathering (such as meeting, convention, or assembly), the literature also goes in many directions. Sociological research on meetings (the little that exists) tends to favor meetings in organizations or meetings tied to organizational practices, where the purpose of the meeting is discussion and decision making. The analysis thus presupposes that the meeting participants have a common goal, which is rarely the case in the type of conferences of interest in this dissertation. See Schwartzmann (1989) for the most comprehensive study of this type of organizational meetings analysis.

At the intersection of history and sociology, Wree traces the military, political, and religious genealogy of meetings, focusing on the development of meeting manners and civilization. Again, the decision-making aspect dominates, but on a macro-societal level as opposed to the micro-level analysis of Schwartzmann (although Schwartzmann strongly opposes this frequently used dichotomy in sociological research, arguing that "the study of meetings requires rethinking micro- versus macro-level distinctions and is itself one of the important context for linking, theoretically and empirically, the concepts of practice, process, structure and agency" (Schwartzmann, 1989, p. 13)). However, Wree does not cover philosophical or educational meeting settings, such as the agora in ancient Greece or other types of education-oriented meeting activities throughout history.

On a research level, a growing body of literature focuses on the impact of a conference series on the development of a particular field, e.g., looking at conferences as temporary clusters (Maskell, Bathelt, & Malmberg, 2004, 2005) or as field-configuring events; see the special issue of *Journal of Management Studies* (Garud, 2008; Lampel & Meyer, 2008). Most of these studies look at conferences as texts, analyzing what the participants talk about, the speeches held, and so forth through discourse analysis, formation of identities, and field evolution. But these studies are omitting the contextual factors influencing the text, such as the power exerted by the organizers (selecting speakers, format, and, to some degree, the participants through the marketing, barters/free seats, and so forth), which impacts what is talked about and how it is talked about.

Literature on new, specific conference formats does exist, such as Search Conferences (Emery & Purser, 1996), Dialogue Conferences (Gustavsen & Engelstad, 1986), Consensus Conferences (Joss & Durant, 1995), and Future

Workshops (Jungk & Müllert, 1987), along with variations of these, such as the Vision Conferences (Vidal, 2004), based on Future Workshops. These are all conference formats that aim at stimulating democratization processes and enhancing empowerment through dialogue and shared decision making. For a review of the origins, principles, and use of these conference types, including their relation to action research in a Scandinavian context, see Nielsen (2006).

Open Space Technology (H. Owen, 1997a, 1997b) is probably the most well-known alternative to the traditional conference format. Here, the basic concept is self-organization; a central theme or meeting purpose is decided upon on beforehand but the participants develop the agenda during the meeting. In order for this self-organization to take off, the formulation of the purpose is extremely important; it needs to be complex (i.e. an issue with no easy or right answers), present some kind of conflict with a high level of urgency (to make sure that people are interested in the issue and are eager to take action immediately). During the meeting, the Law of Two Feet applies which means that people are encouraged to leave a session if they do not feel they are learning or contributing. Variations of Open Space Technology, like Unconferences and BarCamps have gained popularity within the web-technology community. There are no off-line publications explaining these Open Space variations but one may get an insight into what they are about and how they are conducted by an Internet search (see for example Wikipedia, 2008d).

Participatory techniques like The World Café (J. Brown, 2005) and the Fishbowl method (Wikipedia, 2008b) introduce new processes for large audiences settings—for example, to be used in an Open Space format. In the design and architect community, there is growing interest in the so-called Pecha Kucha presentation format (Klein & Dytham, 2010), developed by two Japanese architects, which dictates that a presentation should consist of twenty elements and twenty seconds to present each element, amounting to a total presentation time of six minutes and forty seconds. Most often, these elements are Power Point slides, which are set to change automatically. The idea has spread to include other topics than design and the American version is called Ignite (Oreilly Media, 2010), which allows only fifteen seconds per element, resulting in a total presentation time of five minutes. The formats are meant to force presenters to be concise and keep the audience attentive. A similar point

seems to be underlying the idea of Lightning Talks (see Wikipedia, 2008c or search for the term on the Internet to see different settings where they have been used) and TED talks (TED Conferences, 2010). Both formats are about cutting things short: Lightning talks last a maximum of five minutes and the classic TED talk length is 18 minutes but are now also featured in 3, 6, 9 and 12 minutes talks.

Although these new conference formats and techniques are well described, the literature tends to be of a somewhat practical nature (how to plan and conduct the formats and processes proposed) and lacks research results on why and how they work, for whom they work, and so forth.

If we move away from general descriptions of general formats and processes, there are numerous case descriptions of particular conferences. These reports or articles on conference outcomes and experiences are most often communicated from the organizing committee's perspective and in rare cases from a participant's perspective. The reports by organizers are either a review of the content alone (what was said, how was it perceived, any generalizations that can be drawn within that particular field as to where "it stands"), or of the planning process, or of the evaluation, or a combination. (Examples of reports and articles from an organizer perspective are American Psychological Association, 1968; Bryant & Shinn, 1979; Fouad, et al., 2004; Melnick & Sabo, 1987; Miles, 1994.) A common feature is that they do not attempt to include a broader context for reflection.

Some case articles by organizers are indeed well-referenced and put the conference case into a broader research perspective, but these do not focus on learning per se (Correa, et al., 1988; J. D. Johnson, et al., 1996; Spee, 2007).

The participants' reviews are of course more orientated towards personal outcome and often provide advice to future conference goers on how to navigate in the conference in question or provides advice to organizers on how to improve the conference series in the future (Alvir, 1975; Barton, 2005; Lyons, 2007; Winchester, 1985).

In all instances, the case articles appear very isolated with no cross-references to each other and ironically, several of them voice a demand for further research into conferences, learning and outcome.

A few articles combine the evaluation of a conference case with perspectives on adult learning theory, probably because the themes of the

conferences in question were related to learning theoretical issues (Hatcher, Wiessner, Storberg-Walker, & Chapman, 2006; Meaney, Trinick, & Fairhall, 2009; N. Miller, 1991). While being interesting and detailed insights into particular conference contexts, these studies are not attempting at developing new conference formats or participatory techniques; they are only pre-occupied with analyzing what happened at these conferences in hindsight. A couple of shorter articles (Emil, 1992; Grissom, 1992; Knott & Cole, 1989) as well as a book (Mundry, Britton, Raizen, & Loucks-Horsley, 2000) reflect on the paradox that adult learning conferences do not take their own medicine and provides guidance of how this can be done. but ironically only three pages cover. Finally, the use of technology and how these can enhance attendees' outcome is not only a hot topic in the industry but also of interest for producers of technology and learning researchers. A few studies have experimented with different kinds of technologies and their impact on attendees learning experience (Abram, 2001; Jacobs, 2005).

Two theme issues on conferences have been published in the journal *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*. The first publication focuses on residential conference centers as a learning environment, advocating that these provide a "learning sanctuary" which is particularly apt at providing a learning experience for adults (Simpson & Kasworm, 1990). The articles cover different aspects of the learning sanctuary as a phenomenon, for example its history, the environmental psychology, the creation of atmosphere and the use of technology. The other publication is closer to the subject of this project and focuses on improving conference design and outcomes (Ilsley, 1985). However, it is surprising how many of the articles are about planning and organizing all aspects surrounding the core issue (which is, from an education perspective, the content and format). There are for example articles on how to create the optimal conference environment (in terms of lighting and quality of air), advice to conference attendees on how to profit from attending a conference, advice to organizers on how to support newcomers and how to make a strategy and organizing a division of labor for large conferences.

The literature on conferences which originates from the MICE industry—the closest thing to home for the field of conferences—also focuses on the logistical dimension of conference planning and implementation, such as venue selection and management, supplier collaboration, catering, housing,

and the use of technology, as well as business-related matters, such as marketing and budgetary concerns. In recent years, the industry has been very preoccupied with impact on the environment and how to reduce it (conducting "green meetings"). All of this is reflected in the numerous industry magazines and annual market surveys that are published by the industry organizations mentioned in section 2.1 above.

The textbooks used for meeting management programs at universities and other types of courses reflect the industry's tendency to emphasize the logistical and business dimension of their trade. For example, out of the 46 chapters in the textbook *Professional Meeting Management* (Ramsborg, Miller, Breiter, Reed, & Rushing, 2006) only two chapters are about learning (Strick, 2006) and learner outcomes (B. Miller & Ramsborg, 2006). The first-mentioned chapter on learning goes through an adapted version of the so-called VARK model (Fleming, 2010b) which depicts that all human beings have a preference for one of the following learning styles: visual, aural, read/write and kinesthetic. The chapter has left out the read/write dimension, but this understanding of learning seems to be dominant in the meetings industry. This results in a view of conference design where sense stimulation is the most important feature, often interpreted as spectacular entertainment elements. The chapter on *Program design and development* (W. Johnson, 2006) deals mostly with time-lines and schedules; a two-page list of "educational formats" are offered in bullet-style to describe the most commonly used format like Q&A, poster session, plenary session etc.

Berridge (2007) presents a literature review on the (lack of) presence of events design in textbooks dealing with events management. Interestingly enough, even though his book bears the promising title *Events Design and Experience,* he uses the word learning in this capacity only a few times. It should be noted that the book covers all type of events, i.e. of the more entertaining kind than the type of conferences dealt with in this project.

In Denmark, the industry is increasingly pre-occupied with meeting design, including educational aspects. A couple of projects initiated by the industry (the first one in 2003 with governmental financial support) have paved the way for awareness and discussions about the importance of developing new meeting formats. This is also reflected in the edited book *Mødebogen* (in English: The book on meetings) (Bay & Blicher-Hansen,

2006). Although many of the 30 contributions deal with the classical industry subjects as already pinpointed, some chapters go into the process design of meetings, including a chapter about the dramaturgy in meetings (Agger & Wellejus, 2006) and one about learning meetings (Tange, 2006). The latter builds on the work by Ravn and his research group (Elsborg & Ravn, 2007; Ravn, 2007b), who introduced a number of dialogue processes in a number of conferences, building on an Aristotelian notion of human co-flourishing, and studied the participants' reactions to these. Also, their work on the role of meaning in work life and how facilitation can contribute to better meetings is closely connected to the ideas developed in this project (Ravn, 2005a, 2007c, 2008).

2.3   A DEFINITION OF CONFERENCES

Etymologically, the verb *to confer* stems from the Latin words *con* (together) and *ferre* (to bear), for example, *bringing together* or *compare*. According to Roget's thesaurus, *confer* is defined as, "To meet and exchange views to reach a decision." Synonyms listed are *advise, consult, deliberate, parley*, and *talk*.

The everyday use of the word *conference* reveals ambiguity. Take words like the following: *parent-teacher conferences, student-teacher conferences, supervisory conferences, video-conferencing, research conference, professional conference,* and *sales conference*. These are all very different meeting activities. Then there are words that don't include the word *conference* but might be considered to be conference-like: *seminar, congress, convention, symposium,* and *colloquium.*

Several attempts at definitions of these "meeting words" have been made (Seekings, 1996), but the fact is that none of these are widely accepted in practice, and different cultural practices attach different meanings to the word *conference*. Some would use the word *seminar* to describe a one-day conference where the participants know one another beforehand, while others believe a *seminar* lasts only two hours but could easily imply that the participants are strangers to one another. Some use the terms *conference* and *congress* interchangeably, while others think a *congress* implies a trade show of some kind, or that parallel sessions are what differentiate a *congress* from a *conference*. Similarly, in Danish, the word *møde* (meeting) is normally applied to

company-held meetings with few employees, but internationally, the term is applied to anything from large events with several thousand participants to a conversation between two people.

I define the word *conference* in this research study as the following: an event where people from different organizations are gathered face-to-face for two or more presentations in a row and where the participant volume exceeds standard classroom size. This means that conferences are a type of activity that:

- Has more participants than can fit into a normal-sized classroom
- Has participants from different organizations/workplaces
- Has presentations as the main activity (or the premise is that the participants should learn something)
- Has more than three presenters or session activities in a row (e.g., lasts at least half a day)
- Is held face-to-face

The broad usage of the word *meeting* and its synonyms has prompted Rogers to comment (2003):

> It could be argued that the variety of available vocabulary is more a reflection of the rich diversity of the English language than a symptom of an industry with myriad events, each with its own distinct characteristics. It may not really matter whether an event is called a "conference" or a "convention", and certainly there are as many misuses of these terms as there are correct interpretations, if indeed such a thing as a correct interpretation really exists. (p. 18)

To some degree, I agree with the arguments presented here: that a common understanding of the variety of words used to describe a meeting is unnecessary—and impossible to establish—and that the number of words is inversely proportional to the amount of meeting formats that exist. The most common meeting format is still the presenter in front of a seated audience.

But I would argue that it is still important to become more aware of the parameters that are *differentiating characteristics* of meeting activities and their implications for the proposed meeting format. Even though such an effort will not produce a set of well-defined meeting definitions expressed in one-word labels, the parameters can, at a minimum, function as a guideline for

describing a particular meeting activity—no matter what you choose to call it. I propose the parameters presented in Table 1 as differentiating characteristics of a conference.

Time	Duration How long does the conference last?
	Single event or recurring event Is it a "stand‑alone" conference, or is it part of a series that is held annually or bi‑annually or…? When did the conference series begin?
Participants	Number of participants How many participants attend the conference?
	Intra‑organizational or inter‑organizational Are the participants from the same organization/workplace or from different organizations/workplaces?
	Homogenous group or heterogeneous regarding: *Function*: Do the participants have the same function/job task to perform, or do they hold very different functions? *Hierarchal position*: Are the participants from the same or different levels in the organizational hierarchy? *Nationality*: Are the participants from the same country or from different countries?
	Level of acquaintance How well do the participants know one another?

	Experience with the subject field Are the participants newcomers who want to sniff around to get an idea of what the field is about, or have they been working within the area for twenty years and want to meet and discuss specific issues with their peers?
	Expectations and aims Have the participants signed up for the conference because they want to see a celebrity keynote speaker listed in the program, or because they are browsing for knowledge? Or is the conference about networking for future collaborations? Have the participants decided themselves to attend the meeting because the topic interests them, have they been more or less "forced" to go for some reason, or is it part of an incentive tour?
Aim (from the organizer's point of view)	▪ Present information ▪ Present a "celebrity speaker" ▪ Share knowledge/build relationships among peers ▪ Develop new knowledge for the benefit of a region/an industry/an organization ▪ Sell a product/service ▪ Kick-off ▪ Build and maintain customer/employee loyalty ▪ Discuss beliefs and values and find common ground ▪ Decision making (about the future, election of representatives, etc.)
Content	**Nature of subject** Is the topic of the conference within the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, or health sciences?
	Level of content Is the level of content practical or academic?
Venue	**Residential or nonresidential** Are the participants staying the night at the venue, staying at different hotels, or going home every night?

Table 1: Differentiating characteristics of a conference

The parameters outlined above allow for a multitude of different types of conferences to be found in real conference life. Despite the sameness in the overall format, there may be huge differences in the mechanisms that guide the organizational setup during the conference planning and the participants' behavior during the conference itself. I propose a typology of six conference types, well aware that these distinctions are purely analytical; in real life one can easily find a mix of these types.

Type	Participants	Time	Primary Aim
Research Conference	Researchers	2-4 days	▪ Present information ▪ Share knowledge among peers
Professional/ Business Conference	Employees from different organizations	1-2 days	▪ Present information ▪ Share knowledge among peers ▪ Develop new knowledge
Corporate Conference	Employees from the same organization	1-2 days	▪ Calibrate the company vision and values ▪ Build and maintain employee loyalty ▪ Build relationships among employees
Sales Conference	Customers (existing and potential)	1-2 days	▪ Sell a product/service ▪ Build and maintain customer loyalty ▪ Present product information
Association Conference	Members (existing and potential)	2-4 days	▪ Present information ▪ Share knowledge among peers ▪ Develop new knowledge ▪ Build relationships among participants ▪ Discuss beliefs and values ▪ Decision making
Political Conference	Delegates	1-2 days	▪ Present information ▪ Discuss beliefs and values ▪ Decision making

Table 2: Conference types

The next chapter will present the four conferences that have participated in this project. According to Table 2, they would be classified as association conferences and business conferences, with a dash of research conference.

Looking at a considerable number of programs for conferences that adhere to the above criteria reveals a classic structure that many meetings follow. An opening keynote kicks off the day, followed by back-to-back plenary presentations until lunch. In the afternoon, a number of breakout sessions are offered; even though they are often called workshops, the format mostly stays the same, with one-way presentations and perhaps a bit of Q & A in the end. The day often closes with a panel debate in which all the plenary speakers participate. If it is a two-day conference, there will be a conference dinner in the evening, often at a spectacular venue (interesting from a tourist point of view), opened by an honorary speaker and some kind of musical entertainment.

The next section will elaborate on some of the challenges and issues involved in changing this type of program structure and format.

2.4 CHALLENGES FOR NEW CONFERENCE FORMATS

Within the field of adult education, a distinction is commonly made among three types of learning settings (Jensen, 2005; Wahlgreen, Høyrup, Pedersen, & Rattleff, 2002):

- **Formal learning**
  Educational activities in institutionalized settings with finalized exams or another kind of official acknowledgement.
- **Nonformal learning**
  Learning activities outside educational institutions but in an organized setting and planned with intent.
- **Informal learning**
  Everyday learning that is unintentional and more or less unconscious.

The type of conferences dealt with in this dissertation fall somewhere between nonformal learning and informal learning. They take place at a certain time and in a certain place defined by the organizers and are organized with intent

(they have a specific theme and content, but, as argued earlier, they often omit a specific *learning* intent), but there is no curricula or exams. People are essentially "free" to do what they want despite the official program, and social gatherings are often organized as part of the official program (and are even considered by many to be the most important aspect of attending the conference). This makes the learning context of conferences a new one in relation to known categories and a bit different in relation to the theories that apply to each category.

Since these conferences are both nonformal and informal, a number of challenges add to the complexity of striving toward a greater potential for learning:

Participant volume

There are more participants at conferences than in a classroom setting or in a workplace team, which makes it impossible to accommodate individual learning needs and preferences, adjust along the way, support each individual as a teacher would normally do, and so forth. It also makes dialogue and other types of participatory processes difficult to organize from a sheer logistical point of view.

Participant diversity

As volume increases, so does the likelihood of diversity. Dialogue is even more difficult at conferences because it often takes place across functional, cultural, and organizational boundaries, and people do not know one another beforehand. Participants also have different competence levels regarding the conference theme; some are newcomers to the field, others experienced. Also, participants have different motives and expectations for attending; some have been more or less forced to go by their company or the conference lies at the periphery of their interests, while others are completed engaged in the conference topic, as it lies at the core of their work.

Interim by definition

Conferences are stand-alone events, unlike many other types of learning settings that allow for progression, such as long-term courses comprising several classes or a daily workplace setting. Hence, conferences take place in a relatively short moment in time, the speakers change by the hour, and there is

no teacher or equivalent to guide the process. This makes it difficult to build trusting relationships among the participants and their learning environment as other types of educational settings are able to do.

Industry norms and structures

Most conference venues have fixed services, standards, and procedures that render any alterations to the business-as-usual model almost impossible and unaffordable. The conference space is often an auditorium-like setting with inflexible furniture and a number of smaller breakout rooms.

Besides the general industry challenges listed previously, these are some of the challenges that render the speaker/audience setup the preferred choice of format in most cases. All other types of setups become a challenge logistically, economically, and psychologically.

The next relevant issue when attempting to increase participant outcome is the participants' expectations and purpose of attending. There is no research-based knowledge that defines the kind of outcome conference participants expect in general (no matter which conference type), but in the conference literature, suggestions have been made. Seekings has summarized the following expectations:

- o People usually expect to *learn* something, and look for the learning experience to be pleasant—even entertaining.
- o They want to *enjoy* themselves (who ever deliberately sets out not to do so?) and, in this context, it should be noted that comfort, efficiency and presentation all directly influence delegates' enjoyment.
- o They also tend to seek *stimulation* and *reassurance*; this is especially so for people who work alone (for example, salesmen and many professional people).
- o People also seek *peer group approval* and prestige (being seen in the "right" company).
- o They go to conferences to *gossip*, to *make contacts* and, often, to do business.
- o They may also attend for a *morale booster*, for a *break from routine*—possibly as a perk or to be rewarded for good performance. (1996, p. 11-12)

I would also argue that people browse at a conference to confirm their own beliefs (a kind of reassurance) but from a benchmarking perspective on a personal level: Do I know more/less? Am I doing better/worse than the rest? Benchmarking on the organizational level might also take place. Employees attend a conference to scan the state of the art within a field and be able to assess: Where is my organization positioned compared to other players in the field, and are we competitive now and in the future?

I also believe that participants—besides seeking peer group approval and gossiping—simply want to share knowledge with colleagues holding the same type of position or coming from the same industry: Is there anybody out there struggling with the same issues as I am/my organization is, and how do they handle it? Finally, I also tend to think that quite a few people want to see "the star". If there is a famous keynote—the more celebrity-like the better—participants tend to sign up to see these persons live.

As presented in the literature review, the Open Space Technology format (H. Owen, 1997b) has been pioneering new conference practices, but for many conference organizers and participants, this seems like a radical change and is not suitable for all types of conference purposes. This implies that the intention of innovating on the classic conference format is not to turn everything completely upside down like the Open Space format does but to explore how you can give the classic conference a spin.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents and discusses the overall research approach as well as the empirical grounds of the study, including the four case conferences and the conference planning processes involved. I will elaborate on the methods used for gathering data and the analytical approach in Chapter 6.

The methodology chapter is quite elaborate, and the reason is twofold: 1) A research-based development project involves a considerable amount of empirical fieldwork, and, consequently, the methodological aspects of the research process are such an integral part of my personal epistemological process—and thereby the results of this study—that I deem it important to move beyond a simple description of the research methods used. 2) The chosen research approach, design-based research, is still emerging, and this calls for an introduction and discussion of this type of research design in its own right. I hope sharing my experiences and reflections on this type of approach will contribute to its development.

I will begin by briefly explaining the overall research approach, including why I have chosen to walk down this avenue in this particular way, and by framing the discussion within the larger perspective of the relevance of science in today's society. I will then elaborate on the four case conferences, how they were selected, the type of cooperation agreed upon, and my role in the conference planning processes, with an emphasis on those issues that are relevant from a methodological point of view. This serves as a backdrop for discussing what constitutes the design-based research approach undertaken in this study compared to other applied research methodologies like intervention research and action research. I will touch upon some of the fundamental issues of doing research in practice, both on a human relationship level and regarding questions of validity:

- The role of theory when the goal is change and improvement in practice
- The double role of acting both as a researcher and a consultant
- The democratic ideal that to some extent is inherent in cooperative relationships between researchers and practitioners

3.1 DESIGN-BASED RESEARCH

The present study is carried out using a design-based research approach, which can be defined as "[…] a series of approaches, with the intent of producing new theories, artifacts, and practices that account for and potentially impact learning and teaching in naturalistic settings" (Barab & Squire, 2004, p. 2).

Design-based research within educational research is most commonly dated back to Brown (1992) and Collins (1992), but several sources (Collins, Joseph, & Bielaczyc, 2004; Denyer, Tranfield, & Aken, 2008; Jelinek, Romme, & Boland, 2008; Romme, 2003) cite Herbert Simon for arguing back in 1969 that two modes of engaging in research exist: science and design. "Science raises the question, 'is this proposition valid or true?' while design asks 'will it work better?'" (Jelinek, et al., 2008, p. 317ff.). The design approach is here seen as a way to engage different specialists in a collaborative effort where the purpose is to achieve "more desirable states of (organizational) affairs" (Jelinek, et al., 2008, p. 318).

Similarly, Burkhardt and Schoenfeld (2003) argue that there are three main research traditions within education: 1) The humanities approach, which produces "critical commentary" or improved insights, although without empirical evidence to support its claims. 2) The science approach, which aims at producing empirically tested insights by identifying problems and suggesting possibilities, although without generating practical solutions. 3) The engineering approach, which is "concerned with practical impact— understanding how the world works and helping it "to work better" by designing and systematically developing high-quality solutions to practical problems" (Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003, p. 5).

Since design-based research is still an emerging methodology, many variations of the approach exist, and there are even discrepancies regarding its name; the literature contains different ones, such as design experiments, design research, and design science. Following the argumentation of the Design-Based

Research Collective, I have chosen the term *design-based research* "to avoid invoking mistake identification with experimental design, with studies of designers, or with trial teaching methods" (Design-Based Research Collective, 2003, p. 5).

Akker et al. (2006) present some common characteristics of design-based research, arguing that these studies are:

- o Interventionist: the research aims at designing an intervention in the real world
- o Iterative: the research incorporates a cyclic approach of design, evaluation and revision
- o Process oriented: a black box model of input-output measurement is avoided, the focus is on understanding and improving interventions
- o Utility oriented: the merit of a design is measured, in part, by its practicality for users in real contexts
- o Theory oriented: the design is (at least partly) based upon theoretical propositions and field testing of the design contributes to theory building. (Akker, et al., p. 5)

As will be demonstrated, all of these characteristics apply to my research design. The study consists of the development and implementation of a conference format based on the notion of the dramaturgical learning space— and, more specifically, the learning-through-rhythm model—in four different conferences and an evaluation of the participant experiences using a multiple methods strategy. Hence, the research process of this study falls in five phases, although some of them are overlapping in time:

1) The formulation of design principles based on theory (see Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework)
2) Selection of case conferences or finding collaborative partners (see section 3.2 in this chapter)
3) Conference program design and planning in collaboration with conference organizers (see Chapter 5: Designing the ECCI X Conference Program)
4) Implementation/testing (see Chapter 6: Data Collection and Analytical Approach)

5) Evaluation and analysis (see Chapter 7: Participant Evaluation and Chapter 8: Analysis Based on the Learning-Through-Rhythm Model, respectively)

3.1.1 WHY DESIGN-BASED RESEARCH?

The reasons for using a design-based research approach tap into a fundamental discussion about the role and goal of research in today's society.

Within the social sciences, research has traditionally been about analyzing data and describing, explaining, and problematizing the given subject matter. On rare occasions, a few comments on alternative ways to do things are suggested, but, in general, providing solutions is considered to be disrespecting the complexities of reality.

The work of Gibbons (1994) and Nowotny (2001) sparked a discussion about mode 1 versus mode 2 research or knowledge production, claiming that a networked society calls for new types of research that not only exist for the sake of creating knowledge (mode 1) but also produce knowledge in the context of its application (mode 2). One of the arguments supporting this claim is that problems and solutions are found when researchers meet resistance from reality, and so researchers should take the laboratory out to the problem and not take the problem into the laboratory. This leads the way toward transdisciplinarity and the possibility of posing questions and find explanations that move beyond the framework of a single discipline. It might be argued that mode 2 research has always existed, but Gibbons and Nowotny made explicit the fact that societal structures have changed tremendously over the past twenty or thirty years, and they suggested how science could adapt accordingly.

Within the research fields of organizational and educational science, there is a long-standing debate about what has been labeled the *relevance gap*, the notion that the research within these fields appears irrelevant to its practitioners (e.g. Akker, et al., 2006; Bartunek, 2007; Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003 within educational research and; Rynes, Bartunek, & Daft, 2001; Vermeulen, 2007 within organizational research).

Burkhardt and Schoenfeld lament that educational theories "lack the specificity that helps guide good design, to take good ideas and make sure that

they work in practice" (Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003, p. 10). They also argue that "papers that often claim to have instructional implications do not offer enough for a designer to use as more than a possible source of ideas, whose validity must then be established from scratch in the domain of use" (Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003, p. 8). Similarly, Bartunek studied all articles published in *Academy of Management Journal* in 2006 and found that the "implications for practice" sections often do not discuss implications (only 64 percent did), and, if they do, the most common advice given is to increase awareness among managers of the phenomenon investigated and provide training on the topic. But:

> Recommendations to pay special attention to a phenomenon do not help a manager know what to do in response to it. […] implications are typically suggested in a decontextualized, distant way. Some of the advice would appear to many readers to be contradictory, and some of it is simply hortatory. (Bartunek, 2007, p. 1325 ff.)

It has, of course, been contended that practitioners neglect to improve failed practices even though evidence of alternatives exists in the research literature (Jelinek, et al., 2008; Rynes, et al., 2001), but the label *relevance gap* dictates that the responsibility of the problem (and of finding a solution) rests on the shoulders of the research community.

The rigor/relevance dilemma is usually advanced as an explanation of the relevance gap. According to Vermeulen (2007), "Rigor means that the various elements of a theory are consistent, that potential propositions or hypotheses are logically derived, that data collection is unbiased, measures are representative and reliable, and so on" (Vermeulen, 2007, p. 755). This means that rigorous research designs are most commonly understood as quantitative and, ideally, randomized double-blind controlled experiments. The rigor/relevance dilemma basically argues that research results derived from rigorous research are not interesting, useful, or relevant and that research results that *are* all of the above are not based on research designs that are rigorous enough—that is, that are able to meet the validity and reliability standards set forward by the positivist-oriented academic community. It is seemingly a catch twenty-two: Rigor is achieved only at the expense of relevance, and relevance is achieved only at the expense of rigor. Since rigorous

research epitomizes scientific results (e.g., the single-most important criteria to get papers published, get tenure, achieve peer recognition, etc.), rigor is given priority over relevance within most research fields.

On a policy level, the two contrasting forces exist alongside each other. On one hand, there is an increasing political effort to advance evidence-based research (Shavelson, Philips, Towne, & Feuer, 2003), which is most commonly interpreted as cause-and-effect studies based on rigorous research designs that measure the proposed effect of a variable. On the other hand, the concept of mode 2 research has had a strong influence on national research policies, particularly in Northern Europe. The two political aims are not mutually exclusive on paper but may be difficult to merge in reality given the dominant academic culture and its traditions.

Design-based research has been proposed as a way to change how (social) research is conducted, particularly within the organizational and educational research communities, because it supposedly has the potential to narrow the relevance gap without sacrificing rigor. Also, it is argued that newer educational and organizational theories to a large degree take *context* into account, which calls for new research methodologies if these are to embrace the theoretical propositions empirically and contribute to their refinement (Barab & Kirshner, 2001; Barab & Squire, 2004; Collins, et al., 2004; Design-Based Research Collective, 2003; Gorard, Roberts, & Taylor, 2004; Jelinek, et al., 2008). As such, design-based research has a twofold purpose of understanding and developing in context, as design-based research studies contribute to "understanding the messiness of real-world practice, with context being a core part of the story and not an extraneous variable to be trivialized" (Barab & Squire, 2004, p. 3); they also "help create and extend knowledge about developing, enacting and sustaining innovative learning environments" (Design-Based Research Collective, 2003, p. 5).

Following this, the present study is an attempt to create knowledge about how to design and implement such an innovative learning environment in a conference context. From a methodological point of view, this approach raises numerous points for discussion; in order to continue the discussion about doing research in practice the way I have done in this study, I will now introduce the four case conferences, including a brief description of the

empirical process, to shed light on the role(s) I played during the conference planning processes and the reflections associated with that role.

3.2 THE FOUR CASE CONFERENCES

The first step of the empirical research process consisted of finding a number of conference organizers who were willing to participate in the research project. In theory, there are two strategies to follow when selecting partners and deciding on a process design:

- Selecting a range of conferences that are similar (as identical as possible) regarding aim, content, length, participant profile, and so forth and implementing different conference formats each time.
- Selecting a range of conferences that are completely different regarding aim, content, length, participant profile, and so forth and implementing the same conference format each time.

In reality, neither ideal version was possible, but I opted for the second selection strategy: working with different conferences but trying to implement the same conference format. Ultimately, the selection was based on the following factors:

- The quality of my network (reducing/increasing the number of potential partners)
- Whether the proposed conference was held at a time that suited the overall timeframe of the research project
- Whether the aim of the conference matched the conference types dealt with in this project (referring to Table 2: Conference types, I sought conferences whose overall aim was disseminating knowledge rather than selling a product, innovating on a local/global problem, or kicking off a new company project)
- Most importantly, whether there was good chemistry between the organizers and me. During the initial meetings, I assessed how much the organizers were actually willing to change the usual conference format and how much they could, without having to get approval from somewhere

else (and thereby reducing the potential maneuvering space). The organizers, I sensed, were concerned about the possibility of me coming up with all sorts of crazy ideas that they wouldn't like or that would make their conference a fiasco. They assessed my ability to understand their needs, limits, hopes, and dreams.

I settled on partnerships with four conference organizers (four conferences). See Table 3 for an overview of the conferences, including how the partnerships were made possible.

Despite a conscious selection strategy, it could be argued that the conferences are quite different in size, scope, type, and format. As I will demonstrate later, one size does not fit all, and so it has not been possible to design and implement *a* format but rather different formats, ones based on the same design principles and theoretical understanding. This means I have been able to see different participant types in action, different conference settings, and different versions of the design principles in practice. But it also increases the level of complexity significantly, making it difficult to compare the data from the different conferences and draw conclusions across the material.

I therefore decided to let the last conference, the ECCI X conference, be the primary case while using the other three conferences as secondary cases. They were held approximately a year after I started the project, and the ECCI X conference was held another year later. This means that the main storyline will stem from the ECCI X conference while examples from the secondary cases will be added to build arguments when they contribute interesting perspectives.

The appendices II-IV provide an insight into the three secondary case conferences; relevant conference materials are included as well as an overview of the evaluation results. In the Appendix folder IV (the Creating Knowledge IV conference), an elaborated description of the conference program is included. This description specifies the intended program rhythm, the program elements and the position of these elements in the learning-through-rhythm model. Together with the ECCI X conference, this conference was the most elaborated one in terms of adhering to dramaturgical principles.

	PRIMARY CASE	SECONDARY CASES		
Conference	European Conference on Creativity and Innovation (ECCI X)	Help Desk Forum 2006	The Annual Meeting of The Innovation Council [DA: Innovationsrådets årsmøde]	Creating Knowledge IV (CK IV)
Organizers	*The Initiative for Creativity and Innovation* (IKI) and *Copenhagen Business School* (CBS) on behalf of the *European Association for Creativity and Innovation* (EACI)	*Service & Support Forum*	*The Innovation Council* (under *The Think Tank Monday Morning*)	*The Forum for Library User Education* (an interest group under the auspices of *The Danish Association of Research Libraries*) on behalf of *The Nordic Association on Information Literacy* (NordINFOLIT)
Conference type	Professional conference/ Research conference	Professional conference /Sales conference	Association conference /Professional conference	Association conference /Research conference
Number of participants	Approximately 350	92	80	145 (+ 36 day 1)
Length/Date(s)	4 days October 14-17, 2007	2 days November 7-8, 2006	1 day September 12, 2006	3 days August 16-18, 2006
Theme/Title	Co-creation	Service Desken – IT-afdelingens vigtigste funktion? (English: The Service Desk—the most important function of the IT department?)	Genvej til verdensklasse – fra vision til virkelighed (English: A shortcut to world class—from vision to reality)	Empowerment of the student through cross-institutional collaboration

Aim	To focus on removing borders between lab and home and between product and user, and to rethink and recreate the dynamic among user, creativity, and innovation. To bring academics and practitioners together.	To give help desk managers and employees tools and ideas on how to become a central link between the IT department and the business. To raise their awareness of how they can become better at creating value for the business.	To sum up on the past year's activities within the council and to look ahead: What direction should the council take?	To strengthen the collaboration among academic support units within and across institutions. Academic support plays an important role in improving students' academic study skills and general well being during the study process, and if academic support units collaborate to a higher degree, the quality of the academic support is enhanced.
Participant profile	Academics and practitioners within the field of creativity and innovation. There are participants from all over the world (30 countries are represented).	Primarily managers and employees working in help desk/service desk functions.	Members of the Innovation Council. They represent all sectors of society, from private business to the public sector and educational and research institutions.	(Nordic) library employees, university professors, and teaching assistants, as well as employees in other kinds of academic support functions, such as pedagogical development centers, student support centers, academic writing centers, and so forth.
Venue	"The Wedge," Copenhagen Business School	Hotel Prindsen, Roskilde	Base Camp, Copenhagen	The Black Diamond, The Royal Library (day 1) Copenhagen University Amager (day 2 and 3)

Language	English	Danish	Danish	English
How partnership was made possible	My co-supervisor, Professor Mette Mønsted from CBS, became involved in planning the academic program of ECCI X since the IKI association is based at CBS. Mette Mønsted suggested my involvement to the planning committee, who welcomed the idea.	A few months after I began the research project, I facilitated a workshop at a MICE industry trade fair in Copenhagen. One of the participants was Mats Berger from the company Service & Support Forum. The workshop was about finding connections and interests among the participants. As an example, I mentioned that I needed to get in contact with conference organizers who were interested in participating in the project. Mats came up to me after the workshop and expressed his interest.	A very close friend of mine is the director of *Monday Morning*. He introduced the idea of working with me to the head of *The Innovation Council*, Verner Kristiansen, who then invited me to a meeting.	Tina Pipa, head of the board of *The Forum for Library User Education,* had participated in a number of activities held by my supervisor, Ib Ravn. She was very interested in the work he did on previous projects about learning meetings, and so Ib Ravn suggested to Tina that CK IV could be part of my thesis.
Contract period	October 1, 2005–October 17, 2007	March 22, 2006–November 8, 2006	January 16, 2006–September 12, 2006	October 1, 2005–August 18, 2006
Conference materials	See Appendix I folder	See Appendix II folder	See Appendix III folder	See Appendix IV folder

Table 3: Overview of the four case conferences

3.2.1 CONTRACTS

I made written contracts with all four conference organizers. The contracts were almost identical, though each had slight modifications. The main points of the contracts were to establish the purpose of the cooperation (to give me access to the conference to use as a case in my Ph. D project and to give the organizer guidance in developing a learning conference where the participants' outcome is enhanced) and agree on the organizers' and my responsibilities and obligations.

I committed to use my knowledge and experience to contribute to the conference development; to participate in dialogue with the organizers about their wishes and needs for the conference and consider these when developing the conference program; and to participate in the conference to collect data about the participants' outcome and conference experience. I also agreed to instruct speakers, the conference moderator, facilitators, and others if needed.

The organizers committed to engage in dialogue with me about the development of the program in order to develop and implement new conference formats, to enable me to collect data during the conference, and to take care of the practical and logistical tasks involved in the planning.

The contracts also stated that there were no financial accounts to settle between the organizers and myself, and they allowed me to publish all the results in accordance with academic traditions. None of the partners asked for anonymity, and the subject is not mentioned in the contracts.

3.3 THE RESEARCHER AS CONSULTANT

Research approaches where the researcher interacts with the subjects studied—and even influences, intervenes, or initiates change processes—have always existed within the social sciences, dating back to pragmatists like Peirce and Dewey, who suggested that theories should not be judged by their claims to truth but by their ability to produce change in the world and explain phenomena.

Therefore, one might argue that design-based research does not differ significantly from other types of applied research methodologies like

intervention research or action research. The interpretations of design-based research that are employed in this study draw heavily from the aforementioned approaches, but there are distinct and important differences. In the following, I will discuss intervention research and action research and highlight the similarities to and differences from design-based research in order to clarify the boundaries as I see them. At the same time, I will discuss the main methodological issues related to this type of study, most notably the double role of consultant and researcher, where the researcher collects and evaluates data that she has participated in generating.

3.3.1 INTERVENTION RESEARCH: A GOAL OF IMPROVEMENT

The design-based research approach in this study draws from intervention research in the sense that there is an explicit goal of initiating a research-based change in, or an improvement of, practice. This goal is normative but based on theory that guides the implementation. However, the design-based approach is not hypothesis testing in the classical sense.

Within intervention research, the research process ideally looks like that which is depicted in Figure 2. Theories and hypotheses are established by researchers. Consultants/change agents are hired to translate these into an intervention and conduct the appropriate implementation. Then the researchers investigate whether the implementation had measurable effects. This means that intervention research is mostly quantitative, involves conducting pre- and post-evaluations to document the effect/progress, and preferably has randomized control trials included in the design.

Theory	→	Implementation		→	Effect
		Intervention group(s)	Randomized controlled trial group(s)		
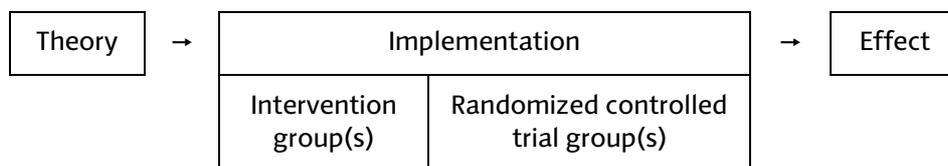
Figure 2: Intervention research

The aim of design-based research is similar to that of transformative theory as proposed by Ravn (Babüroglu & Ravn, 1992; Ravn, 2005b, 2007a). He

suggests that "[…] theory can be *transformative* in the sense that in using it, researchers may actually help practitioners improve and transform their social institutions or organizations" (Ravn, 2005b, p. 2). The idea is illustrated by a so-called horseshoe model. See Figure 3 (Ravn, 2007a, p. 321, my translation).

```
┌─────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────┐
│ 1. Present condition │ ───────────▶ │ 4. Presumed improved │
│                      │              │ condition            │
└─────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────┘
          │                                     ▲
          │                                     ┆
          ▼                                     ┆
┌─────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────┐
│ 2. Hypotheses and   │              │ 3. Theory of an     │
│ "theories" behind the│ - - - - - ▶ │ improved condition  │
│ present condition   │              │                     │
└─────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────┘
```
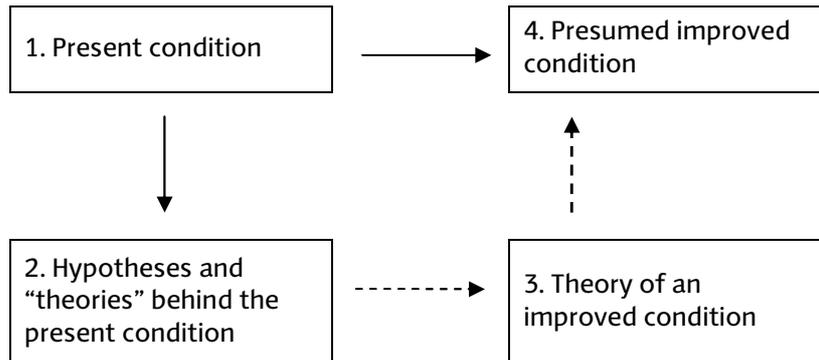
Figure 3: Transformative theory

Ravn argues that practitioners or change agents often take the direct route from box 1 to box 4, skipping the other elements, which results in superficial interventions where systematic and continuous reflections on assumptions and expectations are neglected. Similarly, researchers within the social sciences focus on boxes 1 and 2 only, thereby failing to contribute to the development of society at large. On rare occasions they move on to box 4, suggesting changes or best practices based on ideas and experiences of an anecdotal character that they have accidentally encountered during the research process (Ravn, 2007a).

The aim of this research project is to undertake a study that includes all four boxes, with an emphasis on the often-neglected box 3. The point is to provide research that is future-oriented and sets out to achieve a new, improved condition for the people involved rather than looking back on the past and provide analytical insights of what happened. Drawing on planning research, Babüroglu and Ravn argue that normative planning approaches can inform action research and reorient it as a "futures theory" (1992, p. 27) by focusing on the normative dimension:

> Being based on an explicit vision of the good and the norms required to bring it about, normative planning is of a higher level than strategic and operational planning, both of which take underlying values and goals more or less for granted and hence serve to perpetuate the norms of the present. (Babüroglu & Ravn, 1992, p. 22)

The argument is that mainstream planning approaches prevent development and that a normative idea of a desirable future holds a liberating power:

> The normative planning approaches encourage the stakeholders of a system to transcend conventional definitions of what is possible and realistic and engage freely in the creation of more desirable states of the system. The questioning of self-imposed constraints and assumptions is accompanied by attention to notions of the good: what ends ought to be pursued and how may they be evaluated? (Babüroglu & Ravn, 1992, p. 23)

This approach of this study is similar. During the development and planning phase, I rely heavily on a number of design principles (which are presented later) based on theoretical assumptions about what will improve conference outcomes and acted as a consultant, giving advice, making suggestions, mediating, interacting with stakeholders, and so forth, on the basis of this theoretical framework. This means I have a very clear—even normative—idea about which direction to go, and I'm not hiding this; on the contrary, my normativity is the premise of action. My understanding of the field has been communicated explicitly to the parties involved all the way through, and this understanding drives the process. It is the ideal that we are supposed to achieve together, and it is this ideal (or the implemented version of it, as I will discuss later) that I am evaluating.

The word *normativity* is normally used as an invective within the social sciences, because normative research findings equal subjective results; and the whole point of the ordeal is to be objective and present objective research findings that everyone can trust, regardless of the scientist's personal bias. But in design-based research, the situation is turned around: The normativity defines the outset of the research process, and, like a hypothesis, it is put to the test in practice. Furthermore, the normative outset does not come out of thin

air; it is the result of an in-depth study of relevant theory deemed appropriate to the development of the practice field in question.

A strength of the intervention approach is that the theoretical underpinnings are so explicit, although some argue that intervention research too often lacks a clear, theoretical basis (Goldenhar, LaMontagne, Katz, Heaney, & Landsbergis, 2001; T. S. Kristensen, 2005). Nevertheless, the point of intervention research is to evaluate the normativity (in the form of a theoretical belief) that is put forward. As such, the aim of the researcher is clear and becomes an intricate part of the evaluation.

3.3.2 ACTION RESEARCH: CO-CREATION

Many intervention research projects mention problems in implementation as explanations for effects that are less than expected (Semmer, 2006). Even though the strategy and behavior of the consultants (or change agents) who are in charge of the intervention are not documented—the development or the design phase is a sort of black box, and the implementation process is rarely reflected on (Goldenhar, et al., 2001)—it is often assumed that implementation problems are largely due to the consultant's lack of skills.

Within action research, including its many variations, such as action science (Argyris, 1989; Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985), participatory action research (PAR), research-oriented action research (Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2003), and action learning (Marsick & O'Neil, 1999), the developmental phase is a very important part of the research process, because this is where the joint learning between the researcher and the practitioners takes place. See Figure 4: Action research design.

Problem identification (possibly through means of data gathering, done by the researchers)	→	Intervention (planning and execution in a joint collaboration)	→	Evaluation (to some degree also a collaborative effort)	→	Contribution to theory building → Empowerment and social change
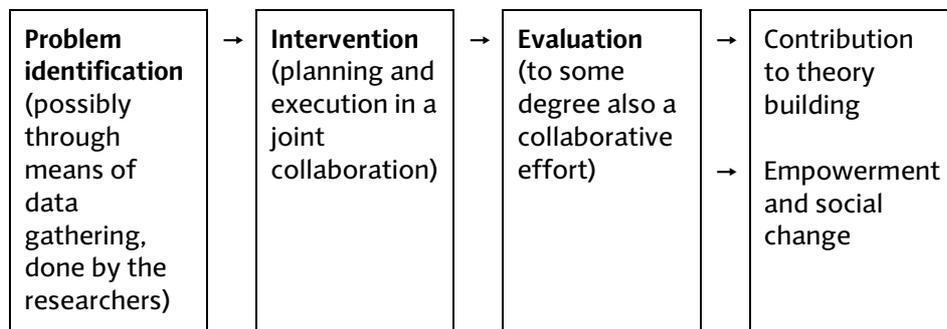
Figure 4: Action research design

In action research, the development and implementation phases are not sequential but components of an iterative cycle, and the process is collaborative. The ideal research collaboration is democratic, where the researcher assists the project participants in arriving at a more empowered and free condition. The local members hold "the answers" within themselves; they are the true experts of their own lives, and the researcher's role is to facilitate the process, guide the ongoing reflection, and collect the necessary data for the evaluation. (For this type of definition of action research, see Greenwood & Levin, 1998; Krøjer, 2006)

This is contrary to intervention research, where the theoretical premise is nonnegotiable and the appropriate intervention and change measure is decided upon beforehand. The argument is that if these measures are left to be determined in a collaborative process, the local members will probably come up with measures that have already been documented in other studies to have no effect. For example, if the intervention study seeks to improve well-being in the workplace, the members are likely to suggest the need for a chill-out space with Fatboy bean bags and a table soccer game. Well, many studies have already shown that this measure has only a short-term effect, if any. So the task of the researcher is to provide a measure that holds improvement potential in theory but needs empirical validation.

Action research is not as theory-driven as the intervention approach, presumably due to the underlying democratic ideal; it does not make sense to turn anything down in the name of "following a theory" when you are supposed to have a collaborative and democratic process. Instead, action

researchers are continually ready to adjust their research question and the theories relevant to answering that question during the joint learning process.

In design-based research, the process is also collaborative and context-dependent but only to a certain degree, since the theoretical framework that guides the intervention remains constant in its essence: "Some aspects of design are discovered only in the path of action—we begin designing and creating, then discover in the interplay of ideas and constraints what can and cannot be achieved by what we start with, and adapt to create better designs that accomplish more of what we seek" (Jelinek, et al., 2008) p. 320). The operative phrase here is "what we seek"—the goal is to prepare a design that comes as close as possible to what we seek. If what we seek is not obtained, the design is adjusted, but what we seek remains constant until the evaluation results proves us wrong and a new definition of "what we seek" emerges.

3.3.3   THE DOUBLE ROLE OF CONSULTANT AND RESEARCHER

Similar to action researchers, design-based researchers find themselves in a double role, acting both as a researcher and as a consultant—or as both advocate and critic (Design-Based Research Collective, 2003). This circumstance raises two set of issues, one that deals with the process and another that deals with the validity of the results. The latter will be dealt with in the next session; in the following, I will address a number of issues that pertain to the role of the researcher during the collaboration process. In Chapter 5: Conference Planning in Practice, I will provide a more in-depth description of the ECCI X planning process, where the focus will be on the attempts to implement certain format elements rather than specific methodological issues, although this process description is bound to illustrate several of the methodological issues that are pointed out here as well.

The first three conferences in the research project took place within a two-month period, one year before the ECCI X conference. During the first three conferences, the development process was generally similar to that described in the following paragraphs.

At the first meeting, the organizing committee is eager to learn about my ideas, thoughts, and experiences. I toss out a few ideas but also stress that I imagine the development process to be a joint collaboration between them and

me. I ask them about the participant profile to find out more about the conference participants, what they usually do when they meet, and so on.

At the first meeting, there is also a dialogue about what the organizers perceive to be the most "appropriate" conference, understood as a conference that strikes a balance between being familiar and unfamiliar. This seems to be a very important conversation for the organizers; they always bring up this subject. They are very adamant about making sure that participants feel safe in a recognizable context but that they also are challenged and get something beyond what they expected. On one hand, they want to try something new (otherwise they wouldn't have contacted me), but on the other hand, they are nervous about the unknown—and ultimately nervous about failure. The worst-case scenario probably differs from organizer to organizer, but they are all concerned about economic failure and "lack of success," such as low participant satisfaction and insufficient impact (be it political, strategic, or practical significance).

At the time of the first meeting, the conference organizers have already booked some of the speakers and a venue that must be considered in the program planning. This reflects the classic conditions under which conferences are put together: A person responsible hurriedly sets a date and asks an administrative person to book a venue before anyone has made a strategic decision about the conference theme, goals, and success criteria. Then the most important speakers are approached, and, after they are confirmed, the preliminary PR is set in motion. Then the real planning begins. At this point, however, many crucial decisions have already been made that have consequences regarding what is possible for the rest of the program planning.

In all three cases, I am asked to devise a program draft after the first meeting, which is then presented and discussed at a subsequent meeting or several meetings. I imagined that many conference organizers at this point would have novel ideas for implementation and that we would adjust and elaborate on them together—but this has rarely been the case. It seems as if thinking innovatively about conference formats is an impossible task. What is there to change when you are restricted by participant volume, room structures, and number of speakers? Instead, the discussion has evolved around my proposal and how to make it work in their specific community, with which I'm not familiar.

The ECCI X process proves a bit different in this regard. Given the nature of the conference (creativity and innovation), the very long planning period (two and a half years), and the many people involved, all of whom have lots of creative ideas and experiences, a wealth of ideas is brought to the table at every meeting. It is immensely stimulating but also a bit frustrating, since I really have to work hard to convey my ideas and legitimize myself. Here I am in a very different position than I was during the other three conference planning processes, where I had easier access.

A particular challenge in the planning processes of the two association conferences (Creating Knowledge IV and ECCI X) is that the majority of the people involved have never before arranged a conference. This sometimes puts me in a difficult position, since my experience with implementing new conference formats has given me conference planning experience *in general*, producing a difficult dilemma: Do I keep quiet, regardless of my knowledge, because I have to stay true to my role (to contribute to program format development)? Or do I speak up every time I "know better" for the possible benefit of the organizers, with the risk of becoming a constant wise guy and stealing ownership and responsibility from the organizers? In general, I choose to provide advice on major issues that I deem crucial for the potential success of the conference.

During the planning processes, I play a consultant role and participate actively in the generation of data. During the actual running of all four conferences, I take on the role of researcher, whose primary task is to collect data. In order to ensure some degree of cross-validation and allow me to take a step back, my supervisor and three students assist in the data collection. (See Chapter 6 for an elaboration of the data collection methods used.) However, it is not entirely possible to maintain a strict distinction between Nicoline-the-consultant and Nicoline-the-researcher during all four conferences. I decide on small adjustments of the programs along the way, instruct conference moderators, and, on a few occasions, ensure that logistics are taken care of. The ECCI X conference is easier to handle since it is larger and there are more people responsible for the program and the logistics.

My role is supposedly very clear: to contribute to program format development. But in reality, the boundaries are blurred, because what does it actually mean to contribute to program format development? Ultimately, all

aspects of conference organization are linked to program format: the food, how people are seated, the available A/V-equipment, transport logistics, and so on. It is suddenly not so clear where my role starts and ends in relation to the other organizers involved.

This is interesting on two levels. It is interesting on a methodological level, as I play a double role as a consultant for the organizing team and a researcher. And it is interesting on an industry level, as it points to the idea that a vast majority of conference organizers are in reality inexperienced. They do it once in their lifetimes, because they have made a bid to organize "the Copenhagen issue" of a conference series that moves around Europe or the world in an annual or biannual cycle. It is more the exception than the rule that knowledge from one local organization committee is not transferred to the next local organization committee, but, even so, everyone wants to do it their way and do things differently. Being part of a local organizing committee is an opportunity to exercise power in the community as it allows you to frame content and form aligned with your own convictions, and this is a crucial part of the incentive to organize a conference.

It seems impossible for conference organizers to create or drive the development with me just as a facilitator; I need to play a more active (the most active) part. This is partly due to the fact that they can formulate what they want or need only within the familiar—what they already know. Mostly, all they know are speakers on lecterns and auditorium-like settings. This is not to say that organizing committee members do not become active co-creators— my ideas need translation to their context, and they co-create to the extent that they are able to contribute to this translation. But the innovative expertise is the responsibility of the researcher and even expected by the conference planners—that is the primary reason why I was invited onto the planning committee.

The supposedly expert position of the researcher is the central challenge in a collaborative research project. The main argument for conducting a participatory and democratic process used by action researchers is the fact that including people and letting them find the answers themselves promotes ownership and the competence to continue working within the new framework when the researcher is gone. When the researcher acts as the traditional expert, lecturing on how to do things and deciding on others'

behalf what is best for them, this is not likely to happen. The difference between these two types of consultant roles is reflected in Schein's (1987) notion of expert and process consultant roles, where the latter has become the dominant ideal in consulting practice.

The question I would like to address here is whether the democratic, process-oriented approach is the right one in all types of applied research design. In an intervention study by (K. Nielsen, Fredslund, Christensen, & Albertsen.), with the aim of increasing health and well-being in female-dominated professions, two canteens are subject to an intervention designed by two consultants with two different approaches: "[…] the occupational health practitioner in canteen B had been more directive, whereas the occupational health practitioner in intervention group A used a more process-oriented, participatory implementation strategy" (K. Nielsen, et al., 2006, p. 281). Surprisingly, the results evaluation shows that Workplace B experiences positive changes, while Workplace A doesn't. The process evaluation reveals "that employees at Workplace A were not able to appreciate the participatory approach of the consultant. They had little experience with workplace interventions and found it hard to address these issues themselves. […] and the interviews indicated that they preferred a more directive consultancy style" (K. Nielsen, et al., 2006, p. 284).

Of course, there may be a fine line between being directive and providing input and new ideas, and it may not always be possible to tell the difference. In a seminal article about seduction and betrayal in qualitative research, Newkirk (1996) raises the same issue but from an ethical standpoint: What is the ethical justification for researchers not to intervene, air their concerns, and provide their advice when they suspect something to be on the wrong track? None, is the argument. A failure to intervene might do harm to subjects or other people involved in the project. It may be that researchers are not right in their concern, but it is their (ethical) responsibility to offer counterhypotheses of what is happening and what could be done differently. Newkirk counter argues the ethical justifications that might be advocated in favor of keeping quiet:

- **Ethical justification #1: The subjects have agreed to participate and have been informed of the purpose of the study.**
  Project descriptions are often general and neutral in their rhetoric, often hiding the real intent of the study. The initial benevolent and well-meant attitude of the researcher is taken literally by the subjects, and they do not expect to be deceived or be the cause of negative results.
- **Ethical justification #2: The insights provided by the study outweigh the costs that any subject has to suffer.**
  The problem here is that "the most direct benefits accrue to the researcher and the most direct harms often to the subject" (Newkirk, 1996, p. 8). Also, the estimated value of any study is often overrated.

The ethical issue is also raised by Barab and Squire (2004) from a design-based research point of view; they lament that researchers working in schools often find themselves in ethical dilemmas:

> Do they [researchers] stand idly by and watch a teacher struggle to use their curricula, or do they intervene providing additional support? Do researchers share stories of struggling students with teachers and allow them to change instruction accordingly, or do they okay a hands-off role, minimizing their impact in classroom practices? (Barab & Squire, 2004, p. 10)

I realize that conducting a democratic research process in principle does not equal keeping completely quiet and hiding the expertise one might have to offer. However, from an action research point of view, the relationship between the researchers and the collaborative partners is, per definition, troublesome due to the inherent power imbalance:

> The conventional training of academic researchers generally makes them experienced debaters with lots of practice in managing conceptual models. This can create a situation of communicative domination that undermines the co-generative process. […] In addition, the professional's social prestige and years of formal training may convince people to accept a particular point of view too easily. When this happens, it is a serious threat to the action research process because it distracts attention from local points of

view, which are central to the initiation of any action research
process. (Greenwood & Levin, 1998, p. 120)

This means that collaborative research processes between researchers and practitioners are never equal and that it is a constant challenge to achieve mutuality. Power relations determine to a large extent what is established as expert knowledge and who claims to hold it. To take it to the extreme, democracy as understood in action research means that the majority is always right and capable of coming up with the best solution (for them, in that particular context), and experts are only experts due to the power bestowed upon them by society.

Where does that leave the researcher as a consultant in design-based research? The researcher-as-expert role is not ideal; competence building among practice field members is not part of the research process, and there is always the danger of the researcher having the winning argument regardless of whether it holds true. But the democratic process is also troublesome, since there is no ethical justification for an expert's having concerns or advice and not expressing it. And practitioners do not always hold the answer themselves, as they may not realize the scope of what is possible or fail to ask for something they do not know exists. Nordström, a Swedish innovation researcher, comments that:

Companies try to ask people what they want through all kinds of
market-based surveys, focus groups and the like. But that is like
committing suicide. Ordinary people don't have a clue about what
they want. It's a trivialization of innovation. You need to tell people
what they want. That goes for the market as well as within politics.
If you ask people if they want a new product or a new EU-treaty,
most people would normally decline. Then you do a number of
focus groups and the result becomes conservative, reactionary
products, newspapers or bills. (Krasnik, 2009, p. 3, my translation)

In this particular study, another aspect of the roles of researcher and conference planner makes the question of democracy and expertise even messier. A commonly used argument for doing research in action is that this approach "emphasizes backstage realities that should inform research, maintaining a creative tension between insider and outsider viewpoints"

(Jelinek, et al., 2008)p. 320). The researcher, as an outsider of the empirical context under investigation, collaborates with local community members who have insider knowledge of their context.

But this project demonstrates that the distinction between insider and outsider can be blurred, because the local context is temporary and the insider knowledge is actually distributed among the researcher and the collaborative partners: The conference organization is established for the purpose of one conference only, and the researcher participates from nearly the beginning to the end of the organizational lifetime. Consequently, the researcher is just as much an insider of the organization structurally and culturally as the organizing committee members. (This is, of course, dependent on the type of conference organization. In association conferences, some members have already established relationships, though they are now being transformed into a conference organization context. The professional organizations most often have an already established conference team.) Also, the committee members are strangers to the practice field investigated by the researcher—that is, new conference formats—and they are newcomers to conference organization in practice, an area in which the researcher is an insider due to previous conference experience.

On the other hand, the researcher is an outsider regarding the conference topic, the community that surrounds the conference series, and the knowledge of how previous conferences have unfolded. At the same time, the conference organizers in this project are highly educated, extremely resourceful, and reflective about their own practice, as opposed to other types of action research studies that often collaborate with minorities and "the oppressed." This type of competence inequality between the researcher and the cooperative partners represents a different type of power game than normally described.

Hence, it might be argued that the previously used dichotomy between practitioner and researcher in this text is not as clear-cut in reality; practitioners can be borderline researchers and vice versa, an idea that is also reflected in the concept of the reflective practitioner by Schön (1983), where the distinction is not a result of a person's function or job tasks but rather depends on which mode of reflection the person performs: reflection in action or reflection on action.

This project suggests an integration of these two seemingly contrasting roles, the researcher as expert and the researcher as process facilitator.

Expert

EXPERT role ▪ The researcher is authoritarian ▪ Intervention research studies	EXPERT in PROCESS role ▪ The researcher recommends actions based on theory, but also listens and guides the participants in reaching their own conclusions—and offers counterhypotheses on these ▪ Design-based research studies
N/A	PROCESS role ▪ The researcher facilitates ▪ Action research studies

Process

Figure 5: Researcher roles

As Figure 5 illustrates, this new researcher role is one where the researcher uses his or her expertise in a collaborative spirit; where the researcher holds theoretically based ideas on improvement but collaborates with local community members on translating these into the local context; and where the researcher helps the people involved to find greater clarity and reach their own conclusions but also offers counterhypotheses of these if necessary. However, the fundamental premise, the design principles, are not replaced by others or changed dramatically during the process. This awaits the results of the analysis, where a new and improved understanding of the premise is created and forms the basis of the next intervention.

As shown, intervention research and action research differ fundamentally in three ways:

▪ **Level of change and improvement**
While action research is locally bound and aims to create empowerment in local communities, intervention research seeks improvement for the benefit of society at large (or among a group of professionals across local contexts).

- **View of people**
  Intervention researchers view research participants as objects of study while action researchers view them as subjects. This chapter shows that it is a central challenge in collaborative research design not to underestimate the resourcefulness of the collaborative partners—but not to overestimate them, either.
- **View of science**
  Intervention research emphasizes rigor over relevance and action research the opposite.

In light of this discussion about what constitutes this study's design-based research approach and the inherent issues pertaining to the double role of consultant and researcher, I will now discuss the study's validity.

3.4 VALIDITY

The research effort in this study consists of evaluating and analyzing an intervention. The intervention consists of a number of theoretically based design principles that are put into action. These design principles are determined by my ability to translate the theory into a framework that is relevant to the purpose and that can guide a design process. Similarly, the intervention design is determined by the organizers' and my ability to translate the design principles into an actual conference program; it is also dependent on the social, economical, and political challenges that influence the planning process. Finally, the actual conference—the implementation—is dependent on a wide range of factors: the organizers' and participants' interpretations of the design, unforeseen problems, and unsuspected events. See Figure 6.
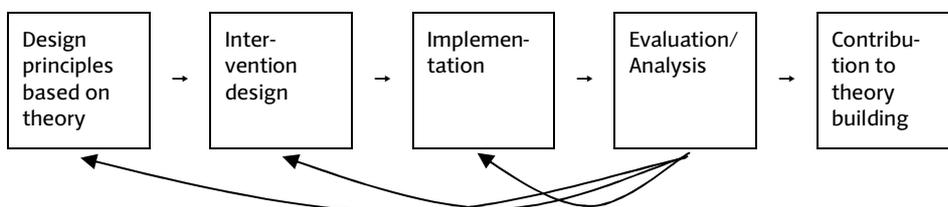
Figure 6: The design-based research process and its potential translation gaps

As the model shows, there are numerous potential translation gaps in the process. The design principles will always be a translated version of how I, the researcher, understand the theory, and they will be limited by the extent to which I am able to transform this translation into a concrete intervention design. Similarly, there is a translation gap between the intervention design and the implementation since the actual conferences never turn out exactly as planned.

The translation "errors" are not only a result of my (lack of) reflection and ability but also a consequence of the complex conference planning process where many decisions are based on practical and political concerns rather than adhering to an ideal set of design principles, as the process description above illustrates.

I find these translation gaps or the differences among theory, design, and implementation to be the greatest challenge of design-based research, but this crucial aspect is mentioned only briefly in the literature. Collins et al. mention the problem of "design as intention versus design as implementation" (Collins, et al., 2004, p. 17) and refers to a study where this is labeled "lethal mutations", where the goals and principles underlying the design are undermined by the way the design is enacted" (Collins, et al., 2004, p. 17). They conclude that:

> any implementation of a design requires many decisions that go beyond the design itself. This occurs because no design can specify all the details, and because the actions of participants in the implementation (e.g., students, parents, teachers, and administrators) require constant decisions about how to proceed at every level. (Collins, et al., 2004, p. 17)

This means that I am able to evaluate the enacted design or implementation only as it turned out—sometimes according to plan and sometimes not. Through this I may provide indicators of how well the theory, or the *planned version* of the operationalization of the theory, worked. And even here, evaluating *the* implementation is not as clear cut as it may seem: Even though I have chosen to evaluate the participants' perspective, the selection of data to be analyzed and the interpretation is bound to be influenced by my perception.

3.4.1 RIGOR AND RELEVANCE

Conducting design-based research in an educational research field that is not yet established poses some problems; there are not many existing studies to build upon, and the conference as a learning context differs in many ways from other types of learning contexts. This makes it difficult to do the following:

- Evaluate the everyday practice of the participants before and after the intervention (i.e., assess whether the participants' outcome has had a positive impact on work behavior).
- Specify assumptions about the intellectual and social starting points for the envisioned forms of learning, identify student capabilities and current practices, and do a pilot study.
- Provide some measure of control based on previous research studies. Normally, existing studies help to identify and specify variables that are the target of the investigation and those that are secondary, ancillary variables—and justify the difference.
- Say anything conclusive about causal relationships between the intervention and the effects. Normally, a consensus on data interpretation within a particular field provides some guidance on the validity of the results.
- Run iterative cycles of design and revision. A conference is a single event taking place in a short period of time and is not a consecutive series of learning sessions where you can adjust instructions/design, refine conjectures, and so forth on an everyday or weekly basis. (Iterative cycles can work only for a long-term perspective, and in that case you don't even have an exact replicate of the setting; rather, you probably have a different type of conference—a different audience, a different theme/field, a different length, and so on.)

When redesigning an educational program that is offered over a longer period of time, it is often possible to adjust the design during the intervals between lessons. But the case conferences are held only once, so it is not possible to revise the design and hold them again in an "improved version." However, since there was a year between the first three conferences and the last conference, learnings from the first attempts have, of course, been taken into

account during the planning process of the fourth conference. Similarly, all the planning processes have fed into one another in a hermeneutic process, applying experiences and ideas from one setting to another.

Following up on the rigor/relevance discussion, it has been lamented that design-based research is not rigorous enough (Bartunek, 2007; Dede, 2004; Kelly, 2004). The central challenge seems to be how to integrate "research methods focused on discovery with methods focused on validation of claims" (Shavelson, et al., 2003, p. 25).

Bartunek argues that the way research is conducted should not change; she advises against watering down the process to make the research more relevant and against creating direct changes in practice. Instead, she believes that researchers should communicate to practitioners in multiple settings and ways where relationships can be build (dialogue instead of lecturing) and that researchers and practitioners should work together to implement the "implications for practice" that result from a research effort (Bartunek, 2007).

Gorard et al. similarly suggest that design-based researchers should combine three approaches in order to realize the goal of rigorous and relevant research: the "new political arithmetic" approach (focusing and defining the research problem by conducting a large-scale analysis of relevant quantitative data along with selected qualitative case studies of the same data set), research synthesis (searching for evidence-based practices in existing high-quality studies to estimate and better understand the impact of various factors contributing to the intervention's success level), and complex interventions (which include an exploratory feasibility study before the definite randomized control trial and subsequent large-scale implementation). According to Gorard et al. (2004):

> Borrowing the procedure from the complex intervention suggests that the outcome(s) of interest for the design experiment must be fixed first, else, if it is modified along with the intervention during the study, there is no fixed point to the research. The approach simply becomes a "trawl" that will eventually find something. (Gorard, et al., 2004, p. 585)

The basic argument is that much design-based research remains in the exploratory trial phase and lacks the subsequent test of the final form,

conducted in a large-scale, rigorous way (Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003). Taking the design through an alpha, beta, and gamma test as real product design processes do is probably an ideal strategy for a design-based research study, but this may be impossible in many research contexts. At the very least, this is not a task for an individual research project; rather, it requires a team effort, which is also a point that is raised repeatedly in the design-based research literature: "Our approach to design research requires much more effort than any one human can carry out" (Collins, et al., 2004, p. 33).

A central methodological issue in design-based research studies is the fact that the researcher initiates a range of change processes in practice and subsequently analyzes the consequences of these change processes, thereby evaluating a work in which he or she has been actively involved. This issue is even more pertinent in a study that is conducted by a single researcher. However, the design-based research literature contains surprisingly little reflection on this double role of researcher and consultant.

Besides the practical matter of resources, the reasons for conducting design-based research in a team also include the advantage of diverse competences and analytical skills: "The crucial determinant in any type of design experiment is that the team collectively has the expertise to accomplish the functions associated with developing an initial design, conducting the experiment and carrying out a systematic retrospective analysis" (Cobb, Confrey, diSessa, Lehrer, & Schauble, 2003, p. 11ff.). Being able to cross-validate findings and interpretations among a group of researchers would reduce the validity problems regarding the double role, as would the use of triangulation or multiple methods. "[…] [D]esign-based research typically triangulates multiple sources and kinds of data to connect intended and unintended outcomes to processes of enactment. In our view, methods that document processes of enactment provide critical evidence to establish warrants for claims about why outcomes occurred" (Design-Based Research Collective, 2003, p. 7).

3.4.2 ROBUSTNESS AS QUALITY CRITERIA

It seems that there are two distinct interpretations (or goals) of design-based research in the literature. One emphasizes theoretically based improvements of

practice and the obligation to "explore possibilities for creating novel learning and teaching environments" (Design-Based Research Collective, 2003, p. 8), and the other emphasizes the advancement of theories by testing them "in the crucible of practice" and "iteratively adapting and sharpening theory in its context" (Shavelson, et al., 2003, p. 25).

I confess to adhering to the first interpretation, where theory-based development, rather than theory testing, is at the core of the research. Critics of design-based research often lament that this type of research produces local theories rather than generic theories, as does action research. Local theories are not adaptable to other settings, are not specific enough for laymen to replicate/adopt in other local settings, or require so much adaptation that it undermines the design's feasibility. The argument is that real designers are only innovative in the exploratory phase; once a design is chosen, it is tested rigorously until proven perfect (e.g., think of aircraft design and construction).

The criticism is not irrelevant to this study—the conference programs developed are indeed local and contextually bound. As such, it is not possible to reproduce the conference programs in other local settings exactly as they have been enacted in this study, not because the design principles not are generalizable, but because at this stage knowledge about how to implement the design principles in various settings is not elaborate and prescriptive enough; further studies are needed to improve these factors.

That said, the large-scale ambition is an expression of the view "one size fits all": If you just develop the perfect sausage recipe, then you can mass-produce the perfect sausage from now until the end of time. But when it comes to conference program planning, one size does not fit all. Consider the number of differentiating characteristics of conferences listed in Table 2, which proves how many types of conferences exist, and then add all the different subject matters of these conferences, as well as the different aims and goals from an organizer's perspective—it becomes clear that it will never be possible to produce a rich description that will take all types of local adaptations into account. According to Barab & Squire (2004):

> The challenge is to develop flexibly adaptive theories that remain useful even when applied to new local contexts. This potential of flexible adaptive theory does not result because the theory was

somehow generated in a context that was free of confounding
situational variables, but rather, because the theory is supple enough
to maintain its robustness even in the context of changing
situational variables. (Barab & Squire, 2004, p. 11)

Barab et al. further argue that we should employ research methodologies that allow us to describe local challenges and develop local instructional theories in a manner that supports others in adapting lessons learned in one context to their local contingencies (Barab & Kirshner, 2001, p. 12).

This means that the quality criterion of the theoretical framework should be *robustness* and whether the design principles and the concrete conference program initiatives withstand the test of time and adaptation across a variety of settings. Also, these efforts should be described and reflected upon systematically. In other words, this study should be considered the first explorative step in a larger effort to develop participatory conference formats and should be followed up by implementing and evaluating the theoretical framework in other local settings in order to build a substantial body of knowledge regarding conferences and learning.

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The first important step in a design-based research project is to formulate or construct a local instruction theory—a theoretical framework guiding the specific intervention. The framework consists of "conjectures about a possible learning process" as well as "conjectures about possible means of supporting that learning process" (Akker, et al., 2006, p. 21). Akker argues that the available research literature often provides only limited guidance in constructing and describing these conjectures:

> The design researcher may take ideas from a variety of sources to construe an instructional sequence. Note, however, that adopting often means adapting. In this respect, the way of working of a design researcher resembles the manner of working of what the French call a bricoleur—an experienced tinker/handy person who uses, as much as possible, those materials that happen to be available[…]. [Theory-guided bricolage indicates] that the way in which selections and adaptations are made will be guided by a (possibly still emergent) domain-specific instruction theory. (ibid.)

In this light, the present chapter will outline the notion of conferences as dramaturgical learning spaces. As argued in Chapter 2, the subject of conferences is interdisciplinary in that it is constituted by numerous subject fields, and I have chosen to explore how two of these subject fields—adult learning and dramaturgy—can contribute to the development of the conference genre. I will begin by clarifying the operative concept of the research question—how the term *learning space* is defined and what the purpose and role are of using dramaturgy in the conference learning space.

The conjectures regarding what would enhance the learning process at conferences are more concretely formulated as a number of design principles. I will present the idea of learning as rhythm and subsequently move on to the

three design principles of the learning-through-rhythm model—reflection, involvement, and interaction—which are seen as the components through which learning as rhythm is created.

I will then provide a series of reflections on the theoretical framework from a helicopter perspective: What is the theoretical framework intended to achieve? What view of human nature does it presuppose? What are the challenges and impediments to implementation?

The conjectures about the possible *means* that will support the learning process at conferences are introduced in the next chapter when I present the concrete program elements of the ECCI X conference program.

4.1 CONFERENCES AS LEARNING SPACES

In Chapter 2 I listed the differentiating characteristics that could specify what the term *conference* means in various contexts, and, based on these, I proposed a typology of conferences where each conference type shares many of the same characteristics. I defined the usage of the term *conference* in this project as "an event where people from different organizations are gathered face to face for two or more presentations in a row and the participant volume exceeds standard classroom size."

Now, I define the notion of "conferences as learning spaces" as "a conference with a mental and physical space where the potential for learning exists."

A conference is physically confined to a specific venue and bounded by a limited amount of time; hence, the conference learning space is a very literal concept understood as "the conference venue while the conference takes place." But the conference venue is not automatically translated into a learning space just by labeling it as such. A provided learning space does not guarantee that learning actually occurs; however, it offers a concrete physical structure and a timeframe during which the controllers of the space (the conference organizers) have the means to create physical, social, and psychological conditions that increase the likelihood that learning will happen. Of course, the venue's architecture and interior layout, the catering service, and the competence and service level of the venue staff support or constrain these means, as they are beyond the organizers' control to a certain degree. But in

this sense, the conference learning space refers to a specific, physical setting where *the potential* for learning exists.

The organizers of the conference space and its given structures are not the only factors that influence what may or may not happen in the conference space. The result is also determined by the conference participants and how they use the space (which, in turn, is influenced by the conditions offered in the space). The point is that participants also influence the level of potential in a learning space, as they can support or spoil it through their behavior. The participants' behavior and interpretations are determined by three parameters (Lindberg, 2003):

1) Their goal(s), expectations, and intentions (which can be numerous)
2) Their position and power in the social system made up of the other participants and their cultural backgrounds (age, sex, social class, educational level, social and economical status, ethnic origin, religion, sexual preferences, etc.)
3) Their resources (economical, social, political)

The twofold meaning of the term *learning space* presented here is somewhat similar to Bottrup's (2001) in that she says, "The learning space as a concept finds itself in between the external conditions that are set for the learning activities, both organizational as well as societal, and the concrete, subjectively rooted interpretation, influence and handling of those conditions" (Bottrup, 2001, p.143, my translation). Part of the interpretation of the conference experience takes place when participants talk informally at night in hotel bars, at social events, at private dinners, and so forth, and this implies that the conference venue is only one dimension of the conference learning space. Illeris mentions, "The learning that takes place in a particular space is both affected by and affects the learning in other spaces of which the learner takes part" (Illeris, 1999, p.138). This means that the conference learning space is an analytical distinction that can be developed, experienced, and studied, keeping in mind that it is connected to a wide range of other learning spaces that the participants are part of. In this sense, a conference learning space transcends the physical location, the given structures, and the organizational intentions.

To summarize, a learning space is an expression for a physical setting, including the participants' interpretations of that setting, which is bound more by time (the period during which the conference runs) than by the actual conference venue. The learning potential is mutually constituted by the organizers, the given structures, and the participants. The dramaturgical dimension of the learning space—how and why dramaturgy is relevant in a conference learning setting—will be clarified in the following section.

4.2 THE DRAMATURGICAL CONFERENCE

Dramaturgy is usually dated back to Aristotle and his book *The Poetics*, even though the word *dramaturgy* was coined by German Lessing in the middle of the eighteenth century. (See Gladsø, Gjervan, Hovik, & Skagen, 2005, for a historical account of dramaturgy in a Scandinavian perspective.) The word *dramaturgy* is used in a variety of ways and in a variety of settings, including in theories and models used to analyze dramatic texts and performances (Christoffersen, Kjølner, & Szatkowski, 1989; Gladsø, et al., 2005), as a noun to describe the profession of a dramaturge (see Christoffersen, Schultz, Gade, & Branth, 2008), in "how-to literature" with tools and techniques to sharpen the use of dramatic structures and effects in all types of narrative productions (Larsen, 2003a, 2003b), and particularly in the field of screenwriting (Field, 2003; McKee, 1997). In the social sciences, the dramaturgical vocabulary has been used metaphorically to create a framework of analysis where social interaction is seen as a performance in which individuals constantly play roles and negotiate who they are by interacting with others (Feldman, 1995; Goffman, 1959).

This project relies on the interpretation of dramaturgy as the art and science of creating a storyline that captures and sustains the attention of an audience from the beginning until the end (Larsen, 2003a). It is about setting a scene and establishing a space that increases the likelihood of different knowledge creation processes occurring.

Attention is the operative word here, linking the relevance of dramaturgy to the conference learning space. Hansen (2002) describes how the psychology of attention is closely tied to that of learning: If there is no attention, there is no chance that learning will happen. It goes without saying that attention is

not the same as learning; but attention is a prerequisite for the occurrence of learning processes. The concept of attention will be elaborated on below.

The inclusion of dramaturgy as an element in a new perspective on conferences is also motivated by the fact that conference participants expect their attendance to be *an experience*, with all that it entails (cf. the experience economy coined by Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Their model maps two different dimensions that characterize an experience, resulting in four different types of experience realms. See Figure 7: The four experience realms (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 30).
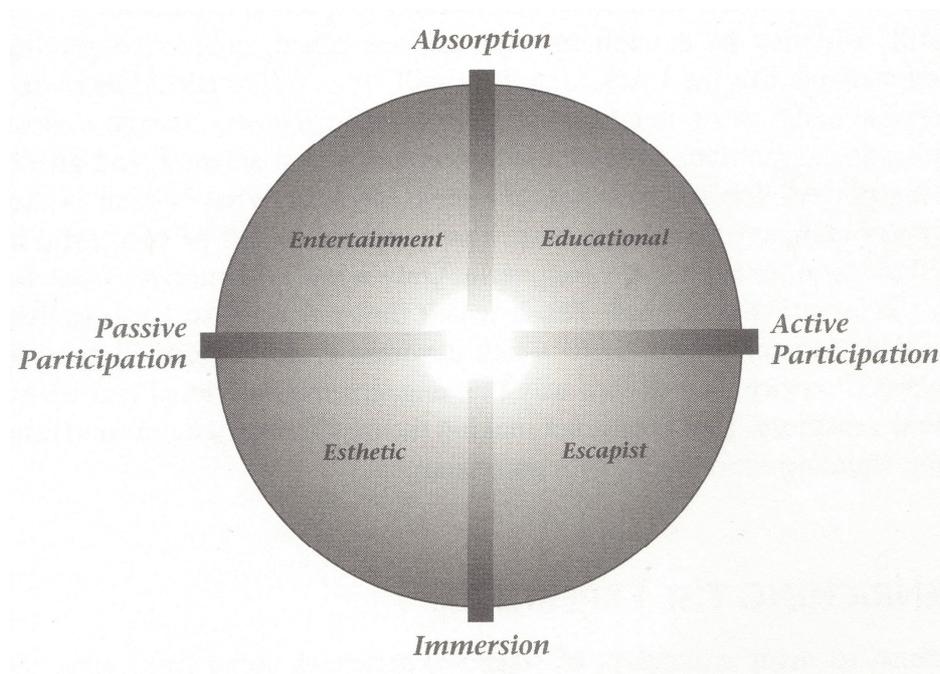
Figure 7: The four experience realms

The horizontal axis presents the degree to which people directly affect or influence the performance and participate in the creation of the experience. I find this to represent a classic dichotomy between observers and doers, although Pine and Gilmore (1999) stress that observers, through their sheer presence, also "contribute to the visual and aural event that others experience" (p. 30). The vertical axis

describes the kind of *connection*, or *environmental relationship*, that unites customers with the event or performance. At one end of this spectrum lies absorption—occupying a person's attention by bringing the experience into the mind—at the other end immersion—becoming physically (or virtually) a part of the experience itself. (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 31)

The difference between the two axes is also characterized by whether the experience "goes into" the person or the person "goes into" the experience. What is important here is that the four different experience realms are not ideals to be achieved separately—that is, that (educational) experiences should remain within the confinements of active participation and absorption. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999):

The richest experiences encompass aspects of all four realms. These center around the "sweet spot" in the middle of the framework. […] [Y]ou want to use the experiential framework as a set of prompts that help you to creatively explore the aspects of each realm that might enhance the particular experience you wish to stage. (p. 39)

In short, the entertainment dimension is about making the experience fun and enjoyable to sustain people's attention. The esthetic [*sic*] dimension is about creating an inviting and friendly atmosphere that makes people feel comfortable and "free to be," while the escapist dimension is about activating people, which enables them to immerse themselves further into the experience. Finally, the educational dimension is similar in its active pursuit, but it focuses on the information dimension and "the exploration of knowledge and skills" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 39 ff.).

In a conference context, where the exchange of knowledge and learning is the focal point, dramaturgy facilitates the entertainment and esthetic dimensions in particular and, in this way, plays an important role in fulfilling the experience dimension of conference attendance. Hence, I would argue that the notion of the dramaturgical learning space has particular pertinence in a conference context compared to other educational settings, because the experience expectations are likely higher in this type of educational setting than in others (if it is seen at all as an educational setting by the participants).

Finally, there is also an empirical/methodological reason for including dramaturgy. At the beginning of the project, I quickly realized that dramaturgy had a strong resonance and communicative power when I tried to explain and sell the idea of new conference formats to potential collaborative partners. This is an important dimension of research-based design—if the collaborative partners don't understand or believe in what you want to change, why you want to change it, and how you want to change it, you are simply not "let in."

4.2.1 ATTENTION

Since attention is a fundamental prerequisite for the initiation of learning processes and it is an essential element in creating an experience, as described above, I will elaborate on the concept here.

The psychology of attention touches on three aspects of attention (Hansen, 2002; R. Kristensen & Andersen, 2004). First and foremost, paying attention means being able to concentrate and focus on something and thereby consciously opt out of something else (R. Kristensen & Andersen, 2004). Second, attention involves being able to sustain attention both in chaotic situations as well as in dull, repetitive activities. Third, attention is the ability to "sort out the pile of sense impressions" (Hansen, 2002, p. 29, my translation) and to stay attentive despite distracting or competing stimuli. This means that attention is only partially determined by external stimuli and how the experience is set up; it is also an individual question of attention span, which can differ considerably from person to person.

In recent years, neuroscientists have developed a deeper understanding of how the various centers of the brain relate to learning processes, and here, attention plays a central role. EEG (electroencephalography) studies of brainwaves show that humans' attention works in a circadian rhythm. A predominance of alpha waves means that a person is extrovert attentive, and a predominance of beta waves means that a person is introvert attentive; the predominance of alpha waves and beta waves changes every second hour during a day. This means that no matter what you do, the attention span of conference participants fluctuates during a conference day (Hansen, 2002).

Wolfe (2006) explains that "there are two factors—both of which the educator controls—that have been shown to greatly influence the kind of

connection made in the brain that can lead to future recall and greater understanding. They are whether or not the information has meaning and whether or not it has an emotional hook" (p. 37).

The brain works as a filter that sorts the many types of stimuli to which humans are subjected. Neuroscience suggests that this sorting is done by means of recognition; the brain automatically searches for patterns between the new and the existing: "The vast majority of sensory data bombarding our brains are not encoded because the brain does not pay attention to information that, in terms of its existing neural networks, is meaningless" (Wolfe, 2006, p. 36).

From a philosophical perspective, attention is tied to boredom, which again is tied to meaning or a lack thereof. Svendsen (2001) traces boredom back to the middle of the eighteenth century, during which the word begins to appear regularly in written texts in English, German, and Danish. Svendsen argues that boredom is a trait of modernity; it was once a symbol of status for the privileged (i.e., monks and the aristocracy) "because they were the only ones who possessed the material basis which is a prerequisite of boredom" (Svendsen, 2001, p. 23, my translation). On one hand, it is reasonable to conclude that boredom has been on the rise ever since and has been democratized as Western wealth has grown. On the other hand, boredom is a phenomenon that escapes definition and is thus impossible to measure in any reliable way.

Like sociologists, Svendsen points out that in modern times, religion no longer grants personal meaning to people's lives, and the demands of an interesting life arise: "The stronger the individual life comes into focus, the stronger the demand for meaning will be in the triviality of everyday life" (Svendsen, 2001, p. 28, my translation). He goes even further by saying, "To be bored you have to perceive yourself as a subject that participates in different contexts of meaning. We demand meaning of the world, and without such a demand, boredom would not exist" (Svendsen, 2001, p. 9, my translation). Svendsen argues that, as a consequence of this, "the number of social placebos is larger than ever before. […] When personal meaning is lacking, all kinds of pleasures and amusements are sought to take its place, a substitute meaning" (Svendsen, 2001, p. 28, my translation). Referring back to the experience economy, a lack of meaning may be linked to the increased demands for entertaining experiences. At the same time, we experience a meaning deficit,

because much of the information we get from the media is already decoded on our behalf, and we are left to passively consume instead of actively constitute our world. This suggests that attention and the role of meaning for creating attention are crucial elements in understanding how to enhance conference attendees' learning outcome.

It is often contended that it is impossible to concentrate (e.g., to be attentive) for more than twenty minutes when sitting and listening to someone speak. I have not found any research studies to support this claim. On the contrary, neuroscience distinguishes between physical time and perceptual time, where twenty minutes in physical time can be perceived as both five minutes and an hour. "Time does not pass with a steady-paced flow. Perceptual time is not isomorphic to physical time, meaning that the subjective passage of time and estimates of duration vary considerably" (Wittmann, 2009, p. 1960).

But what makes or breaks the perception of time? Recent developments within time research suggest that "[…] our sense of time is a function of the intricate interplay between specific cognitive functions and of our momentary mood states" (Wittmann, 2009, p. 1955 ff.). Overestimations of time durations are predominantly linked to negative stress emotions like fear, anxiety, danger, and boredom, whereas time during fun, entertaining, and rewarding activities is often underestimated. "Insofar as the experience of time is tied to the mental status of the beholder, it reflects one's cognitive state and emotional well-being" (Wittmann & Wassenhove, 2009, p. 1809).

The emotional hook mentioned earlier is therefore important. "Emotion is regulated largely by two almond shaped structures deep within the brain called the amygdala. A major role of the amygdala is to ensure that we react quickly to potentially dangerous or emotion-laden situations—flight or fight, also known as the stress response" (Wolfe, 2006, p. 39). Physically, the stress releases adrenaline, and adrenaline contributes to enhancing memory. "The more intense the arousal, the stronger the imprint. It is almost as if the brain has two memory systems, one for ordinary facts and one for those that are emotionally charged" (Wolfe, 2006, p. 39). Since the task of the brain essentially is to keep the body alive, the stress response ensures that

> […] there are certain types of sensory data that the brain is
> programmed to attend to, such as loud noises or sudden
> movements. […] The brain is also highly responsive to novel
> stimuli or events (although novelty is not an effective permanent
> method of gaining students' attention). Novel events become
> commonplace if they occur regularly; this is called habituation.
> (Wolfe, 2006, p. 36 ff.)

In other words, human beings pay attention to the unexpected. In short, the argument presented here is that learning is tied to attention, which again is stimulated via meaning and emotions. To some extent, the dramaturgical perspective is a way to enact the emotional dimension of attention, and the adult-learning perspective is a way to enact the meaning dimension of attention. This underscores the importance of including both in a developmental effort to enhance conference attendees' outcome.

With this in mind, I define *attention* in a conference setting as a focus on a common third. The attention can take many forms on a continuum between present attention and absent attention. Full present attention is a physical, mental, and emotional focus on the common third, while absent attention is best characterized as being in your own world; you are present physically but cognitively and/or emotionally absent from the immediate activities—however, the absence is due to your thoughts and emotions being ignited by the common third but wandering off to create new pathways in the neural network. In this sense, absent attention differs from being inattentive, which is a condition where a person may be physically present but is cognitively and emotionally absent and thinking of something completely different.

4.3 LEARNING THROUGH RHYTHM

Within dramaturgy, the different models or theories of dramatic structure all have a distinct *rhythmic quality* that offers different ways of capturing and sustaining an audience's attention. A major distinction is made among dramatic theater, as formulated originally by Aristotle in his book *The Poetics* (Gladsø, et al., 2005); epic theater, as formulated by Bertolt Brecht (1997), as

an antithesis to Aristotle; and simultaneous theater, as conceptualized by Szatkowski (1989).

Dramatic theater has been called linear dramaturgy or conflict-driven dramaturgy; it comes in many variants but builds on the same classic three-act structure, with a beginning, a middle, and an end (Gladsø, et al., 2005). The story evolves through a plot (a central conflict) and is propelled through a series of plot points that support the central plot. The plot points are connected in a causal relationship, where one event/scene causes the next to occur. The central conflict escalates through minor peaks until it reaches a climax. Such a structure means that good stories are never one-dimensional; there are always at least two sides fighting to prove their version of the truth. For example, love stories will often have the premise that love conquers all, and the main character is confronted with something that forces him or her to embark on a journey where he or she confronts various situations, dilemmas, conflicts, and crises that challenge the love and affection he or she feels for the love interest.

Hence, the rhythm of conflict-driven dramaturgy is created through struggles, crises, chaos, opposites who meet, dilemmas, contradictions, diverse opinions, and so forth. Something forces the main character to do something other than what he or she usually does and shakes him or her up, introducing doubt in what he or she believes in and increasing wisdom.

Similarly, most theories of (adult) learning operate with the idea that a disruption or a challenge is necessary to ignite a learning process. Dewey talks about forked-road situations:

> Thinking begins in what may fairly enough be called a forked-road situation, a situation that is ambiguous, that presents a dilemma, which proposes alternatives. As long as our activity glides smoothly along from one thing to another, or as long as we permit our imaginations to entertain fancies at pleasures, there is no call for reflection. Difficulty or obstruction in the way of reaching a belief brings us, however, to a pause. In the suspense of uncertainty, we metaphorically climb a tree; we try to find some standpoint from which we may survey additional facts and, getting a more commanding view of the situation, may decide how the facts stand related to one another. (Dewey, 2009, p. 11)

In debt to Dewey, Mezirow (2000) operates with the notion of *disorienting dilemmas* that precipitate transformative learning processes. These occur when the meaning of new experiences clashes with an individual's existing meaning perspectives. Along the same lines, Jarvis uses the word *disjuncture* to describe the experience of anomaly between the past and the present (Jarvis, 2006), and Brookfield uses the phrase *trigger event* (S. D. Brookfield, 1987). Other words that these theorists use to describe this condition are *ambiguity*, *uncertainty*, *perplexity*, *confusion*, *doubt*, *disharmony*, and *dissonance*.

What is interesting is that these theorists all view the conflict as a matter of the past versus the present, a mismatch between what we know and who we think we are and new experiences that questions all of this. Two other theories describe the learning process as a challenge between the present and the future.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) by Vygotsky (1978) operates with the idea of learning as covering the distance between one's current competence level and potential competence level. Flow theory by Csíkszentmihályi (1990) posits that the optimal learning situation is one where the learner experiences the perfect balance between his or her competence level and the level of difficulty of the problem that the learner is asked to solve. Assignments that are too difficult compared to the learner's competence level are anxiety-provoking in an unproductive way. But assignments that are too easy will bore the learner. Within both the ZPD and flow theory, the central concept is the challenge—the idea that people need to feel challenged in order to learn, as long as the challenge is of the right amount and type.

The application of the notion of rhythm in disciplines other than artistic ones like music or dramaturgy has its ancestry in sociology. Most notably, Lefebvre (2004) proposed rhythm as an analytical tool for examining everyday life—in fact, he argues that life is essentially rhythmic: "Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm" (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 15).

Rhythm is an attribute of both the body and society. Different bodily functions each have their rhythm (respiration, the heartbeat, digestion), and, therefore, the body is accurately described as "a bundle of rhythms" or polyrhythmic (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 80). These rhythms are embedded in the social context in which the body is situated, which has its own plethora of rhythms (trees growing, bus schedules, opening hours of shops). All these

bodily and social rhythms may be in or out of sync with one another. Lefebvre distinguishes between eurhythmia, where the bodily rhythms are aligned or congruent with the social rhythms, and arrhythmia, where they are not.

Building on Lefebvre's essentially Marxist critique of modern society, the Danish sociologist Hvid (2006; Hvid, Lund, & Pejtersen, 2008) proposes rhythm as a principle for a sustainable working life. He argues that modern work organizations are positioned somewhere between the three poles of "*repetition*, known from Taylorism and bureaucracy"; "*differentiation*, characterized by individualized boundarylessness and unpredictability"; and "*rhythm*, marked by predictable patterns (elements of repetition) AND individual opportunities for differentiation" (Hvid, et al., 2008, p. 88). The downside of a repetitive work environment is the lack of autonomy and the lack of variation, whereas differentiated work environments are fluid, with no clear distinctions between work and private life; as a consequence, they are rhythmless. Building on the seminal work by Emery and Thorsrud, Hvid argues that a sustainable rhythmic working life should be characterized by "a high degree of autonomy for the workers […], a rhythmic balance between performance and relaxation, meaningful patterns of tasks that give each and everyone a main task, and jobs with both difficult and easy tasks" (Hvid, et al., 2008, p. 88).

However, Hvid's concept of the sustainable, rhythmic working life is about creating a counterweight to the constant chase for learning, development, and change (Hvid, 2006) and a way to create fixed points in the lives of both individuals and organizations. It is about rituals, traditions, and change, understood only as variations within a predefined setting. But I think learning through rhythm in a conference setting is about both: adhering to a certain number of social rituals and traditions and creating opportunities for change and development—as well as moving forward through clashing encounters that force you to rethink what you thought you knew.

Returning to pedagogy, two sources introduce the concept of pedagogical dramaturgy.

Bygholm and Dirckinck-Holmfeld (1997) use theater as a design metaphor to design a virtual learning environment that is so strong and supportive that learners and professors intuitively know how to act despite the shortcomings of the communication channels available in the virtual

conference system. (Positive) emotions are an important ingredient in this interpretation of dramaturgy in learning contexts. The idea is to create a sense of a joint learning space where the structural and technical functions, though unnoticed, support the learning activities, including clarified roles and relations, to ensure that the participants are emotionally seduced and fully devoted to the action/scene:

> With the concept of pedagogical dramaturgy the focus in the learning process moves from matter-of-fact dissemination and communication to holistic processes that are always motivated by the participants' emotional engagement. […] The purpose of pedagogical dramaturgy is to create positive experiences and engagement as a point of departure for learning processes as well as to develop the dramaturgical consciousness in connection to the planning of learning processes. (Bygholm & Dirckinck-Holmfeld, 1997, p. 78, my translation)

Dale (1998) also operates with the concept of pedagogical dramaturgy, but he emphasizes its aesthetic qualities and, with reference to Dewey, the use of rhythm and balance as vital components and qualities in teaching situations. "Pedagogical dramaturgy means that [the teacher] has learned to use rhythmic and enlivening effects" (Dale, 1998, p. 254). Dale suggests that aesthetic quality in educational activities, for example, can be achieved by allowing the redundant messages of the teacher to appear in different contexts and with varying consequences. Hence, redundancy is not reduced to monotonous and uniform repetitions, since the repetitions represent both something new and something well known, which allows students to absorb the learning material. Balance is a supplement to rhythm as it ensures that the

> […] weight of the different elements that form part of the experience, the teaching unit, is distributed. […] A teaching unit should vary between different forms of activities between teacher and pupil, between inner activity (reflection) and outer, immediate activity (in relation to the inner reflection activity), between active listening and question/answer situations, an alternation between the teacher's and the pupils' mutual wish of creating understanding, a living situation of elements between thoughtful and creative silence

and swarming, observable life. (Dale, 1998, p. 241 ff., my translation)

Rhythm is achieved by letting a series of classes consist of varied learning episodes and framing each learning episode—as well as the entire class experience over time—with a beginning and an end. The end is brought about during the process; one learning episode leads to the next by including aspects of the previous learning episode (like a looping spiral) while, at the same time, making each learning episode a distinct experience. However, teachers should be cautious of making impatient shifts between activities, leaving everyone with a sense of having a shortage of time to dwell in the subject. Dale's point is that it is vital to ensure variation *as well as* continuity and coherence, which are important dimensions in keeping pupils interested; if their experiences are too fragmented and dispersed, they become indifferent toward the learning situation. They need to sense the larger picture of the learning process in which they are engaged and build on previous learnings.

The above is reminiscent of the Aristotelian three-act structure and the dramaturgical practice of having an overall dramatic structure of the entire script as well as creating dramatic structures within each scene. It also draws from the idea that if one scene (or class) has built expectations of what may come, the likelihood of people being motivated to continue is greater. Furthermore, Dale talks about *staging* a teaching situation (i.e., the French *mis-en-scene*) and how this staging functions as a learning enhancer:

> […] the communication of knowledge depends on the behavior used to deliver the message. […] The teachers perform on a stage, often with explanations and oral narratives as actions. They must convey the knowledge content and stage it in a teaching situation. The teachers' communication of knowledge therefore demands designed expressions. (Dale, 1998, p. 249 ff., my translation)

These designed expressions are effects that enliven the subject and the learning, and they include tone of voice, tempo, facial expressions, gestures, and, most importantly, language and choice of words. Using the language creatively with metaphors, paraphrases, parables, poetic expressions, conjunctions, and variations in case, person, tempo, and climax during the presentation will all

support this effort. I have previously noted that attention alone does not produce learning—that is, a teaching situation can have aesthetic qualities without having learning qualities. In other words, learners experience the situation differently, and the same teaching situation may have learning qualities for some and not for others. Dale also points out that a story can be told in a compelling way without necessarily having pedagogical qualities, but the point is that dramatic effects support communication and increase message impact.

This goes to show that rhythm is an interesting principle to explore in the context of learning. Based on the argument presented here, the potential of the dramaturgical conference learning space is sought to be instantiated via a notion of learning through rhythm, an organizing principle that (theoretically) unites the learning and dramaturgical dimensions of the conference space.

Following Lefebvre's point of view that rhythm is prevalent in the real world, it might be argued that rhythm is prevalent in educational settings without them being organized explicitly according to a rhythmic structure. Therefore, learning through rhythm is more specifically to be understood as learning with an *intended* rhythm; following this, educational activities cannot be rhythmless but will always have some kind of (unintended) rhythm (or rhythms).

Since there is always rhythm per se, a new distinction springs forward: that of good or bad rhythm.

Good rhythm in a conference program includes redundancy and novelty; it is the interplay between letting the familiar (known) meet the unfamiliar (unknown) and letting the unfamiliar become familiar. Thinking in terms of rhythm prompts the conference organizer to think in terms of conflict/challenges, repetition, variation, and contrast and to use these handles as an organizing principle when planning the program: What should be the sequence of the different content elements? Which formats are appropriate for facilitating the content? What pace (length) should be assigned to each program element? And what tempo (level of activity) should be planned in each program element?

To summarize, the notion of learning through rhythm provides a framework for planning a conference program structure by emphasizing the importance of both repetitive elements and disruptive elements to create

variation and ignite the participants' learning process. The next section will elaborate on the elements with which I propose to create the rhythmic variation.

4.4 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The gold standard in education is a human tutor for everyone, and Walker (2006) claims that any design should thus come as close to the gold standard as possible.

In a conference context, this is, of course, impossible to achieve, but what are the alternatives? How can you substitute the individual human tutor and still create the potential for learning?

The concept of learning through rhythm provides an overall theoretical framework for designing a conference program structure that intends to increase participants' learning. The three design principles of interaction, reflection, and involvement are the building blocks upon which the learning through rhythm concept is created, just like notes are the components with which a songwriter composes a melody. These elements constitute the learning-through-rhythm model. See Figure 8.
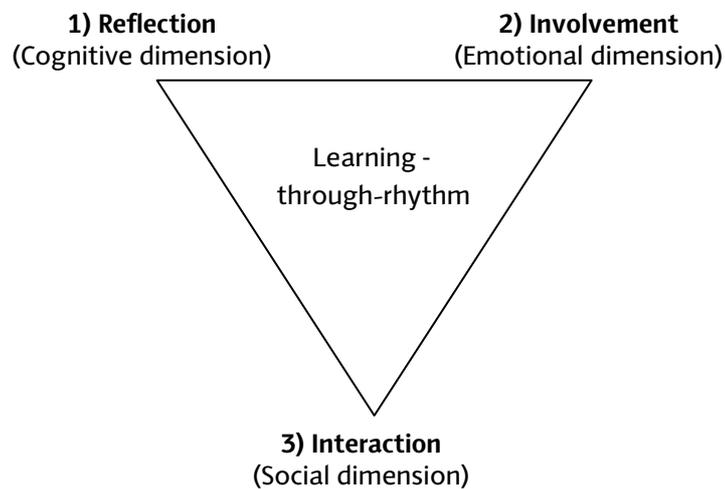
Figure 8: The learning- through- rhythm model

The three design principles will be elaborated below, but in short:

1) **Reflection** is about giving conference participants the time and means to digest the conference experience and create personal meaning on a cognitive level.
2) **Involvement** is about engaging the conference participants emotionally in the conference experience and ensuring that the emotions evoked are positive.
3) **Interaction** is about creating opportunities for conference participants to engage in dialogue with one another, increase the potential for social learning, and build relationships.

In the following sections, the three design principles are explained; following that is a discussion of their relationship to other three-dimensional learning models. Finally, I will reflect on the theoretical framework in a meta-theoretical perspective: What kind of vision of human existence and human development is this framework an expression of?

4.4.1 DESIGN PRINCIPLE #1: REFLECTION

The design principle of reflection is about ensuring that the conference participants are given the time and means to digest the conference experience—both alone and together with fellow attendees.

Dating back to Knowles, a central issue in adult education has been how adults learn from experience and how these experiences "can be used as a resource for their and others learning" (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 326). Tennant (1999) suggests four ways that a teacher can help learners to learn from experience, the fourth level being the most advanced:

1. Create links to the learners' prior experience
2. Create links to the learners' current experience
3. Create experiences that ignite a learning process
4. Subject the meanings that learners attach to their experience to critical scrutiny

The concept of reflection plays a large role in many of the dominant theories of adult learning. Wahlgreen et al. (2002) examine the notion of reflection in the theories of Dewey, Schön, Dreyfus and Dreyfus, Kolb, Jarvis, Mezirow, and Brookfield. Central to all seven theories, they argue, is that learning is a process that is tied to both reflection and action. The difference in the theories depends on the following parameters:

- Time: Does reflection take place during the experience (i.e., action) or after?
- The role of action: Is action the premise of reflection, or is reflection the premise of qualified action?
- The level of reflection: Is reflection mere thoughts about a past event, or does the reflection process contribute to question prejudices, values, and presuppositions? (Wahlgreen, et al., 2002)

Merriam and Heuer (1996) have reviewed the literature of the relationship between meaning-making, adult learning, and development, and they conclude that even though writers on the topic

> […] may differ with regard to some of the subtleties of meaning-making, several generalizations can be drawn […]: First, an experience in and of itself does not have meaning. The person must assign meaning to the experience. Second, individuals bring to their experiences an accumulation of past experiences and knowledge; therefore, individuals' meanings of the same event can be dramatically different. Third, meanings are socially constructed and context-dependent. Finally, the need to make meaning of our experiences is fundamentally human. (Merriam & Heuer, 1996, p. 247)

The transformative learning theory of Mezirow particularly focuses on meaning and reflection; the understanding of the term *reflection* used in this project and how reflection is tied to learning is based on Mezirow's theory. The key concepts of the transformative learning theory will be presented in the following.

Mezirow's writings equate meaning creation and learning, as the following two quotes indicate:

- "Creating meaning refers to the process of construal by which we attribute coherence and significance to our experience in light of what we know" (Mezirow, 1995, p. 40).
- "Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide for future action" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 5).

These mean that learning is a meaning-making activity, which involves tying the present to the past in order to produce increased qualifications in the future. Action is not necessarily meant literally as a physical act; as Mezirow says, "Action may include making a decision, revising a point of view, posing a problem, reframing a structure of meaning or changing behavior" (Mezirow, 1995, p. 49). Drawing on Dewey, Pedersen (2005) points out that reflection is characterized by the fact that it has a purpose or a goal; therefore, reflection must lead to something. This something may be an actual action, a sort of testing in a social context where the outcome is related to previous experiences, but it may also be just a conclusion, a thought experiment where the learners combine and integrate the new information with their existing knowledge.

Meaning exists on two interacting levels, which Mezirow calls meaning perspectives and meaning schemes (Mezirow, 1991, 1995, 2000). A meaning perspective is the filter through which an individual sees the world. It is the fundamental norms, values, assumptions, and ideals that individuals hold as a result of their participation in a specific social and cultural context, their psychological development, and the experiences and knowledge they have acquired over time (Pedersen, 2005). While meaning perspectives are broad and paradigmatic and serve as a general frame of reference, meaning schemes are the concrete manifestations of these perspectives in specific situations and interpretations. Mezirow also calls meaning perspectives "habits of mind" and meaning schemes "resulting points of view" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 17). In this capacity, an individual's meaning structure "selectively shapes and delimits perception, cognition, feelings, and disposition by pre-disposing our intentions, expectations and purposes" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 16).

Mezirow distinguishes among three ways of making meaning, which differ in terms of the tacitness of the experience and the associated meaning-making process:

- **Presentational construal** is based on tacit experience and tacit meaning-making (e.g., it is a kind of sensuous apprehension without the use of language).
- **Propositional construal** is also based on a tacit experience but with the possibility for verbalized meaning-making (e.g., in the form of an internal dialogue).
- **Intentional construal** is based on a conscious, explicit experience and semantic meaning-making that can be in the form of an internal or external dialogue.

A potential for learning arises when an individual's habitual expectations are challenged in a way that compels the individual to reevaluate his or her meaning structure—when there is a clash between the experience and the existing meaning structure and the meaning-making process in the form of presentational or propositional construal becomes problematic. This results in a "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 163), which forces individuals to become explicitly aware of their meaning-making process and engage in intentional construal. This is done through reflection:

> Intentional construal is required to transform our meaning schemes
> and perspectives. We do this through reflection, understood here as
> an apperceptive assessment of the justification of our beliefs, ideas
> or feelings. Ordinary reflection involves assessment of the nature
> and consequences of these learnings. The kind of reflection which
> includes and relates the circumstances of their origin with their
> nature and consequence can be understood as critical reflection.
> (Mezirow, 1995, p. 44 ff.)

The purpose of transformative learning is to enable learners to question others as well as their own presuppositions (e.g., meaning structures) in order to illuminate previous experiences in light of the reformulated, basic assumptions and understand new experiences in a different way than usual.

Mezirow distinguishes among three forms of reflection: content, process, and premise reflection. Content reflection is an interpretation of the problem or disorienting dilemma on the *what* level; it examines "what we perceive, think, feel, or act upon" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 107). Process reflection is

concerned with the *how*: It is "an examination of how we perform these functions of perceiving, thinking, feeling, or acting and an assessment of our efficacy in performing them" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 108). These two types of reflection can take place both during "thoughtful action" as well as in retrospect; but, like presentational construal, process reflection is not necessarily an explicit, conscious activity expressed semantically in thoughts or in dialogue with someone else but can also be a tacit form of sense-making. Premise reflection always takes place in retrospect and makes us question why we perceive, think, feel, or act as we do.

The different forms of reflection lead to changes in the meaning structure on different levels. Reflection on content and process will most likely lead to changes in the meaning schemes, while premise reflection will lead to a transformation of an individual's meaning perspective. See Figure 9 (Mezirow, 1995, p. 47).
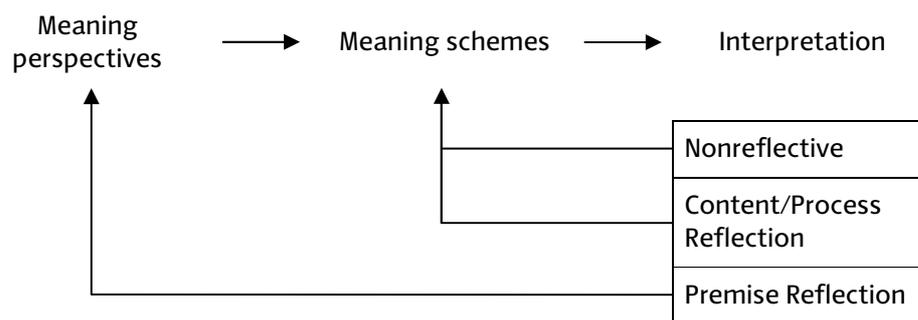
Figure 9: The structure of meaning and the transformation process

Learning, then, is the transformation of meaning perspectives, whereas assimilation of experiences to the meaning structure is simple learning or confirmative learning, even though "all reflection is potentially transformative of our meaning structures" (Mezirow, 1995)p. 45).

A number of parameters are presupposed for transformative learning to occur (in formal learning situations): The environment has to offer a balance between safety and insecurity/challenge; the learning content should be on the participants' terms (i.e., the learners should work with their own personal dilemmas); the participants should be open, explorative, and inquiring when

engaging in discourse with one another; and, last but not least, sufficient time and space to reflect should be allocated (Pedersen, 2005).

Within dramaturgy, set changes and intermissions are also recognized as a reflection enhancer, giving the audience a moment to connect the dots. Dale also emphasizes the function of the pause in his pedagogical dramaturgy, where the breaks during a school day contribute to the meaning-making of the learning episodes as opposed to external interruptions: "They [pauses or breaks] can be occasions to prepare oneself for what may come. During the pause we sum up, often tacitly, what has been going on, even though we do not comment on it" (Dale, 1998, p. 248, my translation).

From a neuroscientific viewpoint, recent findings also suggest that reflection and/or simply the passing of time is an important element in making the relevant connections between neurons and associating new sensory data with what is already stored (Taylor, 2006; Zull, 2006). Furthermore, different parts of the brain are activated when students engage in the type of learning context in which they search for right answers to problems constructed by the teacher for that purpose, as opposed to the type of learning situation in which they are encouraged to make meaning. The former task is located in the front cortex, which is "most associated with memory, and this tends to look toward the concrete past" (Taylor, 2006, p. 78). By contrast, the latter task resides in the back cortex: "[…] [I]ll-structured problems—those that are open-ended, have many possible solutions and are far more likely to occur in the real world—require the part of the brain that makes plans, decisions, and choices and creatively looks towards the future" (Taylor, 2006, p. 78).

To summarize, the point of implementing reflective practice in a conference setting as a means to enhance participant outcome is to ensure that conference participants are supported in their meaning-making process, specifically in intentional construal and critical reflection. This requires that they have opportunities to reflect on their current practice in light of what they experience at the conference; that they are challenged to see their practices and belief systems and those of others from a new angle; and that they are encouraged to take new ideas and insights further in their line of thinking in order to increase the likelihood of acting on these ideas and insights when they return home.

4.4.2 DESIGN PRINCIPLE #2: INVOLVEMENT

Involvement is about ensuring that conference participants are engaged emotionally in the learning process and that the emotions evoked are positive. Research on the role of emotions in (adult) learning processes is often tied to motivational aspects (i.e., learning has to be joyful and meaningful) as represented in humanistic psychology. In recent years, positive psychology has emphasized the role of positive emotions as fundamental for well-being (Fredrickson, 2003; Froh, 2004; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Fredrickson has forwarded the broaden-and-build theory, which posits that

> positive emotions *broaden* people's thought-action repertoires, encouraging them to discover novel lines of thought or action. Joy for instance, creates the urge to play, interest creates the urge to explore, and so on. A key, incidental outcome of these broadened mind-sets is an increase in personal resources: As individuals discover new ideas and actions, they *build* their physical, intellectual, social and psychological resources. Play, for instance, builds physical socioemotional, and intellectual skills, and fuels brain development. Similarly, exploration increases knowledge and psychological complexity. (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002, p. 172)

The point is that positive emotions are not only responsive and "signal flourishing"; they also "produce flourishing" (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 218) and trigger an upward spiral, which results in emotional well-being in a long-term perspective. The notion that positive emotions broaden attention and cognation is interesting from the perspective of a conference that seeks to support learning processes because studies show that "[…] when people feel good, their thinking becomes more creative, integrative, flexible and open to information" (Fredrickson, 2003, p. 333).

Bygholm and Dirckinck-Holmfeld also emphasize the importance of positive emotions in their concept of pedagogic dramaturgy: "[…] a learning process with great experiences and positive energy provides strength to learn and the courage to dare" (Bygholm & Dirckinck-Holmfeld, 1997, p. 78, my translation).

Jacobsen et al. (2001) have studied research environments in Denmark and found that departments or research units with a good working

environment (e.g., a working environment where there was mutual respect/acceptance, positive appreciation of differences, and a sense of community) were more productive and produced research of higher quality, measured in terms of citations.

While the broaden dimension of Fredrickson's theory is supported by many other research findings, it has been questioned whether it is positive emotions only that are involved in the building of personal resources and competences (Nørby, 2008). Negative emotions may also ignite learning processes; e.g. experiences of fear in one situation can lead to increased precaution when facing a (seemingly) similar situation. Also, personal crisis often lead to self-development; while being in the crisis, negative emotions are involved but in hindsight people report that these periods of their life have been rewarding and have led to a deeper understanding of them selves which is regarded as a positive thing (Graversen, 1990).

The dramaturgical learning space recognizes both mechanisms: While claiming that conflicts or disorienting dilemmas in terms of a provocation, a new perspective that goes against a personal or collectively decided truth are necessary triggers for learning, these triggers may well (but not necessarily) provoke negative feelings like irritation, frustration, and insecurity. The likelihood of such learning triggers to be productive and not blocking the individuals' learning process is increased if the learning environment is otherwise positive and trustful.

I have previously contended that the dramaturgical dimension of the conference learning space is relevant in order to evoke the participants' emotions, which again are crucial for catching and sustaining their attention. However, the dramaturgical involvement runs the risk of keeping the conference space on an entertainment level only (as depicted in Figure 7: The four experience realms), where the participant is emotionally aroused but remains observant and distant. A more psychological involvement goes deeper and paves the way for personal meaning creation, much like the escapist experience realm that is constituted by immersion and active participation. This means that including dramaturgy in a new perspective on learning at conferences does not imply an application of *a* dramaturgical model or to "just" improve the performance qualities on stage and keep the participants in a nonparticipative audience mode. The logic here is that dramaturgy provides

concepts and tools for facilitating attention through emotions and therefore holds the potential for creating opportunities for learning in a conference setting. However, it cannot be transferred directly and needs adaptations and supplements from the field of adult learning when organizing the conference learning space in practice.

The linear dramaturgy introduced above—also known as dramatic theater—was contested by Bertolt Brecht when he introduced the concept of epic theater. Where Aristotelian dramatic theater seduces, makes extensive use of emotions, and makes people believe that what they see is reality, epic theater wants to do the opposite and constantly makes people aware that the theater is a staged version of reality (also called the *Verfremdungseffekt* in German or the alienation effect in English). The aim is to raise the social and political awareness of the audience and compel them to take that awareness with them when they leave the theater.

Lately, Szatkowski (1989) has conceptualized a third type of dramaturgy: simultaneous theater, which is a product of the postmodern era where the grand narratives are gone and "fragmentation is made the new reality" (Szatkowski, 1989, p. 73). See Table 4: Dramatic, epic, and simultaneous theater for an overview of differences among the three types of dramaturgy. The table is an adaptation of Szatkowski (1989, p. 81), which in turn is based on Brecht (1997, p. 37).

Brecht emphasizes that "this table does not show absolute antitheses but mere shifts of accent. In a communication of a fact, for instance, we may choose whether to stress the element of emotional suggestion or that of plain rational argument" (Brecht, 1997, p. 37).

DRAMATIC THEATER	EPIC THEATER	SIMULTANEOUS THEATER
Plot	Narrative	The scene presents several fiction layers at once
Implicates the spectator in a stage situation	Turns the spectator into an observer, but...	Turns the spectator into an observer of what it means to experience
Wears down his capacity for action	...arouses his capacity for action	Makes the spectator aware of his own co-creation
Provides him with sensations	Forces him to make decisions	Breaks the spectator's routine way of experiencing
Experience	Picture of the world	Many worlds
The spectator is involved in something	He is made to face something	He is challenged to ascribe meaning
Suggestion	Argument	Complex pictures
Instinctive feelings are preserved	Brought to the point of recognition	The course of feelings is interrupted by the rhythm of the play
The spectator is in the thick of it, shares the experience	The spectator stands outside, studies	The spectator co-creates [my addition]
The human being is taken for granted	The human being is the object of study	Meaning-making is explored
He is unalterable	He is alterable and able to alter	Questions absolute values
Eyes on the finish	Eyes on the course	Eyes on creating meaning
One scene makes another	Each scene for itself	Each scene is a complex unit woven together with the next
Linear development	In curves	Labyrinth
Evolutionary determinism	Jumps	Complementarity as the basic principle
Thought determines being	Social being determines thought	The concepts are at the same time a tool as well as a wall between thinking and existence
Feeling	Reason	Questions the concept of knowledge

Table 4: Dramatic, epic, and simultaneous theater

Dramatic theater involves, epic theater is distanced, while simultaneous theater invites spectators to co-create. Dramatic principles have always had a strong

position within the art of fictional storytelling, but in the past decade or so, dramatic principles have also gained force in nonfiction (documentaries, TV news, etc.) (Larsen, 2003a). Opinions are split about the increasing focus on emotions in news coverage, entertainment TV, and so forth. Just as Brecht originally opposed the emotional emphasis and claimed that the dramatic model does not really bring the audience closer to an understanding of the world we live in, some argue that the excessive use of emotions and dramatic enhancers in today's mass media trivializes and undermines its seriousness—or has even taken the front seat, leaving no substance.

In the present project, I have not conformed to a single dramaturgical model or type of dramaturgy, although it would be fair to say that the learning-through-rhythm model draws heavily from the fundamental principles of simultaneous theater. However, concrete activities in the conference programs that are supposed to embrace the involvement dimension as well as the rhythmic conceptualization of conference program structures are heavily influenced by the classic linear tradition. It could be argued that conferences are inherently circular in style (fragmented and with discontinuity) and epic in nature (nonfictional with strong references to the world existing outside the conference room), but this is exactly why I argue for the implementation of more dramatic (and hence emotional) elements: conferences are too fragmented, there is too much reasoning without feeling, and there is a lack of central conflict and strong formulated premise. This throws me into the arms of what has been labeled "the emotional trend," but I would argue that the type of conferences dealt with in this project are a type of social activity (the only type, perhaps) that really needs more drama; however, I am well aware that it is a delicate balance. It is in this gray zone that people are moved, surprised, and so forth, which can prove to be a powerful and valuable learning enhancer.

Gray zones and ethics go hand in hand, and this case is no exception. When an organizer of an educational activity chooses to strategically or intentionally evoke certain emotions as the learning-through-rhythm model suggests here, ethics must be considered. A positive word to describe the emotional dimension of the conference design would be *seduction*, and a negative word would be *manipulation*. A full-blown seduction of conference attendees can prove to be troublesome, as people may feel manipulated and

staged without knowing what role they play or what is going to happen. The latter is, of course, a key element in keeping people's attention, but there is a huge difference between exposing people to this in the comfort of their own home or in the dark of the cinema and exposing them to it during a conference. Keeping in mind the simultaneous and epic lines of thinking counterbalances the use of dramatic effects and prevents the conference from being dramatized beyond what is "appropriate." As we shall see later, the limits of appropriateness in a conference setting are not crystal clear, and it is impossible not to take some risks.

Wolfe (2006) describes the flipside of emotions from a neuroscientific point of view. The fight-or-flight stress response mentioned earlier is ignited not only by perceived (physical) danger but also by psychological danger. "During the stress response, the rational problem-solving part of the brain is less efficient. […] Even mild stressors lead to initiation of the stress response which negatively affects the student's ability to perform" (Wolfe, 2006, p. 40). Stress factors in a conference setting are numerous, and conference organizers have an even bigger challenge in overcoming the many negative stress responses that people face. Stress factors include being in a new and unknown context, fear of failure or that one might appear stupid, social exclusion, and so on. Entering a conference room almost by definition evokes stress emotions to some extent, so it is all the more important to create a psychologically safe environment so participants can feel comfortable enough to take a leap and embrace the conflicts or disruption with which they are faced in the dramaturgical learning space: "Being psychologically safe means feeling free enough to take risks" (Wolfe, 2006, p. 40).

To summarize, the point of including an emotional dimension and enhancing involvement in conference settings is based on the idea that emotions play an important role in learning and that a positive learning environment that evokes positive emotions has two significant advantages: They contribute to creating a personal hook (or meaning), and they broaden the attention-scope and cognition of participants, which renders them open to new ideas and unusual thought associations. This increases the likelihood of meaning perspective transformation. The use of dramaturgy, particularly elements from dramatic theater, facilitates the involvement dimension and

contributes to creating a collective roar, although this also runs the risk of dramatizing and seducing beyond what is appropriate.

4.4.3 DESIGN PRINCIPLE #3: INTERACTION

The design principle of interaction is about ensuring that a social space is created where conference participants are given opportunities to interact and communicate with fellow attendees in various ways. This way, learning not only is top-down through presentations by official presenters selected by the organizers, but also embraces the possibility of social learning where attendees learn of and with each other.

The social dimension of learning has earned particular interest in the last decade with the advent of Lave and Wenger's concept of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), where learning occurs through participation in the shared sociocultural practices of a particular community. This view presupposes that the community has a shared practice; in Wenger's (1998) terms, they have mutual engagement (relationships and interactions with one another), a joint enterprise (a common goal and/or understanding of the domain of the community as well as mutual accountability), and a shared repertoire (the building and accumulation of resources).

In the conference settings dealt with in this project, the mutuality between attendees is much vaguer than a shared social practice, as stipulated above. It is reduced to "a common interest in the subject field," and this interest can be extremely diverse among participants, producing an array of individual goals, wishes, and needs for outcome. If we stretch it a bit, it might be argued that conference attendees have a common interest in the advancement of the subject field in society at large, but I do not consider this common interest to be articulate and predominant enough to define the conference attendees as a community of practice and let this parameter become a principal goal of the conference program design. Indeed, a conference series can, over time, grow a community of practice, just as conferences that are the main medium for members of a network to meet up will have a stronger sense of mutuality and benefit from the social learning environment that is associated with being a member of that community. However, the conferences

in this research project are not long-standing, except for the ECCI conference series; but here, the vast majority of the ECCI X conference participants were newcomers, and only a small group could be characterized as a community of practice.

Based on Wenger, I would therefore claim that just being together as conference attendees does not necessarily promote a learning environment. In the limited time available at a conference, it is not necessarily the case that gathering a group of people guarantees that they will begin to interact and form some kind of social order, or that just being together in the same room will create social learning.

As already presented, the overall goal of the implementation of the learning-through-rhythm model is to maximize *the individual's* outcome. We are talking about enhancing an individual process/experience in a social context through the means of interaction among attendees. The notion of social interaction presented here is one where learning is bound to the individual but is created in and affected by a social and historical context.

This resonates with the Vygotskian notion of ZPD, which emphasizes learning as a social interaction process between a more experienced adult/teacher and a less experienced child/learner. The ZPD is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In Vygotsky's perspective, the collective and social take precedence over the individual and personal; that is, the interpsychological dimensions form the basis for the intrapsychological (Hansen, 2005). This means that the teacher plays a crucial role in helping learners reach their potential, and the learners' development is therefore deeply dependent on the possibilities for social interaction with people who are more experienced than they are.

Mott points out that the original ZPD notion is unclear and questions how new knowledge is created (knowledge that is not already mastered by the more experienced person), how a person's ZPD is determined, and how this determination process can be facilitated concretely (Mott, 1992). By conducting an action research project in an engineering company, she has expanded on Vygotsky's notion by emphasizing that ZPD also can unfold in

adult life in organizational settings where there is not one person who is more capable (i.e., more experienced, more knowledgeable, more competent) than the others, as is often the case in work teams in knowledge-producing companies (Mott & Frost, 1994). Instead, Mott suggests a more actor-oriented approach of ZPD, where employees take responsibility for their own development and the more capable people are replaced by a qualitatively higher level of interaction in the work team.

This self-authorization process—where the authority and control of the learning process (i.e., determining and reaching ZPD) lies in the hands of the learners themselves instead of an older and wiser person—requires development of the individual as well as of the system (Mott & Frost, 1994). On the "actor level," the improved interaction level is achieved by focusing on individual learning processes where participants acquire more knowledge within their subject field, improve their social (and communicative) skills, and are provided opportunities to gain deeper insights into their own personalities.

Mezirow similarly highlights the importance of dialogue for reflective practice; inspired by Habermas, Mezirow suggests that the ideal type of discourse is critical-rational discourse (as opposed to hegemonic discourse) and that the inherent communicative virtues are the same prerequisites needed for fostering collaborative adult learning (Mezirow, 2000). Ideally, participants partake in such a discourse on equal terms, and all possess the accurate and complete information they need. Also, "discourse involves an effort to set aside bias, prejudice, and personal concerns and to do our best to be open and objective in presenting and assessing reasons and reviewing the evidence and arguments for and against the problematic assertion to arrive at a consensus" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 55). This means that adult educators should seek to promote tolerance, patience, and respect for others among learners—that is, the courtesy to take turns while speaking; the ability to express themselves honestly, sincerely, and comprehensively; and a willingness to admit when they might be mistaken.

The higher level of social interaction that can replace a more capable person in the ZPD learning process, as suggested by Mott, is stimulated by the fact that the teams have a common goal and a shared responsibility for task-performance. They likely also have an increased awareness of the self-directed nature of the group process and, thus, an interest in contributing to a positive,

rewarding dialogue. However, in those situations where people are estranged and engage in dialogue, the exchange of thoughts and viewpoints is often full of friction, perhaps in particular in a conference context where various power struggles and benchmarking strategies come into play. The idea of rational discourse in an ideal speech situation might be difficult to picture.

Mezirow's ideal of the Habermasian rational discourse has also been criticized for being utopian, naïve, and unrealistic, because there will always be social structures and power relations that make this kind of speech situation difficult, maybe even impossible (Pedersen, 2005). Mezirow's reply to this criticism is that most ideals in life are never achieved, but that should not prevent us from striving to do so. In conferences that are organized as dramaturgical learning spaces where the level of interaction is increased, it may pose a problem if conference participants do not adhere to the above communicative virtues; this calls for an increased use of facilitators to prevent group interaction processes from becoming sidetracked.

Drawing on Vygotsky and Mezirow, interaction in the learning-through-rhythm model is dialogical—that is, a linguistic/semantic activity. The physical dimension of social interaction—that is, between people (bodies), objects, and space—is not elaborated further.

The final point I would like to make about social interaction in conferences is that conferences are not just about absorbing information; they are also about meeting other people of interest. This networking aspect is facilitated through the interaction dimension of the theoretical framework, simply because interaction as stipulated above allows the participants to meet one another in semiformal, content-based contexts, not only during informal breaks but also during the formal part of the program.

Network theory underscores the importance of meeting new people. In the seminal article "The Strength of Weak Ties," Granovetter (1973) argues that those people with whom you have strong ties are most likely similar to yourself, and these close friends constitute a densely knitted group where many are in touch with one another. Distant acquaintances, however, belong to another set of people who are different from you—that is probably why they are merely acquaintances—and these acquaintances do not know one another. As such, weak ties are "not merely a trivial acquaintance tie but rather a crucial

bridge between the two densely knit clumps of close friends" (Granovetter, 1983, p. 202).

Granovetter further argues that weak ties are the most important because these acquaintances give you access to new information, job openings, and other opportunities to participate in community organization: "It follows, then, that individuals with few weak ties will be deprived of information from distant parts of the social system and will be confined to the provincial news and views of their close friends" (Granovetter, 1983, p. 202). It follows that it is better to have a large and broad network with many weak ties to different people (and hence their networks) than many strong ties to people in the same tight network, which only produces redundancy.

When two groups of people—or networks—have no ties between them, there is a hole in the structure of information flow, also called a structural hole (Burt, 2005). "People on either side of a structural hole circulate in different flows of information. Structural holes are the empty spaces in social structure" (Burt, 2005, p. 16). People can benefit from acting as brokers between two such disconnected networks, thus filling the structural hole, because they earn competitive advantage by gaining some degree of control of the information flow: "The information and control benefits of bridging the holes reinforce one another at any moment in time, and cumulate together over time. Thus, individuals with networks rich in structural holes are the individuals who know about, have a hand in, and exercise control over, more rewarding opportunities" (Burt, 2001, p. 211).

This goes to show that there may be substantial benefits—deeper ones than the occasional and informal mingling during breaks sets the stage for—from creating new connections to people in different network circles. Consequently, conference organizers have a huge responsibility to organize opportunities for interaction that go beyond the classic social elements of a conference program, which include lunch hours, breaks, and gala dinners.

To summarize, interaction supports the individual conference experience by creating a social space where people are granted access to both complementarity and diversity, both of which are crucial for learning. Through social interaction, conference participants are provided opportunities to use fellow attendees as sounding boards through the dialogical exchange of thoughts, to be challenged from diversity, and to learn from both equally

capable peers as well as the more experienced. This way, interaction as a design principle also goes beyond a simple notion of networking as mingling during breaks, as increased interaction opportunities in all aspects of the program provide opportunities to build relationships with new people (strong and weak ties) as well as to take on a brokerage role to fill in structural holes.

4.4.4 THREE-DIMENSIONAL LEARNING MODELS

The ambition of the learning-through-rhythm model has been to develop a set of design principles that can serve as a guide for action. The following criteria have been set to achieve this:

- **Completeness**: The design principles cover the phenomena they are intended to improve.
- **Distinctiveness**: The design principles do not overlap too much but make sense as analytical categories.
- **Mutual consistency**: The design principles are cohesive and make up an intelligible whole.

The theoretical framework is a three-dimensional learning model that, generally speaking, encompasses the three dimensions of learning: cognitive, emotional, and social. Three-dimensional learning models are also found in the existing literature on learning.

Illeris has presented a model entitled "the three dimensions of learning." Even though the model has changed over the years (it was first published in a Danish version (Illeris, 1999) and has been revised a couple of times, leading to the most recent publication (Illeris, 2007), the general point has remained the same: Learning always involves three dimensions, which means there are always three ways of analyzing a learning process. In the original model, Illeris pinpoints the following theorists as representatives and poles of the three-dimensional model: Piaget as representative of the cognitive dimension, Freud as representative of the psychodynamic dimension (including emotions, questions of attitude, and motivational factors), and Marx as representative of the societal dimension (including the social processes between individuals as well as the societal influence on these processes and the individuals taking part

in them) (Illeris, 1999, p. 17 ff.). In the later model, he changes the labeling of the cognitive dimension into content (covering "knowledge, understanding, skills"), the psychodynamic dimension into incentive (covering "motivation, emotion, volition"), and the societal dimension into interaction (covering "action, communication, co-operation") (Illeris, 2007, p. 25 ff.).

In an idea conceptually related in its holistic intention, Hiim and Hippe (2007) unfold a didactic perspective where they argue that students should be provided with firsthand experiences, because such experiences embrace intellectual, emotional, and action-related learning aspects all at once. They refer to humanistic psychology as the basis for the view that learning as a creative process should encompass both emotional and cognitive dimensions, and to a more critically oriented perspective to clarify the social and practical dimensions of learning: "Learning happens in a personal, individual, and social context, and all can be exploited to strengthen the learning process" (Hiim & Hippe, 2007, p. 240 ff., my translation).

It will be too extensive to provide a complete account of the similarities and differences of these two models and this study's proposed theoretical framework, but a major difference lies in the function of the models. Since the theoretical framework forms the basis of a research-based development endeavor, I am proposing a prescriptive learning model for a conference setting, rather than a descriptive/analytical model for learning. Illeris's three-dimensional model is a framework for analyzing learning processes, and Hiim and Hippe discuss the didactic dimensions of learning. My theoretical framework is a local instruction theory—a conjecture—about what would enhance learning processes at conferences, and, consequently, I have been compelled to specify the dimensions in distinct concepts.

Although I realize that the three design principles are interrelated and that all three are dimensions of all learning processes as proposed by Illeris as well as Hiim and Hippe, it is important to highlight that the learning-through-rhythm model includes the rhythmic dimension, which suggests that when designing a learning process in a conference setting, one should explicitly *alternate the emphasis* among the three design principles of reflection, involvement, and interaction in a rhythmic structure.

This underscores the idea that it makes sense to make an analytical distinction among the three dimensions. They are distinct in the sense that they occur independently, but they are not mutually exclusive:

- **You can interact or reflect—or do both at the same time—without being involved**:
  This situation is characterized by talking to someone about a subject that does not matter much to you and where you are not really engaged emotionally. For example, this could be when you are being asked to answer a question or solve a problem that does not have any personal relevance to you.
- **You can reflect and be involved without interacting**:
  This happens when you are reflecting on your own during a presentation or in other one-way communication experiences that have some emotional significance for you.
- **You can interact or be involved—or do both at the same time—without reflecting**:
  This happens when you talk to someone without being really present or without taking the helicopter perspective on the conversation, such as in Schön's concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983). This is a situation where, in hindsight, you may engage in reflection on your own presuppositions, especially if encouraged.

4.5 REFLECTIONS ON THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

One might ask whether it is doable to gestalt a conference learning space in reality based on the learning-through-rhythm model and, if so, then how? I will first clarify the intended purpose of the dramaturgical learning space and the level of ambition, so to speak: What is it meant to produce, and which impediments need to be taken into account? These factors are important to keep in mind in the subsequent evaluation and analysis. In the next chapter I will present the translation of the learning-through-rhythm model into a concrete conference program.

The goal of the dramaturgical learning space is to enhance participant outcome. For participants attending a conference like the ECCI X conference,

I define outcome as *anything that the participants take away from the conference (during or later) that they deem important for being able to excel in their work life.* In this perspective, outcome is relative—it is what the participants think it is. This definition also ties outcome to working life; this means that outcome is not necessarily related to the attendee's present job but contributes to the attendee's professional competence on a general level.

I would like to point out that the proposed framework also tries to avoid the classic passive/active dichotomy where it is implied that a learning environment in which learners are seated, physically inactive, and only listening equals passive learners. Even though this type of setting is most likely to produce passive learners, it could also be argued that learners in this type of setting are active in thought, pondering what is said and making connections in their minds to what they already know. This means that listening/watching/thinking while seated can also be defined as a cognitive and emotional activity. I therefore prefer to talk about participation and nonparticipation. The goal of the framework is to increase *participation* through cognitive reflection, social interaction, and emotional involvement and thereby increase outcome.

One might ask what the relationship is between outcome and learning. A distinction is often made between learning as a process and learning as a product or result that lies at the end of the learning process. The premise of the learning-through-rhythm model is that learning is an ongoing (slow!) process, and, as such, it is utopian to think that a learning process can be initiated and terminated with a result during a conference. But conference organizers can intentionally support all the continuous learning processes that people are going through (more or less consciously) to a larger degree with a conference format like the dramaturgical learning space than with the traditional speaker/audience format.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are numerous impediments to creating a learning environment when comparing the conference setting to other types of learning settings: increased participant volume, participant diversity, the physical structure of most venues, the lack of a teacher, and a lack of progression (most conferences are stand-alone events), to mention a few. In addition, a central issue in all types of continuing education is how to support and enhance transfer, i.e., the application of knowledge/skills/competencies

and expertise learned in a school-situation, typically a course or another type of formal learning situation, to another, typically a practical and/or work-oriented context (Eraut, 1994).

One might make an analytical distinction among the three elements involved in a transfer process: the learner, the original learning situation, and the subsequent application context. From a transfer perspective, the ideal learning context offers simulation-type activities, provides real-life examples the learners can work with, and allows time to understand (internalize) the learning material (Illeris & samarbejdspartnere, 2004). Tennant (1999) also stresses that "attending to the possibility of transfer increases its likelihood" and that transfer is enhanced when learners are encouraged "to reflect on the potential for transfer" (Tennant, 1999, p. 167).

To what extent this ideal is achievable in a learning context depends on the learning content (i.e., the nature of the subject matter and the theoretical level). There is a difference between learning and transferring skill-based practices (e.g., how to inject a patient with a needle) and learning and transferring generic knowledge that is broadly applicable across a range of situations (also called specific and general transfer, respectively).

The latter also depends on the learner; the ability to think abstractly influences the extent to which the learner is able to transfer theory to practice; the better the abstract-thinking ability, the better the chance of general transfer. Other parameters concerning the learner that are at play include motivational issues, questions of meaning/relevance, and previous experience with the target task in the application context (Illeris & samarbejdspartnere, 2004; Tennant, 1999).

The learning-through-rhythm model embraces many of the elements mentioned above to create an ideal learning context: It increases the likelihood of people remembering what happened at the conference, supports the meaning-making of their experience, increases peer-to-peer learning, and spurs the participants' reflections on how to apply their conference experience upon their return. But the learning-through-rhythm model suggests only how it might be possible to enhance the learning potential of the conference learning situation itself—it does not solve or account for the many impediments of the application context (i.e., when the conference attendees return to their workplaces).

It is important to stress that recent theories on transfer point out that learning is not limited to the learning situation itself, as if the lessons learned are packed into a suitcase and transported like luggage to the application context. Rather, there is just as much learning involved in the transfer and application processes, because the learner *adapts* the lessons learned to the new situation and also includes past experiences in this endeavor (Illeris & samarbejdspartnere, 2004). However, the classical transfer problem challenges the value of conference attendance in a long-term perspective and will therefore also be discussed in section 8.5Robustness of the Learning-Through-Rhythm Model.

4.5.1 THE IMPLICIT VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE

As presented in the literature review, participatory conference approaches like dialogue conferences and consensus conferences are an act of democracy—their goal is the distribution of ownership to create commitment, ignite social change, and create empowerment. The goal of the theoretical framework presented here is not to find common ground or develop communities together, but to prompt personal learning processes through a stronger emphasis on participation.

In this perspective, the learning-through-rhythm model is essentially pragmatist at its roots; further up the ladder, there are strong traces of humanistic psychology and positive psychology. For a more detailed view of how these theories interrelate on an epistemological level, see Froh (2004). For the present purpose, it is relevant to point out that the view of human nature that is inherent in the learning-through-rhythm model is one of human beings as curious, open-minded, and growth-oriented. It assumes that conference participants are resourceful and strive to do better and be better, and that they are inherently interested in personal development and self-realization.

Critics of humanistic psychology argue that it takes a solid amount of resources to be able to realize your own potential and that people belonging to oppressed or marginalized groups do not have the resources needed as they have are prevented from access). It is also reasonable to assume that all conference participants are not likely to bring with them an open and curious

mindset but rather want to be reaffirmed and spread the gospel of their own beliefs instead of listening to other people's perspectives.

Other external conditions might also influence the conference participants' behavior negatively, ranging from personal problems (e.g., a conference is a good excuse to get away if you have relationship troubles or other kind of family disputes) to workplace-related issues (e.g., your co-worker became ill and you were sent in his place, or the conference ticket is an incentive and you consider your attendance to be a kind of holiday). These factors are not necessarily counterproductive to the default type of behavior assumed in the theoretical framework. However, they merely suggest that there may be factors that lead to the opposite kind of behavior, where conference attendees have no desire to learn or engage in personal development.

Furthermore, being curious, open-minded, and growth-oriented implies being talkative, active, and skilled at building social relationships—in short, being extroverted. This is even more the case in a conference that "organizes" the conference participants' behavior by making them participate in all kinds of processes. In other words, if you are not all of the above at the outset, the conference format forces you to be so. This touches upon a classic debate within pedagogy: To what degree should conference participants take responsibility for their own learning? Should the learning process be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated? Should learners be left to their own devices, or is the whole point of educational activities the idea that someone knows better and pushes the learner to venture into the unknown, despite varying degrees of resistance? And should the learner's signs of resistance be deliberately ignored as a means to achieving the end result, where the learner in hindsight experiences and recognizes the benefits of having gone through the learning process?

The premise of the theoretical framework is that conference organizers should assume the responsibility of educators to a larger degree and set up conditions that will enhance the potential of learning. This may imply a number of ethical considerations that are more prevalent in the conference context than in other educational settings. Since conferences lie in the gray area between a nonformal and an informal learning setting, many conference participants would probably not even perceive the conference to be a learning situation. This problem can, of course, be solved by being explicit about it in

the preconference communication, thereby adjusting mutual expectations, but it also seems important to raise people's awareness of the conference format during the conference and be conscious about the potential ethical dilemmas that the approach of the dramaturgical learning space entails. E.g.

- How much conflict can you impose?
- How much can you seduce participants and play with emotions?
- How much can you ask people to participate who don't want to [cf. above] or make them feel obliged because of group pressure?
- To what extent can you decide what they should do?

The rhythmic notion, and the use of conflicts as its basic driver, prompts disturbance and turbulence, and learning can be conceived of as being dangerous, scary, uncomfortable, or unsafe, much like the liminal phase of a rite of passage. Before people reach the goal—where the thesis and the antithesis become a synthesis—they are in limbo, and this process produces frustration, which most likely is taken out on the organizer of the learning process. This is especially difficult to handle gently in a conference setting where participants are left to their own devices more than in other learning-type settings.

The next step will be to specify how the theoretical framework can be translated into a concrete conference program design and ultimately increase conference participants' outcome. In the next chapter I will present the ECCI X conference program elements and explain how they relate to different aspects of the theoretical framework. The translation process is not merely a desk-activity where I myself plan and decide what and how; rather, it is a lengthy planning process that involves and is dependent on numerous stakeholders, political considerations, practical constraints, and so on. These conditions all play a role in the end result, and I will therefore highlight a number of critical incidents that I consider pivotal in understanding why the final conference program turned out as it did.

5 DESIGNING THE ECCI X CONFERENCE PROGRAM

This chapter takes the theoretical framework one step further into practice and presents an example of how the learning-through-rhythm model can be translated into a concrete conference program. As described in Section 3.2: The Four Case Conferences, I have worked with four conferences in total, but I have decided to select only one of them as the primary case. The conference in question is the ECCI X conference, which was put on by IKI and CBS, on behalf of EACI, from October 14 to 17, 2007. Since the planning process plays a significant role in the shaping of the final program, the chapter will focus on both the development of the ECCI X program (the process) as well as the final conference program (the product).

I will begin by presenting the final version of the ECCI X conference program *as it was planned on paper* from my perspective, as opposed to how the plan turned out, which will be dealt with in the next chapter, predominantly through the voices of the participants.

Since the conference planning was a collaborative effort of an organizing committee representing different stakeholders, different views on what a conference is like, and different competences, the final program is also a result of compromises of both a practical and a political nature. This is important to stress for two reasons. First, the structure, culture, organization, and resources of the conference committee obviously plays a huge role in why the conference program turned out as it did. Second, the final program presented here is a reflection of intention more than the ideal version according to the theoretical framework.

I will describe the ECCI X conference planning process as I heard, saw, experienced, and thought about it along the way. This is an important aspect of design-based research, as it helps clarify the context of the design, which

serves as an important backdrop for the subsequent analysis. According to Barab and Squire:

> The goal of design-based research is to lay open and problematize the completed design and resultant implementation in a way that provides insight into the local dynamics. This involves not simply sharing the designed artefact but providing rich descriptions of context, guiding and emerging theory, design features of the intervention, and the impact of these features on participation and learning. Narrative as one way of making sense of design-based research, as a historical method that involves conveying a series of related plots and describing the temporal unfolding of the design over time. (Barab & Squire, 2004)p. 8)

It is, of course, always difficult to establish the boundaries of a case, especially when it concerns a conference planning experience that has lasted almost two years. This narrative is bound to be very messy; as a consequence, I have chosen to present my perspective structured as a number of critical incidents. Also, giving a complete account of the temporal unfolding of the various design elements would be a research endeavor in its own right, and I have therefore chosen to present the final program as it turned out and omit the rough workings of the translation process (aside from the pointers given in the process description).

5.1 CONFERENCE PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The final ECCI X conference program at a glance is illustrated in Table 5. An extended version (and easier readable) version of the program can be found in the Appendix I folder, including the Book of Contributions with abstracts of all presentations.

A thirty-minute documentary film of the ECCI X conference was put together by an Italian film student, Romina Carraro. She chose to structure the film according to the three design principles of interaction, reflection, and involvement, and this movie provides excellent insight into how some of the program elements described below unfolded and a sense of what it was like

being at the conference. The movie is included in the Appendix I folder but can also be downloaded and viewed here: http://bit.ly/eccix

5.1.1 PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The concept of rhythm was applied to the conference structure, both to the four days as a whole and to each day separately. Each day was given keywords to demonstrate its significance in the rhythmic structure, and the four-day structure was planned according to the following logic:

The purpose of the first day, labeled "anxiety and curiosity," is to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere to accommodate the anxious and curious mood of the arriving participants. The program begins at noon, allowing participants from Europe to arrive in the morning, positioning the first conference day somewhere in the middle of a high point and a low point in a dramaturgical sense. If we start with a big bang, reaching the high point at the beginning of the conference, it can only go downhill from there. On the other hand, it is not the intention to begin with something completely dull, either; the point of departure is somewhere in the middle of the two, with the goal being to catch the participants' attention. Participants experience "one of each"—a blue plenary session, a red track session, and a green Reflection Zone—to give them a taste of what to expect of the various activities. The day ends with a yellow social event, which is a reception held at the Danish Design Centre.

Day two is the day where conference participants are deemed the most conference-motivated. They know their way around the venue, they have already connected with some of the other participants, and they are still eager to take more in. Therefore, this day is labeled "adrenalin and schizophrenia" and stuffed with back-to-back activities from early morning until late night, ending with a big party in the Copenhagen JazzHouse.

Table 5: The ECCI X Conference Program

Anxiety - Curiosity SUNDAY Oct. 14, 2007		Adrenalin - Schizophrenia MONDAY Oct. 15, 2007		Reflection - Contemplation TUESDAY Oct. 16, 2007		Connecting - Closing WEDNESDAY Oct. 17, 2007	
		09.00 – 10.15	**Keynotes** Rob Austin (Professor, Harvard Business School) & Marianne Stokholm (Professor, Aalborg University): "Design Dancing: Innovative Interactions and Transformations on a Common Ground."	09.00 – 10.15	**Keynotes** Jacob Buur (Professor, University of Southern Denmark): "Participatory Innovation." Ernst Gundling (Co-founder and Managing Director, Aperian Global): "Working Like an Eight-Armed Goddess."	09.00 – 10.15	**Keynotes** Uffe Elbæk (Chairman, KaosPilot International Board): "Creativity, Yes – But in What Kind of Social and Political Context?" Rolf Smith (Managing Director, The Office of Strategic Innovation): "Turn Your Life into an Expedition."
09.00 – 12.00	Registration	10.15 – 10.30	**Break**	10.15 – 10.30	**Break**	10.15 – 10.30	**Break**
10.00 – 12.00	Blitz Presentation Market	10.30 – 12.00	**Tracks**	10.30 – 12.00	**Tracks**	10.30 – 12.00	**Tracks**
11.30 – 12.00	Lunch	12.00 – 12.45	**Lunch**	12.00 – 12.45	**Lunch**	12.00 – 12.45	**Lunch**
12.00 – 13.30	**Grand Opening** Keynote by Joe Tidd (Professor, University of Sussex) & Scott Isaksen (President, The Creative Problem Solving Group): "The Innovation Challenge – and the Story Behind."	12.45 – 14.15	**Tracks**	12.45 – 13.45	**Reflection Zones**	12.45 – 13.45	**Reflection Zones**
13.30 – 13.45	**Break**	14.15 – 14.30	**Break**	13.45 – 14.00	**Break**	13.45 – 14.00	**Break**
13.45 – 15.15	**Tracks** 13 parallel sessions in the following categories: Paper Jam, Case Series, Toolbox, Crack-the-Nut, Weird Track, Copenhagen Convention, LEGO Mindstorms.	14.30 – 15.15	**(Fast) Tracks**	14.00 – 14.45	**Keynote** Anne Kirah (Dean, 180° Academy): "180° Academy: A Praxis-oriented Education in Concept Making."	14.00 – 15.30	**Grand Closing** Keynote by Kirpal Singh (Associate Professor, Singapore Management University): "Creativity, Innovation, Leadership and Management: The Challenges Across Cultures."
15.15 – 15.30	**Break**	15.15 – 15.30	**Break**	14.45 – 19.00	**Meet the Danes: Futures of Innovation.** (Excursion to 22 Danish companies)	15.30 – 18.00	**Excursion to Christiania**
15.30 – 16.30	**Reflection Zones**	15.30 – 16.30	**Reflection Zones**	19.00 – 21.00	**Copenhagen City Hall**	18.00 – 20.00	**Dinner at Spiseloppen** (not included in conference fee)
16.30 – 17.00	**Plenary**	16.30 – 16.45	**Break**				
17.00 – 17.30	Transport (Shuttlebus)	16.45 – 18.00	**Keynotes** Niels Due Jensen (Chairman, Grundfos Group): "Innovation is the Essence." Jørgen Knudstorp (CEO, The LEGO Group): "Frontiers of Strategic Innovation Towards 2020."				
17.30 – 21.00	**Danish Design Center**	18.00 – 19.00	Transport (Individually)				
		19.00 – 23.00	**Copenhagen JazzHouse**				

ECCI X Program Overview

- Break / Social Event
- Parallel tracks
- Plenary
- Reflection Zones

On day three, conference fatigue sets in (maybe with a little help of a hangover), and the participants' heads begin to fill up. Now it is time to slow down and provide time for contemplation and reflection, the keywords of the day. According to a dramaturgical line of thinking in terms of contrast and variation, day three cannot be a repetition of days one and two. The needed break in routine is achieved by inviting participants on an excursion in the afternoon and introducing a change of venue. The excursion is not touristic but conference-related; participants are divided into groups, each of which visits a Danish company in the vicinity of Copenhagen (see Meet the Danes below).

Day four is the day of connecting and closing. The pace is greater than that of day three, but it is nowhere near the pace of day two. By early morning, people are already heading home in their minds, and some participants have already left. The last pieces of contact information are shared, and deals are closed; some people hang out and are happy with any extra information that falls into their turbans, while others are still searching for that piece of information that will make all the difference to a current problem they are struggling with. The conference program is just a matter of giving room for all of that and providing opportunities to look back on the conference experience and tie the loose ends in terms of future action. Like the first day, day four is shorter to allow people to leave in the afternoon and arrive home the same evening.

Looking at the days separately, they are all designed in an Aristotelian three-act structure of home-away-home. Every morning starts with a plenary session to create a bonfire ambiance where everyone gathers before they disperse into the thirteen parallel track sessions that fill the middle of the day and the Reflection Zones that take place every afternoon. Toward the end of the day, another plenary session is scheduled to provide a common closure. This structure is visualized through colors: blue (home, or together); red, yellow, and green (away from the center); and blue (home and together again).

Surprise elements that are not mentioned in the program are introduced to adhere to the rhythmic principle of variation and contrast. The plenary sessions are scheduled to last seventy-five minutes, but the plenary speakers are given thirty minutes each in order to allow surprise elements to take place at the beginning of the plenary sessions. Due to budgetary concerns, fewer than

planned are carried out. In the end, a birthday song is sung (celebrating the tenth anniversary of the conference series) on the first day, and a conference dance involving all participants takes place on the afternoon of the second day to get the energy up after a long day. The closing session features a Swirl and Swap activity, where participants look back on the conference experience and exchange their most important insights.

5.1.2 PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The ECCI X conference program was built on four different activities: keynotes, tracks, Reflection Zones, and breaks/social functions. In addition, an excursion called Meet the Danes was organized in the afternoon of the third day.

Keynote speeches

The keynote speeches were scheduled to last thirty minutes each, based on the general assumption that it is difficult to keep people's attention for more than twenty minutes and so plenary sessions should be short and concise (Ravn, 2007b). Also, a somewhat large number of keynotes (twelve) were invited, and it would have been impossible to plan a program allowing them an hour each. The keynotes were encouraged to involve the participants during the presentations. Suggestions on how to do this were provided in a briefing note:

> *Ideas for a different presentation format or small techniques to involve the participants:*
> o *Ask the audience to discuss a question with their neighbor for two minutes.*
> o *Ask the audience to vote on a dilemma you have brought up (how many think X and how many think Y?)*
> o *Give only a twenty-minute presentation and take questions from the audience in the last ten minutes. Let the audience know this beforehand so they can prepare written questions during your presentation. Runners will pick up the questions, and the conference host will select the most common/interesting questions. This ensures a faster and more precise Q & A session.*

- *Team up with the other keynote and decide to give only twenty-minute presentations each. The remaining twenty minutes are used by both keynotes to comment/pose questions to each other. Our conference host will be able to facilitate your dialogue.*
- *Team up with the other keynote and take turns presenting in time slots of five minutes, following this format:*
  - *You both decide on a "problem/topic" that is the common thread around which your presentations revolve. You see the problem from two different angles, representing your different approaches.*
  - *You first present: What is the problem? You take turns presenting this, five minutes each.*
  - *You then present: What enhances and impedes the problem? Again, you take turns presenting this, five minutes each.*
  - *Finally, you present: What are the solutions? You take turns presenting as before.*
  - *You have a dialogue for twenty-five to thirty minutes, commenting on each other's perspective. Our conference host will be able to facilitate your dialogue, posing questions if the conversation gets stuck or representing the burning questions that the audience is likely to have.*

Many keynotes accepted the challenge; the majority incorporated questions for discussion in their presentations. One presentation was held as a dialogue, where the first presenter asked the second presenter a question, who would answer for five to seven minutes, throwing the ball back to the first presenter with a new question. Another keynote was held by two presenters, each of whom described a case; this was followed by a common discussion using a framework that was drawn on the floor with chalk. The framework presented different positions, and the presenters placed themselves at the appropriate position on the floor when presenting the perspective of that position. The audience was invited to join the dialogue in the end, and several members did so. (See the Participant Evaluation regarding Keynote Speeches in Section 7.3 for an elaboration.)

Tracks

The tracks, usually thirteen at a time, ran parallel to one another. The number of parallel tracks was calculated based on the number of participants—the more participants, the more tracks; otherwise, the rooms would be too full. We wanted to ensure there was opportunity for interaction and discussion, which would require fewer than thirty people in a room (only twenty would be even better). There were five different track types which included the following:

- **Paper Jam**
  This involved scientific articles submitted mainly by researchers. However, instead of the traditional paper presentations, the three presenters presented one another's papers and gave feedback to ensure a more vivid discussion among the presenters.
- **Case Series**
  Practitioners/consultants presented their latest experiences from a wide variety of organizations.
- **Toolbox**
  Practitioners/consultants shared their tools, tricks, and methods, mainly by giving the participants a hands-on experience where they could try out the tools themselves.
- **Crack the Nut**
  People were asked to submit a problem within the field of creativity and innovation (of a theoretical or practical nature), and the session's participants were asked to help solve the problem. The idea was to have a track type where academics and practitioners could be brought together and attack a problem from a variety of angles.
- **Weird Stuff!**
  Since not all types of contributions could be put in a box labeled paper, case, or tool, the weird track was set up to invite out-of-the-traditional-conference-box contributions.
- **Playroom: LEGO Mindstorms**
  Since the conference theme was co-creation and the development of LEGO Mindstorms is one of the most well-known examples of user-driven innovation, a playroom was set up so participants could try the product themselves. This also allowed participants to be creative together while building robots—true co-creation.

- **Care Cubicle**
  To focus on social innovation, a group organized a sort of think tank on how to create a worldwide virtual innovation infrastructure, or peer-to-peer innovation. The aim was to provide anyone in the world with innovative power otherwise found only in large corporations. Participants were asked to join in with ideas and reflections throughout the conference.

The point of having different track types was threefold. First, the difference in format and content offers different types of experiences in accordance with the rhythmic notion of variation and contrast. Second, the categories forced presentation submitters to reflect on the nature of their contributions, in the hope of helping them to decide on the aim and format of their session. During the submission process that followed the call for contributions, people were asked to indicate which track type they wished to submit their contribution to. Finally, the headings of the track types were used actively in the program as a way of highlighting what to expect from that session and make it easier for the participants to choose which sessions to attend: A paper jam would be researchers presenting, a case would be corporate representatives sharing their hands-on experiences (and possibly a bit of self-branding), and toolboxes would be consultants demonstrating a technique, process, or method (and maybe a bit of sales talk).

Reflection Zones

The Reflection Zones were held once a day in the afternoon to help participants digest the conference experience and connect it to their own practice/future. All participants were split into groups of six to eight participants. An attempt was made to ensure diversity regarding nationality but homogeneity regarding professional interests; when signing up for the conference, participants were asked to check off a number of keywords representing their interests within the field of creativity and innovation. Reflection Zone hosts were recruited from among the participants, many of whom were professional facilitators. Guidelines for the Reflection Zones were provided, but it was essentially up to the facilitators to plan a process for the group. The briefing of the Reflection Zone hosts included the following text:

Your hands are free regarding the design of the process. However, you could consider:

- o *Keeping a balance between the two most commonly used modes of reflection: thinking alone and talking to someone else.*
- o *That participants like to take a materialized output with them (e.g., a small book of notes or similar to help them remember their thoughts).*
- o *That the Reflection Zone on day one could include some element of "get to know one another," as the participants will be in the same Reflection Zone throughout the conference.*
- o *That the Reflection Zone on day two could include a preparation of a performance to be shown at the evening event at JazzHouse. (It is a tradition in the ECCI conference series that some participants perform during one of the evening events.)*
- o *That the last Reflection Zone on day four could include an overall summing-up of the conference experience (looking back) as well as motivation for some course of action that the participants will implement when returning to their organizations (looking ahead).*

When the Reflection Zones were going on, nothing else was scheduled in the program to stress their importance as a part of the learning experience.

Breaks and social functions

Due to an exclusive agreement between the CBS and the company responsible for the canteen, the organizers were forced to use the canteen company for catering. A simple sandwich and soft drinks were served every day, and people were invited to sit around the building, in an attempt to create a very informal atmosphere. Every evening, all participants were invited to come together in the Danish spirit of *hygge* at different venues in Copenhagen, both to provide multiple opportunities for interaction and to cater to the "tourist gene" that many conference participants have.

Meet the Danes: futures of innovation

In the afternoon of the third day, the participants embarked on a field trip. Split up into more than twenty small teams, they visited a number of Danish organizations to help them rethink a variety of specific issues, from input on

the new metro line to rethinking the future of container transportation. The organizations comprised a wide range of Danish corporations and institutions, including Scandinavian Airlines, Grundfos, The Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs, The Danish Architecture Centre, GN Resound, and the Municipality of Copenhagen.

The prelude

Within dramaturgy, stories have a central, moral-oriented claim that the main character sets out to prove (e.g., the world is cruel, love conquers all, etc.). This is called the premise. The plot and resulting conflicts are all related to the premise. In most conference program designs, I have found the premise to be nonexistent or very vague. Few seem to address critical questions: What is the purpose of organizing this conference? What is the message that we want to get across? What kind of outcome do we hope for? Because of this lack of premise, coupled with the fact that conference programs are often put together in a hurry and depend on the mercy of volunteers who would like to speak, most programs go in many directions content-wise. Even if a program is verbally coherent, meaning that the written program offers a sense of coherence by explaining the elements of the program and their relationship to a central theme, this coherence is not always equally obvious during the conference itself. Therefore, I used the concept of a premise as a lever to ensure that all program elements relate to the overall purpose of the conference. The ECCI X conference organizers developed a premise of *co-creation* and wrote a ten-page concept document.

The dramaturgical concept of the prelude (e.g., the first paragraph in a book, the opening scene in a film, or the first note in a musical piece) is extremely important, as this is where the audience's attention is captured, expectations are built, and the premise is communicated. Likewise, at conferences, the openings are an important building block for creating learning through rhythm.

At ECCI X, the prelude was quite different in form and content from the prelude of the three secondary case conferences (the process description below and the theoretical analysis will illuminate how and why), but it featured a performance that introduced the concepts of co-creation and cross-disciplinarity. Three participant types—the academic, the consultant, and the

creative—played by two actors and an actress presented their views of the conference theme, using five communication principles that ensure a good conference culture: 1) act and contribute, 2) listen and give space, 3) show trust and honesty, 4) be appreciative, and 5) change your perspective. The three actors took the principles very literally and changed the form of their presentation as the principles were presented.

The idea was to preempt the potential culture clash that exists among the three different participant groups, as this was a genuine concern for the organization committee based on the experience of previous ECCI conferences. It was also a way to raise the participants' form-awareness, stress that this conference would expect something more/different than other conferences, and remind participants of the communicative virtues required when interacting with people you do not know and who probably have difference beliefs than you.

Conference Moderator

In documentaries and even in some fictional stories, a voice-over narrator during the "in betweens" is commonly used. The narrator takes the audience by the hand and leads them through the (complex) storyline. The narrator also serves as a mouthpiece for the audience, a person with whom the audience can identify. In a conference setting, the equivalent of the narrator is the conference moderator. (*Conference moderator* is the preferred term in this dissertation. Synonyms frequently used are *master of ceremony [MC]*, *conference chair*, and *conference host*, the latter being the word of choice in the ECCI X program.)

A big effort was made to find a conference moderator who could facilitate the course of events, take the participants by the hand, and lead them through the conference by introducing speakers properly, communicating pivotal practical information, and picking up the pieces if anything failed. The conference moderator would also play a big part in creating a good atmosphere, where conference participants would feel secure and at home and hence confident enough to take a leap. In short, the following requirements were established: a strong communicator with a twinkle in his or her eye; a facilitator with a gentle yet firm hand; and a person with journalistic qualities to sum up and pose questions to the keynotes if needed. We also needed a

person who used English as his or her everyday language to avoid heavy use of Danglish (the Danish version of English), which would not be professional in a conference with fifty different nationalities. Through the network of one of the committee members, we found an experienced Danish male journalist who resides in the Middle East as a foreign correspondent.

5.1.3 VENUE

Scenography plays a huge role in dramaturgy, along with musical elements, props, and costumes. In a conference setting, the architecture imposes a strong structural frame for human interaction. Some types of architecture can create communication among people, and other types of architecture can prevent communication from happening or reduce the communication flow considerably.

The conference venue was the new award-winning CBS building, the Wedge, built in 2005 and designed by Lundgaard and Tranberg, who are famous for designing buildings that open up the possibility of communication. An atrium forms the center of the building, with a ceiling four stories high. There are four platforms (mezzanines) in every corner of the ground floor, ten classrooms in various sizes, thirty-three very small group rooms, and a number of open-space areas that could be used for some type of session. See the ECCI X movie in the Appendix I folder to get an impression of the venue.

The spatial layout of the Wedge influenced the program development; tracks and Reflection Zones were held in the classrooms and group rooms, respectively, while the atrium was used as a plenary space for the keynote sessions, even though it is normally not used for presentations. The atrium emphasized the otherness of the conference; keynotes stood in the center of the atrium on the ground floor with the audience all around, almost like a coliseum. There were three types of seating: 1) platforms that undulated around the first floor area in five levels, 2) small beach chairs on the ground floor, and 3) regular chairs on the second floor that looked down over the atrium. The traditional opulent flower arrangements were replaced by candles and single geraniums in small vases.

5.1.4 PROGRAM ELEMENTS AND THE LEARNING-THROUGH-RHYTHM MODEL

The program elements (as intended) and their position in the theoretical framework are illustrated in Figure 10. Some elements are positioned on one of the three axes, while others are placed more toward the center of the triangle—the more central the position, the more the program element was designed to embrace all three dimensions.

Reflection
(Cognitive dimension)

Involvement
(Emotional dimension)

Paper Jams

Moderator

Prelude

Keynotes

Reflection Zones

Weird Stuff

Case Series

Meet the Danes

Conference Dancing

LEGO Mindstorms

Swirl and Swap

Breaks/ Social Functions

Toolbox

Crack the Nut

Interaction
(Social dimension)
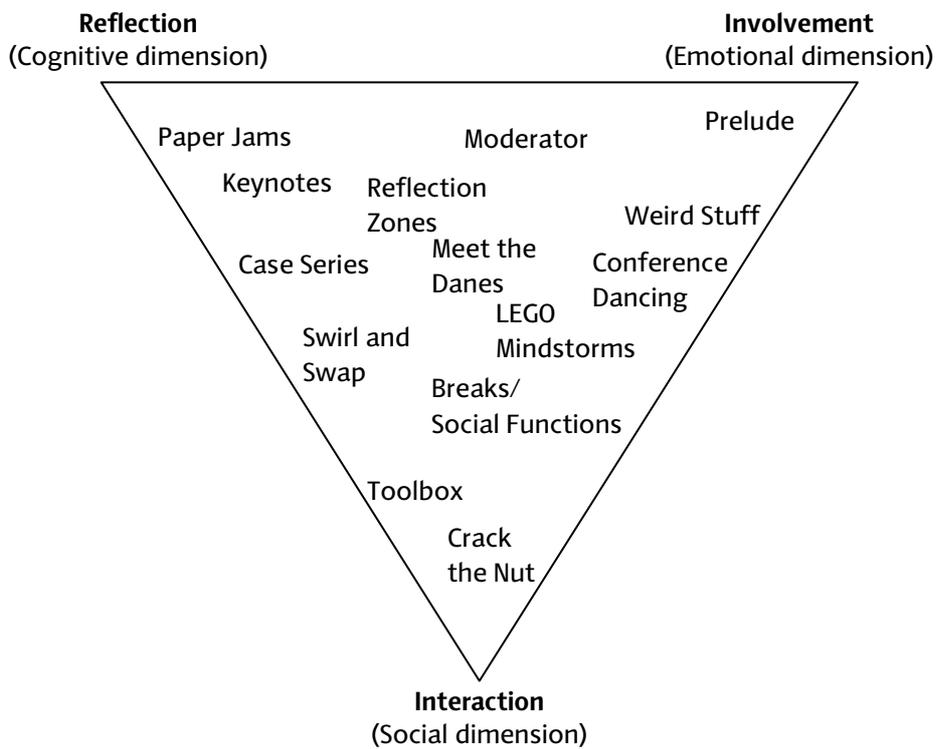
Figure 10: The position of the ECCI X program elements in the learning-through-rhythm model

The positions of some elements are, of course, not easy definable; for example, the formats of the keynotes varied a lot, and the paper jam sessions were interactive for those who presented but only occasionally interactive among the other people present. Also, for purposes of clarity in the diagram, two elements are not placed on top of each other even if they share roughly the same position in the model.

5.2 THE ECCI X PLANNING PROCESS

The following is my version of the ECCI X planning process and not a representation of how the organizing committee as a whole experienced it or how particular committee members see it, although "my story" is, of course, influenced by the reactions I have received from fellow committee members along the way and also somewhat by the conclusions of the evaluative meeting that the committee held immediately after the conference.

I am not presenting my entire story from A to Z, but I will highlight and describe the "critical incidents" (CIs) (Preskill, 1997) of the attempts to implement the design principles into the conference program. The CI method was originally used within (adult) education as a means to facilitate the critical reflection of learners in a learning process by asking them "to write brief descriptions of their experiences that are considered to be significant or memorable" (Preskill, 1997, p. 66). By doing so, they also contribute to an evaluative effort that helps the professor/instructor/teacher adjust the program along the way (short-term perspective) as well as develop his or her teaching skills (long-term perspective). In organizational studies, Hansson and Mønsted (2008) have used the CI method as a structuring principle in the analysis of different interviewees' versions of the same story, tracing the history of a university department by identifying special events or periods that could help explain how two different research units have managed to grow and become very successful.

This is similar to an approach by Abbot (in Barab & Squire, 2004), who suggests to:

> [D]iscuss a case as a sequence of major turning points (kernels) and sets of situational consequences flowing from these kernels. As such, a fundamental challenge in presenting design narratives lies in uncovering these events so that the reader understands their complexity but doing so in a way that lends itself global relevance while at the same time meaningfully capturing the dynamic unfolding of the phenomena. (Barab & Squire, 2004, p. 9)

As a mix of those two CI approaches, I have taken an introspective look on a personal journey (like a student in a learning process), but I have also been

tracing history in a quest to understand how a conference organization copes with introducing and organizing new conference formats. Relevant questions include: What experiments did I suggest during the process? Which ones made it into the final conference program, and which didn't? And, most importantly, why was this so?

I will begin by providing some brief background information on the ECCI X conference organization and then move on to the four CIs of the ECCI X planning process that I have chosen to highlight.

5.2.1 BACKGROUND

As presented in Table 3: Overview of the four case conferences, the planning of ECCI X ran from May 2005 until the conference in October 2007. The organizing committee was chaired by an innovation manager at a large pharmaceutical company in Denmark who was the former chair of IKI. IKI agreed to host the conference together with CBS on behalf of the EAIC.

I was invited onto the ECCI X organizing committee even before my PhD project began. My co-supervisor, Professor Mette Mønsted from CBS, was involved in the planning of the academic program, since IKI is based at CBS. Mette Mønsted suggested my involvement to the planning committee, who welcomed the idea.

All together, the organizing committee included ten participants at the outset, but the conference chair quickly downsized this group to five people— a so-called junta—to make decision-making processes easier. Besides the conference chair and me, the group consisted of the CEO of a consulting and production company that specializes in experience-based communication and learning games, a board member from IKI, and a project manager/student assistant.

Apart from the project manager, the Junta members stayed the same throughout the planning process, although some were more present than others at times. New members came on board to perform specific tasks (such as taking care of submissions or planning specific program elements), and a few left during the process. In the last phase of the planning, a student assistant set up a runner's program to involve students at CBS and to help out during

the conference. A contract was also signed with a PCO, primarily to take care of the budget, registration, and a few other logistical tasks.

My role in the conference planning was to design the overall program structure and ensure that the potential for learning was created. This means that I was not involved in deciding the conference theme, managing the call for contributions (except formulating and planning the organization of the submission form), handling the subsequent submissions, or selecting keynotes. However, I was involved in the conceptualization of the format as well as the planning of when things were going on and where (trying to make the most of the possibilities and restraints of the physical space). To some degree, I was also involved in the communication of the conference format to keynotes, track session chairs, Reflection Zone hosts, and (potential) participants. Finally, I was also included in logistical decisions when these influenced the format (e.g., where to place the coffee tables, food stations, tech center, etc.).

As already mentioned in the methodology chapter, the double role of consultant and researcher posed challenges, as my role in the organizational committee was only seemingly clear; ultimately, all aspects of conference organization are linked to the program format, and I inevitably ended up becoming very involved. This was also due to the fact that all members of the Junta seemed prepared to participate on an idea-generating, strategic level, which left nobody to do the actual work. The conference organization was almost purely run on a voluntary setup, with no management on a day-to-day basis, from May 2005 until late January 2007. In the fall of 2006, it became clear to everyone that we needed a full-time project manager, but this has not been included in the budget. We finally succeeded in finding the funds, as well as a suitable person, who was already employed at CBS, the venue. She was a very experienced project manager but had no conference management experience.

Because of a constant lack of resources, I was forced to watch my boundaries constantly. I had to know when to say yes in order to secure the influence I wanted on the program format and to prevent crucial elements from being dropped from the enactment of the design principles. And I had to know when to say no, because I needed to stay focused on my primary task (writing a doctoral dissertation).

5.2.2 CRITICAL INCIDENTS

The above background description illuminates the context in which the following four critical incidents took place. These incidents are all concerned with the attempt to design and implement conference program elements that would enact the notion of the dramaturgical learning space and, more specifically, the learning-through-rhythm model, as opposed to critical incidents from the organizational aspect of the planning process.

1) Prelude

During the secondary conferences, I had the opportunity to experiment with the preludes, and I found this particular conference element very interesting in the context of the learning-through-rhythm model. But before I even joined the ECCI X committee, the director of the consulting and production company was already on board as a collaborative partner, and he was given the assignment of designing the format for the opening session.

The CEO and I shared an interest in using dramaturgy to enhance meeting experiences, and we were much aligned in our visions and goals. But designing the opening proved to be a difficult task, considering our ambitions; we began planning the opening very late, and the budget was very small. My preference was to repeat the format of one of the other preludes I had previously tried out, primarily because it was a success, and secondly because it would substantiate the research data to have tested similar prelude formats (this was before I realized I would be better off choosing just one conference as the main case). Due to the budgetary concerns, I could not hire the production team I had used before, and the idea was too difficult to realize without their expertise, especially considering the limited timeframe.

Another idea that was put on the table was to go the more event-based route and hire acrobats, musical entertainment, or the like. Since this was very much against the principles stipulated in the learning-through-rhythm model (i.e., to provide entertainment for the sake of entertainment, with no relation to content), I opposed the idea.

A third idea, which ultimately became the solution, was to raise the participants' awareness of form and dramatize the co-creation theme, as described above. The CEO wrote the manuscript and found the actors, and a director of his production team directed the three actors. It was quite

dissimilar in style from the three other preludes I had done, but I found it interesting to see a new attempt at creating a conference prelude. The analysis goes more into depth regarding the prelude as a conference element and compares the experiences of all four conferences.

2) Keynote speeches

According to the role distribution, I was not involved in the content aspect of the conference. At one point, I was "handed over" ten keynote speakers from the head of committee to fit into the program structure. All of them were male, which raised some concerns in the general committee, but since all of the speakers had been approached already, they could not be cancelled. The head of the organizing committee decides to invite two female keynote speakers, resulting in a total of twelve keynote speakers for a four-day conference.

I am well aware that, according to the original sense of the word, there can be only one keynote speaker, usually the opening speaker, who frames the conference theme and pinpoints the core issues that lie ahead for the community. But today, many conferences use the word *keynote* as a synonym for a speaker who addresses all the participants at the same time—for example, a plenary speaker. Since keynote speaker is considered the most prestigious position, being invited as a keynote speaker might convince reluctant speakers to accept the invitation. (Note: It can be argued that the most important speaker is the closing keynote speaker; he or she is often positioned there to keep participants from leaving the conference early, so organizers tend to place who they think will be the most popular toward the end.)

I was very keen to work with the keynote speakers in order to develop new plenary formats that would give the traditional speaker setup a twist. Most organizers like plenary sessions and want to keep them, because they are a marketing tool in those cases where the speaker is a celebrity within the community. And participants do look for great speaker names when deciding whether to attend a conference. However, bad casting from the organizers' side and a lack of presentation skills from the presenter's side often render the great plenary session not so great after all. For the past eight or ten years, the conference trend has been to set up an interview format, often staged in a television studio-like setting. The presentation is facilitated by a journalist (the conference moderator) and directed by the questions posed. This format is not

suitable for all types of knowledge content, and the question is, what are the alternatives? How is it possible to change the plenary speaker format in a way that holds participants' attention all way through, while still keeping the basic elements—the speaker, the seated audience, and the information richness and depth that may lie in a classic presentation?

With dramaturgy as a springboard, I came up with the idea of a 3x3 speaker format while working on the Creating Knowledge IV (CK IV) conference (see the elaborated CK IV conference program description in the Appendix IV folder), and I really wanted to try to implement this in the ECCI X conference as well. The basic idea is to slice up three presentations by three speakers into three acts, where all speakers present in each act. The idea comes from the documentary genre, where a story unfolds through many voices. For example, in a documentary about a shipwreck, the story will often be told by the surviving passengers, different staff members, engineers who investigated the wreck afterward, and so forth. The story is told piece by piece and not by one person. The scenes cut among the different people involved as they present their side of a part of the story.

This "cut-up technique" is adapted to the plenary setting as follows. The three presenters are cast in such a way that each represents a specific perspective on the conference theme (or, even better, on the issues portrayed in the prelude). The session lasts a total of ninety minutes, leaving thirty minutes for each act and eight to ten minutes per presenter in each act. In the first act, the presenters take turn presenting on the question, what is the issue, seen from my perspective? In the second act, they take turns elaborating on the problem by explaining what enhances and impedes the problem in their opinion. In the third act, they take turns presenting their ideas for a solution. One might opt for a question/discussion session at the end of each act.

The 3x3 plenary format proved impossible to implement in the ECCI X conference, since it was deemed inappropriate to demand anything from the plenary speakers, who all agreed to present for free, with only their travel and accommodation costs covered. The compromise was a general briefing letter to all keynote speakers (presented above), encouraging them to reconsider their presentation format and providing a few simple ideas of how to do this. As described above, this was extremely well received and actually did produce an exciting new type of plenary format (including the one of Marianne Stokholm

and Rob Austin, who drew their talking positions with chalk on the floor; see Section 5.1.2).

3) Reflection Zones

The idea of Reflection Zones went through many stages. In the beginning, the idea was to house a number of "creative work zones" that would be scattered throughout the venue's open-space areas. In early versions of the concept, it was noted that each zone was to be "arranged and facilitated by a host, specialized in conveying creative processes and to be used throughout the conference for the various workshops." Many of the potential ECCI participants were professional facilitators, which would help get the community involved. But it was difficult to see how these zones and the creative techniques/processes offered could be matched with and integrated into the program sessions, which are formed by accepted submissions. It was then discussed whether hosts (most likely consultants) should pay a fee to showcase their abilities or even turn the creative work zones into a sort of exhibition where different providers could market their goods and competences; the conference could thereby gain some needed revenue. However, this option seemed too commercial for the ECCI conference identity.

Since I found it difficult to implement the design principle of reflection in a way that truly would make a difference, I suggested that we turn the creative work zones into Reflection Zones, with a professional facilitator to guide the process. I also suggested that these take place in the venue's thirty-five small rooms, for which we were struggling to find a use. The big difference was focusing on the participants instead of the provider/consultant and providing a space where the participants could engage in intentional construal and connect the present with their past experiences. This idea grew on everyone, and the full support for the idea encouraged me to schedule the Reflection Zones every day in the program without any competing program elements. This was to stress the learning intention behind the conference format: that we were serious about the Reflection Zones and believed in them. The rationale was that if some participants were hesitant to join, it would be easier for them to say, "Well, nothing else is going on, so I might as well have a look at what a Reflection Zone is…"

138

4) Integration and Interaction Between Researchers and Practitioners

At previous ECCI conferences, there had been a strong division between the academics and the practitioners (i.e., a separate academic program). At the same time, there were reportedly complaints during the last ECCI conference that it was too difficult to single out which sessions included research papers and which did not.

We talked a lot about how to integrate the groups of researchers and practitioners without compromising the culture of either group, and the most promising idea, put forward by the CEO, were the crack-the-nut workshops. The idea was to let "academics and practitioners join forces in the solving of specific cases. The workshops involve a broad spectrum of topics and themes—from specific product challenges, to personal creativity and innovative processes," as it is written in one version of the concept description.

Besides the integration argument, I found it was a great idea for turning things around. Usually at conferences, there are many "answers," or people who present their advice or version of a solution; but the crack-the-nut workshops did the opposite. They prompted people to come up with questions that were forgotten or simply not posed, or to raise fundamental dilemmas that needed new perspectives. The idea was to gather a group of competent people, both researchers and practitioners, to innovate on the problem together with the audience; the session would be facilitated by an innovation expert.

The new and highly unusual contribution type probably needed an extra marketing effort, which we were not aware of, and we received very few "nut" contributions. These were not enough to create the intended integration between researchers and practitioners, but the idea of getting everyone to innovate together on a number of cases persisted, so the idea of the Meet the Danes workshops during the afternoon of the third day was conceived.

Another angle of attack was the paper jams. There was some reluctance to change the classic presentation format in fear of massive protests, but I was given free reign to experiment. I feel that my innovation competence in this endeavor fell short. I had a number of conversations with a member of the academic review committee, and we came up with a number of suggestions, which all shared the same basic idea: to design a process where the role distribution among the people involved is changed to ensure that the presenters are given proper feedback they can use to improve their work. This

is often lacking in normal academic conference presentations, where there is ample time for discussion after the presentations. One of the ideas was to let an appointed practitioner act as an opponent together with a researcher, but logistically this was difficult to enact. We then came up with the idea of letting the presenters present each other's papers, as described above.

After the notifications of acceptance were sent to everyone, along with an explanation of the format under which the paper jams would take place, the conference manager reported that her inbox was swamped with e-mails from people asking all sorts of questions and airing their concerns. This made her question whether the format really was such a good idea, but the academic review committee member and I persisted that we needed to try something different.

The four critical incidents described here are examples of how the enactment of the design principles was negotiated as well as of the organizational context, with all its possibilities and restraints, which may enhance or impede the possibilities of translating the theoretical framework into reality. They also show an important aspect of design-based research. As depicted in Figure 6: The design-based research process and its potential translation gaps in Section 3.4 in the methodology chapter, it was my intention to minimize potential translation errors as much as possible; if the links in the translation chain were too dissimilar, I would have no clue about what to evaluate and how to determine what I was evaluating. I constantly struggled with the methodological dilemma of trying to influence the conference program as much as I could in accordance with the design principles in order to reduce the discrepancy between the design principles and the conference program and between the conference program (the plan on paper) and the actual conference, when it was held.

The critical incidents also show that many of the discussions in the organizing committee and the diverse assumptions about conference participants and what they want stems from the fact that everyone (including me) thinks they have a patent on what the "right conference" is. Some of these visions overlap, and some don't. Some committee members draw on the tradition of the American Creativity Association (ACA); some draw on the professional conference genre with entertainment elements and spoiled

executives; I have my learning-through-rhythm model and design principles; and others think of classic academic conferences. All of these viewpoints came into play during discussions about what the appropriate format was for ECCI X.

5.2.3 OVERCOMING RESISTANCE

From my perspective, a keyword in the planning process is *resistance*, and I used a great deal of energy to overcome this resistance. In hindsight, I realize that this goes for all four conferences, but an interesting paradox regarding the ECCI X conference planning process existed: While I experienced resistance on some levels, there was, at the same time, a strong culture of creativity and innovation, given the theme of the conference series. This posed another problem: With so many creative and bright people involved, a wealth of ideas was brought to the table at every meeting. It was immensely stimulating but also a bit frustrating, since I had to legitimize myself; I had to work hard to get my ideas across and spend much time negotiating my suggestions. This was a very different position for me compared with the other three conference planning processes, where I was in charge of the program format development. Slowly I worked my way into the ECCI X conference organization, and the closer we got to the conference date, the more elbow space I was granted.

During the planning of the secondary conferences, especially, I had to reassure everyone once in a while that the conference would be great and that there was nothing to be nervous about, even though I honestly did not know whether this was true. This was, of course, a difficult position, and it posed an ethical dilemma: Even though the organizers and I had the same goal, to create a great conference that exceeded the participants' expectations, my agenda was to experiment and not necessarily play it safe, whereas the organizers in general preferred to be on the safe side. I could not admit my uncertainty, as I believed it would start a negative spiral and decrease the likelihood of getting new program elements implemented, as well as the likelihood of them succeeding.

During the running of the conferences, there were also actions of resistance. When conference participants expressed dissatisfaction to one of the organizers about a conference element, the uncertainty of the rightness of the decisions made during the planning process easily grew. Some organizational

committee members wanted to take action immediately and change things on the spot, while others preferred to stick to what had been planned and assess afterward what could have been done differently. These reactions seemed to depend on the organizing committee members' level of buy-in for the overall conference program vision.

I supported the latter standpoint of leaving things as they were, because it was unrealistic and logistically impossible to change major program elements or formats on the spot. All roles and assignments had been distributed and communicated in a script, and with forty people working to get everything in place, we could not deviate too much from the script or chaos would reign. Second, we did not really know if the hearsay was really just hearsay or valid information that should be taken seriously. An example was the paper jam format, where some participants who were employed at one of the sponsoring partners suggested to me on the first conference day that we should change the format, because they experienced a paper jam session that failed completely. They reported that everyone thought the paper jam format was crazy and that no one would show up to the paper jam sessions in the following days. I had to insist on keeping the format for the rest of the conference, because many people had prepared their presentations already, and the data showed later that the story of the paper jam format was more complicated than the buzz seemed to imply.

This goes to show that conference planning can be a complicated, messy affair, with many stakeholders who have diverse opinions, beliefs, and agendas that don't always coincide. ECCI X was probably a conference with more stakeholders than the norm, which had both advantages (idea richness, high degree of community involvement, and willingness to help during the planning process) and disadvantages (chaotic project organization and a wish to please everyone) regarding the enactment of the learning-through-rhythm model.

The remainder of the dissertation will mainly focus on the program elements as they took place during the conference and how they have been evaluated by the participants, and less with the process leading up to these program elements. The next chapter will present how the data were collected and analyzed.

6   DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYTICAL APPROACH

With the first two steps of the design-based research completed (i.e., developing a theoretical framework and translating it into a concrete conference program design), the final step is an evaluation of the enactment of the design. Most design-based research studies use multiple methods for data collection: "Triangulation using multiple methods is one fundamental way to establish robust findings" (Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003, p. 11). Accordingly, a multiple-method research strategy was chosen for evaluating the ECCI X conference, involving both quantitative and qualitative data. Since I am trying to evaluate a conference program design that involves emotions and bodily experiences, I have also deemed it important to use methods that go beyond a purely semantic representation of the conference experience. Hence, I include visual data and visual elements as a means to collect additional (semantic) data, prompting respondents to reflect on their experience in another way (also known as photo-elicitation) (see Harper, 1988; N. J. Petersen & Østergaard, 2005).

6.1   DATA COLLECTION METHODS

See Table 6 (based on the scheme proposed by Andersen, 2005) for an overview of the methods used to evaluate the ECCI X conference. In the following sections, I will elaborate on each of the methods used and then describe how the data have been analyzed.

	Primary data		Secondary data (nonresearcher-driven)
	Stimuli data	**Nonstimuli data**	
Qualitative	▪ **"Interview posts":** Brief interviews with attendees during the conference, conducted by 3 students posing 3-4 questions during breaks (resulting in 150 interviews lasting 3 minutes on average) ▪ **"Photo interviews"** with 5 attendees after the conference (i.e., interviews based on photos that the participants have taken during the conference at my request) ▪ **Evaluative meeting** with the conference organizers after the conference	▪ **Observation** by myself and my supervisor during the entire conference ▪ **Video filming** of 1 Reflection Zone every day of the conference (by a film student, total 4 hours), and 2 other Reflection Zones on the last conference day (by a standalone camera, total 2 hours)	▪ Photo-blogging website for the conference ▪ Blogs and other comments posted by participants on the Internet ▪ Minutes from Reflection Zones, workshops, and so on that participants handed over to me after the conference
Quantitative	▪ **Evaluation form** administered to conference attendees at the end of the conference	▪ **Attendance curve**: Head count at every keynote	

Table 6: Overview of methods used to evaluate the ECCI X conference

6.1.1 INTERVIEW POSTS

Inspired by a short article about how to use responsive evaluation at a professional conference (Spiegel, Bruning, & Giddings, 1999), three students were hired to act as "interview posts" during breaks and lunches, conducting small interviews with participants by posing three to four questions each. This data collection method helped minimize the issue of the double role; the students alone conducted these interviews and came up with their own reactions and follow-up questions during their interactions with attendees, thereby ensuring that I would not be the only person gathering data about the effort I had helped create.

A total of 127 interviews were conducted, lasting anywhere from one minute to ten minutes. The questions posed changed over the course of the four conference days. The questions were:

- What are you expecting from this conference?
- In your opinion, what is the ideal conference like?
- How do you feel about the conference right now?
- Is anything different at this conference than what you thought it would be?
- What do you think about the keynote by XX?
- How would you describe this conference to a friend?
- What do you think of the conference so far?
- To what extent have you heard something new at this conference?
- Are you surprised by anything at this conference?
- How would you sum up your overall feeling about the conference?
- What have been the best and worst aspects of the conference?

The interviews were short, spontaneous, and completely anonymous and gave great insight into the "here and now" during the conference: What do the conference participants think and feel at the very moment when they answered? Not in hindsight, but right now? The interviews provided data about different participant strategies, expectations, and goals. The large number of interviews provides explanations for some of the results of the questionnaire and gives insight into the full participant diversity.

6.1.2 PHOTO INTERVIEWS WITH ATTENDEES

I selected five conference participants and asked them to "take photos during the conference of those moments where you feel like you are learning something—or where you experience any other sense of outcome that you deem important for your work." After the conference I conducted semistructured interviews with the participants on the basis of their photos, asking them, among other things, to organize the photos from the most significant conference moment to the least significant conference moment. Some interviews were conducted the day after the conference, and the last one three weeks after. (See the Appendix I folder for the Photo Interview Guide.)

The participants were selected on the basis of the following parameters to ensure diversity: professional affiliation (academic, business/intern, consultant), field of interest (creativity/innovation), previous experience with the ECCI conferences (yes or no), role at the ECCI X conference (presenter, Reflection Zone host, Meet the Danes host, keynote, or no role), gender, and nationality. For practical reasons, since I couldn't interview everyone on the afternoon of the closing day or fly around the world to conduct interviews, I chose two participants from overseas (Asia and the United States who cold be interviewed on the closing day of the conference or the following day), one from Europe (cheap flight for interview), and two from Denmark.

It should be noted that two participants never replied to my invitation, and two participants declined to participate (one because she felt she would be too busy during the conference, and the other because she would feel too uncomfortable taking photos and possibly offending people involved in situations where she did not take photos, because then she would be stating that this had not been an important moment to her). Finally, one participant agreed to participate, but the film was blank, and at the end of the conference, she was also very reluctant to prioritize the time to do an interview.

Including a visual element as a means to collect data is not unusual within the social sciences and usually falls under such headings as visual sociology, visual ethnography, or visual anthropology (cf. Banks, 2001; Collier & Collier, 1986; Harper, 1988). I have previously written an article about the use of photos in organizational research where I argue that:

Analyses of complex issues in organizations, from assessments of culture to change-related dynamics, are typically guided by semantic exchanges and questions and answers in interviews and surveys. Responses to such questions, however, even when open-ended, are likely to fall within the framework of the researcher or the boundaries imposed by the question. Organizational photography, in contrast, introduces a visual element that allows researchers to pose questions in a way that prompts organizational members to talk about themselves and their everyday working life in a different way. (N. J. Petersen & Østergaard, 2005, p. 229 ff.)

In the same article, I also propose that "there are two basic issues involved in organizational photography: 1) who takes the photos (the researcher or respondent), and 2) how the photos are used in the research (as the final data that can be analyzed as any given 'text' or as a means to 'create' new data)" (N. J. Petersen & Østergaard, 2005, p. 231). In this particular case, the respondents took the photos themselves, and the photos were not analyzed per se but used as a vehicle to elicit their reflections about their conference experience. The interviews have been transcribed and the text analyzed like the other qualitative data. (See Section 6.2 concerning the analytical approach.)

One might argue that this approach not just elicits data but creates them and that the integration of data production into the actual experience alters the experience about which the researcher tries to get data, and hence the experience alters the data. I would argue that some data are always created during an interview, because the respondent is not likely to have a ready answer or preconceived notions to all types of questions. Reflections and the meanings that people attach to their experiences might well be created as a response to questions, as they can be predefined and decided upon beforehand.

To get an idea of how the photo assignment influenced the respondents' conference experience and how they felt about the assignment, I asked all of them the following questions:

- Are there any moments where you forgot to take a photo?
- Are there any moments where you wanted to take a photo but didn't do it because it felt awkward, intrusive, or otherwise inappropriate to do so?
- Any other photos not taken? Why not taken?

- Did you take any photos because you felt you had to—because they knew what you were doing?
- How did the photo assignment influence the way you experienced the conference?
- What do you think of doing an interview this way?

All respondents except one said they never told anyone what they were doing and that the assignment influenced their experience only in the sense that they became more attentive. If the respondents mentioned any moments where they had not taken a photo but wanted to, these were noted one by one on a Post-It and discussed along with the photos. Also, as other research studies using this photographic method show (Holliday, 2000; Staunæs, 1999), it is important to notice the motives that are *not* present in the respondents' photos. For example, I was curious why one respondent did not have any photos of his Reflection Zone, even though he talked very fondly about it. He replied:

> That has something to do with my personality. I almost never take photos of people who are close to me. Because they are in my head. If I lose the photograph, and that person is very significant to me I get a bit emotional about that. Like: Where is the photograph of my mother? Or: Where is the photograph of my wife? So I have stopped taking personal photographs of very close range. And I save it in my head anyway.

It is interesting to note that the respondents report that they forgot to take photos when they were extremely involved in a situation, such as while presenting or participating actively in a session. Other typical situations that were important to them but where they did not take photos were outside the venue; the Danes mention, for example, that they had several learning moments biking to and from the conference venue, reflecting on their conference experience. This is interesting, as one respondent laments about the experience:

> Learning is not a moment—for me not. Learning is a process and suddenly it comes out. Maybe I, in this situation feel—maybe it was that situation but maybe it was because I thought about something

else or something that happened the day before. So what is exactly the learning moment?

Q: So you are saying that your learning moment can easily be disconnected to the situation? And that it often is so?

Yes, it is only one little stimulus in the process. And why do we focus on that stimulus when the whole process might be more interesting? Maybe it comes from all kinds of…Suddenly it is there, but that has nothing to do with the moment. It's maybe just the time that something gets together.

As Chapter 4 on the theoretical framework shows, I concur with the claim that learning is a process. However, asking people to take photos of learning moments is not necessarily contradictory. The point of the exercise is not to establish *the* learning moment of the conference, but to get data about conference outcome in general, with the photos as a helpful reminder and Trojan horse to get the respondents to be specific and provide rich descriptions of their experiences. As already indicated, the advantage of this interview approach is first and foremost that it makes the respondents tell rather than answer and prompts them to reflect on learning moments. The inclusion of the respondents' own visuals help them remember their experiences, and their stories become more specific and rich in detail. Also:

> [I]ntroducing visuals in the research process changes the entire way people reflect on and talk about things—for a variety of reasons. First, the visuals function as a "third party," and third parties always alter interaction patterns. Second, having something "material" to refer to, point at, and center the discussion on also changes the conversation style. Finally, the simple fact that visuals are another way of conveying meaning (beyond words per se) changes the way one "talks" about the presented phenomena. (N. J. Petersen & Østergaard, 2005, p. 230 ff.)

In other words, the photos become conversation pieces and allow the respondent to prioritize the different elements of the conference, because the visual symbolic representations of these elements can be moved around on the table.

Since I was present during the conference as a participant observer and it is mentioned in the program that I have been part of the organization, the respondents may see me in a different light than they would have had I not been part of the organization. In that respect, my role is different from a traditional participant observer, because the respondents' view of me is different (e.g., tied to the event itself); and this may, of course, alter what they choose (consciously or subconsciously) to tell me. Since the interviews turned out to be the most critical reflective data type, especially compared to the interview posts, it does not seem that this has prevented the participants from speaking their minds.

6.1.3 EVALUATIVE MEETINGS WITH CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS

Immediately after each of the first three conferences, I held a meeting with the conference organizers to get an idea of their conference experience, the whole planning process, and the effects of the conferences and the feedback received after the conference. I purposely called these follow-ups with conference organizers meetings and not interviews.

Krøjer (2006) remarks that the objectifying position that is usually granted to an interviewee is often changed in an action research process, because the objectifying function of the interview is decided by the other types of relationships that the interviewer and the interviewee have outside the interview setting. This way, the interview becomes "a sort of parenthesis in the relation" (Krøjer, 2006, p.31). This is very much the case here. But contrary to the experience of Krøjer, where this results in a more personal conversation, I found that I got very little useful information. For starters, they were just as eager to hear about my opinion of the conference and get a preliminary participant evaluation based on the evaluation forms. They were perhaps hesitant about being critical because of all the work I had done for them for free (they repeatedly mentioned this fact throughout the process). Or perhaps it was just easier to focus on the positive things and forget the rest, because they wanted their conference to be a success—and talking about the conference as a success contributes to making it a success. But all in all, it seemed difficult for them to accept my "sudden" role as interviewer.

One of the ECCI X conference participants—a skilled facilitator—offered to facilitate an evaluative meeting of the ECCI X conference. The project manager was very keen on the idea, and since the previous evaluative meetings did not provide crucial new insights, and there were twelve people—a large number—attending the ECCI X evaluative meeting, I decided to go along with this. During the meeting, we were asked to do several things. We molded our process experience in molding mud and explained our work to the others; we worked in different groups discussing the best and worst aspects of the conference planning process while writing down keywords on paper slips that were hung on posters on the wall; and we worked in groups discussing the best aspects of the conference and what recommendations we would make for the next conference organizers.

The main data consist of all the slips and my recollections of the meaning of the keywords as people talked about them. It appeared to be a very open-hearted and honest talk, and thus very valuable. However, since the questions to be discussed were framed in an appreciative way (besides the question of the worst part of the conference planning process), it may also be that the discussion would have been even more critical than was the case.

6.1.4 EVALUATION FORM

The evaluation form was part of the conference package, and throughout the conference participants were repeatedly asked to fill out the form. Questions about all program elements were posed, allowing people to rate content and form separately on a scale from one to five; space for additional comments was included as well. There were also questions about the following:

- What the participants thought of the balance between program content and breaks and between presentations and participant involvement
- To what extent the conference challenged the way they did things at work
- Whether anything or anyone in particular improved the overall outcome of the conference
- What they thought of the pace of the conference
- Whether they were bored at any point during the conference
- Whether there were any parts of the program where time flew by

- What they thought of the mood of the conference
- Whether people at this conference were more open and friendly than conference attendees usually are
- Whether they gained more from participating in this conference than they usually do when attending conferences
- To what extent this conference enabled them to digest presentations, relate the input received during the conference to their past experience, and be involved and interact with other participants, compared to conferences they have previously attended
- Their expectations and whether they were met

Finally, a range of demographic questions were asked. See the Appendix I folder for a copy of the ECCI X conference evaluation form as well as an overview of the results. (The evaluation forms from the three secondary case conferences can be found in their respective Appendix folder.)

The evaluation form provides data about who thinks what on a general level: What program elements get the highest ratings, and which ones get the lowest? What is the overall satisfaction level with the conference? Are there any differences between academics and practitioners, between experienced and less experienced conference-goers, or between ECCI veterans and ECCI newcomers?

The total response rate of the survey was 62 percent. 165 returned the evaluation forms out of 265 participants. According to statistical standards, a population of 265 requires a cohort of 157, i.e. the sample size is representative It should be noted that the participant list counted 367 participants, but in this type of survey, where many respondents are involved in the conference organization with large or small tasks, it is always difficult to determine exactly how many were actually "real" participants. The participant list included, for example, all the runners; academics who participated only in the session they chaired or nonacademic presenters who came only to present and then left; sponsors who never showed up but had been given a free seat; and so on. After assessing the participant list, I cautiously omitted 102 people from the total number of participants for the aforementioned reasons.

Similarly, the evaluation form asked what role the respondent had during the conference, and those who ticked off organizer, presenter/chair of

an academic session, presenter/facilitator in a nonacademic session, Reflection Zone host, and Meet the Danes host are included in the results, since a correlation to the question "In general, how did you like the conference?" does not show a positive bias.

6.1.5 OBSERVATION

During the conferences, my supervisor and I were observers; however, our roles differed. Denzin makes a distinction among being 1) "complete participant," where the researchers hide the purpose of their participation to the objects of study; 2) "participant as observer," where the researcher is constantly present and the objects of study know of the researcher's presence, but the researcher does not participate along with everyone else (although he or she interacts when appropriate); 3) "observer as participant," which is similar to the previous category, but the researcher is present only periodically; and 4) "complete observer," where there is no interaction at all between the researcher and the objects of study.

My supervisor predominantly took on the role as complete participant, while I assumed the role of participant as observer. We both wrote down as much as we could about the way we experienced the conference and our immediate impressions of the participants' reactions. We evaluated each program element qualitatively and assessed to what extent each element embraced each of the design principles on a scale of one to five. The point of having another observer besides me who was familiar with the purpose of the study was cross-validation of the data regarding the enactment and how it differed from the "design on paper" that I planned. Since the other observer was my supervisor, this additionally benefited supervision, as it gave us a common experience and a solid basis for discussions.

6.1.6 VIDEO FILMING

An Italian film student, Romina Carraro, videotaped the conference and produced a documentary film as part of an internship program with the consulting and production company that was part of the organizing committee.

Romina Carraro filmed all the plenary sessions and selected track sessions and followed a Reflection Zone group throughout the conference. The thirty-minute documentary is structured on the basis of the design principles. The film is included in the Appendix I folder but can also be downloaded and viewed here: http://bit.ly/eccix.

It should be noted, however, that I used only the Reflection Zone clips as data material, and I transcribed relevant parts of the dialogue. I later realized that I could have taken greater advantage of the Reflection Zones as a means of gathering data. They provide a great source of information about the participants' sense-making processes, discussions about the conference elements with emerging contrasting perspectives, and insight into the emotional dimension: How do the participants feel? I therefore chose to place a rolling camera on the last day in two additional Reflection Zones.

6.1.7   ATTENDANCE CURVE

The interview posts also counted the number of participants present at every keynote (in the beginning and at the end of each day), as well as at the evening social events, to track the participant volume across the four-day conference.

6.1.8   SECONDARY DATA

According to the classification scheme by Andersen (2005) secondary data are not produced by the initiative of the researcher, but of another party. Such data usually include documents produced with other purposes in mind, such as an annual fiscal report that is then used as data for a different research purpose. In this context, the secondary data are created for the purpose of reflecting on and evaluating the conference, but these efforts were not initiated by me—that is, they were nonresearcher driven. These efforts include the following:

- A start-up company called Piipl, which has developed a photo-blogging website for collaborative innovation, asked the organizing committee for permission to test it during ECCI X conference. Before the conference, participants could upload photos and introduce themselves, and during the

conference, people could also upload photos and comment on them. I have used mainly the comments as data.

- Along the same lines, some participants have written about the ECCI X conference in their personal blogs and other places on the Internet, and I have used Google to find the majority of such comments.

- Toward the end of the conference, several people handed me "products" from a couple of sessions that had included some sort of evaluation of the conference, and Reflection Zone hosts also handed me minutes from their evaluations.

6.1.9 CONCLUSION ON THE RESEARCH METHODS USED

The breadth of the methods employed has ensured that a significant number of participants have been heard. The questionnaires were answered voluntary, participants were selected randomly by the interview posts, and I selected the interview respondents strategically based on specific criteria.

What is interesting here is the bias difference among the three data types. Normally, survey data from questionnaires that are answered voluntary have a positive bias (the lower the response rate, the higher the positive bias), whereas respondents who are asked randomly and remain completely anonymous tend to be the most critical. Interviewees, who are not anonymous to the interviewer but are of course anonymous in the final product, can go both ways, depending on their relationship to the interviewer and the circumstances in which the interview is held.

In this case, the interview posts sampled during the conference provide the most positive data, whereas the photo interviews I conducted after the conference tend to be much more critically reflective. The questionnaires are generally in between, with some aspects rated low and others high, and with both very positive and very negative comments. The overall rating of the conference is extremely high (4.4 out of 5). This leads me to conclude that the combination of the different types of data provides a valid platform for evaluating the conference.

6.2 ANALYTICAL APPROACH

When evaluating an educational program as design-based research, there are two measurement standards. One is the participants' expectations and their definition of *outcome* as formulated during and after the conference. What do the participants expect to take home? What is *outcome* in their view, and in what ways has the conference lived up—or not—to these expectations? Since no information was gathered before the ECCI X conference about people's expectations, wishes, needs, and so forth that could be taken into account when designing the program, this measurement standard relies on hindsight— that is, the data collected during and after the conference about people's expectations.

The other standard is the underlying assumption of the theoretical framework as represented in the final conference program. What kind of outcome is sought to be achieved via the learning-through-rhythm model as enacted by the conference program design? And in what ways, based on the evaluation, do I think that the conference has or hasn't achieved this?

This double task was accomplished by leveraging Kvale's three levels of analysis (Kvale, 1984; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The first level of analysis, *meaning coding*, essentially consisted of the transcription work and the subsequent coding according to themes and keywords. This was the beginning of the analytical process, where I got under the skin of the interviewees and listened to how they describe themselves and their conference experience literally. As the recordings were transformed into words on paper, I suddenly saw and uncovered things I didn't hear during the interview itself. During this typing, I inevitably created a first, preliminary interpretation of what these data said and began constructing themes and codes. Kvale also calls this level *self-perception*; that is, the data are understood on the respondents' own terms.

The second level of analysis consists of *meaning condensation*, that is, a condensation of the meaning of the subject matter on the respondents' terms as understood by the researcher—in this case, a representation of the participants' perceptions of the various conference program elements. Kvale also calls this a *critical common sense analysis*, as it builds on the first level but includes "[…] a broader frame of understanding than the interviewee does him/herself. By including more general knowledge of the content of the

statements, the interpretation of the statement can be expanded and enriched. […] You read between the lines in the text" (Kvale, 1984, p. 60, my translation). The second-level analysis of the ECCI X evaluation data is presented in Chapter 7: Participant Evaluation.

The third level of analysis is a *meaning interpretation* or a *theoretical analysis* and includes "[...] a theoretical framework for the interpretation of the meaning of a statement" (Kvale, 1984, p. 60, my translation). In this case, I coupled the empirical data with the theoretical framework, looking across the immediate empirical phenomena that are dealt with in the critical common sense analysis by using the learning-through-rhythm model and its three design principles as analytical focal points.

In short, the first level of analysis is about *what is said* in the respondents' own words; the second level is about *what is expressed*; and the third level is about *what this is an expression of.*

Table 5, Analysis matrix, combines the critical common sense analysis (chapter 7) and the theoretical analysis (chapter 8) in a matrix that shows how the participant evaluation of the various program elements led to the analytical conclusions that are structured according to the learning-through-rhythm model. Each cell depicts the common points of reference in the data between the two levels of analysis. For example, the cell in the upper-left corner combines the section "overall evaluation" from the participant evaluation and the design principle of reflection. The cell reads, "Young people wanted → Nothing new—but damn inspiring," which means that the participant evaluation shows that conference attendees specifically ask young people to contribute their new and different perspectives that, together with other points from the evaluation, lead to a theoretical point about the importance of newness in conferences to igniting learning processes (see Section 8.1.2.)

		CHAPTER 8: ANALYSIS BASED ON THE LEARNING-THROUGH-RHYTHM MODEL			
		Reflection	**Involvement**	**Interaction**	**Learning-through-rhythm**
CHAPTER 7: PARTICIPANT EVALUATION BASED ON PROGRAM ELEMENTS	**Overall evaluation**	■ Young people wanted → → Nothing new—but damn inspiring	■ Best version of me → Atmosphere ■ Venue → Atmosphere	■ New contacts and relations → Atmosphere ■ Facilitation as relief or straitjacket → Spontaneous or facilitated interaction ■ Participant diversity → Field sustaining and field configuring	■ Format variation → The use of rhythm ■ Participants stayed after conference closing → The use of rhythm
	Keynote speeches	■ Dark horses wanted → Nothing new—but damn inspiring ■ Side-remarks make a big difference → The god of small things		■ Producing and reproducing → Field sustaining and field configuring ■ Peer or expert learning → Field sustaining and field configuring	■ Two keynote speakers format → The use of rhythm
	Track sessions	■ Content substandard → Nothing new—but damn inspiring	■ Psychological outcome → Atmosphere		
	Paper Jams	■ Mutual provocations → Nothing new—but damn inspiring ■ Paper feedback → Nothing new—but damn inspiring	■ Psychological pressure → Atmosphere		■ Sensitive format → Robustness

Reflection Zones	▪ Facilitation → Reflection modes and resistance toward learning	▪ Home base → Atmosphere ▪ Sharing of emotions → Atmosphere	▪ Cross-learning and participant diversity → Field sustaining and field configuring	▪ Resource-demanding → Robustness
Meet the Danes		▪ Personal validation → Atmosphere	▪ Group dynamics → Field Sustaining and Field Configuring	▪ The peak → The Use of Rhythm
Opening/ Closing		▪ Prelude → Fiction versus nonfiction	▪ Swirl and Swap → Spontaneous or Facilitated Interaction	▪ Prelude → The Use of Rhythm
Conference dance		▪ Barrier breaker → Atmosphere	▪ Group pressure ▪ Ethics	▪ Energizer → The use of rhythm
Conference moderator				▪ Narrator → The use of rhythm ▪ Lack of competent hosts → Robustness
Breaks/ evening events			▪ The value of spontaneous conversations → Spontaneous or facilitated interaction	▪ Pauses → The use of rhythm

Table 7: Analysis matrix

I have constructed my analysis of the ECCI X conference by using the software program ATLAS.ti. This program allowed me to code the various types of data in a more detailed way than the old-school methods of cutting and pasting text in various themes or using colors to highlight different keywords. Electronic coding made it easier to assign several codes to the same piece of text and print a coherent text for each keyword.

The coding process was a classical hermeneutical one, where pieces of the text contributed to an understanding of the whole and the understanding of the whole affected how the specific pieces of text were read. As such, the created codes have several origins. Some codes derived from the theoretical framework, some codes were closely tied to empirical situations (specific instances during the conference), and some codes were discovered within the text itself during the sense-making process of the material.

This means that all types of codes (the pre-existing codes of both a theoretical and empirical nature, as well as the ones that "came up" during the coding) influence one another; the finding of new codes leads to a rereading of the already assessed material, and preconceived ideas of "what is what" are altered, leading to a continuous effort of changing code names. Hence, the amount and quality of the data material within each code differ, mainly because you get what you ask for, and what you ask for is guided by your preconceived notions (theoretical as well as personal). Inevitably, my material is a reflection of the questions I have asked and certainly of those I have not asked.

7 PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

In this chapter, the perspective changes; I move away from the organizers' perspective to a participant perspective: What potential and challenges does the conference as a dramaturgical learning space hold in the conference participants' view? As mentioned previously, this chapter is a critical common sense analysis of the ECCI X participants' experiences of the various program elements and draws on all the various types of data that are presented in Table 6: Overview of methods used to evaluate the ECCI X conference. The stories may appear somewhat anecdotal, but they are stepping stones to the analysis based on the learning-through-rhythm model in Chapter 8, which will pick up and elaborate on the points presented here.

When evaluating something, it is always important to clarify the standards informing the evaluation. Since the evaluation of the various program elements is done from a participant perspective, I will begin by providing an overview of who the participants were and what kind of expectations they had, as voiced by the participants themselves at the beginning of the conference (through the interview posts) and quantitatively at the end of the conference (in the questionnaire).

Against this backdrop, I will go into depth regarding the participant evaluation of those aspects of the ECCI X conference that are important from a format point of view—that is, that are relevant as a springboard into the analytical discussion of the theoretical framework in the next chapter.

I will begin by presenting a brief insight into the overall evaluation, including how the participants experienced the overall program format, the conference culture, and the conference atmosphere. I will then move on to the individual program elements, including the keynote speeches, the track sessions in general, the paper jams, the Reflection Zones, and the Meet the Danes excursion. Finally, minor program elements like the opening and closing, the conference dance, the conference moderator, lunch and coffee

breaks, and the evening events will also be touched upon, as these play a significant role in the overall evaluation.

Given my potential positive bias, mentioned in the conclusion of the explanation of research methods used (see Section 6.1.9), I have provided relatively more space in the following text to the critical voices than is expressed in the data. On the same note, it is, of course, interesting to understand why something is good and valuable, but it is all the more interesting to understand why something is criticized, even though it is done by a minority.

7.1 PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS

Lacking knowledge of the expectations of conference participants (as discussed earlier in Section 2.4), I asked the following question in the evaluation form administered to all the participants of the four case conferences: "What kind of outcome did you expect from attending this conference? (Tick off 3-5 items)." Even though the participants from these four conferences were very mixed, ranging from university librarians to IT support staff and from CEOs to researchers, the result is strikingly similar across all four conferences, with the top five reasons being almost identical. The total response rate was 59 percent (351 participants out of 598), and the total result is shown in Table 8: Overview of expectations.

ECCI X		CK IV		Innovation Council		SOS Forum	
To gain new knowledge	85%	To gain new knowledge	92%	To gain new knowledge	71%	To gain new knowledge	96%
To make new contacts	72%	To share knowledge with colleagues	64%	To have a good time	69%	To have a good time	76%
To share knowledge with colleagues	49%	To make new contacts	53%	To make new contacts	67%	To make new contacts	69%
To have a good time	46%	To hear cutting-edge keynote speakers	50%	To hear cutting-edge keynote speakers	35%	To hear cutting-edge keynote speakers	42%
To hear cutting-edge keynote speakers	36%	To have a good time	37%	To bench-mark my organization	22%	To bench-mark my organization	27%
To benchmark myself	23%	To bench-mark my organization	31%	To catch up on old contacts	22%	To share knowledge with colleagues	9%
To catch up on old contacts	22%	To get a break from routine	17%	To benchmark myself	10%	To get a break from routine	9%
To bench-mark my organization	21%	To benchmark myself	14%	To get a break from routine	10%	To benchmark myself	11%
To get a break from routine	14%	To catch up on old contacts	14%	To share knowledge with colleagues	4%	To catch up on old contacts	11%
To seek new job opportunities	10%	Other, please specify:	2%	Other, please specify:	4%	Other, please specify:	2%
Other, please specify:	8%	To seek new job opportunities	2%	To seek new job opportunities	0%	To seek new job opportunities	0%

Table 8: Overview of expectations

The generalizability of the results across participant types and conference types is interesting, because it suggests that the expectations of the ECCI X conference participants are not unique. Hence, the reaction to and evaluation of the ECCI X conference program format is probably not unique, either.

In order to check whether the ECCI X participants have these expectations of conferences in general, the questionnaire posed the question: "Do these expectations differ from the ones you have when attending other conferences? If yes, please specify how." Out of the 144 ECCI X participants who responded, 28 percent answered yes and 72 percent answered no. The most common reason for having different expectations was that people expected more of the ECCI X conference; they expected it to be more fun and more creative, and they expected the conference to provide more new knowledge and facilitate more knowledge sharing and networking.

During interviews at the beginning of the conference, a few participants mentioned explicitly that their expectations were based on previous ECCI experiences and the information sent out beforehand. Some believed that this heightened their expectations:

> I have never seen the amount of organization, invitation, and
> enthusiasm before a conference. I mean just simply the way
> everyone was so on top of e-mailing us, filling us in, even to the
> point of comments, sending us a photograph of this [the venue]. So
> we would know what the typical environment would look like.
> […]. It's really wonderful. So I think the ideal conference would be
> a follow-through of all of those things.

Others mentioned that their contact and communication with the conference organization before the conference lowered their expectations of the level of professionalism of the organization during the conference. They found preconference information to be overwhelming: "Too much and too late information." For example, clear directions to the conference venue were not provided. Overall, the conference organization before the conference was rated 3.9 out of 5.

Including the qualitative data provides a deeper understanding of what the participants understand by those expectations that are listed as response options. These will be discussed below.

7.1.1 NEW KNOWLEDGE

Gaining new knowledge is, not surprisingly, a top-rated item, but it is an ambiguous statement. The intended meaning was "something I did not know before and is valuable for my work," but the qualitative data provide a wide variety of nuances of this intended meaning.

The majority of the participants were looking for new creativity and innovation tools, methods, and techniques. This covers techniques for facilitating creative meetings, techniques for increasing their own creativity, ways of improving development processes through the use of creativity, and methods to handle the innovation process in a way that will lead to products. It also includes tools for measuring the effectiveness of different approaches.

Besides looking for tools for "how to do things," people were also looking for cases on "how to implement things," such as learning from "organizations that are more established and advanced in what they are doing." Non-Europeans were particularly interested in getting insights into European practices and experiences and bringing these back to other parts of the world.

But overall, the majority was looking for something concrete and practical. When asked about their expectations and goals, some participants explicitly stated, "I hope there will be a lot of concrete tools that I can take home and use—or get inspired by. […] Exercises, ways of working that I get a chance to try in practice [during the conference]. More than long theoretical dissertations and analysis." One participant argued that connecting and sharing practices and experiences was the most relevant features of a conference since theory can be read in books.

Others mentioned that they were not as interested in exact tools for how to become more creative or how to train people to become more creative, but were more interested in knowledge of what conditions are to be set in an organization to enable people to show their creativity. This taps into the more academic dimension of the conference, as some people expected to find high-level academic knowledge and wanted to learn from academia/research and put it into practice. However, the desire for these aspects does not seem to be as dominant as the wish for tools among the participants.

A large proportion of the participants seemed to be newcomers to the field who were using the conference to get closer to the subject and learn from those who were more experienced. Others had similar browsing goals, hoping

to get an overview of the field at a glance (what are people within the field working on?) and get an idea of where the field is going. One participant mentioned that he was looking forward to experiencing the variation and that he didn't want too many one-way presentations. Others said they were very open and had no expectations; they were just looking forward to soaking it all up: "I'm a sponge walking around. A sponge!"

7.1.2 NEW CONTACTS

It is again not surprising that networking was important to conference participants. But it is surprising how many people actually attended conferences to make *new* contacts rather than catch up on old ones (72 percent and 22 percent, respectively, at the ECCI X conference, and 60 percent and 15 percent in the secondary case conferences). This is surprising because participants' behavior at conferences—particularly those dominated by Northern Europeans—seemed contradictory to this fact. Many conference participants tended to stick with colleagues from the same organization or other people they knew beforehand (e.g., catching up on old contacts) and made minimal effort to contact people they didn't already know. But the numbers indicate that people were much more eager to meet new people than their behavior indicates.

The qualitative data support this, as the majority emphasized their wish for creating new contacts; some were explicitly looking for new business partners, international research partners, or clients (the latter is probably due to the many freelance consultants present at ECCI X). Others wanted to connect in order to share experiences ("share knowledge with colleagues" was important to 49 percent of the ECCI X participants). In this respect, it is interesting that several ECCI X participants mentioned that they were interested in meeting different people with different opinions and approaches in order to get an understanding of the different views on innovation that exist; that is, these participants were explicitly looking for diversity and hoping to be challenged on the way they look at things. Some voiced their gratitude for being able to meet people who share their interests, as many feel quite alone on an everyday basis with their particular creative approach to innovation.

166

7.1.3 A GOOD TIME

In the questionnaire, 46 percent ticked off that they expected to have a good time, but this is not so present in the qualitative data; only few mentioned this explicitly as a reason to come. It is often inferred that many people are not attending conferences because they wish to become more knowledgeable within an area or because of the networking per se, but because they simply want to escape the intricacies of everyday work. This idea turns conferences into places where people finally get a chance to relax—where they expect to be entertained, where the highlights of the day are the gorgeous meals and maybe even a bit of conference sex on the side. Granted, that type of conference attendee behavior (and those types of conferences where socializing and fun seem to be the *main* purpose, such as incentive tours with conference activities built in for tax deduction purposes) does exist, but these motives do not seem to be primary drivers for the participants who attended the case conferences in this project.

This may be due to the nature of the conferences dealt with in this project (knowledge-intensive, voluntary participation), and it may be part of a growing general tendency toward time-efficiency, as mentioned by the conference manager cited in the introduction of the thesis. However, participants certainly expected conference attendance to be an experience and also a pleasant one.

7.1.4 KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Keynote or expert speakers are often considered the backbone structure of a conference program, for two reasons: The organizers want to "give information" to participants about a certain topic (to make sure they "get this"), and the program has to sell tickets. A keynote "with a name" within a particular community is often considered the only way to fulfill both ambitions, and hence it becomes the most important marketing tool for attracting attendees. It is assumed that a strong keynote signals the following:

1. This conference is serious (we have managed to get X on the program!)
2. You will get your money's worth (X, who we all know is one of the leaders in our field, is sharing his or her insights with us)
3. It will be a great experience (imagine, you get to see X live!)

While this survey has no premeasurements on what made the participants sign up, it is striking that only 36 percent of the ECCI X participants expected to hear cutting-edge keynote speakers. According to the qualitative data, very few ECCI X participants mentioned the keynote speakers when asked about their expectations for the conference. The somewhat low percentage may indicate that the attendees already knew about the program and did not expect the keynote speeches to be "the thing" at this particular conference, but the tendency is similar in the data of the three secondary conferences: 50 percent, 35 percent, and 42 percent answer "cutting-edge keynotes" when asked about their expected outcome.

7.1.5 BENCHMARKING

Organizational benchmarking seemed important to the participants of the two professional conferences, whereas the library conference participants didn't rate this as high. ECCI X participants were quite interested in benchmarking themselves, compared to the secondary conference cases (23 percent and 13 percent, respectively), which corresponds well with the significantly higher percentage of ECCI X participants who attended the conference with the specific goal of networking themselves into a new job (10 percent, compared to the 1 percent of the secondary case conference participants). This is possibly due to the fact that many ECCI X participants are freelance/independent consultants. This indicates that conferences are also an opportunity to show off, but this does not play the main role.

To summarize, the participants at the ECCI X conference were quite tool-oriented and expected new knowledge in the form of tools, methods, techniques, and case experiences. They also expected to meet new people. And even though conferences may be somewhat of an opportunity to show off (benchmarking), this does not play a major role, according to the participants' self-reports. They are also time-efficient and business-oriented, and although

they would like the conference to be an enjoyable experience, they are wary of spending time on meaningless entertainment elements.

This leads to an important point: The list of participant expectations cited by Seekings (1996) in Section 2.4 is what conference organizers normally believe to be at stake. But now it becomes clear that this list overemphasizes the enjoyment aspect (words and phrases like *pleasant*, *entertaining*, and *break from routine* dominate) and underestimates the outcome dimension in terms of new knowledge or creating new contacts (i.e., ensuring the content quality).

The data results reported above are expressions of expectations only, and while hints about actual outcome already have been made, the remainder of this chapter will explore these issues in depth.

7.2 OVERALL EVALUATION

Question	Mean	St. Dv.
In general, how did you like the conference?	4.4	0.73
Were people at this conference more open and friendly than conference attendees usually are?	4.3	0.70
To what extent has this conference challenged the way you do things at work?	3.3	0.81
Have you gained more from participating in this conference than you normally do when attending conferences?	3.9	0.97
By and large, to what extent have your expectations been met?	4.0	0.87

Table 9: Selected survey results

As Table 9: Selected survey results shows, the rating for the general liking of the conference is quite high; in fact, it is higher than any separate rating of the various individual conference elements, except for the Meet the Danes session. Also, the rating for friendliness of other attendees is high, which is an indicator of the good atmosphere of the conference. This point will be elaborated below.

At the same time, the score is low in terms of the degree to which the participants have been challenged (which is a parameter intended to measure the potential for perspective transformation). The response to the question of gain is neither high nor low. Since the question is relative to previous conference experiences, it may be that the ECCI X conference participants in general attend great conferences (which would undermine the premise of this project that most conferences are substandard) or that ECCI X did not live up to standards in terms of tangible outcome. These interesting results will be explored throughout the remainder of the participant evaluation, particularly in the next section regarding program format and conference culture.

The quality of the organization before the conference was rated 3.9, and the quality of the organization during the conference was rated 4.4. Preconference communication plays a huge role in adjusting mutual expectations and conveying what kind of conference the participants can expect. Participants form their first impressions of the professional level of the conference through the website interface, the way the registration is handled, the way preconference questions are dealt with, and so forth.

Many participants commented that the preconference communication was chaotic, mainly because they received too many e-mails with too much information, whereas vital information, such as the venue address and directions, was missing. Many also commented critically on the conference bureau that handled the registration, mainly that they were slow in replying.

"Very poor event management apart from yellow shirts" and "Helpful but non-pro feeling" are also comments made regarding the organization during the conference. Some of these comments are probably connected to general dissatisfaction with the catering and the logistical hiccups that occurred during the conference. On the other hand, many found the exact opposite to be the case. As indicated, the ratings of the conference organization during the conference went up compared to the pre-conference organization: "I think it was very professionally planned. […] Right from the first moment, the opening scene, you could sense that this was a high-level conference and that it had been professionally planned. Then your expectations go up accordingly."

A group of twenty-five students called runners (who were dressed in yellow shirts) took turns helping out during the conference. In return, they were allowed to participate in the conference activities as regular participants

on those days where they were not working. The runners seemed to add to the conference experience of the regular participants, and many praised their presence and behavior. Some even asked for more involvement from younger participants and a better integration of students. This may be another indicator of a quest for "newness":

> I personally would have loved to see more young people participating directly in the conference. […] But many of them were saying that a lot of what went on really didn't interest them very much. Because we were talking from a historical perspective and we were, like, making ourselves happy. Like, I'm talking to a lot of converts, but the young people are in a different zone altogether. They exist in a different world.

Given that the conference theme was creativity and innovation, it seems that many link their evaluation of the conference format to their understanding of creativity and innovation, assessing whether the format is creative and/or innovative according to their understanding. There is a huge difference between the two overall reactions to the conference format, which can be summed up as follows: the positive, as in, "This conference is different, and I love it!" and the more negative (and cynical), as in, "This conference tries to be creative and innovative but really, it isn't—I expected something more."

The majority made positive comments on the overall conference format, as in the following selection of quotations:

- "I think that the idea of involving people has been quite excellent. Of course, you always have this intention [when you organize] a conference but I have not seen any where it has been as consistent as here. So that dimension has been very good."

- "That is my great learning out of this conference—that you can actually go to a conference and learn more about yourself and about the work you are doing. That has given me a very warm feeling."

- Q: What do you think of the conference so far?

  "Phenomenal! It is the first time that I am attending a conference like this, with formalized creativity, so for me it is a great boost, like wow!"

- Q: What things do you like here?

  "The participation. I think by doing things—it made it easier for me to learn. […] Not just to listen to some papers and presentations and stuff. That's what I think."

Reports were that some participants did not enjoy the conference at all and left on the second day, never to return. The negative comments are concerned with the fact that they expected the conference to be more creative and innovative, or that they found that the conference did it the wrong way according to their understanding of what it meant to be creative:

- "I thought it would be more spacey. More different…that is what I expected. […] I am not impressed by the fact that someone draws a big chalk circle on the floor—really, I am not."

- "The perfect conference is a quiet and professional context around good content—not a circus in itself. It feels like ECCI X has already defined creativity as hullabaloo and get-to-know-each-other instead of letting the presenters and the participants draw their individual conclusions on the concepts' own terms."

- "Format-wise, I think it is a misunderstanding to plan a creative conference but not be professional in the execution of it. It's been too sloppy, and there [have] been too many failures. There [have] been some awkward moments where everyone curled their toes, I mean the three actors, and then think that you have been creative…That was just not good enough."

- "I was surprised by the format of the conference—that creativity, for example, is a blues guitar player playing the background—that is very old-school to me, I mean kind of kitsch creativity. And it is not something that I connect with a 'cutting-edge creativity community.' And I think there has been too much form and too little content that way."

To summarize, the above suggests that there are two overall reactions to the conference. A majority of the participants loved it, and a smaller group expressed disappointment. Overall, it seems that neither group was challenged

content-wise. Satisfaction with the logistics went up during the conference, particularly due to the student helpers ("yellow shirts"), and many would have liked to see more young people involved.

These overall reactions provide preliminary insight into some of the central issues of the participant evaluation, and they also clearly indicate that evaluations are always relative to expectations and previous experiences with the conference genre, particularly with creativity/innovation conferences.

7.2.1 PROGRAM FORMAT

The overall program structure of the four conference days (with the first day labeled "anxiety and curiosity," the second day "adrenalin and schizophrenia," the third day "reflection and contemplation," and the fourth day "connecting and closing") seemed to be in accordance with how the participants felt during the conference. Several participants mentioned this overall structure when commenting on the program format. During a Reflection Zone, the following conversation took place:

> Participant X: But it all starts to wrap up to me. It is really…
> Actually, before I came to this, innovation was a big thing out here, oh, what is it? What are we gonna do about it? And it starts to make sense to me, and I can actually link it all up to these maybe four or five big statements that I have taken in. […] So I think it's all starting to link together. So I don't think you really have to go to all the sessions to make sure you get anything out of it. I think I'm digesting today.
>
> Facilitator: Yeah.
>
> Participant X: Don't you have that? You need to digest?
>
> Facilitator: I think it is also the way they set up the days. The first day, how do they call it?
>
> Participant X: Anxiety and…

> Facilitator: …curiosity. The second day is schizophrenia and today is contemplation and reflection. So you are going with the flow! [All laugh very loud]
>
> Participant X: I'm complying with the program!

Following the rhythmic principles of variation, repetition, and contrast, the program changed among different formats. Many participants commented positively on this:

- "I liked the variation between being active myself and Meet the Danes and listening to presentations and walk around and talk to others. I think there was good balance between professional input and reflection. [Pause]. Yes, very pleasant."

- "If I compare with an academic conference or the like, then this is 100 times better."

  > Q: /Yes. Why?

  > "Well, I think it means a lot with that kind of diversity—that things happen in different ways and that there is room for many ways to present something."

Only one participant expressed a dislike for what he or she calls "the many 'stop and go' in the tempo," where track session are energetic and Reflection Zones more quiet. The quotation is harvested from the interview posts, and, unfortunately, the interviewer does not ask for an elaboration on this viewpoint. Another participant replies this way when asked how he or she feels about the conference right now:

> A bit ambivalent, because I like the short sessions, which imply that you need to get up and move around and move from where you are and to a different surrounding. This makes you keep your attention—that you don't sit and get all tired. On the other hand, the sessions are so compressed that you sometimes wish you had heard more—but there is no time, is there. And there are so many interesting things going on that you are also afraid you might miss something really exciting, right.

The last point, about the overwhelming number of program choices, is repeated frequently by the participants. Even though the quantitative data suggest that only 20 percent wanted more/longer breaks and a few even add that the program was "airy," the qualitative data are full of utterances about the "pressed program" and the overwhelming number of parallel tracks. Some participants also lamented that the forty-five-minute sessions had been too short and that they needed more time to discuss and go more in-depth into the issues at hand.

Many Danes, in particular, expressed concern for the many parallel tracks and found the program navigation to be difficult. This may be due to the fact that most professional conferences in Denmark have only two tracks, while conferences in the United States, for example, have more parallel tracks, because the number of participants is in general much higher. But everybody agrees that the level of frustration is inversely proportional to the amount of preparation that participants have put into attending the conference.

An important ingredient in carrying out the conference format was facilitation. The conference moderator instructed the participants to participate in different kinds of activities, and the keynote speakers, Reflection Zone hosts, and some session speakers also facilitated various processes, exercises, and activities. As mentioned several times before, many conference participants hoped to meet new people and communicate with fellow participants, and it seems that the assumption upon which the conference program design is built—that many participants need facilitated processes to do so—is not completely wrong. Some participants commented as follows:

- "I liked that you had to turn and talk to another person about the question asked by the speaker."

- "I think it is good that so much is done to ensure that people meet each other and create contacts—that you are being helped to begin the conversation."

- "[What] happens during conferences is that we talk to people we know or to people we've talked to before, […] and so I think that can sometimes interfere with the way we meet people or not be the most productive way to meet new people. I think a lot of people are looking

for something that will tell them or give them a format which will introduce them to someone new and talk about themselves without having to worry about the particular dynamics of our unstructured room—so I think activities which really do facilitate people give the opportunity to meet many other people even if it is for a short time."

However, this type of conference format, which "structures" the conference participants' behavior to a greater extent, also provokes negative reactions. Some participants resented it immensely, as they felt like marionettes that were forced to behave on command: reflect now, discuss this, do that. A participant explains:

I needed much more space for myself, literally, and also time for myself [...]. I would have liked more facilities, time, slots. Reflection was organized. You were in that group, you go there, and you have to reflect. I am always reflecting in conferences, but I select my people and my moments. It was over-organized when you have to reflect, when you have to talk to your neighbor, when you have to close your eyes, when you have to eat and to listen. [...] It is an example of over-design. Good intentions, nice, creative, true, but does it really fit the needs of the people for a conference? I don't know."

These comments show that participants have fundamentally different perspectives on the value of spontaneous interaction and facilitated interaction. For some, the latter is a relief, and for others it becomes rather like a straightjacket. This issue will be dealt with thoroughly in the analysis.

7.2.2 CONFERENCE CULTURE

The participants made many comments about what I will label "the ECCI X conference culture," that is, the other participants' behavior and the different approaches to creativity and innovation that were expressed through this behavior.

Since ECCI X was a conference on creativity and innovation, many discussions among the participants related to the central question: What is creativity, and how is it linked to innovation? There seemed to be a power

struggle in defining what it means to be creative when innovating and what kind of creativity should be applied in order to enhance the innovation process. There also seemed to be some discussion about balancing the importance of the two concepts, and some felt that the creativity dimension was too dominant in proportion to the innovation dimension.

As previously stated, the participants' different views on creativity and innovation influenced their evaluation of the conference format and content. For example, on the conference blog, somebody posted a photo from a session where people were wearing hats made out of newspapers and posed the following question: "Using drama and Greek myths to solve a real problem. What did you think of this session?" In the comments section, someone asks rhetorically, "Will people in big paper hats be better at innovating?"

In other words, this blogger mocks the type of creative activities and expressions that includes the wearing of hats. Other participants are also provoked by the creative props that some participants carry and have difficulties accepting those participants who displayed cliché-creative types of behavior, as they call it. One participant commented:

> Another reflection on the conference is that I was surprised to see, you know, a kind of clown-ness behavior. Let me put it that way. You know, the feather people, the hat people, all kinds of expressions: Look at me, I'm so creative. It is about studying the topic. If you are studying the topic of psychiatrics, there is no need to behave like a psychic [mentally ill person, ed]. I didn't like that so much. To make that mixture of what you study and how you behave.

It seems that the conference behavior described in the above quotes particularly provoked the academics and that a culture clash between the academic conference tradition and that of professional conferences with industry people and consultants emerged. It is clear that participants used the researcher/practitioner dichotomy as an evaluation parameter and that their belonging to either field directed their program navigation. Researchers avoided the toolbox sessions and the weird stuff, and to some degree the case series, while practitioners avoided the paper jams. A participant from academia reflects on his program choices:

If I were to choose differently, I would not have participated in two of those paper jams—or I even think that I went to three. Considering the multifarious offers…Maybe it was because I was set on getting the real deal in that…

Q: Oh, in the academic world?

Yes. All those different "let's stand in a circle and play some instruments" —there were loads of them, and I acknowledge them, they are good, but I don't need to know more about them.

Q: You don't need to participate in those…

No, not really. […] It is really fun to try, but I wanted to focus on something else: What you get out of it [creativity] instead of doing it.

The above quote also demonstrates that there is a fundamental difference between how the researchers and the practitioners understand the concept of knowledge and how they value different types of knowledge, which also led most participants from academia to evaluate the research dimension of the conference to be below standard. An academic participant says:

There are so many people who have presented their views, but where is the evidence? That is my worry. In the few sessions that I was with consultants—they have all their models and all their phases, and they are all enthusiastic, and it really works, but you know it is consultants, and they are not reflecting: Is it really true? Why is it true? What does really work? What does not work? And for whom? And these questions are not asked. The answers are given, but the questions are not asked. And for a field to grow, you must have some theoretical base, some scientific reflections and more than here.

Similarly, some participants from nonacademic fields (consultants and industry people) expressed dislike for the academic conference approach: "I'm a consultant and from a research point of view I acknowledge that it is interesting to discuss definitions and connections and systemic points of view

of creativity and innovation. But from a consultant's point of view, these academic considerations are not so interesting."

Although there were irreconcilable differences between certain groups of participants, it is interesting that the participant diversity and program variety is mentioned repeatedly as a significant surplus value of attending the conference. Comments like the following are commonly found in the data material:

- "It's important to have a mix—academic people, organizational people—I think this mix helps us to see new perspectives. I am liking this conference." (Industry representative)

- "Part of the reason I came here was to learn more about the new sciences and the new work being done on creativity and innovation. […] Probably next week or the week after when all this soaks in a little bit—I think there is a lot applicability from the different paper jams that I can take out and into the industry." (Industry representative)

- "I think it is interesting to mix the academic paper format with consultants marketing their methods and companies sharing how they have done things." (Unknown participant type, probably researcher)

- "I guess I'm surprised by the diversity—and very happy about that. There are so many people from so many different areas that if you didn't learn something here it was your own fault." (Consultant)

The question is, of course, whether these dichotomies—researcher/practitioner and creativity/innovation—are so explicit because they were already inherent in the conference setup (i.e., the explicit references made during the prelude) or something that would be present in the data regardless.

To summarize the conference culture, there was extreme participant diversity at the ECCI X conference, and there seemed to be a clash between the researchers' and the practitioners' views of what knowledge is and how to approach the creativity dimension in theory and how to express it in a conference context. At the same time, people found the participant diversity and program variety to be a huge surplus value in terms of outcome.

7.2.3 ATMOSPHERE

ECCI X attendees found other conference attendees to be more open and friendly than they usually are (rated 4.3 out of 5). The qualitative data also strongly indicate that the true value of the ECCI X conference attendance lay in the networking aspect and that attendees made more *new* contacts at ECCI X than they usually do when attending conferences: "I am pleasantly surprised all the way around. That is all I can say—I can't think of any other way to say it. I mean, I have gained a fantastic network, like I said. Maybe it surprised me that it happened so fast."

Some participants reported that they made more than twenty new contacts and that they will probably stay in touch with three to five of those. Other participants said that they never make any new contacts at conferences but that this time they made a couple of valuable connections. Many participants emphasized the informal atmosphere when asked about their satisfaction with the conference, in the same breath in which they talked about the good networking conditions. A participant gave an example of how she experienced the social climate:

> By accident, I sat next to [X] at lunch, and then we talked and then she introduced me to [Y], whom she had met in South Africa at another conference. They were very warm, both of them, laughing and smiling. It just brought about a good atmosphere that you can sit next to a complete stranger and start talking as if you have known each other for years. There were no barriers there or the like. That is not something you experience at other conferences. That you just talk to people. […] It is very contagious and very quickly you exert the same behavior toward others.

Another participant explains, "I find it much more informal than I expected. Which is good. That's a good thing! I need to speak to [X] in a while, and it is so informal that I don't have to put on a show." An important point is hidden here: People felt free to be "as they are" instead of playing the usual conference participant role, where you strike a certain attitude that you may not even be comfortable with. The ability to create conditions where people are the best versions of themselves—where they look their best in front of other

participants, and where they feel comfortable and good about themselves—is key.

It is an obvious conclusion that there is a positive causal relationship between the nice conference atmosphere and the amount of networking opportunities. The more people feel at ease, the more open they are. Since making new contacts is one of the most important conference outcomes according to the conference attendees who have attended the four conferences in this PhD project, it becomes all the more interesting to get an idea of what created this atmosphere. Also, the gap between the overall rating of the conference and the rating of isolated conference program elements indicates that there is a missing link—that something extra added to the overall conference in order for 2 + 2 to become 5. If the atmosphere is *it*, what contributed to creating this atmosphere? The methodological research strategy used in this project does not allow for an isolation of phenomena, and I am thus not able to measure exactly what did the trick. However, the qualitative data provide some indications. The following quote suggests that the whole conference setup enabled people to be more open and played a role in creating the ECCI X conference atmosphere:

> I have participated before in a lot of conferences, and I have never experienced anything this fantastic! And it is in particular…What I take with me from here will be how you—by choosing the right format—can get so many people to interact with one another. I have never experienced this kind of openness. I don't think there has been either more or less quality in each element, but the combination and the openness…

In one of the Reflection Zones, a participant explained to her fellow members how the conference format influenced her conference experience:

> I was not here yesterday, but I learned something very important that I wanted to share with you. One thing I learned in this conference—you are forced to give people you might consider weird to begin with a second chance. And when you do, you realize what a gift it is to give people a second chance. You look at someone and you think: Nahh, he speaks weird or he says something I didn't like, I really don't want to…But here, we have to communicate all the

time—you come, you start talking to them, and after five minutes
you go: Wauw, I almost missed that! I almost missed that learning,
I almost missed that opportunity! And in real life—well, I'm very,
very bad at that. In real life, I either shut the door or I never open
the door for people, and you don't get a second chance in real life.

This idea suggests that the strategy of the program design—to create opportunities for interaction among attendees around content (i.e., during the plenary sessions, with the small activities prompting participants to interact, or in the Reflection Zones), instead of having networking activities for the sake of networking activities—was quite successful, because it created a social learning environment where attendees challenged one another to see things from new or different perspectives. People were open-minded and inclusive in their behavior to embrace this, and the informal atmosphere enabled the creation of *relationships.* A participant said that he connected with approximately twenty-five people (i.e., they exchanged business cards), and, of those, he has begun developing (long-term) relationships with approximately four people; thus, there is a qualitative difference between just establishing contacts and developing relationships. This will be explored further in the analysis, where I will take a closer look at the consequences of the ECCI X conference atmosphere on participant behavior.

It might be argued that it was nothing the organizers did and not the program design in general that created the informal atmosphere—that, rather, it was the participants themselves who did it by being who they are, and that their particular way of being a conference participant is different from normal conference participant behavior. When commenting on the atmosphere, most participants mentioned that people working within the area of innovation and creativity are more networking-minded. However, a participant arrived at the conclusion that other conferences she has attended with the same type of participants did not produce this kind of atmosphere:

Maybe it is due to the type of participants who are here. But before,
it has also been teachers and those types of people who are
preoccupied with creativity—and it has not been the same thing at
all. So this conference has succeeded in creating an atmosphere
which prompts everyone to talk to everyone. In fact, you need to

hide if you want to think for two minutes on your own. And that is fantastic!

It may also be that some of the program elements that people did not rate very highly may have had a positive impact on the atmosphere anyway. A participant explained how she thought the prelude played a role in prompting openness among the participants:

> People were very open and networking-minded. […] I think a lot of this owes to the opening session, where it was indicated that you had to co-create yourself and that you couldn't just sit down and let yourself be entertained. [The head of the organizing committee] also mentioned this in his opening speech, and I think it made an impact on people.

Finally, the data suggest that the venue played a vital role in creating the overall ECCI X conference experience. The Wedge venue was rated 4.4 out of 5. A participant elaborated on the venue's influence on his conference experience:

> This is only the second time—and I travel a lot, I go to a lot of conferences—it is only the second time that a conference of this level with many foreign delegates coming was so relaxed in a very open kind of setting. I think the venue was very, very good, and for me in particular the atrium always represents a place which most people just think is for nonofficial, nonformal, nonserious purposes…

Although the unorthodox conference space facilitated a relaxed atmosphere and a sense of community as the above quotes suggest, there are also downsides to using a venue that is not really built for conference purposes. In particular, participants mentioned a low level of comfort (hard seating on the stone plateaus in the atrium and on the beach chairs), problems with sunlight on the big screens that decreased the visibility, and problems with the sound level and acoustics in general. Some participants also found the building to be cold, hard, and lacking in smaller social spaces where spontaneous meetings could be held.

It seems, however, that the majority did not find these annoyances to be important hindrances that overshadowed the positive aspects of this type of venue: "A nice chair once in a while would have been nice [laugh], but that is that. On the other hand, the building has so much to offer that would be impossible to replicate anywhere else."

A researcher lamented that he had a specific strategy for creating an international research network and that he succeeded *despite* the conference format, not because of. Referring to the point made above about the program volume, he found this to be a central barrier, since a packed program that most people choose to follow makes it difficult to connect outside of the official structure:

> I have visited many, many conferences in my career, but in the beginning you go and listen to everything […] and after that, the only goal is to meet others. You must select people and find others, new people and people you already know. And you want to have a comfortable situation where you can sit and eat and have time for each other. […] But the program was so full, and everybody was always moving from one place to the other, so it was hard to catch them.

This quote also suggests that many people chose to follow the main program instead of going out on their own. The conference dinner on the last day, at the participants' own expense, was surprisingly overbooked; during the conference, many asked the secretariat if they could get a ticket. They had not booked from home, but, while at the conference, they felt an urge to extend the conference experience.

To summarize the conference culture, it is clear that the academics and nonacademics had several prejudices against each other; in particular, the academics found it difficult to accept the consultant-like style and so-called creative conference behavior. The program design did not facilitate an integration of these two approaches per se, and the two groups had two separate program trajectories. The participant and program diversity is, however, a dimension of the conference that many attendees highlighted in positive terms, along with the vast number of networking opportunities and the informal atmosphere. The way people were made to connect and interact

throughout the conference facilitated a positive spiral where the two elements—the good atmosphere and the openness of the participants—became mutually constitutive.

7.3 KEYNOTE SPEECHES

The keynote speeches were rated as follows:

	Total mean	St. Dv	Content	Form
Uffe Elbæk, Chairman of KaosPilot International Board (DK)	4.0	0.99	4.0	4.1
Jørgen Knudstorp, CEO of The LEGO Group (DK)	4.0	0.91	4.1	3.8
Kirpal Singh, Associate Professor, Singapore Management University (IN/SP)	3.9	0.85	3.9	3.9
Ernst Gundling, Co-founder and Managing Director of Aperian Global (US)	3.8	0.90	3.8	3.7
Rob Austin, Professor at Harvard Business School and CBS (US/DK) & Marianne Stokholm, Professor at Aalborg University (DK)	3.7	0.93	3.6	3.9
Anne Kirah, Dean, 180° Academy (US/DK)	3.7	1.08	3.7	3.7
Niels Due Jensen, Chairman of the Grundfos Group (DK)	3.7	0.94	3.8	3.6
Jacob Buur, Professor at the University of Southern Denmark (DK)	3.7	0.89	3.8	3.6
Rolf Smith, Managing Director of The Office of Strategic Innovation (US)	3.7	1.08	3.6	3.7
Joe Tidd, Professor at the University of Sussex (UK) & Scott Isaksen, President of The Creative Problem Solving Group (US)	3.4	0.96	3.4	3.5

Table 10: Rating of keynote speeches

The qualitative data do not provide a detailed ranking of the keynote speeches as represented quantitatively above. However, the data support the general

notion that the speech made by the CEO of LEGO, Jørgen Knudstorp, was good and that the one by Rolf Smith was less of a success. In the qualitative data, however, there are no indications that the speech by Uffe Elbæk is at the top of the list or that the speech by Niels Due Jensen is in the middle—his is praised by many, along with the one by Jørgen Knudstorp. The qualitative data also indicate that Rob Austin probably would have received a higher rating than Marianne Stokholm had they been rated separately.

It is striking that the ratings for all the keynote speeches are average or below average. The qualitative data provide insight into why this is so. The general perception of the keynote speeches was that they were too superficial and too commonsense and presented old news. Said one participant:

> I think the keynote speakers—at least some of them—could have been a lot more innovative in terms of what they were gonna talk about. Something more in the future rather than what's done in the past. I mean some of the keynote speakers—you know they're all pretty good but at the same time not giving enough of what's happening in the next ten to fifteen years. I think some of it was very similar to what you could get out of the textbook on the Net. There wasn't really anything really new.

Several participants explicitly asked for keynote speakers that were up-and-coming instead of well known and well established. A participant put it this way: "[The ideal is] great presentations, and not from the same old men who speak all the time. I want some of the younger ones, new ones that bring really exciting stuff to the table." Some participants saw the keynote speeches as a necessary ritual that is not particularly liked but would be missed if it were not there. The general attitude here was, "It was as expected. Nothing big but good."

When a participant was asked what he wanted from a keynote, he answered: "Vision. New vision. Not a summary of the past but possible new directions. Daring ideas. Breaking out." This particular participant found all the plenary speakers at ECCI X to be of the summarizing kind. He acknowledged that although those keynotes were important for the marketing and that they had an important function in personifying the history of a field, a conference also needs fresh blood.

Other participants seemed to expect more from the keynotes than they did from the rest of the program—and the disappointment was all the greater when the keynote speakers did not deliver: "Well, I don't think that [the keynote speeches] were more interesting than all the rest—and I would say that this is what I expect. That when it is a keynote speaker, it needs to be more interesting than all the rest—and I don't think it was."

One aspect of the attractiveness of keynote speakers seems to be the actual experience of hearing a case story from the horse's own mouth—and the more high-profile the horse, the better. When people praised the speeches by the top Danish CEOs Jørgen Knudstorp and Niels Due Jensen, they emphasized that these keynote speakers were honest (admitting product hiccups and failed strategies in the past); that their words had weight thanks to their top managerial positions in market-leading companies; and that they, as leaders within the community of creativity and innovation, conveyed important signals and statements. They did this by discussing their companies' future strategies, what they thought will be the right way to approach the innovation challenge, and how they saw creativity play a role in this endeavor. One participant observed:

> They are two important and influential people in Denmark. […] It does not matter that much what the company does for a living, but it is important that they bring those statements. I can use them in several ways: as a consultant, to document that this is the way—the direction to go in. And then as a researcher, as a case, as a statement.

This means that conferences play a vital role in terms of producing and reproducing the culture and values of a particular field—and keynote speakers are especially important in this process. They sustain, challenge, and influence future directions, and they socialize new members of the community by the way they talk about things. A newcomer to the field explains, "They [the keynote speeches] were so general, so I took some learning moments more like: How do you present a topic? I'm relatively new—I come a little bit from a different area, and I see how they have certain wordings. How they explain certain things and what type of examples they give."

7.3.1 PLENARY FORMAT

Instead of having all the keynotes do the same thing—presenting alone with their PowerPoint slides—the program assigned half an hour to each keynote and placed two keynotes back to back. This allowed the keynotes to pair up if they wanted to, and four keynotes chose to do so (i.e., two out of the five plenary sessions were keynote pairs). In the following, I will focus only on the two keynote pairs, since they both did a "form experiment," while the remaining keynote speeches were pretty standard presentations (although most of them included not only words on PowerPoint slides but also photos and short films).

The keynote by Rob Austin and Marianne Stokholm featured a pie chart drawn with chalk on the floor, illustrating six different dimensions that various products link to or (theoretical) standpoints that one may take when discussing a product under development. The dimensions were: Business, Technology, Strategy, Man, Aesthetics, Culture, Philosophy, and Environment.

Rob Austin and Marianne Stokholm began their session by each presenting a product case. This was followed by a conversation in which they positioned themselves on the pie chart to illustrate in which dimension their discussion was rooted. The audience was then invited to discuss the cases and the dimensions of the pie chart, which generated much debate. As Table 10 shows, the format was rated second highest, while the content was rated second lowest. This is substantiated in the qualitative data. Said one participant, "From my perspective—a Danish perspective, a practitioner perspective—that they were… That it wasn't up-to-date cases, and I don't think the conclusions were right, but I really like the format. That the format is open and that you discuss and involve the audience—that worked well."

The format ended up being a kind of "live blogging," where the keynote speakers started by making their statements and then asked the audience, "What do you think?" The participants then commented on the keynote speech as well as on one another's comments. One participant described how he woke up as the format became more interactive: "If I can't understand everything, I check out and do something else. But at the point where people were invited to participate, I can honestly admit that I woke up and listened again."

Even though the data strongly suggest that people enjoyed the interactive format, not everybody found fellow audience members' comments or questions interesting, and some would rather have spent time listening to the "expert." This left some of the audience members frustrated, which is expressed in the following statement from two participants:

> The keynote started to sidetrack when members of the audience brought up their own agendas. A very entertaining gentleman spoke on microloans. A great little talk but a bit off topic here. Another member of the audience stated that emotions have a great influence on consumers and their choice of product. Well…we weren't flabbergasted by this insight.

This leads to a perennial conference format question: Should there be a Q & A at the end of a keynote speech? Should the audience be invited to comment and dialogue? Some argue yes, because it is one of those rare opportunities to interact with keynote speakers who are otherwise unavailable for direct communication. Some argue no, because it often happens that one audience member takes up all the time, not really asking a question but promoting himself or herself or a certain cause (Elsborg & Ravn, 2006). But as this project and the work of Elsborg and Ravn show, there are other ways of including the audience than a traditional Q & A session that outweigh this negative effect to some degree.

The opening plenary session featured Joe Tidd and Scott Isaksen, who teamed up because they had met at a previous ECCI conference, each receiving an award for the best book on innovation and the best book on creativity, respectively. At that point, they realized that they should write a book together that integrated the creativity and innovation dimensions. This book was launched right before the ECCI X conference, and they decided to have a live conversation during their plenary, each taking turns posing the other one a question and answering. While Joe Tidd and Scott Isaksen were the most high-profile names from an international perspective, their plenary session is the lowest rated of them all, in both content and format (as Table 10 shows). A participant called for a more improvisational and confrontational style when two keynotes are discussing:

It would have been more interesting had they been infighting or if they had challenged each other. Or maybe not had planned everything on beforehand: […] Okay, now I tell this and then I exit and then you come back and get the microphone and then you talk about this and then you exit and I return. That is too scripted.

Even though the majority of the participants were not too fond of the conversational format by Tidd and Isaksen, it seems that pairing two keynote speakers can create interaction and variation that raise the participants' attention. A participant commented that the dialogue structure with questions and answers provided him with cognitive hooks that made the content easier to follow: "They would set up a question and then there would be that little pause, that little wait. You know, and then the answer would come. You were anticipating; it kept you engaged."

Toward the end of the conference, by which point the participants had experienced several types of plenary format, a participant said:

Some of the big keynotes have been much about…They have been an advertisement for their company; it's been very business-heavy. I actually think it has worked better when they have been standing two and two like they did yesterday and the day before yesterday. […] The way [the keynotes] have been held the other days where there are two speakers at once, where you interact a little and there is a bit of ping-pong and discussion—for me, that has worked better to keep…[It is better than] a presentation, like today.

The most important point made here about keynote speeches at the ECCI X conference was that the general rating was below average, and participants found them too superficial, too commonsense, and too much old news. They expected more from the keynote speakers than from the rest of the program, and participants requested more newness and formats that would elicit juxtaposed perspectives. Most participants enjoy plenary formats where they can contribute in some way, but some prefer to let the casted experts do the talking.

7.4 TRACK SESSIONS

There was a total of six track session slots during the conference, and, during these, between ten and thirteen tracks ran parallel. Logistically, the more participants there were, the more tracks were needed, or the number of participants in each track would be too large and prevent dialogue and discussion. Five of the six track session slots lasted 1.5 hours (many of them with two presentations, lasting forty-five minutes each), and the sixth track session slot lasted forty-five minutes only. The LEGO RobotLab and the Care Cubicle tracks were repeated during every slot, but the remaining presentations were different every time.

The tracks were type-labeled to make it easier for the participants to assess the nature of the session (i.e., paper jam, case series, toolbox, crack the nut, and weird stuff). The call for contributions had also made use of these labels, so potential presenters submitted to the category they found appropriate. The paper jams will be dealt with separately in the next section, and this section will concentrate on the other track types as a whole.

Despite the critical comments on the content of the keynote speeches, quite a few of the conference participants found the keynote speeches to be better value than the track sessions. Said one, "I've been disappointed by the low level of some of the keynote speeches and some of the track presentations—I think it's been five or even ten years behind the world I live in and the work I do on a daily basis." As with many of the evaluation points, some felt the exact opposite, that the track sessions were the most worthwhile aspect of the conference content-wise: "It's been during the small tracks that I have produced good ideas."

The conference content level is a perpetual dilemma facing conference organizers: On what level is the advance knowledge of the participants? What aspects can we presuppose they are familiar with already? If the conference is part of a conference series, how much can we rely on progression? It seems that ECCI X tipped the balance in favor of the newcomers and failed to include what the experienced within the field would consider to be cutting-edge. According to one participant:

> This is also what I hear when I participated in the Reflection
> Zones—that people are very new to this whole field. They get a lot

of information, and people that are acquainted with the subject think it's not innovative enough. Like we're all the time thinking about/talking about things we already know, and I think that the information level is good for people who have nothing to do with it, but that's not enough. The people that are experienced with creativity and innovation should get inspired, and that is not happening.

In general, the participants asked for a more challenging content and complained about a lack of newness. This means that the data are rich on variations of the following participant comment: "I don't want to criticize very much, but I have to admit I haven't learned very [many] new things. I must say I'm not impressed, because I think it's very much old wine in new bottles—I would say. There are some new concepts, but I can't see any real new creative perspectives—I'm sorry, but I didn't find that here."

For some participants, learning something new is not narrowly defined as hearing a piece of information they did not know before but could also just be a new way of presenting old stuff:

Q: To what extent have you heard something new during this conference?

Participant: Lots! Lots! I have only heard new things—well, that is not true, I knew some…I have heard some of this already but it has [been] presented in new ways and it is… many, many, many new things.

Another participant explained how he had not heard something completely new per se but that information within the well known is a good thing because it enables him to absorb the information in the first place—otherwise it would probably be dismissed: "I heard a lot of new stuff but new information in that same method of thought and that is where…That method of thinking is where I felt very comfortable, which made it all the better for me and having the ability to take on the new information."

In one Reflection Zone, a participant described the central message she got out of attending a session and added that it was not something she could use in her daily work but that she thought it was a very interesting point. Later

on, when asked by the facilitator to summarize her outcome of the day, she said: "Most observations today, I don't think I learned anything new." For this participant, hearing something new was not enough to be classified as learning—learning is about pieces of information that you can put to use, that compliments the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to do your job.

It is also interesting that it seems that psychological outcomes like feeling better about yourself (i.e., your ability to perform your job tasks, your general confidence, and your energy level) are considered important. When a participant was asked to summarize his conference experience, he replied:

> It [the conference] has given me exactly what I hoped for—without having been able to express it clearly other than I would like to get inspiration to continue everyday working life—and that is exactly what I have gotten. Inspiration and a belief that you can do things differently. [...] The best thing for me personally has been a particular session that was very alternative but has given me the strength to believe that I can contribute to do the changes I want to when I return to work after the conference.

Another participant said:

> Based on traditional criteria, you cannot always say: "That particular session presented something really new" or "Wauw, this is something we have never seen before" and so on. I think this characterizes many of the sessions here, that they don't provide this. But that is not important to me. What is important is that [...] I get home and feel that I have been energized or have been provided with new angles on how to perform my job, partly... I mean, this is what I have gotten. So in that respect, I got what I came for.

It may, of course, be that participants use this kind of argumentation as a justification—if no other outcomes are achieved, this type of outcome justifies conference participation. And this is necessary in order to not have a sense of wasted time, which is the worst thing in time-efficient participants' worldview.

Being validated was not one of the response options in the questionnaire in the question concerning expected outcome (benchmarking yourself is the closest), but it seems that it should have been, as many participants expressed a

general satisfaction at having been confirmed that what they know and do—and how and why they do it—is "on level." Said one participant, "So I have found—which was important to me—a confirmation that what we were researching the last couple of years was a good contribution to the field. It is understood by the people, it is generally liked by the people, and we can build on that in a broader way. That is why for me it was a good conference."

One major determining factor in the evaluation of the tracks seems to be the presenters' passion for their subject and their ability to present. Words like *charisma*, *authenticity*, and *genuineness* are attached to those who are evaluated positively. A participant explained how being emotionally involved with the presenter opens up the possibility of being able to create meaning and take in what is said:

> It's all about feelings, really. I mean this thing about being enthusiastic and that something has meaning…and there is something that appeals to you and brings about some particular feeling. This is an insight I have reached that I didn't have before. I mean, what brings about meaning—and why do you listen to one presenter and not to the other? Why don't you listen even though what is said is true and exciting? It may be concerned with the projections you have toward this person, something that you don't think appeals to you—it can be the way that person speaks, it can be his linguistics, etc. But if a person gives something of themselves and I—in some way—become involved in this person and I sympathize with this person, then I am much more enthusiastic.

To summarize, participants commented that there was a general lack of newness at the conference regarding both keynote speeches and track sessions. Still, many participants found their outcome significant; despite everything, they were inspired and felt energized to go home and carry on with their job tasks. This is a major insight that will be dealt with later in the analysis.

7.5 PAPER JAMS

The paper jam format was an attempt to change the dynamics of the traditional paper sessions, where people present their work and there is limited

time for serious feedback from peers and discussion with the audience. The three paper authors thus presented one another's papers and acted as opponents to increase peer involvement and feedback and stimulate discussion.

A total of eighty-two abstracts were submitted, and forty-eight papers were accepted based on a peer reviewing process. Presenters were informed of the paper jam format after the notifications of acceptance were distributed, which led many to express their concerns with the format and to pose lots of questions to the conference secretariat. Another information letter was sent to clarify questions. In the end, three papers withdrew because of the presentation format. During the conference, two papers were cancelled, and it also turned out that some presenters had not read or understood the format information and came unprepared.

During the conference, the general buzz was that the paper jam format was a disaster, and attendees who had chosen to attend a paper jam in the first couple of track sessions advised other attendees against attending them and avoided attending more themselves. It is therefore surprising that the data is ambiguous on this point—that is, the opinions are more split than the initial negative buzz indicated.

In general, those participants who had a specific role in the paper jams (e.g., the presenters/opponents/chairs) were slightly more positive than those who were audience members. When asked about the best aspect of the conference on that particular day, a paper presenter commented: "Well, I enjoyed very much the tracks—the track where I participated as a speaker. I found it very stimulating, and I appreciated very much the fact that another person presented my paper and then that there could be an opponent and final considerations. It was the first time doing it this way, and I appreciated it very much." Another paper holder commented:

> This setup was very interesting. It is thrilling to see someone else present your paper. The main advantage is that someone else is only presenting the core of your paper and necessarily in an understandable way (otherwise he would not understand it himself). The interaction with the co-presenters and the participants was very good; we had a lot of questions on all three presentations and a great atmosphere in the room.

This indicates that in many cases the format fulfilled the ambition of providing more and better peer feedback in order to help presenters really get an outcome from participating. But the format was not necessarily audience-friendly, and from an audience point of view, opinions are very polarized. A participant who experienced the paper jam format at its best and at its worst gave the following reply when he was asked, "What has been the best aspect of the conference today?":

> I think it was the paper jam, where there were some very, very interesting discussions—and the researchers who had published were very engaged and enthusiastic, and the discussion that appeared from this was really good—I found it fruitful that they provoked each other a little bit and points of view emerged. That was really exciting to listen to.

When the same participant was asked, "What has been the worst aspect of the conference today?" he replied: "Well, today? I actually think—I went to a paper jam yesterday where one of the presenters didn't show up, and there was not really any discussion emerging out of the remaining publications. And that was kind of boring [laughing] to watch, because when there is not really any action going on—then it takes the sting out of the format."

The above quotes indicate that when the paper jam format goes wrong, it fails utterly; and when it succeeds, it succeeds way beyond expectations. Two aspects of the paper jam format in particular seemed to cause trouble: the fact that the paper holder did not present his or her own paper, and the fact that many people felt a need to read the papers beforehand in order to follow the discussions. These two aspects may, of course, be interlinked, as the following quote suggests:

> It was too "jamming" for me; I could not figure out who was who, maybe because I was a little late…But it is the system where some [have] written and others present and so on. That makes me think that the academic way of doing it implies that you say: We present a paper, and then we get an opponent. But here it seemed to me that we never got to the presentation part unless you had read it beforehand. And by the way, I could not find them [online] —they were impossible to locate. Anyway, it seems that when someone else

> presents the paper, then you get the opponent feedback already
> before anybody in the room knows what the paper is about.

The above quote raises the question of whether people felt disoriented during the paper jams because of the untraditional presentation format or whether some participants had difficulties understanding the somewhat special academic discipline of presenting papers in the first place (maybe because they had never been to a "pure" academic conference). The answer is probably a bit of both. A participant said about the paper jams: "A confusing format where you had to be alert in order to understand who actually meant what—but on the other hand, the unorthodox presentation format resulted in difficult subjects being presented in an accessible way."

Presenters also mentioned the preparation time and the pressure associated with presenting someone else's work to be a challenge. A paper holder reflected on his preparation process:

> I realized that my role in presenting the others was not the quality
> that it should have in order to be useful for those people. So I
> worked in my hotel room [for a really long time in the evening]—a
> lot of work. I had to reread it and to make a really good review of
> their paper. I did it already at home, but I saw that so much
> depended on the quality of the presenter that I thought…The three
> women were also to comment on my paper, and they approached
> me and asked a lot of questions about it, so I realized they had put a
> lot of effort into it. And I wanted to give that back. So that is why I
> took time.

The same participant added that even though he got some very valuable feedback, both from listening to the presentation and from the opponent, the effort he put into the preparation did not justify the outcome, because the paper he had to present basically did not interest him, and he would rather have spent his time on a paper that did:

> It sounds a little bit strange—normally I present a certain model in
> a rational and strict way, and when they presented it, they put all
> kinds of pictures around it, and I thought: Yes, that is really good. I
> mean, it is not only wording; you must also frame it in pictures.

They selected pictures during my presentation that I liked, so I kept them, and I have already used them not long ago when I had to give a presentation. […] In that sense it is useful. These two [the preparation and listening to the others present my work] are connected: You give something and you get something. […] But it was not the paper I would like to have studied. […] This paper was in an area where: Yes, it is nice to know but not essential. And you always struggle with time, so why this topic and not others? In that same evening, I could have studied the paper that I was really interested in and had a discussion with that person about it and more questions, for example.

Other presenters found the opponent feedback very valuable and pointed out that it was interesting to hear what others have understood from reading your paper and what they chose to accentuate. From a logistical point of view, the paper jam format is vulnerable to cancellations—if one paper holder drops out at the last minute, the whole sequence is mixed up, and all the preparation from the two other presenters has been in vain. The quote above pinpoints another issue that many arise: the importance of matching papers that are close in topic in order for the paper jam format to succeed. But the general diversity of the conference participants challenged the possibility of making suitable paper matches, as one participant also noted:

> […] The problem is that you talk from different schools and different languages and you have a different theoretical understanding, and when there is a person coming from a totally different research area and presenting your paper, it's very difficult, because they haven't studied from the same angle as me, and it takes years to understand it from that angle. And then it is difficult to present a paper from a person who comes from a different area—so the idea is good, but probably there is a need for [matching] people who maybe fit a bit more together.

In conclusion, the "presenting one another's papers format" had two different consequences, primarily depending on the presenters' abilities and how well the papers were matched. One possibility is that it enhanced interaction and enriched the discussion because the presenter—as a nonauthor—was able to

cut to the chase and provide a clearer and shorter presentation of the paper than the author could have given; the presenter could also make the author see his or her own work in a new light because of the way it was presented (adding to the pool of feedback). The other possibility is that it weakened understanding because the presenter acted as opponent instead of presenter, was ill-prepared or did not quite understand the premise of the paper, and did not have the authenticity and passion for the subject that an author might have when presenting his or her own work.

In this sense, the word *jam* seems to be very appropriate, since it has two meanings: *to jam* like jazz musicians who (seemingly effortlessly) blend with one another; or a *traffic jam* or *paper jam* in a Xerox machine, where everything is stuck in an inextricable knot. Factors promoting the success of the paper jam format seem to be the following:

- A strong chair who facilitated the process
- A high degree of interaction with the audience (initiated and facilitated by the chair)
- Well-prepared presenters who understood one another's topics (because they had been matched well)
- Opponents who took their role seriously—but not too seriously
- A good match of papers (i.e., papers that were close in topic and/or theoretical point of departure)

7.6 REFLECTION ZONES

Toward the end of every day, just before the afternoon plenary, all participants were invited to join a Reflection Zone group for one hour, hosted by a professional facilitator. Groups consisted of four to nine participants, and most people stayed in the same group throughout the four conference days. Based on the data collection overview, the Reflection Zones are the only conference element where data have been drawn from the videofilming of a couple of Reflection Zone groups.

Overall, the Reflection Zones were rated 4.1 (with a somewhat high standard deviation of 1.07). When asked, "Did anything or anyone in particular improve your overall outcome of the conference?" 73.9 percent

answered yes. Out of those who explained their answer, 23.7 percent explicitly mentioned the Reflection Zones.

When the participants were asked during the conference if they were surprised by anything, many said the Reflection Zones were a nice surprise: "I didn't know what the Reflection Zones were when I saw them in the agenda in the beginning. But the one I went to yesterday was really useful. I guess that was not expected." This also means that many participants admitted that their enthusiasm was limited when they saw the Reflection Zones advertised in the program:

> Before [I got here] I was a little bit "Hmm…how can that be interesting?" but they were well prepared, and they have been very interesting. I didn't get to the first meeting […], but I have been to the rest of them, and I like the discussions. There have been [participants] from different countries with different backgrounds— so yeah, very positive.

Along the same lines, a few said that they had prejudices about how much other people actually would be willing to share and consequently doubted how useful the Reflection Zones would be, but that they were all pleasantly surprised. This indicates that from a communication perspective, Reflection Zones had a low attraction value and required open-minded attendees who were willing to take the chance and join them—and in order for attendees to do so, they had to trust that there would be an outcome. In order to gain that trust, the organizers needed to have some level of legitimacy among a core group of participants. As it turned out, approximately 150 participants attended the Reflection Zones out of the 265 "full-time" participants at ECCI X.

According to these participants, three factors made the Reflection Zone experience especially rewarding: having a small home in a big event, the cross-learning among participants, and the role of the facilitators. Let's consider each in turn.

7.6.1 A "HOME" BASE

Many mention the function of the Reflection Zones as a kind of home as important to them. It is clear that many find conferences anxiety-provoking if they do not know any of people present and find it difficult to handle the social interaction dimension. The Reflection Zones mitigated this and made those participants feel less alone and lost, because they allowed them to create social bonds right from the beginning that they could use in other parts of the conference and beyond. When one participant was asked what she thought about the Reflection Zones before coming to the conference, she said: "I thought it sounded excellent. It's like—when you are a student, some people like to attend lectures. But it is easier to make people stay on when they are part of a group and feel connected to the event. It makes people well rooted in the event. Then you have a base."

The members of each Reflection Zone stayed the same throughout the conference (though a few changed their group along the way), and this was an important aspect in providing that sense of home: "The Reflection Zone is a very good thing, because it brings people together—people you haven't seen before and also that you stay with these people during these two to three days, so you meet them again and again—it brings you closer." Another participant elaborated on how this brought the discussions to another level:

> I thought it was good [to be with the same people all week], because it allowed you to know a little bit about their perspective. If it was someone new every time, you would have to reestablish the relationship every time, and that takes time. […] You know where they are coming from, right. You understand their perspective, and when they talk, you can understand their bias. But if it was new every time…It would be more difficult. It needs to be the same people.

As hinted at earlier, the Reflection Zones functioned as an important precursor for the evening social events. Participants reported that conversations that were begun during the day in the Reflection Zones were continued at night and enhanced the overall networking. For example, participants would introduce fellow Reflection Zone members to other participants they already knew and who they thought would benefit from meeting. A couple of Reflection Zone

groups even reported that they have formed networks beyond the conference: "Our Reflection Zone is setting up a website for the seven of us, and we are gonna continue talking and reflecting as we go along."

7.6.2 CROSS-LEARNING

As will be discussed later, many found the program volume overwhelming and were quite distressed by having to choose from so many options, which led to a feeling of missing out all the time. But getting a glimpse of other parts of the program through the stories of fellow Reflection Zone participants seemed to mitigate this distress to some degree. Said one participant, "People who have been to different sessions come and engage and exchange the best experiences they've had—in that way, you are not only restricted to what you experience but also what others experience."

What seems to be the most fruitful dimension of the Reflection Zones are the discussions of common experiences (i.e., program elements that people have experienced together). The following remark by a participant summarizes many of the comments made on the Reflection Zones: "Hearing the reinterpretation by others of things that I have seen advanced my understanding." Another one elaborated:

> I learned a lot. It was this thing about listening to each other and learn[ing] from each other. About getting insights into how others interpreted the same things that we had seen together. This whole decoding of what was actually going on at the conference and how to use it. […]. It was this whole being arbiter of taste: "Arrrgh, did you really like that sort of thing? And haven't we heard that before? And that is a classic, American technique." So I got many points of learning regarding how to decode all my different impressions.

Also, cross-learning seemed to be enhanced by the participant diversity, as mentioned previously. A participant said:

> Often what happens is that you share with people who are the same way, and the sharing you get is also kind of the same, so you are not challenged so much. The good thing about this is that you come into this room with people you don't know and have a completely

different way of communicating, a different way of perceiving things, so it is much more rich. Otherwise you just talk to the people who are like yourself, and you tell each other that this was great and this was not good. Here, I get a completely different perspective of what I was listening to.

Getting to know the other participants also allowed participants to share their emotions, not just their thoughts. Excitement, joy, boredom, practical nuisances, and so on were shared. In one of the Reflection Zones, at the end of the second conference day, the following conversation took place:

Facilitator: So, how do we feel?!

Participant X: I feel fine.

Facilitator: I feel tired. [Directed at Y:] How do you feel?

Participant Y: Fresh! I just started today.

Participant Z: I feel inspired. Tired in some way, but also energetic. I've had a fantastic day! I think it has been really great. I have experienced a lot of new things and with people I didn't know, and I think I get closer too… W [reflection zone member] for example [big smile].We have been in the same workshop, and it was really nice.

Facilitator [directed at Z and W]: You're sharing something there!

Participant Z: Yes, we shared something—I think—unique.

So the Reflection Zones helped people get closer to one another and to the topic. When asked about her outcome from the Reflection Zones, a participant said: "It brought me peace. To get time to digest it all. I think it [the conference experience] has sunk in deeper. The last day, we had to tell each other in pairs what we thought we had gained by attending the conference. At that time, I had not given this one thought. But when I had to sit there for three minutes and just tell my partner what I had gained, I was forced to think these thoughts, and I warmed to the subject. Yep, it was rewarding."

7.6.3 FACILITATORS

The Reflection Zone facilitators were given some general guidelines about the purpose of the Reflection Zones and the expectations of their role, but it was left to the facilitators to determine exactly how they would approach and achieve this goal. Many participants pointed out that the key success factor of the Reflection Zones was indeed the facilitators: "The idea of having facilitators in the Reflection Zones—genius! It has been very, very good. […] To put people together in small groups and allow them time to talk about things and then have someone taking care that things are flowing—and it seems that in most groups it is highly qualified people who are more or less professional facilitators. That rocks!"

Participants mentioned that the facilitators kept the conversation going when it got stuck, they ensured everybody had a say, and they were suitably non-result-orientated (i.e., they let the conversation fly). It is interesting how this latter element seemed to please many: It seems that most of the Reflection Zones struck a good balance between structure (people clearly preferred having a facilitator who indeed provided some structure) and nonstructure (there was no predetermined end goal or result).

This taps into some of the few critical comments regarding the Reflection Zones, as most of them were directed toward the incompetence of the facilitator. This underscores the importance of a good facilitator in determining the success of a reflective activity in a conference setting: "[I was bored during] the Reflection Zones. However, I was jealous of other groups. Just bad luck with the facilitator." It seems that when the facilitator steps out of the classical facilitator role (i.e., facilitating the conversation among the participants and igniting their reflection process through various exercises and processes), the participants are less likely to find it useful. One participant said, "The facilitator of my Reflection Zone didn't have any facilitation skills and talked too much himself, and he was between ten and fifteen minutes late every day."

As the quote suggests, examples of less useful facilitation in this context are when the facilitator focuses on himself or herself by using the participants as a sounding board for his or her own interests instead of rooting the point of departure in the participants' interests and needs; or when the facilitator "goes psychologist" and provides only exercises that encourage the participants to

"work with themselves" (i.e., reflecting alone or maybe in pairs), ignoring the potential outcome of group interaction and cross-learning, as highlighted above.

Finally, some participants objected to this kind of organized reflection. A participant lamented:

> Where I have experienced less outcome, I would say, are the Reflection Zones. […] You can do reflections in several ways, and the organized reflection is, like, just one option. I'm not sure it is value-creating for me in any case. So maybe a little more time for self-reflection and networking could be a point of improvement, but it is also a compressed program, so I don't know…

Several factors might influence why some resent the facilitated, organized reflection activity, and this issue will be dealt with in the analysis.

Considering the predominantly positive evaluation of the Reflection Zones, one might ask whether the format of the Reflection Zones suited the content of the ECCI X conference theme particularly well, and, as a consequence, the participants were positive about it. However, it is interesting to note that many made strong comments like "I have been to other conferences where I think it would really have made a difference if they had had Reflection Zones." When asked whether any elements of the ECCI X conference could be used in other types of conferences, a participant replied:

> Reflection Zones could easily [be transferred] —do something interactive and digest the things you have learned. So you don't have two-way communication all the time and sit in a large hall with a man and a PowerPoint presentation. That you sit down and either try to use it or have a time-out where you get the possibility to touch it and pose questions. And get an opportunity to mingle with people in another way.

To summarize the conference program element of Reflection Zones, the idea was met with some reluctance by participants, but since nothing else was scheduled in the program, many went along with it and were pleasantly surprised, giving it a very high rating. It seems that three key factors contributed to their success:

- The Reflection Zones gave participants a small home in a big event. The members of each zone were the same throughout the conference, and in this respect the Reflection Zone became a comfort zone. Furthermore, they kick-started the habit of interacting with other participants during the conference and were a precursor to mingling in social settings.
- The cross-learning that took place among participants significantly impacted the participants' sense of outcome. They were granted glimpses of those program sessions they missed out on (reducing the frustration of not being able to attend them all), they discussed common experiences, and they shared their feelings about their conference experience.
- The Reflection Zone hosts played a huge role in the success, as they facilitated the dialogue and different reflection processes. Participants seemed to be the most satisfied with those zones where the hosts focused on the participants (instead of placing themselves in the center) and alternated among different reflection modes.

7.7 MEET THE DANES

The Meet the Danes workshops took place in the afternoon on the third day of the conference. Adhering to the principle of rhythm, the idea was to change the scene and engage the participants in a different way than the conference otherwise offered. Participants were invited to twenty-two Danish companies and organizations around Copenhagen to crack a nut (e.g., a problem that the company is facing), and the experience is rated 4.5 out of 5 (with a standard deviation of 0.9) by those who participated. The data suggest that many found Meet the Danes to be the high point of the conference— interestingly enough, this was also the intention according to the dramaturgy laid out in the conference program. Apart from the timing of the Meet the Danes workshop, several other factors contributed to the high ratings. A participant elaborated on why this conference element was such a good experience:

> It was the interactive dimension. That you get a chance to use yourself and that there is an output. And because you trust the fact it will be used somehow. That it makes sense.

Q: Did you learn anything—did you take anything home with you?

[Pause] Maybe a confirmation that I am able to do that kind of stuff. That it is valuable even though it is something I have not done before. It was very close to what we have discussed during the conference, and it was fun to go out and use it straight away. […] I've been given the opportunity to visit another company and hear about how they do things. […] It would not have been the same to do it in a room in the Wedge [the conference venue]. To get inside the company and get a feel for the atmosphere, meet a couple of the employees.

As mentioned previously, this quote also hints at the value of being validated in what you know and do. A significant number of participants chose not to attend Meet the Danes; having a program element off-venue is bound to result in some people going astray, simply because it allows them to take a break, visit tourist sites around Copenhagen, or do some shopping. But it also seems that the way this particular program element was framed put some people off. Said one participant, "I thought: This is free consultancy for the Danes. I know that it was not presented that way, but I thought if I would be in an organization, I would ask the same: So come, and here is my problem and maybe we can learn something from it. I knew it was not like that, but…"

The fact that some participants disliked Meet the Danes is not surprising, considering the fact that this program element basically contradicts "the (psychological) contract" that conference organizers and attendees normally have: Attendees pay a fee to get something (new knowledge) in return. But the Meet the Danes format asked the participants to give something—with the underlying assumption that by giving, the attendees would also get something, namely an experience, a way to practice the conference theme in reality (co-creation) and a chance to meet other conference attendees in an untraditional way. Nevertheless, the attendees were asked to do something that many of them normally get paid to do (given that many of them work as consultants).

The feedback from the Meet the Danes hosts was predominantly positive, though a few hosts reported negative experiences with their groups. A handful reported that they had been provided with ideas that were so good

that they would continue working on them. The majority of the hosts reported that they had been inspired by the dynamics of the process and got confirmation that they were on the right track, which also proved valuable:

> We received five main ideas, and the people that came up with them said: We can't believe you haven't heard of these ideas before, you must have had all of them before! And I said: Well, in a way we have, but in a way we haven't. Because you put a spin on them that we haven't thought of before. That will actually give it life. We didn't think of this particular angle. It was very enriching.

The hosts decided themselves whether they wanted to facilitate their group through the process or whether they wanted one of the group members to be the facilitator. In either case, a suggested process guideline was provided by the conference committee. Forming work groups of people who are strangers and asking them to solve a task on a tight schedule has a tendency to produce tense group dynamics. In the case of Meet the Danes, there were the usual reports of power struggles over how to go about the process (especially poignant at this conference, where most participants knew about facilitation and innovation processes and thought that their way of handling such processes would be the best), endless discussions about whether the host has been asking the right question, and domineering participants who jeopardized the collaborative effort. This brings the value of facilitation—also among a group of professional facilitators—into focus again. A participant commented:

> Meet the Danes needs GOOD & STRONG facilitation. In my group, people were not building on each other, but they were piling up ideas. My interventions did not work, and I left very unhappy. Too bad, especially because the idea of visiting an organization is GREAT! And the logistics were arranged very well.

To summarize, the Meet the Danes session was the highest-rated element of the entire conference, and the following characteristics seem to be why: It was interactive, it provided an opportunity to put theory into practice, and it gave participants a personal feeling of validation. Interestingly, some participants did not like it at all and considered it to be free consultancy, perhaps breaking the traditional psychological contract between conference attendees and

conference organizers, where the former is provided with content by the latter, not the other way around. The hosting companies were, in general, also satisfied, although only a few actually got really new ideas to work with. A few negatives were related to the usual group dynamics issues, including power struggles and time spent discussing the fundamentals, resulting in the innovation process going nowhere.

7.8 OTHER CONFERENCE ELEMENTS

Besides the major conference program elements dealt with above, a number of minor conference elements also played an important role in the realization of the learning-through-rhythm model in practice. These elements are the following: the opening and closing, the conference dance, the conference moderator, breaks, and evening events. These will be evaluated separately below.

7.8.1 OPENING AND CLOSING

Besides the opening keynote, the opening consisted of quite a few elements:

- A short welcoming speech from the president of the EACI
- A prelude with three actors (as described in the program description in Section 5.1)
- A ceremony that followed the tradition of the ECCI conference series, where the EACI president crowns the head of the local organizing committee with a special ECCI hat
- A speech by the head of the local organizing committee
- Practical information conveyed by the conference moderator
- A short introduction to the track series Care Cubicle and the LEGO RobotLab

Overall, the format of the opening session was rated 4.1, while the content was rated 3.7. Said one participant, "I think it [the opening] got people to think in a more creative way, so I think it was a good way to stimulate the imagination and to structure things differently than normal conferences." In particular, the

speech by the head of the local organizing committee seemed to make an impact:

> To me, Arne [the head of the organizing committee] set the stage.
> […] It was: Let's be expressive. There are no barriers, no problems.
> Don't feel uncomfortable about expressing. […] For me it was
> really: Okay, these people really are going to be free to discuss
> different points of view without anyone having their feelings hurt.
> Here we can have this discussion, because from this discussion,
> from two completely different points of view, something new will
> come. Most people don't think that way.

To some, the prelude with the three actors also added to the building up of an open-minded atmosphere, although opinions regarding this element were more split: "The scene was kind of set for hullabaloo with the first…clowns. They [laugh]…It was very, it was really good. The stage was set for the atmosphere—that you were supposed to be informal and talk to others."

Some participants did not find any significance in the performance piece or that it added to the overall framing. As briefly mentioned in the section (7.2.2) about the conference culture, some even found the performance embarrassing: "I thought it was like…toe-curling when those actors became, like, too much."

In this respect, the introduction by the chair of the organizing committee fulfilled the function of the prelude, and the authenticity of the chair made a positive difference, whereas the prelude was obviously a fictional dramatization and had less impact. A participant compared the two elements:

> It [the prelude] was a performance. And it was scripted. And it was
> not improv, it was scripted. If it was improvisational, it would have
> been more creative. Each one of them could still be in character so
> they had a perspective and a role to play. But it was very scripted to
> me.

> Q: More theatrical?

> Yes! That made the difference from Arne's because it was…Arne's
> was real. And intimate and sincere and not scripted. If it was, it was
> only scripted a little bit, and he took off with it.

Besides the closing keynote, the closing session featured all the traditional rituals, including handing over the baton to the organizers of the 2010 ECCI conference in Brussels, award ceremonies, and the Swirl and Swap activity, which was intended to provide the participants with a final reflection and summing-up of their conference experience and an opportunity to share it with others. This element was rated 3.8 in content and 4.0 in format.

The comments on this facilitated exercise are very similar to the general points presented in the section above about the conference format in general. For the most part, people enjoyed these plenary activities, but some also felt pushed around.

7.8.2 CONFERENCE DANCE

The conference dance at the end of the second conference day was implemented to provide energy and break up the predictability of the printed program, introducing something unexpected. The data pool on the conference dance is not exhaustive, but almost all the recorded comments are quite positive. Most participants commented that the dance indeed gave an energy boost and that they enjoyed getting a chance to move their bodies after a long day of sitting in a chair. Some added that they liked the dancing intermission but were glad it lasted only ten minutes:

> Well, I thought it was fantastic, I really do. Because people were getting tired and it gave a kick. The adrenalin started rushing again, and everyone came in contact with each other in a new way—there was a common spirit, common amusement, and it became much more lively afterward. […] And it became much easier to stand more input.

Some participants did not see a deeper connection between the conference theme and the dance but took it to be a fun intermission, while others made a link between the conference theme and the dancing and found these to be mutually constitutive in a positive way:

> I thought it was fun. It was really, really fun! To me, creativity and what it means to be innovative is also connected to let[ting] go of

some reins and dare something. It is barrier-breaking…And it was a
little bit when I had to go onto the dance floor and dance with a
man! That was barrier-breaking. But it was fun.

Others mentioned that they liked the way the initial skeptics turned around
and participated, despite their initial reluctance. However, there is an ethical
issue at work here. Some participants observed that even though people
seemingly enjoyed the conference dance, they seemed to join in because of
group pressure:

> The dancing—it is too much a play. You are coming to study a
> topic and not to be a part of the topic. That is strange for me. Not
> serious. It disturbed me, and it irritated me several times. Yeah, I
> had to laugh a little bit. And I'm sure that many people felt the
> same, but you can't express it because it dominated and you have to
> follow because of group pressure.

In line with the general dispute over what creativity really means, the
participants who made critical comments found the conference dance to be a
faulty expression of the conference theme:

> Just to get this off our chests: ECCI X really needs to get its
> priorities right. The double third keynote (with Niels Due Jensen,
> CEO, Grundfoss and Jørgen Knudstorp, CEO LEGO Group)
> didn't start as scheduled. Instead came a little surprise: This being a
> conference on creativeness and innovation, we were all going to
> dance to the rhythm from an African drummer. That stole twenty
> minutes from the schedule—the exact same twenty minutes that we
> were lacking in the end of Knudstorp's talk. Therefore the ECCI X
> host had to cancel all questions from the audience. Being late,
> however, didn't prevent the same host from rambling on for
> another ten minutes. What were they thinking?

This quote voices the concern that dancing took time from more important
things—that is, the keynote speakers. What is interesting is the perception of
how things unfolded. The dance lasted ten minutes, and the first keynote
speech lasted exactly thirty minutes as scheduled. There was an opportunity to
pose questions, but no one did. The second keynote speech also lasted thirty-

two minutes, and he was not cut off in any way, although there was no question time. But it is interesting to note how the tolerance threshold of some participants toward anything extracurricular is so low and the fondness for the (traditional) keynote speech is so high.

7.8.3 CONFERENCE MODERATOR

In terms of program design, the conference moderator had an important role in the overall conference dramaturgy as a kind of narrator who personified the red thread, taking the audience by the hands and guiding them through the program. The organizers pointed out that outsourcing the role of conference moderator to a professional and experienced person was a tremendous relief. Overall, the conference moderator was rated 4.4. Several people commented that they found him to be above standard:

> I was impressed by the toastmaster. […] It was pleasant that he was present all the time, and he seemed interested. […] He was not showing himself off as others often do. Or had an affectation of humor. He had a subtle, pleasant style. Seemed knowledgeable and intelligent. I thought that was nice. He did not show himself off. I felt in good hands.

The following quote illustrates an interesting observation: that even though participants are not necessarily conscious of the role of the conference moderator, his style and manner might affect the overall evaluation of the conference:

> Yeah, he was good. I like that because he was the stable point. It was so good of him that even in social events he was there. He was kind of the stable, red line in the conference. And he was personally very good in the sense that he kept a distance to the topic but not so far away that he was technical. He was polite; I LIKE that! I like politeness. I like respect that you show to the audience and to the presenters. There can never be enough for me, because many people are so rough to each other. Yeah, he was always there. Well, the jokes, that is a matter of taste, but that is his style, that is okay, because he can do his style. I found it a good idea. I have never seen

that so good before. Because you ask me, I realize that this was an important thing in the conference.

Some lamented that the conference moderator took up too much time conveying practical information. Others would have liked him to play an even more dominant role content-wise by summarizing common points between the two keynotes in the same plenary session or juxtaposing them, just like when a teacher interprets the textbook text and suggests how one might read and understand it. But the high rating suggests that the moderator performed beyond the normal standard and that a brilliant moderator who is given a specific role can make a positive difference in a conference experience.

7.8.4 BREAKS AND EVENING EVENTS

The program committee assumed that because people were given so many opportunities to interact during the regular program, the need for breaks and informal socializing would not be so poignant. However, this proved to be only partly true. See Table 11 for the survey responses to the question: "What do you think of the balance between program content and breaks?"

I don't want more or less of anything, the balance was fine	75.2 %
I prefer fewer/shorter breaks and more program content	6.2 %
I prefer less program content and more/longer breaks	18.6 %

Table 11: Rating of relation between program content and breaks

The majority, as the numbers indicate, found the balance between breaks and scheduled activities appropriate: "There is scheduled plenty of time to walk from one program thing to the other and have those breaks and meet people, and just do some networking and then move on. I think that it has worked very well. Very informal."

During interviews, however, many participants mentioned that the breaks were too short when they were commenting on the program format in general. Some participants argued that the breaks needed to be longer in order for participants to attend to work-related issues that may have required their attention while they were away:

Q: What do you think about the conference so far?

A: I meet a lot of nice people. The people are very open-minded. They are communicating a lot—that I like. What else…Little bit missing—the pauses are very close, and the program is very big, and you don't have too much time to communicate.

On one hand, it seems that more interaction during the scheduled activities does indeed take the steam off the need for socializing during breaks. On the other hand (and this is something I have observed in the secondary case conferences as well), an interactive program intensifies the need for time to socialize, because people have more to talk about, and they strike up short conversations with more people in the formal program that they would like to follow up on in a more informal setting:

After you sit in these programs and absorb all this information and you get excited and inspired by this, it is almost like you have to have an outlet for it because it wants to come out! And so the discussions that took place in all of these [evening events]—in addition to meeting people and making friends, all of which was very, very good, the discussion always turned around to what each of us learned during the day. It was like we had to tell people—we were so excited about what we learned that we had to tell somebody else.

As previous data have shown, it is interesting to note the perceived difference between organized meetings and true spontaneous meetings. A participant explained that there is a difference in the value of the spontaneous conversations that arise in the informal settings and the ones that are facilitated in the formal conference setting. He described a conversation he had at the evening event after the first conference day:

At the Danish Design Centre, I [talked] to someone I knew from previously […] and it was kind of…Very concrete and work-related matters, we talked about. What are you guys doing now, what are we doing, are there any potentials for collaboration? Wauw, that sounds exciting, could you please send me that article. It was also reflective about what the conference was like and who was attending and stuff like that, but it ended up being very concrete, and it was one of the first times where I had a conversation like that. […]

Q: There was a connection and real dialogue?

Yes, and it lasted longer. Previously, I had had these spot—or construed and fast ones where we were being put together. This was one where we knew each other a little bit and work with the same stuff. The conversation went on for a longer time, I noticed. We helped each other: Go and talk to that guy! We went astray and started recommending.

[…] This thing about constructing or structuring yourself into these processes can be annoying when you feel that you already do it naturally. That you don't stand in the corner and write texts on your mobile during the breaks.

This substantiates the earlier conclusion regarding the need for breaks and informal social activities in a conference with lots of organized interaction— that breaks with self-organized conversation are all the more important. There are simply more things to talk about, and there are more people you would want to talk to.

During the conference, the most common complaint was the catering. The catering was rated extremely low, 2.6 out of 5. Within the conference industry, it is often claimed that conference participants don't remember what the conference was about but that they remember if the food was good or bad—and, consequently, that the catering is the most important dimension to consider in order to get excellent reviews. Since the food and beverages at ECCI X were downright terrible, but the conference was still rated 4.4 overall, this line of thinking probably says more about the event-less format of most conferences than about how important food is, as the following quote also shows:

Q: Is anything different at the conference than what you thought it would be?

A: Eh…maybe one thing…[laugh] it was the catering—I expected more, but it's not the most important thing. The most important thing is what's being presented—and that I'm very satisfied with.

Even though many responded that they did not think the bad catering influenced their overall experience negatively, the catering quality does, of course, have an impact, as the extreme case of ECCI X shows:

The worst [aspect of the conference] has undoubtedly been the food! It's a disgrace! But anyway, it has nothing to do with anything...But in a way it has, because it is sad that it leaves an impression of Denmark as a land where people only eat sandwiches. One participant in my Reflection Zone did not want to attend the reception at the City Hall yesterday because she could not handle anymore sandwiches. So she thinks that this is the kind of nutrition we get here. And unfortunately, that is partly true.

Bad catering can prevent people from participating in social events, it can influence the atmosphere, and participants' energy level simply lowers if their bodies do not get fuel. Participants made comments such as: "Food is important for my creativity," "Food [breakfast] is related to…learning," and "I am sure that if you just make sure that there are beverages enough for the participants, the outcome would maybe also be better." See table Table 12 for the rating of the evening events.

	Content	Form
Danish Design Centre	3.2	3.6
Copenhagen JazzHouse	4.1	4.2
City Hall	3.9	4.3
Christiania (after conference closing)	Not rated	Not rated

Table 12: Rating of evening events

It is often inferred that attending a conference is not just about getting food for the brain but also about the entire (cultural) experience of visiting a foreign place. The social evening events were an attempt to tickle the participants' apparent tourist need, and the organizing committee scheduled the evening events at different interesting venues in Copenhagen and, of course, promoted the idea of interaction in an informal setting.

What is interesting here is that these events are largely absent in the qualitative data; nobody gave examples of interesting connections, insights, and so on that were produced here. When asked about them, several participants commented that they preferred to focus on content, such as in the following comment from a young participant who indicated that he was not interested in social stuff for the sake of being social:

> Again, I am too serious, because I thought that if you come from a different country then you might…If there was any content—but there wasn't any content [scheduled at JazzHouse] —like there was at the Danish Design Centre where there was a presentation and you could visit a site. At JazzHouse it was all social social.

This suggests that while the tourist aspect of conference attendance probably still is an important element to integrate in conference planning in general, it may be less important than it used to be. This corresponds well with the feedback that conference managers cited in the introduction, namely that employees are much more focused on substance and value-for-money on a content level than they used to be.

7.9 KEY POINTS

The ECCI X conference as a whole did not turn out exactly as planned—like all other plans that are implemented in practice—but quite a few specific things did. A number of denominators stand out from the evaluation: the participants' dissatisfaction with the lack of newness, the participants' excitement over the number of new contacts they made during the conference, and the widespread satisfaction with the excellent informal atmosphere.

Overall, both the keynote speeches and track sessions provided content that was reportedly substandard. They were considered too superficial, too

commonsense, and old news. The conference participants asked for more dark horse presenters and young people to provide new perspectives. Conference participants expected more of the keynote speeches than the track presentations and they were therefore an even bigger disappointment. That said, the data shows that plenary speakers play a big role in producing and reproducing the culture and values of a particular field and that participants (especially newcomers to the field) listen carefully to the way that speakers talk about their subject and pay attention to subject details.

The ECCI X conference also experimented with the classical academic paper presentations during the so-called paper jam tracks. The paper presenters were in general appreciative and did indeed experience a better peer feedback, both from the other presenters, the chair and the audience than is normally the case. The audience had mixed experiences depending on the presenters' presentation skills and the chair's ability to facilitate the session: When the jamming succeeded, they experienced fruitful discussions and that different points of view emerged because of the mutual provocations among the presenters. When paper jamming failed, the audience found it extremely difficult to follow the presentations. The format is sensitive towards cancellations and requires good matching of the papers—otherwise the presenters do not feel that the effort put into the preparation justifies the outcome.

The Meet the Danes workshop was the highest-rated program element of the conference which is congruent with the program dramaturgy which placed Meet the Danes as the peak. Reasons cited for its success was the interactive format, the possibility of putting theory into practice and the personal validation that people experienced. A downside of this type of group-based activity is the potential negative group dynamics (for example power struggles) that might obstruct a constructive group process.

The conference participants also enjoyed the Reflection Zones because they provided a sense of belonging and opportunity for cross-learning. The latter was reportedly enhanced because of the participant diversity; people felt challenged by their fellow attendees to a high degree. The Reflection Zones also had a positive effect in terms of the general atmosphere (amongst others because they allowed sharing of emotions) and the possibility for creating new contacts (more than usual and on a higher qualitative level because the

Reflection Zones provided an organized and elaborated space where participants had more time to talk to each other).

The plenary format experiments were in general well received and people explicitly mentioned that these formats raised their attention level but it goes without saying that great formats without substance and content that matches the participants' level of knowledge become empty shells. Overall, the participants commented positively on the variation in the program format and the overall program dramaturgy with the prelude, the plenary sessions at the beginning and at the end of each day, the Reflections Zones each afternoon, the packed second day with the energizing conference dance, the variation created on the third day by the Meet the Danes excursion, the different track formats, the timing of the breaks and the social events, the role of the conference moderator and the closing. All these elements seem to have created a sense of eurhythmia, i.e. a situation where participants adapt the conference rhythm because it is congruent with the participants' bodily and psychological rhythm—or vice versa.

Facilitation was an integral part of the various processes that were designed to enhance reflection, involvement and interaction. The Reflection Zone hosts were professional facilitators and reportedly one of the main contributing factors to their success (and stronger facilitation might have kept the negative group dynamics of the Meet the Danes workshops in check). Most participants welcomed the facilitated activities as they most notably resulted in an increased level of interaction which promoted networking and the building of a great atmosphere. But facilitation also comes across as being controlling; the level of detail in the program plan is high (sometimes down to the minute) and even though nobody was forced to participate some people felt less free to do what they wanted.

Despite the general feeling of lacking newness at the conference, participants commented positively on the fact that they had been validated and reassured, which made them feel good; their conference outcome consisted of a raised awareness of their ability to perform their job tasks, an overall gain in general confidence, and a renewed energy level. At the same time, participants repeatedly mention the great atmosphere at the conference: it was informal, yet professional and participants were open and kind and therefore easy to get in

contact with. The participants' sense of outcome and the conference atmosphere are most likely interrelated and will be elaborated in the analysis.

7.9.1 DATA DIVERSITY

Although the general impression of the ECCI X conference as displayed in the data is very positive, it is interesting to note that there are a few comments and opinions that lie at the complete opposite end of the spectrum for almost every conference program element.

This data diversity may be due to several factors. First, the many parallel tracks in the program resulted in many different experiences—very few participants followed the same trajectory throughout the program. Many people experienced different things, resulting in different opinions. Some participants had the luck of experiencing all the things that went well, while some had the misfortune of experiencing the things that did not work so well, and some experienced a bit of both.

Second, the interdisciplinary nature of the conference program provoked diversity in itself content-wise by mixing academic sessions and nonacademic sessions (varying from case presentations to tool sessions and other kinds of workshops), and by catering to people within the innovation field as well as the creativity field. Conditions were ripe for this diversity to thrive, because participants were prompted to air their opinions and discuss matters with one another.

Third, as a consequence of the versatile conference program, the group of participants was quite heterogeneous in terms of expectations, experience within the field of creativity and innovation, goals of attending, and so forth. The cultural diversity was also high, with people coming from nearly fifty countries (mostly European and North American). Regardless of the many trajectories that existed within the program, the participant group was so diverse that in some cases they simply had different opinions of the same program element.

During the evaluation by the ECCI X organizing committee, many lamented that defining the target group was the most important issue that was not addressed thoroughly enough during the planning phase, with a subsequent lack of strategic PR. The ambition to integrate academics and

nonacademics and feature interdisciplinary content (innovation and creativity) might have led to a marketing campaign that was too good for its own good, attracting participants with a larger variety of expectations than the actual conference could fulfill. The participant evaluation shows how this overreaching manifested itself. The point here is the importance of adjusting participant expectations through preconference communications.

8 ANALYSIS BASED ON THE LEARNING-THROUGH-RHYTHM MODEL

The theoretical framework suggested that participant outcome at conferences could be enhanced if conferences were seen as learning spaces. Since attention is the primary prerequisite for learning, I suggested that dramaturgy could be a suitable attention mobilizer in a conference setting. This is the basic premise of the dramaturgical learning space.

I then proposed the learning-through-rhythm model as a way of realizing the dramaturgical learning space. This model implies that the dramaturgical notion of rhythm creates an attention space through the use of conflict, repetition, variation, and contrast. At the same time, most theories in (adult) learning operate under the idea that something disruptive (i.e., a mismatch between the individuals' current experience and past experiences) precipitates learning processes. In this respect, rhythm—and the idea of conflict—becomes a prerequisite for creating learning processes in conferences.

Three design principles were chosen as the building blocks with which the learning-through-rhythm model is created: reflection, involvement, and interaction, representing cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions, respectively.

In this chapter, the participant evaluation (see Chapter 7) and my reflections on the results are discussed in light of the theoretical framework (see Chapter 4) as outlined in Table 7: Analysis matrix, which illustrates the relationship between the ECCI X program elements, the design principles, and the analytical points I will present in the following sections. The chapter is structured around the three design principles of reflection, involvement, and interaction and concludes with general reflections on the use of rhythm in conference program design, including to what extent the learning-through-

rhythm model shows robustness (cf. the methodological discussion in Chapter 3).

Given the chosen methodology and the holistic nature of the theoretical framework, many of the themes that dominate the adult-learning literature can be read into the data (e.g., topics like learning readiness, motivation, meaning, transfer, etc.). Even though all of these themes are relevant and could shed important light on the topic—especially because the idea of conferences as learning situations has not been studied before and, therefore, anything is interesting—it has not been possible to dig into all of them. (Similarly, there are probably numerous issues that crop up in the data that could be interesting to analyze further from a dramaturgical perspective.) Therefore, the points of discussion that are dealt with in the following analysis are *a selection* of issues that are found in the data—the most interesting and important ones, as judged by me. They are not an exhaustive account of all the pros and cons that could play a role in illustrating the feasibility of each design principle.

8.1 ANALYSIS IN TERMS OF DESIGN PRINCIPLE #1: REFLECTION

Most adult-learning literature contends that reflection is a fundamental element in the learning process. Following the theory of Mezirow (1991, 1995), reflection prompts intentional construal and supports the meaning-making process, where the conference experience is digested, evaluated, and assessed in light of what we already know. Intentional construal increases the likelihood of premise reflection, that is, the questioning of why we perceive, think, feel, or act as we do. This type of critical reflection is necessary in order for the transformation of meaning perspectives (i.e., learning) to occur. Hence, the intention of implementing reflection in the dramaturgical learning space is to make sure that time and space are allocated to this activity and that it is facilitated properly to maximize participant outcome.

Reflection elements were implemented in several ways in the ECCI X conference program, most notably in the Reflection Zones, but also during keynote speeches and in some of the track sessions where participants were asked to reflect and/discuss certain questions. The final Swirl and Swap activity

prompted the participants to reflect upon and summarize their most important insights from the conference experience.

Reflection as a design principle proved to be a strong learning enhancer, particularly in the way the Reflection Zones were organized. The role of the facilitator in the Reflection Zones proved to be pivotal to their success; this "teacher" took on the job of stimulating the communicative virtues of the Reflection Zone members in order to get as close to the ideal conditions for discourse as possible, and the facilitators' ability to intervene and prompt critical reflection processes was critical.

That said, three important insights regarding the use of reflection in conference settings will be presented and discussed in the following sections. They are:

1. The nature of different reflection modes at conferences and the participants' reactions to them.
2. The lack of newness expressed by the participants and the fact that conferences often lack the most important driver in creating learning development: a learning trigger or a stronger focus on the role of conflict and how to challenge the participants' perspectives. But as this project demonstrates, there are numerous obstacles to implementing this in practice.
3. The nature of what ignites reflection; people seem to be very inspired by side remarks made by presenters rather than the big picture.

8.1.1 REFLECTION MODES AND RESISTANCE TOWARD LEARNING

Initiating and facilitating reflection in a conference setting faces the same challenge as reflection activities do in other types of educational settings: The effect depends largely on the conference attendees' learning readiness and motivation. Unlike other types of formal educational settings, where the teacher can establish and provide a motivational breeding ground over time, a conference lacks the conditions to enable this.

In a conference context, it makes sense to distinguish among three types of reflection modes: Reflection can be ignited through interaction with fellow attendees in spontaneous conversations (rI); you can reflect by your own

accord when your mind wanders off (rII); and reflection can be ignited when you are asked to do it by a facilitator, either individually (rIV) or through interaction with fellow attendees (rIII). See Table 13: Reflection modes.

	Social	Individual
Spontaneous	rI	rII
Prompted	rIII	rIV

Table 13: Reflection modes

It seems that participants perceive reflection as being qualitatively different depending on the type of context in which it took place. The key difference is whether the reflection is spontaneous (rI and rII) or prompted by a facilitator (rIII and rIV). The evidence points toward (rI) and (rII) as the purest and, consequently, the best reflection modes, as they are spurred by something that occupies the participants—something to which they have a strong personal connection and that seems meaningful. (rIII) and (rIV) are perceived by the participants to be the least productive modes of reflection; people do it because they have to, not because they cannot help doing it because they are so wrapped up in the subject.

A reason for the resistance toward prompted reflection activities may be that there is no psychological contract for learning between conference organizers and conference attendees; it is not explicitly part of the deal for attendees to succumb and say, "I will let you guide me into new perspectives and knowledge because you know best." In Chapter 2: The Context of Conferences, I describe how conferences are a mixture of informal and nonformal learning situations. In a formal learning situation, the contract is clear (even though there may be resistance here, too, for various reasons). Conferences are more fragmented than a sequence of classes with a curriculum and built-in progression. Within the notion of Dale's pedagogical dramaturgy (1998), he suggests variation in terms of form but continuity and coherence in content because learners need to have a sense of the learning goal, a sense of the bigger picture. In a classic conference, there is the opposite: monotony in

format and fragmentation in content (there might be a seeming coherence in the program on paper but not in reality; the red thread is often less than obvious). In the dramaturgical learning space, the thematic content is ideally consistent (cf. the notion of the basic premise) but with conflicting views and perspectives as well as variation in format. These combinations create considerably more fragmentation and discontinuity than formalized learning settings enjoy, and this means that there is no explicit bigger picture; this is something you yourself must create. This has consequences for the quality of the learning processes that might be available at a conference.

For a conference organizer who is interested in enhancing participant learning, the problem is that the undefined learning situation produces unclear roles—there is seemingly no teacher and no students. But facilitated reflection processes are needed to push the participants into dialogue with one another, as this is where the potential for transformation of meaning schemes or even meaning perspectives rests. "A reflection process needs to be attached to concrete actions to ensure that the learning becomes explicit. This process should be encouraged by a conscious and systematic interaction with others/another person for the purpose of provoking the reflection" (Wahlgreen, et al., 2002, p. 32, my translation). This is what Mezirow refers to as intentional construal; but in a conference context, this precondition for transformative learning is at the same time the object of resistance.

This resistance may be accrued to the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, i.e. "doing an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence"(Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 56).

The spontaneous reflection modes are most likely to be intrinsically motivated and the prompted ones extrinsically motivated. As previously stated, meaningful and purposeful learning activities are particularly important to adult learners (Merriam & Caffarella, 2005). Since conference participants who attend the type of conferences dealt with in this project mostly sign up out of a genuine interest in the subject field, the conference experience as a whole will—by default—seem relevant, and the participants' learning readiness and intrinsic motivation should be high.

Intrinsic motivation has always been regarded as leading to experiences that are truer and their effect of a higher quality in a learning perspective than extrinsic motivation but the Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci,

2000) distinguishes between two types of extrinsic motivation which foster two kinds of reactions.

> Students can perform extrinsically motivated actions with resentment, resistance, and disinterest or, alternatively, with an attitude of willingness that reflects an inner acceptance of the value or utility of a task. In the former case—the classic case of extrinsic motivation—one feels externally propelled into action; in the latter case, the extrinsic goal is self-endorsed and thus adapted with a sense of volition. (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55)

Acknowledging that it is not possible to rely on intrinsic motivation alone in a learning setting, SDT posits that three psychological factors (or human needs) are crucial for maintaining intrinsic motivation as well as increasing the quality of extrinsically motivated activities: *competence* (the need to feel competent enough to engage successfully in the activity), *autonomy* (the need to decide for yourself) and *relatedness* (the need to feel a connectedness or sense of belonging to the person or group that the activity originates from and that these persons value the behavior prompted). The more an activity is perceived to accommodate these three components, the more self-determined the activity will seem, hence fostering extrinsic motivation that is internalized and integrated into the self (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The ECCI X evaluation shows that participants praised the general atmosphere highly, that the Reflection Zones had an important emotional function as a small safe haven and that the conference moderator received high ratings; this indicates that the participants' sense of relatedness to the other participants and the central conference figure was quite high and following SDT this have inclined people to participate. At the same time, participants' reluctance to join the facilitated processes may be linked to the participants' fear of looking foolish or incompetent which is especially poignant in a conference context where social role-play is a conspicuous part of the conference space.

It is difficult to deduce anything from the data regarding the competence factor, but the autonomy factor seems to be of particular interest in a conference learning setting where the participants are well educated, resourceful, and have a strong self-perception as autonomous, free-thinking,

and free-acting individuals. When some of the participants, as interview respondents, are asked to make sense of their experience, they display an intellectual distance; they are torn between accepting that they have been an object of facilitation which actually fuelled an improved outcome while at the same time being strong individuals who do not need (that kind of) incentives to engage in a learning process. Some people of course have a negative history of learning experiences that have resulted in a self-image of "I'm too dumb to learn" (S. Brookfield, 1995, p. 150) but the majority of the conference participants in this project are well-educated and have positive experiences with learning, so the opposite is more likely to apply: I'm too smart to learn (cf. the seminal article by Argyris (1991)).

Along the same lines, participants may have difficulties in changing their meaning perspectives, especially if they consider themselves experts. Conference attendees arrive at the venue with an already established bigger picture (or meaning structure), and they try to make the new fragments heard at the conference fit the bill. If they don't (for various reasons), these new fragments are probably discarded. A learning process often implies a change of personal beliefs and values, and people often resent such changes because of the uncertainty and instability associated with this. Brookfield goes even further and says:

> For some, the conduct of life is a quest for certainty, for a system of beliefs and a set of values—even for a well-defined social structure—that they can adopt and commit to, for life. The psychological comfort and reassurance derived from commitment to such eternal verities is so strong that it can resist years of discrepancies, dissonances and anomalies […]. The human capacity for denial knows no limits. (S. Brookfield, 1995, p. 150ff.)

Brookfield points out that learners, who seemingly embrace the learning process, "grieve for lost certainties" (1995, p. 151). Likewise, Mezirow stresses that the transformation of meaning perspectives can "feel like a loss of sense of self" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 168). As mentioned previously, this represents a paradox considering the strong quest for newness at conferences that the data display in this project. However, the most obvious explanation seems to be that people enjoy being confirmed in what they know as well as being

challenged on a meaning-scheme level—but not when it comes to their meaning perspectives.

Besides the reasons listed above, the rhythmic notion offers another reason which may play a role when discarding information or resisting learning altogether in conferences formed as dramaturgical learning spaces.

The learning process is a cycle with a rhythm of its own—two steps forward and one step back. This means that this "incremental fluctuation," as Brookfield (1995, p. 151) calls it, has built-in temporary resistance. Similarly, there may be arrhythmia (Lefebvre, 2004) between the rhythm of the program and the individual's bodily rhythm (physical and psychological). When the learning pace is too fast to follow, participants are likely to show resistance toward learning; the same thing happens when the pace is too slow.

In one of the secondary conferences, a reflection journal with reflection questions was provided as part of the conference package. Participants were asked to reflect and write in their journals during the conference. The activity was rated 3.5 out of 5 and thus was not a big success compared to the Reflection Zones. The minor reflection pauses during the day seemed more difficult to implement than the one-hour Reflection Zones that were institutionalized in the program. Factors like the moderators' instructions or the layout of the journal (which was basically one folded sheet of A3 paper) may not have inspired participants to pursue the activity/tap into the process, but it may also be that the pace of a reflection activity is too different from the rest of the conference program activities. Suddenly, collective silence, slowing down, and contemplation are required, and the bodily rhythms become out of sync or incongruent with the social rhythm.

This issue of organizer control versus participant autonomy and the difficulty of striking the right balance where learning is stimulated and sustained (be it intrinsically or extrinsically motivated) is just as relevant when analysing the design principle of interaction. I will therefore continue this discussion in section 8.3.3 Spontaneous or Facilitated Interaction.

8.1.2 NOTHING NEW—BUT DAMN INSPIRING

The data from the ECCI X evaluation show that ECCI X failed on the dimension "to bring something new to the table," and the participants called

for more challenging content. Apparently, there were no cutting-edge track sessions or keynote speakers saying the unthinkable or someone providing a new insight that had an impact. This inevitably raises the questions: What is meant by new? And new for whom? The ECCI X conference catered to the conference participant who:

- Has attended other creativity conferences before, such as previous ECCI, ACA, or American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) conferences, and is part of the community of participants who have gathered at these events on and off for many years.
- Is a local (from Denmark) and a somewhat newcomer to the field or works in the periphery and is attending ECCI for the first (and probably the only) time.

The ECCI X conference did not cater to the type of participant who:

- Has extensive experience in the field of innovation and creativity but has not attended an ECCI conference before.
- Works within new technology/media.

This list is by no means exhaustive, but it highlights the fact that ECCI X did not properly determine which target group to cater to—and that this is a very difficult task for this type of conference. If you choose to target newcomers alone (understood here as newcomers to the field), the conference will not seem attractive to anyone, as conference attendance is about getting acquainted with a certain community of practice as a legitimate peripheral participant (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This is impossible if the community's central figures are not there. If you target the community's central figures, the conference will seem extremely attractive to newcomers, as they see the possibility of interacting with the "important ones" and learning from those who are more experienced. At ECCI X, the interesting thing was that experienced people within the field—but newcomers to the ECCI community—in particular felt frustrated.

The data show that *new* is, of course, interpreted in various ways. For some, *new* means something they have never heard before; for others, it means

old news framed in a new way. Also, the form of a presentation and the charisma of a presenter can be energizing in themselves, giving participants the feeling that something new has been added to their pool of experience, even though nothing new was actually said.

Thus, *new* means "new to me" and not necessarily new to the world or completely original; it does not necessarily have to be new in the content sense but can also be a matter of form. The latter insight is puzzling, and the following anecdote may explain this phenomenon. I once attended a conference with funky business author and "conference-speaker-artist" Johan Ridderstråle. I use the word *artist* because his presentation was like a rehearsed performance; it included a meticulously written manuscript, probably professional direction (preplanned pauses, jokes, voice intonation, and movements across the stage and among the audience), and visually intriguing PowerPoint slides made by an artist. When leaving the conference hall, two participants behind me discussed the presentation. One of them enthusiastically said, "Well, he didn't say anything new. But it was damn inspiring!" The other agreed completely. This points to the fact that a brilliant keynote speaker who knows all the rhetorical tricks of the trade, but who doesn't present revolutionary new information, can have an important function in a conference. But from a transformative learning perspective, this is not enough.

The data from this project also show that there is something intriguing about a high-profile speaker (e.g., the CEO of a large organization) who presents an interesting case "all inclusive," commenting on both successes and failures. Two reasons for this come to mind. When the speaker presents the flipside of the coin, the case shows a battle and becomes less one-dimensional and more attention-grabbing. Besides the inspirational benefits, such a keynote speech also gives people a feeling of exclusivity, especially if the CEO rarely speaks in public. Participants feel lucky to hear the case from the most central figure and decision-maker, and the story comes across as real and trustworthy.

This represents a paradox. Most organizers cast speakers who are well established; they are cast to talk about their latest publication, which everyone has already read or familiarized themselves with. This minimizes the chance of something unexpected, provocative, or new being presented. At the same time, keynote speakers (the more well known, the better) are the most important

selling point to participants when choosing to attend a conference—but participants complain about the lack of newness these speakers bring when asked to evaluate them afterward. In the case of the ECCI X conference, the opening keynote speech was by the two most well-known authors within the field, but they received the lowest score. This suggests that there is a discrepancy between what makes the conference participants buy a ticket and what they really want when they are at the conference itself.

That said, the theoretical point of having conflicts or learning triggers as a central element could have been much more extensive in the ECCI X program, such as in the performance in the opening session, which did not fulfill the purpose of a prelude. Instead, it elicited an awareness of the participatory conference form and informed participants that they had an important role in making their and others' conference experience successful. Developing a prelude in a conference context has proven to be very difficult, and I will say that it has fully succeeded in only one out of the four conferences. In Section 8.2 about involvement, the issue of the prelude is addressed in depth; here I will say only that the story became a very important focal point for discussion, and the participants used it throughout the conference as a springboard for understanding each other's perspectives.

Another way of enhancing the idea of conflict or learning triggers would be a more strategic selection of plenary speakers—or casting, if you will—and a more explicit process design for the presentations. But, as mentioned, organizers are hesitant to cast "wild card" speakers along with established ones. It is more the rule than the exception that one side of a phenomenon only is presented. Of course, different speakers are often invited to offer different perspectives on an issue, but they are never in direct conflict with or opposition to one another—and, if they are, it is never made explicit. It is even rarer to have a keynote who problematizes his or her standpoint. But why is it so difficult to provide "news" at a conference?

There are many probable explanations. It may be that speakers who might be able to provide new insights, arguments, and cases don't realize that what they know or do is interesting for other people. Or they may have an interest in withholding this knowledge for various reasons. Also, many keynotes prefer giving the same talk to different audiences to reduce preparation time. In some circumstances, plenary speakers agree to speak

without payment, and how can you then ask them to do something different and time-consuming? Along the same lines, most presenters probably find it difficult to say something that opposes what is already established as "the truth" and instead conform to some kind of commonly accepted standard within the community, declining to be controversial (or opposed to the existing norm).

Either way, it could be claimed that organizers fail to do their research properly and do not make an effort to locate those speakers who are willing and able. I assume that conference organizers don't like the thought of conflicts and that they are frightened by the idea of suppressed tensions in a particular community emerging at their conference, giving room to critical voices without any control.

The question remains whether it is enough that conferences are "just" inspiring, and if this is enough to attract the conference audience of the future. One might take the stance that conferences are not places where something new is created; rather, they are places that facilitate the dissemination of what we already know. I would argue that conferences could and should increase novelty—or the production of novelty—through a stronger focus on the central conflict (or opposites, contradictions, juxtapositions), which is so crucial to dramaturgy and adult learning theory alike. The challenge of how to do such focusing in a constructive and positive spirit remains.

8.1.3 THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

When the interview respondents talked about their learnings and outcome in general, many accentuated a small side remark or sentence they had noticed—that is, they did not talk about the general points that were made by presenters but pinpointed side remarks that resonated with them. During a Reflection Zone, the participants discussed a keynote speech, and one of the participants mentioned a distinction the keynote speaker made between culture and climate. In the conversation that followed, they adjusted their meaning schemes accordingly:

> X: For me, that's great. For my methods in my research—if you
> cannot interview on organizational culture, maybe you can talk

about climate. Maybe it's easier to interview someone about that
[…].

Y: It was also a bit of an eye-opener to me that you can distinguish
between culture and climate. It makes it more structured.

X: Yes, really nice. That was the best thing for me. [laugh]

Y: It is interesting how such a small remark can make such a big
difference.

I have had a similar experience myself. I attended a session with violinist Miha Pogacnik on music and business leadership, where he deconstructed and interpreted a Beethoven violin concert played by a live symphony orchestra. He drew the musical process on a huge board using different colors and commented along the way on how to understand the music flow. At one point in the music piece, he said, "This note is the question of all questions—it is the mother question." This comment made me think about my PhD project, and I realized that my research question consisted of many questions that were hanging in mid-air; I needed a mother question. It prompted me to go home and write five pages about the aim of the project, possible directions for each chapter, the justifications for these, and so on. When I finished writing, it was all clear to me, and I formulated the research question—the mother question of the Ph. D project.

It is interesting to note here that the keynote speech by Uffe Elbæk is the best rated (4.0 out of 5), and its format was quite untraditional; among other things, his speech consisted of twenty-five small, simple statements. After a couple of minutes of introduction, Elbæk told a story about surfing as a metaphor for an organization and critiqued the Danish political environment for not supporting creativity (this lasted a total of seven minutes). Then he gave twenty-five pieces of advice that were like creativity doctrines, some familiar, some unfamiliar: "Embrace chaos, give the best away, beware of those who are perfect, ask anyone, be disciplined." This lasted five minutes. Finally, he showed a video with lots of rhythmic music from all over the world, which lasted ten minutes. This keynote speech even caught the attention of the catering personnel, who stopped working and started watching and listening.

The small remarks or pieces of advice that were used in the examples above were obvious and provocative at the same time and seemed to help participants stay attentive by creating resonance and igniting reflections; such results make time go faster because the mind is preoccupied with creating personal meaning. The remarks are extremely banal, but nevertheless they have the power to ignite a whole chain of thoughts and make an impact. However, the impact of these remarks, although perceived as important by the participants, would at most be classified as an adjustment of meaning schemes. They strike the right balance between challenge and confirmation of the participants' existing meaning structure, and simple learning/confirmative learning is achieved. This finding also supports the claim that many conference participants attend conferences to be acknowledged and get confirmation that what they already know is good/fine/enough/right, not necessarily to become challenged as radically as transformative learning calls for.

The question is whether the adjustment of meaning schemes is a huge achievement in a conference setting or whether it is just not good enough from a learning perspective. The above indicates that transformative learning, as proposed by Mezirow, may be an overly ambitious ideal to apply in a conference setting. This is not to imply that the ambition of transformative learning within conferences should be rejected: "A perspective transformation can occur either through an accretion of transformation of meaning schemes resulting from a series of dilemmas or in response to an externally imposed epochal dilemma" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 168). Examples of such dilemmas are life-changing events like illness, divorce, or retirement, but they can also be an eye-opening discussion, a book, or a painting.

The data do not indicate that transformative learning has taken place for any participants during the conference, and it is reasonable to assume that the likelihood of a transformation in hindsight as a direct result of conference attendance is low. As the quote alludes to, content and process reflection are the first steps on the way to transformative learning, as these contribute to changes in meaning schemes, which might result in a meaning perspective transformation over time. (Even though a direct route to the transformation of a meaning perspective exists, that is more instantaneous.) Allocating time and space for reflection (not just content and process, but also premise reflection) is therefore deemed relevant and crucial to enhancing participant outcome in a

conference setting. Otherwise, the tendency to remain on the level of presentational construal is high.

8.1.4 KEY POINTS

Summing up on the design principle of reflection, the analysis shows that prompted reflection activities are necessary to promote learning in a conference setting but such activities are at the same time challenged by the very nature of the conference learning space which is both a nonformal and an informal learning type of setting. Hence, participants do not necessarily acknowledge that they are taking part in a learning situation. Participants value reflection moments, that arise spontaneously (either individually or in a social setting), higher because they are perceived as being more true or real than the prompted ones. The analysis shows that when trying to prompt extrinsically motivated activities in a conference setting it is of particular importance to establish a sense of relatedness and be sensitive towards people's sense of autonomy. The more participants feel that their actions and behavior are self-determined, the more they will embrace and engage in the activity. This is of particular importance in conference settings where participants have a strong self-image as being resourceful, knowledgeable and self-directed. Other factors that might induce resistance toward learning are difficulties in changing meaning perspectives (which implies getting rid of old beliefs) and arrhythmia (where the psychological and bodily rhythms are too incongruent with the conference rhythm).

The substandard content that was provided at ECCI X has led to a number of conclusions about the role and goal of speakers at conferences. On one hand, participants seem to be inspired (enough) by speakers just because they have a high status in the community or in society in general and/or because they have a way of presenting their point of views that makes an impact even though the points have all been heard before. Also, the participants' reflection processes can easily be ignited by small side remarks made and thereby have significant impact. However, it is not likely that these type of reflection processes produce transformative learning; meaning schemes may be adjusted and altered, but the participants' meaning perspectives have probably remained the same. Stronger premises and a more conscious use of

conflicts and disorienting dilemmas are called for. Although it may be overly-ambitious to believe that conferences are able to foster transformative learning instantaneously, allocating time and space for both content, process and premise reflection is deemed relevant and crucial to enhancing participant outcome in a conference setting. Otherwise, the tendency to remain on the level of presentational construal is high. Also, the transformative ideal may make conference organizers realize what kind of task they have ahead of themselves if they truly want conferences with higher participant outcomes.

8.2 ANALYSIS IN TERMS OF DESIGN PRINCIPLE #2: INVOLVEMENT

The conjecture put forward in the theoretical framework was that positive emotions are an important learning enhancer, and the design principle of involvement ensures that some conference elements create a psychologically safe learning environment and prompt participants to become emotionally involved. This broadens participants' attention, renders them open to more new ideas, and expands their thought associations.

In the conference program, emotional involvement as a design principle was embraced more intangibly than the design principles of reflection and interaction. Generally, the ambition was to create a warm, welcoming, relaxed, and cozy atmosphere by choosing an unusual venue, setting up the conference space a certain way, emphasizing a high level of interaction among participants (i.e., participatory sessions, Reflection Zones, the Meet the Danes workshop), and scheduling a significant number of social events in the evenings. Minor program elements, such as the prelude and the conference dance, were also scheduled to stimulate involvement.

The data show that the atmosphere indeed was extraordinary, and I will first explore why and how this seems to have impacted the participants' overall sense of outcome. Next I will examine the implementation of preludes in all four of the conferences that were part of this research project. The reason is twofold. First, the prelude is a central element in the learning-through-rhythm model since it facilitates the inclusion of conflict, which is so critical within both dramaturgy and adult-learning theories. Second, the participants'

reactions to the preludes enable the exploration of the ethical issue raised in the theoretical chapter regarding the intended use of emotions in conference settings.

8.2.1 CONFERENCE ATMOSPHERE

The ECCI X evaluation shows that the general liking of the conference is rated higher (4.4 out of 5) than any separate rating of the various program elements. In other words, the sum is greater than its parts. The big question, then, is the following: What made the participants like the conference? Even though attendees overall did not find that the conference contributed anything new, the data show clearly that people felt energized, inspired, and validated. At the same time, many conference participants repeatedly observed that the general conference atmosphere was exceptionally good and positive, and these two factors are most likely interlinked. The parameters that influenced the atmosphere in a positive way seem to be a combination of the following:

- **The venue**
  The nontraditional conference space with the informal seating arrangement created a welcoming and inviting atmosphere from the very beginning.
- **The Reflection Zones**
  They gave people a base and sense of security. Discussions and critiques were generally conducted in a positive/appreciative spirit. Besides sharing experiences, practices, and views, people shared emotions about their conference experience.
- **The opening**
  The conference chair had a small speech in which he urged people to take an active part in the play: "We have just set the stage." The opening performance had the same message, and even though some people found it toe-curlingly bad, it conveyed a central message: Let's be expressive—and let's not feel uncomfortable being expressive.
- **Conference volume**
  Even though some found the conference to be big in terms of participant volume, and the program, in particular, to be big in terms of the high

number of parallel tracks, many international conference-goers found the conference to be cozy and small.

- **Participants were presenters and presenters were participants**
  Many participants contributed to the program as presenters or had other roles, and most of the keynotes stayed throughout the conference. This changed the audience/speaker relationship, and the responsibility for the conference dialogue was distributed.

The combination of these program elements promoted a general feeling of emotional well-being; it helped the participants blossom and break down personal barriers so they could engage fully. One might say that the conference provided an atmosphere where they could be the best versions of themselves which, in turn, contributed to creating an even greater atmosphere.

The latter point, about being the best version of yourself, is especially important. Conference participants show only a fraction of their personalities at a conference, because they are reduced to people who sit in a chair and listen to an expert with whom they may or may not agree. Because of the social awkwardness and the circumstances surrounding the breaks, participants are often reduced to human beings who stand alone in the corner and check cell phone messages to look busy. If they talk to someone, it is probably someone they already know. I would argue that the dramaturgical learning space provides a conference environment where participants, to a large extent, can be who they are and be heard, seen, and recognized. The more they are allowed to display their personalities, the better they feel about themselves as conference participants—and the more their mindsets are broadened, following the broaden-and-build theory.

A study of viewers' enjoyment of feature films showed that people may evaluate a movie with challenging cognitive content (i.e., a complicated narrative) positively, even though they may not have understood the story completely—the reason being that they have become emotionally involved in the central character (B. Owen, 2007). This suggests that emotional aspects can outweigh cognitive aspects in the evaluation of an experience and may be a possible explanation for the high overall evaluation of the ECCI X conference despite the fact that the data shows that participants found the content to be substandard.

Another contributing factor may be that the learning-through-rhythm model emphasizes the creation of personal meaning-making and focuses directly on individual goal fulfillment. Within positive psychology it has been suggested that goal congruence, i.e. when an experience is perceived to bring you closer to a desired goal, positive emotions are evoked (Nørby, 2008).

Conference organizers and conference participants may have different and even contradictory goals in many instances: The conference organizers seek to be agenda-setting on a policy level or push for some other kind of (societal) impact that serves the strategy of the organization, while the participants sign up for a conference for personal benefit and gratification. In other words, only policy makers or high-level business executives who have a meta-perspective on things and the power to influence the policies made have a personal interest in the policy level, while other conference-goers, who operate on a more subordinate level, are interested in new knowledge, tools, and techniques that can help them better perform their jobs.

A case study of the first conference, the Alternative Staffing Alliance (ASA), exemplifies this idea by providing an interesting insight into the program trajectories of the conference participants. The mission of ASA is "to serve job candidates with employment handicaps, such as ex-offenders or the homeless," and the stated purpose of the conference was "to support the solidification of the field by encouraging participants both to join in and help define an association that would bring them together under a shared umbrella" (Meyer & Aten, 2008). Different types of sessions were offered, including sessions on a policy level, which intended to set an agenda and define the role of the Alliance, as well as sessions focusing on skill development, primarily within marketing and management. The preliminary results show that most participants were not interested in joining sessions dealing with the policy level but opted for those sessions that offered personal skill development.

This alludes to the point that most conference participants are more focused on personal utility value than conference organizers are aware of: They go for personal meaning and relevance, even in those conferences that are marketed as focusing on configuring a stronger and more influential community (presumably for the benefit of everybody working within the field).

ECCI X had no specific political or strategic agenda other than to provide a gathering that would be stimulating for the participants. For example, the Reflection Zones were set up to allow participants to dwell within their particular interests and challenges, and the Reflection Zone hosts were instructed to facilitate the process on the participants' terms instead of pushing their own agendas. A few facilitators could not resist, but in general the aim of letting participants dwell within themselves and their thoughts was executed to the participants' great satisfaction.

So far, this project has positioned the dramaturgical learning conference as a participatory conference format, opposed to most conferences, which are nonparticipatory. (See Table 15: Comparison of three different conference formats, for an elaboration of the difference between the dramaturgical learning conference and two other dominant conference formats, the classic conference and Open Space.) Another important distinction comes to mind: The dramaturgical learning conference aims to produce a psychologically safe environment, with trust, security, reassurance, and an appreciative communication culture. These elements are lacking in most conference settings, which produce awkward social situations that, in return, foster negative stress responses like anxiety, nervousness and insecurity. The findings of the ECCI X conference support the broaden-and-build theory by demonstrating that the benefits of consciously fostering a positive conference atmosphere are numerous.

8.2.2 FICTION VERSUS NONFICTION

In the dramaturgical learning space, beginnings are considered extremely important. The first sentence in a book, the first note in a piece of music, or the first image of a movie sets the stage. Similarly, the opening session of a conference provides an opportunity to do the same: to frame the conference theme and the central conflict. In all four conferences, large efforts were made to develop and implement such a prelude, and I have chosen to discuss the experiences and data from all four conferences, as the comparisons among these provide some very interesting insights.

In terms of attention, conferences exist on both ends of a continuum. At one end, the conference is knowledge-intensive on a high level and rich in

detail but tends also to be boring. At the other end, the primary goal is to ensure that participants have a good time and that they are entertained. In the first case, the conference lacks emotional markers but has lots of substance; in the latter case, the conference is entertaining but easily forgettable. Neither of these formats seems optimal for the type of conference this project addresses.

The prelude is an attempt to mix entertainment with substance. The four prelude productions differed in format and whether they were fiction or nonfiction. See Table 14 for an overview.

The data show that the false plenary speaker at the CK IV conference was the most successful prelude and that the ECCI X performance was the least successful of the four.

The data also show that emphasizing the opening act of a conference has tremendous potential and can have a huge impact. What is interesting here is that I have previously argued against the "one size fits all" line of thinking, which is implied in the large-scale ambitions of some design-based researchers. But it seems that the CK IV prelude format is robust across several settings. Working as a conference consultant, I have implemented it (with a different character and a different story that fit the conference context) in three conferences in the past year, all with the same positive effect. The following features appear to contribute to the impact of a conference prelude; the more a prelude embraces all five elements, the greater the effect:

Specifies the premise

In the planning phase, the production of a prelude opens up many necessary, fundamental discussions about the conference theme and helps determine expectations and goals from both an organizer and a participant perspective (and clarifies the difference between the two). Working on a prelude facilitates a more precise specification of the central premise. In the subsequent planning of the conference program, it is easier to determine which speakers to invite and which sessions to include.

	ECCI X	Help Desk Forum 2006	The Annual Meeting of The Innovation Council	CK IV
Format	Live performance by three actors	Short film—but based on true stories	Documentary short subject (e.g., like a news report on TV)	Live plenary speech by an actress
Fiction or nonfiction	Fiction	Fiction—but based on true stories	Nonfiction	Fiction—but based on true stories
Presented to the audience as being…	Fiction	Fiction	Nonfiction	Nonfiction
Content	The performance introduced the concept of co-creation and cross-disciplinarity. Three participant types—the academic, the consultant, and the creative—presented their views of the conference theme, using five communication principles that will ensure a good conference culture. See section 5.1.2 Program Elements for an elaboration.	The film followed a package courier on a typical working day, until suddenly his handheld computer device for scanning the packages stopped working. He called the support center. From there, we followed the support center's attempt to solve the problem and the struggles the delivery guy faced during the day. The story was written by a script writer/director through interviews with	This was a case story about a successful innovation project in a hospital that created a patient hotel. The report included interviews with the manager, employees, and patients.	A false student speaker named Stine K. Svendsen talked about her experience as a university student. The story was constructed by a script writer/director through interviews with six students. The emphasis was on the themes relevant to the conference audience (how she experienced the service in the library) and the issues raised by the keynotes later on in the program

		help desk supporters, managers, and users, and the film was shot with professional actors.		(like plagiarism).
Rating (out of 5)	3.9	4.2	4.1	4.6

Table 14: Overview of the four conference preludes

Creates "a common third"

The prelude creates a common experience that serves as a platform for dialogue. People who don't know one another yet engage in dialogue understand one another better when they have a common frame of reference, which eliminates the struggle to make one another understand their perspectives. The prelude stands in as the common third that both conversational parties can refer to, which helps them get their points across easier. During CK IV, the prelude became a conversation piece that both speakers and participants used heavily for the remainder of the conference. In Mezirow's terms, the prelude creates intersubjectivity—that is, common generalizations are made that can serve as a conversation enabler, because everyone knows the categories in which everyone talks, promoting mutual understanding.

Says the unsaid

Most communities leave certain things unsaid for various reasons. It can be because there is a holy cow that must not be slaughtered; because people are sick of hearing about the same issues, problems, and challenges and have begun to ignore them; or because they have lost touch with reality or have become blind from being trapped in the daily grind. In all instances, they need someone from the outside to look at their community and tell them a couple of "truths." In this case, the prelude becomes a way to make the familiar unfamiliar—it allows the participants to see the familiar with new eyes. This dimension is very emotion-laden and potentially explosive, as suppressed tensions and conflicts may come to the surface; but the benefits are huge. When the unsaid has been explicated in the very beginning, it becomes a legitimate topic of discussion, which minimizes the sort of symbolic conversation that many people conduct at conferences where they talk on one level while knowing that underlying drivers govern what is said. In an ideal situation, saying the unsaid will make a conference community get to the point more quickly, where the conversation matters.

Makes the absent present

In most conferences, the subjects of the subject matter are absent (e.g., university students in a conference about empowering students, users in a conference about improving computer support, or citizens in a conference

about promoting bicycling in cities). The prelude is a way to facilitate the presence of the absent who, ironically, are the purpose of the meeting. It relates the conference program to the everyday lives of the participants (including all the emotions it evokes) and makes the conference theme concrete instead of abstract.

Follow-ups during the conference

To ensure the maximum effect and value of the prelude, it should not stand alone. Ideally, it is followed up by plenary speakers who discuss the prelude from a number of perspectives, as well as workshops where participants reflect and discuss the prelude and the plenary presentations with fellow attendees.

The CK IV prelude fully embraced all of these parameters, including the follow-up dimension—I have since used the same type of prelude in two other conferences with the same effect. While the two films adhered, to a large degree, to the criteria listed above (but less than the CK IV performance), the ECCI X performance embraced only one of these dimensions (saying the unsaid). This was done by stereotyping the three participant types within the ECCI X community and highlighting the preconceived notions these groups have of one another. Rather than going for the subject and creating a common third, the prelude aimed at raising the participants' "form awareness" by introducing some rules of discourse that might be beneficial in a participatory conference format. As mentioned above, the results show that this type of prelude does not fulfill the goals of a conference prelude.

The deception (or manipulation) of the CK IV prelude raises the issue of ethics. (The interesting thing is that emotional manipulation in a conference context seems to be ethically more precarious than cognitive provocations.) When people were told at the end of day one at CK IV that Stina K. Svendsen was a fictional character, though based on a series of true stories, there was some disappointment. Some commented that they wished she had been real, even though such a person would be impossible to find.

When experiencing a theater play, people relate to the real as well as the fictional elements (Gladsø, et al., 2005). Even though contemporary theater blurs the boundaries, the CK IV prelude exploits the fact that the participants expect the norms of that genre (authenticity/reality) to be adhered to; when

the unspoken conference contract with the participants is broken, a double contract is created (Behrendt, 2006). A double contract refers to those circumstances where fiction and reality suddenly swap places or transform into each other by first being presented as one and then the other (e.g., fiction presented as based on a true story—but then the true story is not so true; or reality presented as reality—which turns out to be fiction; or claimed fiction that proves to be more reality than anyone thought).

In an industry report about the events industry in Denmark in the experience economy, a section is devoted to "the dark side of events" (J. Nielsen, 2008). Drawing from Durkheims's comparison of ancient religious rituals and the music festivals and other types of mass-meetings in today's society, Nielsen points out that these events produce a collective roar (*effervescence* in Durkheims's terms, similar to euphoria or exaltation):

> The collective roar is the frame of cognition where the collective values are reformed, rejected and resurrected. After a ritual, the holy is rooted with a new face, a new root net and a new existential meaning. Therefore, each completed ritual is a re-born experience. The collective is challenged and strengthened. For the individual, one may speak of a transformation where a new experience arises from the ritual's influence of the mind. (J. Nielsen, 2008, p. 47, my translation)

In some types of events, such as sports matches, the collective roar is one of the primary reasons for participation; while in other types of events, such as stadium concerts, the collective roar adds to the sensory experience. The flipside is that the seductive characteristics of the collective roar also have the power to manipulate the crowd, sometimes with disturbing consequences (e.g., the Nazi or Fascist movements). Within organizational research, much criticism has been directed toward the many efforts to cultivate a sense of unity among employees, such as through large organizational events (J. Nielsen, 2008).

The potential transformative effect on the individual as a result of participating in the collective roar can be positive and rewarding, but it can also be counterproductive if people, in hindsight, feel betrayed or seduced into a state of mind they essentially do not approve of.

In the sense that a feeling of unity is established among conference participants through the means of the prelude, it is in the form of "a common third" as mentioned above. Since the participants rated the CK IV prelude very high, it seems that they accepted the premise of the narrative presented, even though they were deceived. It is extremely important to emphasize the fiction's close relationship to the reality when revealing the deception, but acceptance is probably possible only if the narrative is extremely congruent with the reality it seeks to portray and if the authenticity is undeniable. When people have first been affected and have deemed the presentation trustworthy, true, recognizable, and "the way it is," the narrative is difficult to dismiss, even though the presenting character is fictitious. Otherwise, the participants would dismiss the narrative immediately. This means that besides aiming at evoking (positive) emotions during the conference, conference organizers should also think about the lasting effect of a prelude; they should not strive only to create a momentary craze.

8.2.3 KEY POINTS

To summarize, the design principle of involvement was an important contributing factor in creating an extraordinary conference atmosphere, which most likely made the conference participants evaluate the conference positively—the score on the general evaluation question is significantly higher than any separate rating of the various program elements. Research suggests that emotional aspects can outweigh cognitive aspects in the evaluation of an experience.

The dramaturgical learning space provides a conference environment where the participants are heard, seen, and recognized, and this general emotional well-being prompts them to be the best versions of themselves, which again adds to their contentment. At the same time, the learning-through-rhythm model is participant-oriented as opposed to organizer-oriented. Conference organizers and conference participants may have different and even contradictory goals in many instances: The conference organizers seek to be agenda-setting on a policy level or push for some other kind of (societal) impact that serves the strategy of the organization, while the participants sign up for a conference for personal benefit and gratification. The

ECCI X conference had no specific political or strategic agenda other than to provide a gathering that would be stimulating for the participants. This means that the likelihood of participants experiencing goal congruence (and consequently that positive emotions are evoked) is higher.

The great atmosphere produced by the learning-through-rhythm model is a key component to the model's success. When being in a psychologically safe environment, with trust, security, reassurance, and an appreciative communication culture, participants are more likely to broaden their attention and cognition (e.g. creative thinking, openness towards new and different perspectives) and build personal resources in a long term perspective. Also, this type of atmosphere, which evokes positive emotions, produces greater feelings of self-other overlap.

The use of a prelude to evoke emotions right from the beginning can be a powerful learning enhancer in the social learning space, as it creates a common third—a shared point of reference—that allows strangers to understand one another faster during dialogue. Experiments with different prelude formats reveal that some have more potential than others; in particular, the blend between fiction and nonfiction, where the distinction is kept a secret, shows promise, but it also raises some ethical questions of the degree to which conference organizers can play with this kind of deception.

Similar to the conclusion regarding reflection as a design principle, there is no evidence that transformative learning has been produced through the means of involvement as a design principle. However, the theoretical arguments, as well as the empirical data, suggest that the likelihood of that happening is increased tremendously by ensuring the emotional well-being of conference participants.

8.3 ANALYSIS IN TERMS OF DESIGN PRINCIPLE #3: INTERACTION

The purpose of the design principle of interaction was to transform coffee-break conversations into a formal part of the program and encourage the participants to talk to one another to a greater extent, thereby creating a social learning space as well as increasing opportunities for building relationships

with new people. It was assumed that emphasizing interaction in the conference program would create a ZPD environment, not because of the presence of a more capable person, as the traditional notion would have it, but because of a qualitatively higher level of peer-to-peer interaction, as Mott suggests (1992; Mott & Frost, 1994). But the design principle was also based on the idea that social interaction does not necessarily happen just because people are put in a room together; no social order will suddenly emerge within a conference's limited time frame unless a certain dose of structure facilitates it.

Interaction was implemented particularly in the Reflection Zones and Meet the Danes sessions. Contributors were also asked to integrate interaction in their session/presentation design and clarify in their contribution proposal how they planned to fulfill this ambition. As a result, most track sessions had interaction elements. Finally, many keynotes had interactional elements in various forms.

In the following, I will discuss three important findings. The first finding is related to the point about the great conference atmosphere and how this has influenced the interaction dimension in an important way (and vice versa). The second finding pertains to the social dimension of learning. Juxtaposed to the first finding, a number of parameters seem to negatively influence the social learning environment in the dramaturgical learning space, namely issues of group pressure and the tendency to become field-sustaining rather than field-configuring as a result of gravitation toward sameness. The third finding relates to the issue already raised in the analysis of reflection as a design principle, namely the point about the use of facilitated processes to ensure interaction and how facilitation seems to produce both positive and negative reactions.

8.3.1 FOSTERING PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

The participant evaluation provides some interesting insights into why interaction among participants and between speakers and participants is crucial to the success of a conference that aims at supporting and enhancing participants' learning processes.

There is a saying that nothing can make you feel lonelier than being alone in a crowd.

Interaction helps the participants create more new contacts. The often-quoted notion that "the interesting things at a conference happen during the breaks" (Forskerforum, 2004) probably stems from the fact that during breaks, participants interact with one another, create new contacts, and get the opportunity to discuss important issues (that may or may not be related to the conference subject). The learning-through-rhythm model shows that it is possible to create a conference program that ignites discussion during the formal program sessions and facilitate processes where attendees are led to talk to strangers instead of talking to "the usual suspects" they already know, which is what often happens during coffee breaks. This paves the way for moving beyond the usual cliques and colleague groupings and establishing initial contacts to new people and networks (i.e., filling structural holes). Since creating new contacts is also one of the outcome parameters that participants value the highest (cf. Section 7.1 about participant expectations), interaction has proven to be one of the most important design principles when creating a successful conference.

The data from ECCI X shows that the increased level of interaction is fostered by the great atmosphere—and vice versa. Interaction among conference participants creates a different atmosphere, where participants cease being alone in a crowd and begin being together. When people get to know one another, they begin to feel more secure and happy about being there, and the trust needed to act and interact collectively is built.

Recalling the theoretical background of involvement presented in section 4.4.2, a positive conference environment will broaden the participants' attention and cognition. Similarly, the broaden-and-build theory suggests that positive emotions lead to pro-social behavior; this also seems to have been the case at ECCI X.

> Induced positive emotions lead to a greater likelihood of initiating conversations with and disclosing personal information to a stranger. […] Moreover, induced social interaction between strangers leads to increased positive emotions. [P]ositive emotions are important to social activity as both a cause and a result of social interactions. (Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006, p. 93)

This means that the design principles of involvement and interaction positively constitute each other. Waugh and Fredrickson go even further and propose that

> positive emotions broaden people's sense of self to include others, which over time may produce greater feelings of self-other overlap and "oneness". These feelings of self-other overlap may in turn predict a more complex understanding of others. Having a more complex understanding of others may then smooth the progress of the relationship, allowing each person to better appreciate the other and continue to come closer. (Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006, p. 94)

Following this, relationships need time to evolve. In a classic conference setting, the time allocated for building relationships is limited to breaks and social events but the ECCI X conference provided several types of sessions where relationship-building was possible. Accumulated over the four conference days, participants actually managed to establish contacts that moved on to be more significant relations.

8.3.2 FIELD-CONFIGURING AND FIELD-SUSTAINING

A special issue of *Journal of Management Studies* focuses on so-called field-configuring events (FCEs), which are

> settings in which people from diverse organizations and with diverse purposes assemble periodically, or on a one-time basis, to announce new products, develop industry standards, construct social networks, recognize accomplishments, share and interpret information, and transact business. […] FCEs can enhance, reorient, or even undermine existing technologies, industries, or markets; or alternately, they can become crucibles from which new technologies, industries, and markets emerge. (Lampel & Meyer, 2008, p. 1026)

As demonstrated, conferences can facilitate a social learning environment, and they can, of course, be field-configuring settings, particularly a conference that marks the beginning of a new conference series or the formation of a new field.

But I would argue that not all conferences are full of evolving, dynamic, emerging, and developing processes only; conferences can also be self-preserving, constantly reestablishing and negotiating the status quo. In other words, conferences can be field-sustaining. For example, the yearly Academy of Management conference, the leading conference for business research worldwide, provides numerous sessions on learning the game of being a business scholar: how to succeed in the discipline of business research; how to conduct research in accordance with methodological standards; how to get published; and so forth. (This is not to imply that the Academy of Management meetings are field-sustaining only, but it goes to show that many conferences have sessions that assimilate newcomers to the field rather than focus on developing the field). The ECCI X conference had both field-configuring as well as field-sustaining elements.

From an actor-oriented perspective, a field develops when the people of the field develop. According to the theoretical framework, learning processes are ignited by something disruptive—that is, when someone offers a new perspective, a different perspective, or a counter-perspective that challenges your existing meaning structure. Following this logic, the more interaction there is in a conference, the less field-sustaining it will be, provided that the participants are diverse in terms of experiences and worldviews and are not hesitant to air these.

The data show that participants reasoned that they had been prompted to talk to many of their fellow attendees in various ways, and, because of this, they talked to people they normally would not talk to because of prejudices. This provided them with new perspectives that they would otherwise not have gained. Following up on the point made previously about how positive emotions promote pro-social behavior, studies also show that this behavior is more inclusive (Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006). In this sense, the learning-through-rhythm models counteracts field-sustaining tendencies by readying people towards a broadened perspective and incline them to establish contacts with people different from themselves.

As already established, diversity brings about the potential for transformative learning, but, paradoxically, the acclaimed diversity may be difficult to take advantage of in reality (Justesen, 2007). Along with an increasing level of interaction follows an increasing number of

counterproductive group dynamics issues where power struggles, prejudices, and an overall lack of communicative virtues dominate. During the Meet the Danes workshop, negative effects of group dynamics were a particular issue. Interestingly, the effects of group dynamics were predominantly positive and productive during Reflection Zones. This is probably due to the two most important differences between the two types of group-based activities:

- The Reflection Zones had a host who was a professional facilitator. Since many ECCI X participants work as facilitators, there were probably many group members who might have taken the role of facilitator, but the Reflection Zone hosts were granted this status beforehand. At Meet the Danes, the facilitators were provided by the host or chosen from among the group members on the spot.
- During Meet the Danes, the participants had to solve a problem assignment they had not chosen themselves and perform, while Reflection Zones were all about individual digestion (although this might include using fellow participants as sounding boards.) The Meet the Danes setup called for some degree of competition, since many participants work as consultants. I assume that when people get away from power relations, the likelihood of critical-rational discourse is much higher. Therefore, the Reflection Zones had a higher potential for success from a learning perspective, since people did not carry any structural authority or leadership roles that needed to be manifested.

In a few instances, the Reflection Zone host (e.g., the facilitator) was probably more capable than the Reflection Zone members and was therefore able to lead the participants toward their ZPD in a Vygotskian sense. In most cases, however, the Reflection Zone host could just as well have been a Reflection Zone member and vice versa. They explored the conference subject together, and the facilitator "just" had the role of organizing the processes through which this was done, thus creating the potential for ZPD learning processes among peers, as inferred by Mott (1992; Mott & Frost, 1994). In either case, it seems that the facilitators during the ECCI X conference overall managed to ensure a higher level of interaction and that the Reflection Zone structure

cultivated a social learning environment which increased the potential for field-configuration.

Another reason for why it may be difficult to use the richness of diversity is that all communities—or temporary groups, such as a conference—have a tendency to gravitate toward sameness. The process of socialization often equals assimilation, in that the organization or culture into which the newcomer is inducted is left unaffected, and the potential learning or development that lies in embracing the newcomer's critical-constructive input is lost (Sprogøe, 2008). The data shows that plenary speakers impact the socialization of newcomers to the field through imitation: Participants pay attention to and adopt points of view, examples, visions, and language usage where these fit their existing meaning structure. While the conference participants in this study call for newness (i.e., complain when it is lacking), there is also some evidence that they also find great value in being validated in what they already know and even prefer not to be (too) challenged (see section 8.1.1).

These two forces—the field-configuring and field-sustaining—probably coexist in all conferences. A conference series needs some degree of development in order to attract participants continuously, but there are also many forces that prevent development from happening, such as assimilation. In this respect, there is a potential risk of conferences being field-sustaining events rather than field-configuring ones.

8.3.3 SPONTANEOUS OR FACILITATED INTERACTION

As seen in the analysis of reflection as a design principle, there is a qualitatively different perception of the value of spontaneous and facilitated reflection depending on the person's sense of self-determination. Table 15: Comparison of three different conference formats depicts the placement of the dramaturgical learning space in the spectrum between a classic conference format and the Open Space format in terms of participants' participation/nonparticipation and control/noncontrol performed by the organizers.

The conference classic format has a high degree of organizer control and allows scarce opportunities for participation. The format has a fixed

program structure and focuses on what I will call message delivery; the organizers control the conference content, which is defined by what the organizers find important and relevant to present. Often, this means that the conference as a whole is organizer-oriented and the participants' sense of self-determination is low. In terms of learning, the one-way communication approach results in so-called rote learning, where conference attendees listen only during sessions.

The Open Space format is highly participatory and has low organizer control. The conference theme ensures a high level of interest and "sense of urgency" and the format encourages participants to pursue meaning and relevance at all times. In case they do not learn anything or contribute, they should leave and join another session where this is possible. The content of the sessions is organized by the participants themselves, and everything can change according to the participants' wishes, i.e. the sense of self-determination is high.

The dramaturgical learning space mixes the conference classic format and the Open Space format and yet, it is something different. Primarily, the format aims at transformative learning. There is a high degree of organizer control, but the control is used to increase participation through interaction, reflection, and involvement. The level of self-determination is medium; the overall program is decided beforehand by the organizers, but the sessions are structured by way of facilitated processes that leave room for the participants own goal fulfillment.

	Nonparticipation	Participation
Control	**CONFERENCE CLASSIC** ■ Fixed program structure ■ Presentations ■ Transfer model of learning ■ Low level of self-determination	**DRAMATURGICAL LEARNING SPACE** ■ Fixed program structure adhering to the principles of learning-through-rhythm ■ Organizer control used to increase participation (i.e., through interaction, reflection, and involvement) ■ Presentations and intros ■ Aims for transformative learning ■ Medium level of self-determination
Noncontrol	**N/A**	**OPEN SPACE** ■ Participants create the program ■ Allows participants to pursue meaning and relevance at all times ■ Talks and intros ■ Participants are responsible for own learning ■ High level of self-determination

Table 15: Comparison of three different conference formats

The backbone format of the classic conference format is the presentation. Schmidt (1995) argues that the role of a pedagogue is to make people do something they would not necessarily have done on their own accord, and this exertion of power is legitimized in some kind of authority. Throughout history, this pedagogical authority has been self-evident, but in contemporary society, this is no longer the case, which makes Schmidt (1995) wonder how it is possible to think enlightenment in the era of self-formation - a very relevant issue in a learning conference context.

Schmidt distinguishes among four methods of knowledge transfer used in knowledge institutions: the lecture, the presentation, the talk, and the intro. See Table 16: Knowledge transfer methods in knowledge institutions (adapted from a draft version of Schmidt, 1995).

Format	Authority	Purpose	Judgment criteria
Lecture	The speaker	Enlightenment	Right / Wrong
Presentation	The interaction between the speaker and the audience	Formation	Good / Bad
Talk	The audience	Self- enlighten-ment/ Critique	Applicable / Nonapplicable
Intro	The user	Self- formation	Usable / Useless

Table 16: Knowledge transfer methods in knowledge institutions

The lecture in its purest or most original form is equivalent to reading a paper out loud. The tone is didactic and normative, and the knowledge format is replicable and anonymous. The lecture disseminates already-existing knowledge, and the lecturer gains authority because he or she knows something that the audience might come to know. A lecture does not seduce its audience; they are convinced, or not, by the perceived rightness of the presented information.

The presentation differs from the lecture by being more concerned with form. The presenter thinks during the presentation and is not bound to a manuscript to the same degree as a lecturer (i.e., the presentation is situational and thereby different every time it is presented). Where the lecturer discloses, the presenter sets the tone but triggers a self-development process. However, authority is a prerequisite in both transfer methods.

The act of giving a talk differs in the sense that the authority is held by the audience: The knowledge communicated is not preconceived, and points of view are not conclusive but dependent on the audience's conclusions. The

talk is given without the use of technology, as this would fix the arguments presented and omit openness toward negotiating them.

Schmidt acknowledges that these three types of knowledge transfer are ideal types and that in reality the boundaries are more blurred. However, they are relevant and important to keep in mind, as we otherwise will lose sight of what makes the fourth type, the intro, the ideal to be achieved in the future. The intro is a mix of the three, combining the text of the lecture, the transfer mode of the presentation, and the openness of the talk. The authority belongs to the individual and his or her perennial question: How can I use this?

Schmidt's point is to suggest a new form of pedagogy without the old-fashioned authority—but also without the modern, liberal version where students are responsible for their own learning processes. This approach acknowledges that we are in the era of individualism but also that someone (a teacher) has the competence to educate and elevate others (Schmidt, 2003).

According to this distinction, conferences held the classic way still employ the authoritarian presentation style. If someone from the sixteenth century opened a door to a conference auditorium venue in 2010, he would not doubt what was going on. He would easily recognize the room layout, with a lectern and an audience. He would be surprised by the technology and PowerPoint slides, the room aesthetics, and the many women, but he would be able to read the situation immediately. This is probably also why conference participants (continue to) accept this type of format; it is culturally inherited, familiar, and expected. People go into a known structure, and it is therefore easy to accept its drawbacks—you know beforehand that you will be led through a chain of events beyond your control.

Illeris (1999) writes about how traditional schooling has led adults to adhere to the conception that the teachers should teach the pupils what needs to be learned:

> [Adults have] an obstinate expectancy about the teacher taking the responsibility. […] The situation is paradoxical; while the adult learners behave like pupils, they have a hard time accepting the deprivation of control over one's estate. They are bored and resist tooth and nail, more or less consciously—but at the same time, they do not want to take the responsibility themselves, because it is much more demanding. (Illeris, 1999, p. 175, my translation.)

While this type of behavior matches the presentation approach, the combination holds little promise for transformative learning.

The Open Space model and the dramaturgical learning space seemingly both represent the fourth type of knowledge transfer mode suggested by Schmidt. A distinct difference is the degree of organizer control. Many elements of the ECCI X conference program had been process-designed and had a facilitator to guide the participants through these processes. The program was planned beforehand but in a way that would increase reflection, involvement, and interaction. In the Open Space model, the authority and responsibility are completely left to the participant. A downside of this may be that people find it difficult to navigate, become insecure, and remain observers who choose not to participate in order to remain in their comfort zone. In this respect, the Open Space format share common traits with the talk as a knowledge transfer mode where it is implied that people are best left to their own devices and that you can learn from yourself—which, as indicated, might not be the case .

Two types of reactions emerge to the extended use of facilitation and preplanned processes that are implied in the rhythm-through-learning model. Those participants who tend to stick to passive conference behavior mostly because they feel socially inhibited in this type of environment welcome any excuse to interact, but they need a legitimate excuse to get going. The facilitated activities and the organized space relieve them of the responsibility of being proactive and lessen the social awkwardness of making contact with strangers, striking up conversations, and making seemingly pointless small talk. In this sense, the boundaries, structures, and processes established by the program design set the participants free.

For other types of participants, the lack of free choice, as expressed in organized interaction and reflection, is a like a straitjacket. It invades their private space, their sense of free will, their autonomy, and so forth. It is my assumption that participants who are socially confident in the conference space—who have power, seniority, and familiarity; who have a way with the spoken word; and who thrive on navigating social settings like these—do not need any help. In fact, any help in this regard takes away precious time they could have spent as they saw fit and prevents them from achieving their conference goals. For the first group, this format of the dramaturgical learning

space increases goal congruence and for the latter group, this format decreases goal congruence.

It could be argued that the organized and facilitated processes have an egalitarian effect, since the interaction-weak participants are provided with an opportunity to get onto the same level as the stronger participants. In this sense, the process designs become empowering, because they enable conference participants to come out of their shells with their full personalities instead of (unwillingly) restraining themselves to conference personalities only. However, there is a thin line between feeling like a puppet on a string and like an autonomous individual who moves within a larger, predefined, yet flexible structure.

Q & A's after a plenary speech are an illustrative example. Usually the audience is allowed to pose questions at random, but many people resist speaking in public, and the perpetual pitfall seems to be that the people who choose to do so are often not really posing questions but rather promoting themselves or their organizations or, in the worst cases, sidetracking the topic. A solution may be to provide people with paper slips on which to write their questions, which they hand over to the organizers during the keynote; or to provide attendees with an electronic hand-device or set up a Twitter account to allow people to type and send their questions electronically, which are then displaying on the main screen. The conference moderator and/or the keynote then selects the questions they find the most interesting or the most often posed.

To some attendees, this is a much more productive way to go about the Q & A, as they suddenly are given a gateway to participation—a way to let themselves be heard without the nuisance of speaking in public. But others find it controlling and borderline gate-keeping; since they are used to taking the floor, they suddenly feel restricted.

While preparing the conference programs in this project, I was repeatedly told, "You can't tell people what to do, because then they won't do it!" At the same time, I repeatedly heard the following comment by astonished participants during the conferences: "When we were asked to do X, I thought: This is never gonna work. But we did it, and, to my surprise, it worked!" This point to the fact that when activities are organized and staged the right way, you can do much more with large groups of people than simply seat them in a

chair. An important aspect to note, however, is the difference between *facilitating* learning processes (i.e. extrinsically motivated activities with high degree of self-determination) and *organizing* people's behavior (i.e. extrinsically motivated activities with low degree of self-determination).

8.3.4 KEY POINTS

A great conference atmosphere produces positive emotions which lead to pro-social behavior, i.e. behavior that is more open and including toward strangers. At the same time, a high level of social interaction at a conference fosters a great atmosphere. This means that the design principles of involvement and interaction positively constitute each other – they support and enhance each other in a dialectic process.

This project demonstrates that it is possible to create a conference program that ignites interaction during the formal program sessions and to provide an environment where participants move beyond just creating contacts but get the opportunity to build relationships and thereby fill structural holes between networks.

The ECCI X conference had both field-configuring (i.e. evolving, dynamic, developing) as well as field-sustaining (i.e. self-preservative) elements and these two "forces" co-existed. In some instances it seemed that the richness of diversity was difficult to take advantage of or: That people have a tendency to gravitate toward sameness. Also, along with an increasing level of interaction follows an increasing number of counterproductive (to learning) group dynamics issues where peer pressure, power struggles, prejudices, and an overall lack of communicative virtues dominate.

At the same time, the learning-through-rhythm models counteracts field-sustaining tendencies by inclining people to build relationships with other attendees different from themselves. Establishing new contacts or weak ties grants access to diversity and provides a framework for seeing things (presuppositions, values, beliefs) in a new light. These relationships provides triggers for learning which in turn increase the potential for field-configuration It seems that the increased level of interaction during ECCI X indeed created a ZPD environment, not because of the presence of a more capable person but because of a qualitatively higher peer-to-peer interaction level. It would seem

impossible to create this type of community at a conference (since a Reflection Zone group does not have a common goal like a working group in an organization), but the Reflection Zones succeeded for the most part in creating a social learning environment.

The dramaturgical conference format places itself as a third format in the middle between the conference classic format and the Open Space format and yet, it is something different. Primarily, the format aims at transformative learning. There is a high degree of organizer control, but the control is used to increase participation through interaction, reflection, and involvement. The level of self-determination is medium; the overall program is decided beforehand by the organizers, but the sessions are structured by way of facilitated processes that leave room for the participants own goal fulfillment.

The point is to create a conference space that neither builds on old-fashioned authority nor on the modern, liberal version where participants are responsible for their own learning processes. This approach acknowledges that we are in the era of individualism but also that the organizers have the competence to plan educational processes and through these bring participants to new paths of self-discovery that they otherwise would not have visited.

For the majority of the participants this format increases goal congruence, i.e. the participants are set free by the boundaries, structures, and processes established by the program design. For a smaller group of participants, the format decreases goal congruence, i.e. the lack of free choice invades their private space, their sense of free will, their autonomy, and so forth. This point to the fact, that there is a delicate balance between turning conference participants into "conference cattle" where they are pushed around and then completely leaving them to their own devices.

8.4 THE USE OF RHYTHM IN CONFERENCE PROGRAM DESIGN

The main contribution of this project is the coupling of dramaturgical rhythm and adult learning and the use of rhythm as the fundamental principle for designing conference programs. The learning-through-rhythm model, with learning-through-rhythm as the fundamental component along with the three

dimensions of reflection, involvement, and interaction, has proven to be a strong concept when trying to enhance participant outcome in a conference context.

A number of program elements can be deduced as important rhythmic components in the ECCI X program structure:

- The opening, which set the tone for the participant behavior that was expected, ignited the conference theme, and created a common frame of reference
- Two plenary speakers interacting in some way
- Reflection Zones at the end of each day
- A packed program on day two, with the conference dance as an energizer in the afternoon
- Meet the Danes on the third day as a peak, offering "something different" than the first two days.
- The format variations during track sessions
- Breaks (or pauses) after every single program element
- The conference moderator as a narrator

When a dramaturgical rhythm is good, people want to hang on and see the next thing. In ECCI X, there were signs of this happening—people followed the general program to a greater extent, many participants noticed and appreciated the variety and diversity in content and form, and people signed on for the conference dinner on day four (after the conference closed) during the conference. This final act is equivalent to staying in the cinema until the credits are over because you want to make sure you do not miss anything.

A specification of rhythm in conferences needs to be made here: As the analysis of the design principles shows, learning-through-rhythm in a conference setting is not the same as just ensuring variation among reflection, involvement, and interaction in the conference program. *The rhythmic dimension is grounded by its relation to content*. The opposite would be the implementation of a fun program element in a conference that focuses on an important and serious subject, even though the fun segment has no knowledge content or references to the conference theme. See Figure 11: The relationship between content and fun.
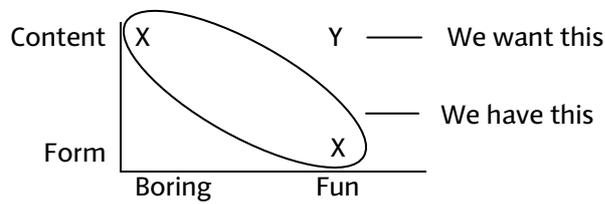
Figure 11: The relationship between content and fun

To put it differently: As mentioned in the literature review in section 2.2, the meetings industry is very preoccupied with designing meetings that appeal to all senses in order to embrace the VARK (visual, aural, read/write, kinesthetic) learning styles , 2010b). The learning-through-rhythm model has a different take. Here, *meaning* is the key, specifically allowing time and space for personal meaning-making processes to occur. In order to do this, the design has to embrace cognitive reflection, social interaction, and emotional involvement, and these dimensions demand a variation in program elements in order to grab and sustain attention—in this endeavor, elements that appeal to different senses are key. This line of argument provides a different justification for using senses than the VARK model and consequently, the way that conference programs are designed differs in focus and style.

The VARK model results in conference designs that run the risk of overly emphasizing the entertainment realm—and also partly the esthetic [*sic*] and escapist dimensions (cf. Figure 7 by Pine & Gilmore, 1999)—for the sake of "sense stimulation". But what is often forgotten is the content dimension (or: the education realm), which increases the likelihood of meaning creation and learning to occur. An example is a research conference on climate changes in Australia where a group of female dancers were hired to perform a dance act with balloons covering the most intimate parts only. The participants found the dancing to be offensive and left the room. The organizers reportedly wanted to provide some "light entertainment in a conference with heavy content" ("Klima-konference med ballondans,", 2006). Another example is that many conferences book an entertaining speaker at the end of the day sports celebrities to talk about motivation, personal stamina, communication, team work etc. I recently witnessed a famous movie director speak about

266

leadership at a sales conference for new software products. This may seem as a sophisticated solution to achieve the ideal combination of content and form—but more often than not, the knowledge content has peripheral or no relationship to the conference theme and therefore remain just entertaining.

The learning-through-rhythm model emphasizes that fun should be fun in relation to the conference theme and provide meaning and relevance for the conference participants in relation to their job functions, not just for the sake of fun. In this perspective, plenary speakers should provide less ostentation and more real impact.

8.5 ROBUSTNESS OF THE LEARNING- THROUGH- RHYTHM MODEL

The methodology chapter ended by concluding that I have adhered to the interpretation of design-based research, which emphasizes theoretically based improvements of practice and aims at developing new learning environments, and that the quality criterion of the theoretical framework should be *robustness* (i.e., whether the design principles and the concrete conference program initiatives withstand the test of time and adaptation across a variety of settings).

The conferences produced in this research project are quite different in their implemented version, and the sample size (four conferences) is small, but the robustness of the learning-through-rhythm model across a variety of conference settings (albeit within content that lies in the social sciences/humanities) is strong. The idea of creating a conference program based on the principle of dramaturgical rhythm has proven to be sustainable, with many options for local innovations and adaptations.

However, there are also indications that some of the concrete program elements developed in this project would be difficult to implement in other conferences. Walker argues that "[a]n aspect of every design study ought to be a consideration of the resources required to sustain the design" (2006, p. 12) and that the goal is to produce a robust design that yields impressive results, not only under ideal/optimal conditions but also under severe constraints. There are numerous examples of design-based research where the intervention,

though successful in terms of learning gains, was not feasible resource-wise (e.g., it was not profitable and required a certain type of instructor) (Barab & Squire, 2004).

An example is the Reflection Zones. Though they received very good ratings, the data show that the approximately thirty facilitators (one for each Reflection Zone) played a crucial role in this success. At the ECCI X conference, professional facilitators were part of the community and were rewarded with a reduced conference fee. The question is whether it is financially realistic to pay professional facilitators when they are not found within the community or whether it is logistically realistic to educate a number of people within the community as facilitators before the conference (who might not be as successful as professional, full-time facilitators). Also, due to the logistics involved in finding and organizing the facilitator group, approximately three hundred to four hundred conference participants seems to be the maximum number that can feasibly participate in this type of process.

Another challenge is the fact that conferences built over the learning-through-rhythm model go against the standards of the conference industry in several ways. For example, an important aspect of the new conference format is the conference moderator, who guides the participants through the program and facilitates the collective processes in the plenary. The conference moderator is always there and functions as the stable focal point amidst the frustrating chaos. It turns out that this type of conference moderator holds a new role that is mastered only by a few.

In a Danish cultural context, the most typical conference moderator at professional conferences is an experienced journalist, preferably a news anchor or another type of TV-presenter known from national TV. The "celebrity effect" probably influences this choice, and I presume that conference organizers want someone who can perform on stage, quickly get acquainted with different subjects, moderate a panel discussion, introduce plenary speakers, and pose (critical) follow-up questions if needed. These arguments are not completely off track, as journalistic competence to a large degree fulfills the demands of a conference moderator. But in many instances, it is my experience that these celebrity journalists have either one or several of the following issues against them: They are used to following a manuscript on a monitor and are not as good in an improvised setting; they lack humor or the

ability to communicate with a twinkle in their eye in order to create a relaxed atmosphere and sense of togetherness; they often play their fame, telling funny anecdotes from behind the scenes of a TV program they once worked on, which may warm up the audience and release an immediate laugh as intended but have no relevance to the subject, serving only to cement their celebrity status (and making them come across as being self-absorbed).

At research or association conferences, there is usually no conference moderator. Maybe the head of the organizing committee does an introductory speech and presents the keynote speaker, but the hosting role in the remainder of the conference is kept to an absolute minimum.

In conferences that are produced as dramaturgical learning spaces, the ideal conference moderator is omnipresent but does not steal the show. The conference moderator knows how to tie loose ends together; how to convey necessary practical (boring) information in an interesting way in order to ensure that people listen and that the program runs smoothly; how to relieve a tense atmosphere when appropriate by using appropriate means; and, most importantly, how to facilitate large group processes. On top of this, international conferences held in nonnative English-speaking countries (like Denmark) also require someone who has mastered the English language on a very high level. Finding excellent conference moderators who meet these requirements has proven quite difficult.

The Reflection Zones and the conference moderator are two examples of new demands that require something different from the standard conference organization and something more than standard suppliers currently are able to provide. My post-project experiences with conference program design tell me that there are other ways to operationalize the learning-through-rhythm model than those presented in this project. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, one size does not fit all, which means that concrete program elements must be customized to the conference and venue in question. The scalability ideal presupposes that you can mass-produce the sausages once you have found the perfect recipe—and that everyone will like the sausages, and that they are suitable for every type of meal. This is not the case for conference planning, as every conference is different; this makes the issue of design robustness more complicated. Or, rather, the idea of robustness should be redefined: Instead of refining only one operationalized version of the model, the goal of further

testing should be to establish which versions work for which conference types and audiences, how and why.

The final point to be made is that one cannot reproduce the effects and the artistic ideas used in one conference in all other conferences, since they will then run the risk of becoming conventions in their own right, thereby losing their "surprise power." For example, the prelude with a fictitious speaker portrayed by an actor will lose its effect when people know the trick beforehand; the success of the performance depends on the attendees believing that this is a nonfiction person. This does not mean that the notion of a prelude should be discarded—it just means that conference organizers will have to keep developing new types of preludes.

In section 4.5 Reflections on the Theoretical Framework. I raise the issue of transfer and how conference participants face the same transfer challenges (i.e., the ability to transfer knowledge from one setting to another) (Eraut, 1994) as they do when attending other types of continuing education. Regarding learning in a long-term perspective and the return on investment for the home organization that sponsored the conference trip, this is an important issue, and the question is how the idea of the dramaturgical learning space can contribute to increasing conference attendees' ability to transfer their conference learnings into their home organizations.

The ideal transfer environment in the application context includes management support, co-workers' support, a general positive attitude toward change in the organization, a high degree of job-autonomy, and the usage of the "teach-to-teach" model where employees communicate their learnings to co-workers (Wahlgreen, et al., 2002).

The factors that are repeatedly suggested for increasing the likelihood of transfer are difficult to implement in a conference setting are activities that minimize the distance (cognitively, physically, temporally) between learning and application, for example: including managers in the course and securing their support for the implementation of new ideas as a result of employees' course participation; integrating each learner's prequalifications and long-term educational plans; scheduling frequent alternations between course and work; performing follow-up when the course is completed; and using the educational alternation principle of "course, work, course, work etc." (Wahlgreen, et al., 2002, p. 69). The only two factors that seem realistic are increased use of the

teach-to-teach model, where employees are taught how to disseminate the course results to colleagues, and the participation of larger social units (a group of colleagues) from the same organization. However, these measures are by no means a guarantee of increased transfer between a conference setting and the home organization.

All these suggestions for enhancing the transfer environment seem difficult to integrate in a conference perspective. Organizers have no way to influence the conditions in the participants' home organizations, and no knowledge about their qualifications and long-term educational plans. All that is possible and feasible is to encourage conference participants to reflect on the transfer potentials during the conference and think about how they might use their conference experience upon their return; and to assess what the impediments seem to be and how they can overcome them, including what action to consider first, and so on. A participant explained, for example, how he returned to his organization full of ideas and contacts, but no one understood them or found the contacts relevant; so he was not able to follow up on any of these takeaways.

To summarize, the learning-through-rhythm model has essentially proven to be robust, although specific interventions might be difficult to replicate in other local settings.

In my opinion, the design-based researcher must strike a balance between making changes within the constraints of the system in which the intervention is situated and attempting to change that system altogether. In this particular endeavor, I have found it important to be realistic and accept certain limitations, but also to be idealistic and ambitious and seek to influence the change of the given framework. This particular design-based research project has not led to a result that is ready for large-scale implementation, but it emphasizes the developmental effort, which opens up the possibility of inspiring and igniting change in similar local settings.

9 CONCLUSION

This project started by asking how a conference may be conceptualized as a dramaturgical learning space and what the practical implications for conference program design and participant experience are.

Conferences in this project are defined as events where people from different organizations gather face to face for two or more program elements in a row and where the participant volume exceeds standard classroom size. This makes the learning context of conferences a new one in relation to known categories; they are a mix of informal and nonformal learning settings and thereby a bit off in relation to the theories that apply to each category. In particular, conferences are challenged by participant volume; participant diversity; the meetings industry's norms and structures, which cater to a classic conference style; and the fact that conferences are temporary events by definition and progression.

The development and study of conferences is relevant for a number of reasons:

- Conferences are an important part of the educational setup in adult life as a form of continuing education.
- Research and theories on learning have developed immensely during the last fifty years, but conferences continuously use the one-way communication model to induce learning processes.
- Communicative patterns in society have changed immensely; the young generation is used to participating to a greater extent, and knowledge is no longer confined to experts (in other words, your peers may be just as much experts as the conference presenter chosen to be the expert).
- The financial and human resources spent on organizing and attending conferences are considerable.
- Employees are much more time-efficient today than they used to be (i.e., they opt only for conferences that potentially add to job performance).

- The meetings industry in Denmark cannot compete on price with cheaper destinations in, for example, Eastern Europe; and building competence in new conference formats would be a possible blue-ocean strategy.

9.1 THE LEARNING-THROUGH-RHYTHM MODEL

On a theoretical level, the study of conferences is cross-disciplinary, and I have presented an argument claiming that new conference formats can be developed by combining the fields of dramaturgy and adult learning: Conferences are learning spaces in the sense that they are a specific setting where the potential for learning exists. Within dramaturgy, the concept of attention is key, and since attention is a prerequisite for learning—and because conference attendees think of conferences as an experience that goes beyond the mere learning aspects—dramaturgy becomes particularly relevant as a staging device for the conference learning space.

Also, the fields of adult learning and dramaturgy share partiality for disruptiveness; within dramaturgy, conflicts (also crises, dilemmas, or contradictions) are the key drivers in propelling the story forward. Within adult learning, challenges (also uncertainty, perplexity, doubt, or dissonance) are considered necessary for igniting a learning process.

Thinking in terms of rhythm prompts the conference organizer to think in terms of conflict/challenges, repetition, variation, and contrast. Good rhythm in a conference program includes redundancy and novelty; it is the interplay between letting the familiar (known) meet the unfamiliar (unknown) and letting the unfamiliar become familiar.

Within this framework of the dramaturgical learning space, I have developed the learning-through-rhythm model as a theoretical guideline for designing a conference program structure that intends to increase participants' learning. The three design principles of reflection, involvement, and interaction are the building blocks upon which the rhythm-through-learning is created.

Reflection is about giving conference participants the time and means to digest the conference experience and create personal meaning on a cognitive level. Reflection ensures that the conference participants are supported in their meaning-making process, specifically in intentional construal and critical

reflection. This requires that they have opportunities to reflect on their current practice in light of what they experience at the conference, that they are challenged to see their practices and belief systems and those of others from a new angle, and that they are encouraged to take new ideas and insights further in their line of thinking in order to increase the likelihood of acting upon these ideas and insights when they return home.

Interaction is about creating opportunities for conference participants to engage in dialogue with one another and increasing the potential for social learning and relationship building. Interaction creates a social space where people are granted access to both complementarity and diversity, both of which are crucial for learning. Through social interaction, conference participants are provided opportunities to use fellow attendees as sounding boards through the dialogical exchange of thoughts, to be challenged with diversity, and to learn from both equally capable peers and the more experienced. In this way, interaction as a design principle goes beyond the simple notion of networking as mingling during breaks; increased interaction opportunities in all aspects of the program provide opportunities to build relationships with new people—strong and weak ties—as well as to take on a brokerage role to fill in structural holes.

Involvement is about engaging the conference participants emotionally in the conference experience and ensuring that the emotions evoked are positive. This design principle is based on the idea that emotions play an important role in learning and that a positive learning environment that evokes positive emotions has two significant advantages: They contribute to creating a personal hook (or meaning), and they broaden the attention-scope and cognition of participants, which renders them open to more new ideas and unusual thought associations. This increases the likelihood of meaning perspective transformation. The use of dramaturgy, particularly elements from dramatic theater, facilitates the involvement dimension and contributes to creating a collective roar, while also running the risk of dramatizing and seducing participants beyond what is appropriate.

9.2 A NEW RESEARCHER ROLE: THE EXPERT-IN-PROCESS

The project has been conducted using a design-based research approach, which implies designing an educational program based on theory, implementing the design in practice, and evaluating the effort. This methodology is future-oriented and sets out to achieve a new, improved condition for the people involved rather than looking back on the past and providing insights into the current state of affairs. This may seem normative, and it is; but like a hypothesis, it is put to the test in practice. And the normativity is not pulled out of thin air; it is the result of an in-depth study of relevant theory deemed appropriate for contributing to the development of the practice field in question.

There are two distinct interpretations (or goals) of design-based research in the literature, and I confess to adhering to the one where theory-based development is at the core, rather than testing theories and developing a generic program design where one size fits all. This means that the conference programs developed are local and contextually bound.

This research approach is closely tied to intervention research and action research; yet it differs from both research methodologies. I have proposed a new researcher role—the expert-in-process role—where the researcher has theoretically based ideas for improvement (much like intervention research) but collaborates with local community members to translate these into the local context (much like action research). The researcher proposes new ideas and initiatives and helps the people involved to find greater clarity and reach their own conclusions—but also offers counterhypotheses of these if necessary.

9.3 ENHANCING OUTCOME

The evaluation demonstrated that three types of outcome are of particular importance to conference attendees:

- Acquire new knowledge
- Meet new people
- Emotional well-being

These elements seem almost banal in their simplicity but the project shows that they are not necessarily easy to provide for in reality as a conference organizer. Also, they are breeding ground for this project's most important points about conference organizing and attendance; in the following I will clarify to which extent the learning-through-rhythm model embraced these outcome parameters listed and then I will discuss to which extent the learning-through-rhythm model produced transformative learning.

9.3.1 ACQUIRE NEW KNOWLEDGE

The *raison d´être* of conferences is to present new knowledge within a specialized field and, not surprisingly, the project demonstrates that participants' quest for newness is quite strong. However, according to the participants, the ECCI X conference failed to provide plenary speakers and other presenters that lived up to this desired outcome criteria.

Participants may be inspired by some speakers just because they have a high status in the community or in society in general and/or because they have a way of presenting their point of views that makes an impact even though their points have all been heard before. Also, the participants' reflection processes can easily be ignited by small side remarks made and thereby have significant impact.

However, it is not likely that these type of reflection processes produce transformative learning; meaning schemes may be adjusted and altered, but the participants' meaning perspectives have probably remained the same.

Newness in the learning-through-rhythm model is provided by the challenges or conflicts instantiated by the prelude and presenters, as well as by the peer feedback inherent in many of the conference activities. The social learning environment facilitated through peer-to-peer interaction ended up being the most important learning enhancer because participants were compelled to exchange views and perspectives that potentially challenged their own.

Even though a great social learning environment seems to be almost enough to satisfy conference participants (see below), organizers need to qualify the casting of presenters and provide disruptive elements.

It seems that organizers tend to forget this fundamental premise of conferences; newness at conferences is rare, and most conferences come across as being very nice and neat, places where nothing happens. Therefore, organizers may benefit from making the inherent conflicts or disagreements that inevitably exist in professional communities explicit, inviting new speakers who are not the "usual suspects" and inviting speakers who disagree and dare to show it in order to ensure less consensus-orientation and more field-configuration. Using disruptiveness consciously holds great potential, as this propels the program forward and ignites individuals' learning processes.

9.3.2 MEET NEW PEOPLE

Surprisingly, the data documents that people actually attend conferences to broaden their networks and meet people they have never met before—not to catch up on old contacts. Although networking as a concept was not explicitly included in the learning-through-rhythm model, it was a strong assumption that networking opportunities would be a natural side effect of the interactional elements, given that participants would be encouraged to interact and meet each other in various activities throughout the conference. The data strongly support this initial assumption.

The power of the informal networking that takes place during breaks is strengthened when people interact in program sessions. This project demonstrates that it is possible to create a conference program that ignites interaction during the formal program sessions and inclines participants to establish contacts with people different from themselves. This provides an environment where participants move beyond just creating contacts but get the opportunity to build relationships and thereby create the potential for ZPD learning processes among peers and filling structural holes between networks. All these features contribute to creating a conference that is field-configuring rather than field-sustaining.

However, some instances it seemed that the richness of diversity was difficult to take advantage of in some instances. Along with an increasing level of interaction follows an increasing number of counterproductive (to learning) group dynamics issues where peer pressure, power struggles, prejudices, and an overall lack of communicative virtues dominate.

Interaction during program sessions needs to be facilitated in order to happen. Most participants welcomed the facilitated activities as they most notably resulted in an increased level of interaction which promoted networking and the building of a great atmosphere. But facilitation may also come across as being controlling; the level of detail in the program plan is high (sometimes down to the minute) and even though nobody was forced to participate, some people felt less free to do what they wanted. This will be elaborated below in section 9.4 Conference Cattle.

9.3.3   EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

This outcome parameter is different from both "acquiring new knowledge" and "meeting new people" in the sense that this is not an outcome that the participants have formulated explicitly as something they seek or include in their definition of outcome. But the ECCI X conference had a high overall satisfaction rating despite the lack of newness—the score on the general evaluation question is significantly higher than any separate rating of the various program elements—and the data suggest that this is due to the high degree of emotional well-being (determined as improved sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem and general well-being) that the participants experienced. This also suggests that conference outcome is more than—or different from—learning and that learning is only part—albeit an important part—of outcome from a participant perspective.

This emotional well-being was fostered by a great conference atmosphere which was said to be informal, yet professional and open with kind participants that were easy to get in contact with. The great atmosphere is a key component to the success of the learning-through-rhythm model. When being in a psychologically safe environment, with trust, security, reassurance, and an appreciative communication culture, participants are more prone to be the best versions of themselves and more likely to broaden their attention and cognition (e.g. creative thinking, openness towards new and different perspectives) and build personal resources in a long term perspective.

Finally, a great conference atmosphere produces positive emotions which lead to pro-social behavior, i.e. behavior that is more open and

including toward strangers. At the same time, a high level of social interaction at a conference fosters a great atmosphere.

9.3.4 EURHYTHMIA

The above shows how the distinctiveness of the three design principles is messier in reality than in theory. They really seem to be interrelated; they are all a cause of and a result of each other.

Additionally, there is the rhythmic dimension and what role it seemed to play. Overall, the participants commented positively on the variation in the program format, the format experiments and the overall program dramaturgy with the prelude, the plenary sessions at the beginning and at the end of each day, the Reflections Zones each afternoon, the packed second day with the energizing conference dance, the variation created on the third day by the Meet the Danes excursion, the different track formats, the timing of the breaks and the social events, the role of the conference moderator and the closing. All these elements seem to have created a conference rhythm that was fully adapted by the conference participants in the sense that the conference rhythm seems to have been congruent with the participants' bodily and psychological rhythm—or vice versa. In Lefebvre's words, there was eurhythmia.

The causal relationship between the ECCI X conference rhythm, the conference atmosphere, the increased level of social interaction, the participants' emotional well-being and their overall high conference satisfaction (despite the experienced lack of newness) is difficult to establish. But all these elements were part of the conference experience, and the data strongly suggests that they are produced by the enactment of the learning-through-rhythm model.

9.4 CONFERENCE CATTLE?

The dramaturgical learning space aims at fostering transformative learning. Compared to a conference format like Open Space there is a high degree of organizer control, but the control is used to increase participation through interaction, reflection, and involvement. This means that the level of self-determination is on a medium level; the overall program is decided beforehand

by the organizers, but the sessions are structured by way of facilitated processes that leave room for the participants own goal fulfillment.

The point is to create a conference space that neither builds on old-fashioned authority nor on the modern, liberal version where participants are responsible for their own learning processes.

For the majority of the participants this format increases goal congruence, i.e. the participants are set free by the boundaries, structures, and processes established by the program design because they give these participants an appropriate excuse for socializing with others and using them as sounding boards in their meaning-making processes.

For a smaller group of participants, the format decreases goal congruence, i.e. the lack of free choice invades their private space, their sense of free will, their autonomy, and so forth.

As a counter reaction to leaving participants to their own devices, you may run the risk of falling into the other trench of organizing (and controlling) their entire experience. The worst case scenario would be participants feeling like conference cattle with the organizers as shepherds who tell participants what to do all the time.

It is interesting to note that a central issue of the project is the balance between being an expert and a facilitator; between controlling and between letting go; between deciding for others what is best for them and letting them decide for themselves.

As Schmidt (1995) points out, the role of an educator is to make people do something they would not necessarily have done on their own accord, based on the assumption that the instructor knows best and the participant will see the benefits in hindsight. But learning processes also need elements of self-discovery and fooling around on your own accord.

Based on the analysis, a relevant addendum would be to make sure that a sense of relatedness is established and that the facilitated processes and the way the facilitator communicates is sensitive towards people's sense of autonomy. The more participants feel that their actions and behavior are self-determined, the more they will embrace and engage in the activity. This may be even more conspicuous in a conference setting where participants are well-educated and resourceful and the psychological contract about "this being a learning situation" is not as clear as it would be in a formal learning situation.

9.5 ROBUSTNESS

This project has demonstrated that new conference formats can be developed despite the many structural and cultural impediments inherent in the meetings industry among organizers, venues, and attendees alike. Conference programs must cater to the majority while being individually adaptable—as well as realizable logistically and financially. Indeed, it seems impossible to create a sublime conference experience for everyone, an experience where all attendees—from different organizations, with various social and cultural backgrounds, and with different levels of knowledge of the subject—feel taken into account, feel at ease, are challenged to the right degree and in the right way, are taken care of at the right time, are served the right type of food at the right time, and so on. But the greatest breakthrough of this project is the evidence that this is not, in fact, impossible.

I have previously previousy established that I adhere to the point of view of design-based research as theory-based development and I proposed that the validity of the theoretical framework should be robustness and whether the design principles and the concrete program initiatives withstand the test of time and adaptations across a variety of settings.

During the project, locally adapted versions of the learning-through-rhythm model have been implemented in the four case conferences, although they were quite different in terms of subject, size and type of participant. Interestingly enough, many of the ECCI X conference elements and the three-act program structure every day were copied to the ECCI XI conference two years later. The prelude of the Creating Knowledge IV conference was repeated in another library conference in Sweden. Granted, some elements from the four conference programs are not directly transferable to other settings, but numerous consultancy assignments in the past year and a half have also proven the appeal of the rhythm-as-learning model to various conference organisers and its applicability in a wide range of settings.

It should be noted that association conferences are a conference type that suits the learning-through-rhythm model particularly well, probably because participants attend out of genuine interest in the subject (they have a sense of urgency regarding new knowledge and knowledge sharing) and personal competence development is in focus. It may also be that the organizational structure of the planning process of association conferences is

better to accommodate the format development required to implement the rhythm-through-learning model.

However, this project is a first explorative step in developing participatory conference formats and should be followed up by implementation and evaluation of the theoretical framework in other local settings in order to build a substantial body of knowledge regarding conferences and learning.

9.6 IMPLICATIONS

I conclude that thinking in terms of learning-through-rhythm—that is, variation and contrast between reflection, interaction and involvement—when planning a conference program, will take conference organizers a big step in the right direction toward stimulating, engaging, and energizing meetings.

This may have major implications for how we think about learning in large group settings altogether. Think of all the types of gatherings where resourceful knowledge workers meet to exchange knowledge and where one-way communication is the default format: afternoon meetings in organizations, talks offered by associations, parents' evenings in schools, informational meetings in all kinds of settings, and so on. The potential productivity of such meetings is huge but too seldom exploited; if all these types of meetings were rhythmic and participatory, the development potential for individuals as well as society at large would be considerably higher. A question, that remains, is when the industry will begin to realize that they profitably can influence form and content at meetings and that they should emphasize the building of competences in this area.

Implications may go even further. The project has developed a hybrid communication form, a mix between the dramaturgical mode of communication and the pedagogical mode of communication which challenges the one-way communication format. If it is possible to change the classic conference structure, it might also be possible to challenge other walks of life where there is learning intent but one-way communication as a default. An example is the way that many museums continue to display history through objects in exhibition cases and posters with text. How might a museum exhibition, conceived as a dramaturgical learning space, look like? Or

even: Would it be possible to create a hybrid between a conference and a museum exhibition, using the design principles of the learning-through-rhythm model? It might be.—

REFERENCES

Abram, S. R. J. (2001). Intelligent conferences: reality or oxymoron? *Searcher, 9*(1), 42-48.

Agger, A., & Wellejus, A. (2006). Mødets hellige treenighed. In P. Bay & L. Blicher-Hansen (Eds.), *Mødebogen* (pp. 79-87). København: Kursuslex.

Akker, J. V. D., Gravemeijer, K., McKenney, S., & Nieveen, N. (Eds.). (2006). *Educational design research*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Alvir, H. P. (1975). *Things I look for when asked to attend a conference or an inter-campus information system meeting*: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, National Institute of Education.

American Psychological Association (1968). *Scientific communication at the XVII International Congress of Psychology, Moscow, 1966 and some implications for the design and operation of international meetings*. Washington D.C.: APA-PSIEP Report No. 20.

Andersen, I. (2005). *Den skinbarlige virkelighed* (3rd ed.). København: Samfundslitteratur.

Argyris, C. (1989). Participatory action research and action science compared. *American Behavioral Scientist, 32*(5), 612-623.

Argyris, C. (1991). Teaching smart people how to learn. *Harvard Business Review, 69*(3, May-June), 99-109.

Argyris, C. (1992). *On organizational learning*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Argyris, C., Putnam, R., & Smith, D. M. (1985). *Action science. Concepts, methods and skills for research and intervention.* San Fransisco and London: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Babüroglu, O. N., & Ravn, I. (1992). Normative action research. *Organization Studies, 13*(1), 19-34.

Banks, M. (2001). *Visual methods in social research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Barab, S. A., & Kirshner, D. (2001). Guest editors' introduction: Rethinking methodology in the learning sciences. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences, 10*(1&2), 5–15.

Barab, S. A., & Squire, K. (2004). Design-based research: Putting a stake in the ground. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences, 13*(1), 1-14.

Bartlett, S. F. (1964 [1958]). *Thinking. An experimental and social study.* London: unwin university books.

Barton, K. C. (2005). Advancing the conversation: The roles of discussants, session chairs, and audience members at AERA's Annual Meeting. *Educational researcher, 34*(9), 24-28.

Bartunek, J. (2007). Academic-practitioner collaboration need not require joint or releveant research: Toward a relational scholarship of integration. *Academy of Management Journal, 50*(6), 1323-1333.

Bay, P., & Blicher-Hansen, L. (Eds.). (2006). *Mødebogen.* København: Kursuslex.

Behrendt, P. (2006). *Dobbeltkontrakten. En æstetisk nydannelse.* København: Gyldendal.

Berridge, G. (2007). *Events Design and Experience.* Oxford & Burlington, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Bottrup, P. (2001). *Læringsrum i arbejdslivet. Et kritisk blik på den lærende organsation.* Frederiksberg: Forlaget Sociologi.

Brecht, B. (1997). *Brecht on theatre: The development of an aesthetic.* New York: Hill and Wang.

Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a critical reflective teacher.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Brookfield, S. D. (1987). *Developing critical thinkers: Challenging adults to explore alternative ways of thinking and acting.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Brown, A. L. (1992). Design experiments: Theoretical and methodological challenges in creating complex interventions in classroom settings. *Journal of the Learning Sciences, 2*(2), 141-178.

Brown, J. (2005). *The World Café. Shaping our futures through conversations that matter.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Bryant, B., & Shinn, E. (1979). *Impact study. Follow-up conference assessments* (No. ED186417): Southeastern Teacher Corps. Network, Graduate School of Education, Atlanta University, GA.

Burkhardt, H., & Schoenfeld, A. H. (2003). Improving educational research:Toward a more useful, more influential, and better-funded enterprise. *Educational Researcher, 32*(9), 3-14.

Burt, R. S. (2001). The social capital of structural holes. In M. F. Guillén, R. Collins, P. England & M. Meyer (Eds.), *New directions in economic sociology*. New York: Russel Sage Foundation.

Burt, R. S. (2005). *Brokerage and closure*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bygholm, A., & Dirckinck-Holmfeld, L. (1997). Pædagogik i det virtuelle læremiljø: metodiske overvejelser. In O. Danielsen (Ed.), *Læring og multimedier* (pp. 63-87). Aalborg: Aalborg Universitetsforlag.

Christoffersen, E. E., Kjølner, T., & Szatkowski, J. (Eds.). (1989). *Dramaturgisk analyse. En antologi.* Aarhus: Institut for Dramaturgi, Aarhus Universitet.

Christoffersen, E. E., Schultz, L., Gade, S., & Branth, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Dramaturgi*. Aarhus: Afdeling for Dramaturgi, Aarhus Universitet.

Cobb, P., Confrey, J., diSessa, A., Lehrer, R., & Schauble, L. (2003). Design experiments in educational research. *Educational researcher, 32*(1), 9-13.

Collier, J., & Collier, M. (1986 [1913]). *Visual anthropology: Photography as a research method*. Albuquerque: University of Mexico Press.

Collins, A. (1992). Toward a design science of education. In E. Scanlon & T. O'Shea (Eds.), *New directions in educational technology* (pp. 15-22). New York: Springer-Verlag.

Collins, A., Joseph, D., & Bielaczyc, K. (2004). Design Research: Theoretical and Methodological Issues. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences, 13*(1), 15-42.

Convention Industry Council (2007). APEX Initiative. Retrieved July 2, 2007, from https://www.conventionindustry.org/apex/about.htm

Convention Industry Council (2010). APEX-Accepted Practices. Retrieved July 24, 2010, from http://conventionindustry.org/apex/accepted.htm

Correa, M. E., Klein, E. B., Stone, W. N., Astrachan, J. H., Kossek, E. E., & Komarraju, M. (1988). Reactions to women in authority: The impact of gender on learning in group relations conferences. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 24*(3), 221-233.

Csíkszentmihályi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper and Row.

Dale, E. L. (1998). *Pædagogik og professionalitet*. Århus: Klim.

Davidson, R., & Cope, B. (2003). *Business travel. Conferences, incentive travel, exhibitions, corporate hospitality and corporate travel*. Harlow: Prentice Hall Financial Times / Pearson Education Limited.

Dede, C. (2004). If design-based research is the answer, what is the question? *The Journal of the Learning Sciences, 13*(1), 105-114.

Denyer, D., Tranfield, D., & Aken, J. E. v. (2008). Developing design propositions through research synthesis. *Organization Studies, 29*(03), 393-413.

Denzin, N. K. (1970). *The research act in sociology.* London: Butterworths.

Design-Based Research Collective (2003). Design-based research: An emerging paradigm for educational inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 32*(1), 5-8.

Dewey, J. (2009 [1910]). *How we think.* USA: BN Publishing.

Elsborg, S., & Ravn, I. (2006). *Lærende møder og konferencer i praksis.* Kbh.: People's Press.

Elsborg, S., & Ravn, I. (2007). *Learning Meetings and Conferences in Practice.* Copenhagen: People's Press.

Emery, M., & Purser, R. E. (1996). *The search conference: A powerful method for planned organisational change and community action.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.

Emil, B. B. (1992). The conference planners' dilemma: Give them a fish, teach them to fish, or help them satisfy their own hunger. *Adult Learning, 4*(1), 21-22.

Eraut, M. (1994). *Developing professional knowledge and competence* London & NY: RoutledgeFalmer.

Feldman, M. S. (1995). *Strategies for interpreting qualitative data.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Field, S. (2003). *The definitive guide to screenwriting.* London: Ebury Press.

Fleming, N. (2010a). VARK - a guide to learning styles Retrieved July 24, 2010, from http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp

Fleming, N. (2010b). VARK - a guide to learning styles. Retrieved July 24, 2010, from http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp

Foley, G. (Ed.). (2004). *Dimensions of adult learning: Adult education and training in a global era.* Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press.

Forskerforum (2004). Det vigtige sker i kaffepauserne. *Forskerforum, 175.*

Fouad, N. A., McPherson, R. H., Gerstein, L., Blustein, D. L., Elman, N., Helledy, K. I., et al. (2004). Houston, 2001: Context and legacy. *The Counseling Psychologist, 32*(1), 15-77.

Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology. The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist, 56*(3), 218-226.

Fredrickson, B. L. (2003). The value of positive emotions. *American Scientist, 91*(July-August 2003), 330-335.

Fredrickson, B. L., & Joiner, T. (2002). Positive emotions trigger upward spirals toward emotional wellbeing. *American Psychological Society, 13*(2), 172-175.

Froh, J. J. (2004). The history of positive psychology: Truth be told. *NYS Psychologist*(May/June 2004), 18-20.

Garud, R. (2008). Conferences as venues for the configuration of emerging organizational fields: The case of cochlear implants. *The Journal of Management Studies, 45*(6), 1061.

Gibbons, M., Nowotny, H., & Scott, P. (1994). *The new production of scientific knowledge: The dynamics of science and research in contemporary society.* London: Sage.

Gladsø, S., Gjervan, E. K., Hovik, L., & Skagen, A. (2005). *Dramaturgi. Forestillinger om teater.* Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday.

Goldenhar, L. M., LaMontagne, A. D., Katz, T., Heaney, C., & Landsbergis, P. (2001). The intervention research process in occupational safety and health: An overview from the national occupational research agenda intervention effectiveness research team *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 2001*(43), 616-622.

Gorard, S., Roberts, K., & Taylor, C. (2004). What kind of creature is a design experiment? *British Educational Research Journal, 30*(4), 577-590.

Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology, 78*(6), 1360-1380.

Granovetter, M. S. (1983). The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. *Sociological Theory, 1*, 201-233.

Graversen, G. (1990). Kriser skaber personlig vækst og udvikling. *Humaniora, 4*(2), 10-13.

Greenwood, D. J., & Levin, M. (1998). *Introduction to action research. Social research for social change.* Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Grissom, B. M. (1992). Fostering adult learning principles for your staff. One administrator's perspective of the value of conferences. *Adult Learning, 4*(1), 15-17.

Gustavsen, B., & Engelstad, P. H. (1986). The design of conferences and the evolving role of democratic dialogue in changing working life. *Human Relations, 39*(2), 101-116.

Hansen, M. (2002). *Børn og opmærksomhed. Om opmærksomhedens psykologi og pædagogik.* København: Gyldendal.

Hansen, M. (2005). At lære sammen med andre. In C. N. Jensen (Ed.), *Voksnes læringsrum.* Værløse: Billesø & Baltzer

Hansson, F., & Mønsted, M. (2008). Research leadership as entrepreneurial organizing for research. *Higher Education, 6*(55), 651-670.

Harper, D. (1988). Visual sociology: Expanding sociological vision. *American Sociologist, 19*(1), 54-70.

Hatcher, T., Wiessner, C. A., Storberg-Walker, J., & Chapman, D. (2006). How a research conference created new learning: A case study. *Journal of European Industrial Training, 30*(4), 256-271.

Hiim, H., & Hippe, E. (2007). *Læring gennem oplevelse, forståelse og handling.* København: Gyldendal.

Holliday, R. (2000). We've been framed: Visualising methodology. *Sociological Review, 48*(4), 503-521.

Huxham, C. (2003). Action research as a methodology for theory development. *Policy and Politics, 31*(2), 239-248.

Huxham, C., & Vangen, S. (2003). Researching organizational practice through action research: Case studies and design choices. *Organizational Research Methods, 6*(3), 383-403.

Hvid, H. (2006). Bæredygtighed og det levende arbejde. *Tidsskrift for arbejdsliv, 8*(2), 23-37.

Hvid, H., Lund, H., & Pejtersen, J. (2008). Control, flexibility and rhythms. *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health, 2008*(6), 83-90.

Illeris, K. (1999). *Læring. Aktuel læringsteori i spændingsfeltet mellem Piaget, Freud og Marx.* Roskilde: Roskilde Universitetsforlag

Illeris, K. (2004). *Adult education and adult learning.* Frederiksberg: Roskilde University Press.

Illeris, K. (2007). *How we learn. Learning and non-learning in school and beyond.* London and New York: Routledge.

Illeris, K., & samarbejdspartnere (2004). *Læring i arbejdslivet.* Frederiksberg C.: Roskilde Universitetsforlag.

Ilsley, P. J. (1985). Improving conference design and outcomes: Editor's notes. *New Directions for Continuing Education, 28*(December 1985), 1-2.

Jacobs, N. A. M. (2005). Conferences as learning communities: Some early lessons in using "back-channel" technologies at an academic conference - distributed intelligence or divided attention? *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 21*(5), 317-329.

Jacobsen, B., Madsen, M. B., & Vincent, C. (2001). *Danske forskningsmiljøer. En undersøgelse af universitetsforskningens aktuelle situation*. København: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Jarvis, P. (2006). *Towards a comprehensive theory of human learning. Lifelong learning and the learning society.* London: Routledge.

Jelinek, M., Romme, A. G. L., & Boland, R. J. (2008). Introduction to the special issue: Organization studies as a science for design: Creating collaborative artifacts and research. *Organization Studies, 29*(03), 317-329.

Jensen, C. N. (Ed.). (2005). *Voksnes læringsrum*. Værløse: Billesø & Baltzer.

Johnson, J. D., Meyer, M., Berkowitz, J., Ethington, C., Miller, V., Stengle, W., et al. (1996). The role of a conference in integrating a contractual network of health services organizations. *The Journal of Business Communication, 33*(3), 231-256.

Johnson, W. (2006). Program design and development. In G. C. Ramsborg, B. Miller, D. Breiter, B. J. Reed & A. Rushing (Eds.), *Professional meeting management. Comprehensive strategies for meetings, conventions and events* (pp. 265-282). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

Joss, S., & Durant, J. (Eds.). (1995). *Public participation in science: The role of consensus conferences in Europe*. London: Science Museum

Jungk, R., & Müllert, N. (1987). *Future workshops: How to create desirable futures*. London: Institute for Social Inventions.

Justesen, S. (2007). *Navigating the paradoxes of diversity in innovation processes-in practice. A longitudinal study of six very different innovation groups.* Unpublished PhD, Copenhagen Business School, PhD Series; 2007-25.

Kelly, A. E. (2004). Design research in education: Yes, but is it methodological? *The Journal of the Learning Sciences, 13*(1), 115-128.

Klein, A., & Dytham, M. (2010). Pecha Kucha foundation. Retrieved July 24, 2010, from http://www.pecha-kucha.org/foundation

Klima-konference med ballondans (2006). *Ekstra Bladet*, Section: Online. 2006-08-06.

Knott, C., & Cole, W. (1989). Conferences: A search for quality. *Adults Learning (England), 1*(2), 49-51.

Krasnik, M. (2009, Oct. 2). Fuck it up, fuck it up, fuck it up... *Weekendavisen*, p. 3, Section: Kultur.

Kristensen, R., & Andersen, F. Ø. (2004). *Flow, opmærksomhed og relationer*. Frederikshavn: Dafolo Forlag.

Kristensen, T. S. (2005). Intervention studies in occupational epidemiology. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine, March 2005*(62), 205-210.

Krøjer, J. (2006). Kritisk forskning og forskellige forandringsperspektiver. En teoretisk tilnærmelse. *Nordiske Udkast, 34*(2), 23-38.

Kvale, S. (1984). Om tolkningen af kvalitative forskningsinterviews. *Tidsskrift för Nordisk Förening för Pedagogisk Forskning, 4*(3-4), 55-66.

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). LA, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage.

Lampel, J., & Meyer, A. (2008). Guest editors' introduction. *The Journal of Management Studies, 45*(6), 1025.

Larsen, P. H. (2003a). *De levende billeders dramaturgi. Bind 1: Fiktionsfilm*. København: DR.

Larsen, P. H. (2003b). *De levende billeders dramaturgi. Bind 2: TV*. København: DR.

Lattimore, C. (2008). Rethinking how we think. *The Meeting Professional, January 2008,* 60-65.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning. Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.

Lefebvre, H. (2004 [1992]). *Rhythmanalysis. Space, time and everyday life*. London and New York: Continuum.

Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social science; selected theoretical papers.* New York: Harper & Row.

Lindberg, M. (2003). *Fremtidens mødefaciliteter. Mødets fænomenologi - en introduktion til rum*. Copenhagen: Wonderfull Copenhagen.

Lyons, L. E. (2007). The dilemma for academic librarians with collection development responsibilities: A comparison of the value of attending library conferences versus academic conferences. *Journal of Academic Librarianship, 33*(2), 180-189.

Marsick, V. J., & O'Neil, J. (1999). The many faces of action learning. *Management Learning, 30*(2), 159-176.

Maskell, P., Bathelt, H., & Malmberg, A. (2004). *Temporary clusters and knowledge creation: The effects of international trade fairs, conventions and other professional gatherings* (No. 2004-04). Marburg: SPACES, Philipps-University of Marburg.

Maskell, P., Bathelt, H., & Malmberg, A. (2005). *Building global knowledge pipelines: The role of temporary clusters* (No. 2005-020). Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School.

McKee, R. (1997). *Story*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Meaney, T., Trinick, T., & Fairhall, U. (2009). "The conference was awesome": social justice and a mathematics teacher conference. *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education, 12*(6), 445-462.

Melnick, M. J., & Sabo, D. F. (1987). Analysis of free communications presented at the first seven NASSS annual meetings: Some patterns and trends. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 4*(3), 289-297.

Merriam, S. B., & Caffarella, R. S. (2005). Læring i voksenlivet - integration af teori og praksis. In K. Illeris & S. Berri (Eds.), *Tekster om voksenlæring* (pp. 75-88). Frederiksberg: Roskilde Universitetsforlag.

Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood. A comprehensive guide* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Merriam, S. B., & Heuer, B. (1996). Meaning-making, adult learning and development: A model with implications for practice. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 15*(4), 243-255.

Meyer, A. D., & Aten, K. (2008, August 8-13, 2008). *Symposiym proposal: A conference on conferences.* Paper presented at the Academy of Management, Anaheim, California.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Mezirow, J. (1995). Transformation theory of adult learning. In M. R. Welton (Ed.), *In defense of the lifeworld. Critical perspectives on adult learning* (pp. 39-70). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Learning as transformation-critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 3-33). San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M. B. (1994). Recasting the annual meeting: Reflections on a change process. *Educational Researcher, 23*(1), 21-27.

Miller, B., & Ramsborg, G. C. (2006). Writing effective learner outcomes. In G. C. Ramsborg, B. Miller, D. Breiter, B. J. Reed & A. Rushing (Eds.), *Professional meeting management. Comprehensive strategies for meetings, conventions and events* (pp. 283-304). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

Miller, N. (1991). Changing conference culture: exploring social processes through structured experience. *Studies in Continuing Education, 13*(2), 167-179.

Mott, L. (1992). *Systemudvikling - den menneskelige dimension*. Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

Mott, L., & Frost, J. (1994). I dialog med fremtiden: Nærmeste udviklingszone for individ og system. *Psykologisk Skriftserie, 19*(1), 111-135.

MPI (2007). *Mapping the future of onsite learning. White paper from the Professional Education Conference-Europe, March 18-20 2007, Copenhagen, Denmark.*

Mundry, S., Britton, E., Raizen, S., & Loucks-Horsley, S. (2000). *Designing successful professional meetings and conferences in education: Planning, implementation, and evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Newkirk, T. (1996). Seduction and betrayal in qualitative research. In P. Mortensen & G. E. Kirsch (Eds.), *Ethics and representation in qualitative studies of literacy* (pp. 3-16). Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.

Nielsen, J. (2008). *Events i den danske oplevelsesøkonomi - den kollektive brusen*. Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

Nielsen, K., Fredslund, H., Christensen, K. B., & Albertsen., K. (2006). Success or failure? Interpreting and understanding the impact of interventions in four similar worksites. *Work & Stress, 20*(3), 272-287.

Nielsen, L. D. (2006). The methods and implications of action research: A comparative approach to search conferences, dialogue conferences and future workshops. In K. A. Nielsen & L. Svensson (Eds.), *Action research and interactive research* (pp. 89-115). Maastricht: Shaker Publishing.

Nowotny, H., Scott, P., & Gibbons, M. (2001). *Re-thinking science: Knowledge and the public in an age of uncertainty*. London: Polity Press.

Nørby, S. (2008). Positive emotioner og tilgrænsede fænomener. In A. Myszack & S. Nørby (Eds.), *Positiv psykologi - en introduktion til*

videnskaben om velvære og optimale processer (pp. 101-126).
København: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Oreilly Media (2010). How to produce an Ignite event. Retrieved July 24, 2010, from http://ignite.oreilly.com/faq/how-to.html

Owen, B. (2007 May 23, 2007). *Narrative comprehension and enjoyment of feature films: An experimental study.* Paper presented at the *Annual meeting of the International Communication Association*, *San Francisco, California*

Owen, H. (1997a). *Expanding our now: The story of open space technology.* San Francisco: Berret-Koehler Publishers.

Owen, H. (1997b). *Open space technology: A user's guide.* San Francisco: Berret-Koehler Publishers.

Pedersen, K. (2005). Den organiserede reflektion - med udgangspunt i Jack Mezirows voksenpædagogiske teori. In C. N. Jensen (Ed.), *Voksnes læringsrum.* Værløse: Billesø & Baltzer.

Petersen, M. K. (2007). *Towards new meeting and conference concepts.* Copenhagen: Centre of Cultural Analysis.

Petersen, N. J., & Østergaard, S. (2005). Organizational photography: A 'snapshot' approach to understanding knowledge sharing In A. F. Buono & F. Poulfelt (Eds.), *Challenges and issues in knowledge management* (pp. 229-248). Greenwich: Information Age Publishing.

Pine, J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The experience economy.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Preskill, H. (1997). Using critical incidents to model effective evaluation practice in the teaching of evaluation. *Evaluation Practice, 18*(1), 65-71.

Ramsborg, G. C., Miller, B., Breiter, D., Reed, B. J., & Rushing, A. (Eds.). (2006). *Professional meeting management. Comprehensive strategies for meetings, conventions and events* (5th ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

Ramsborg, G. C., & Tinnish, S. (2008). How adults learn. *Convene,* Special Series in 2008.

Ravn, I. (2005a). Bedre møder gennem facilitering. In P. N. Bukh (Ed.), *Controlleren* (pp. 1-19). København: Børsen.

Ravn, I. (2005b). *Transformative theory in social research: The case of the learning conference.* Paper presented at the Danish Sociologists' Congress, Roskilde University, Denmark.

Ravn, I. (2007a). At forske en anden verden frem. In R. Engelhardt, C. Mehlsen & F. Stjernfelt (Eds.), *Tankestreger - tværvidenskabelige nybrud* (pp. 317-328). København: Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitetsforlag.

Ravn, I. (2007b). The learning conference. *Journal of European Industrial Training 31*(3), 212-221.

Ravn, I. (2007c). *Meetings in Organizations: Do They Contribute to Stakeholder Value and Personal Meaning?* Paper presented at the Academy of Management, Philadelphia, PA, USA.

Ravn, I. (2008). Mening i arbejdslivet : Definition og konceptualisering. *Tidsskrift for Arbejdsliv, 10*(4), 59-75.

Rogers, T. (2003). *Conferences and conventions. A global industry.* Burlington: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Romme, A. G. L. (2003). Making a difference: Organization as design. *Organization Science, 14*(5), 558-573.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25*, 54-67.

Rynes, S. L., Bartunek, J. M., & Daft, R. L. (2001). Across the great divide: Knowlede creation and transfer between practitioners and academics. *Academy of Management Journal, 44*(2), 340-355.

Schein, E. (1987). *Process consultation. Vol. II. Lessons for managers and consultants.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Schmidt, L. H. (1995). Hvordan oplyse? *Social kritik, 36,* 39-50.

Schmidt, L. H. (2003). Invitation til en libertinær pædagogik. *Opinion, 10.*

Schwartzmann, H. B. (1989). *The meeting. Gatherings in organizations and communities.* New York: Plenum Press.

Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action* London: Temple Smith.

Seekings, D. (1996). *How to organize effective conferences and meetings* (6th ed.). London: Kogan Page.

Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 5-14.

Semmer, N. K. (2006). Job stress interventions and the organization of work. *Journal of Work, Environment & Health, 32*(6), 515-527.

Shavelson, R. J., Philips, D. C., Towne, L., & Feuer, M. J. (2003). On the science of education design studies. *Educational Researcher, 32*(1), 25-28.

Simpson, E. G., & Kasworm, C. E. (1990). Revitalizing the residential conference center environment: Editors' notes. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 46*(Summer 1990), 1-2.

Spee, J. (2007). Volunteer vs. professional management of academic conferences: A comparison of five meetings. *Journal of Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics 5*(3), 70-79.

Spiegel, A., Bruning, R. H., & Giddings, L. (1999). Using responsive evaluation to evaluate a professional conference. *American Journal of Evaluation, 20*(1), 57-67.

Sprogøe, J. (2008). *Induction? Because first impressions last!* Unpublished PhD, Doctoral School of Organisational Learning, Department of Learning, Danish School of Education, Copenhagen.

Staunæs, D. (1999). *Transitliv: Andre perspektiver på unge flygtninge.* København: Forlaget Politisk Revy.

Strick, S. K. (2006). Strategies to embrace the adult learner. In G. C. Ramsborg, B. Miller, D. Breiter, B. J. Reed & A. Rushing (Eds.), *Professional meeting management. Comprehensive strategies for meetings, conventions and events* (pp. 247-264). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

Svendsen, L. F. H. (2001). *Kedsomhedens filosofi.* Aarhus: Klim.

Szatkowski, J. (1989). Dramaturgiske modeller. Om dramaturgisk tekstanalyse. In E. E. Christoffersen, T. Kjølner & J. Szatkowski (Eds.), *Dramaturgisk analyse. En antologi* (pp. 9-84). Aarhus: Institut for Dramaturgi, Aarhus Universitet.

Tange, N. (2006). Lærende møder. In P. Bay & L. Blicher-Hansen (Eds.), *Mødebogen* (pp. 31-40). København: Kursuslex.

Tange, N., & Ravn, I. (2003). Spild ikke krudtet på kedelige konferencer. *Learning Lab Denmark Quarterly, 4,* 12-13.

Taylor, K. (2006). Brain function and adult learning: Implications for practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 110*(Summer 2006), 71-85.

TED Conferences (2010). TED: Ideas worth spreading. Retrieved July 24, 2010, from www.ted.com

Tennant, M. (1999). Is learning transferable? In D. Boud & J. Gerrick (Eds.), *Understanding learning at work* (pp. 165-179). London: Routledge.

U.S. Travel Association (2010). Travel facts and statistics. Retrieved July 22, 2010, from http://www.ustravel.org/news/press-kit/travel-facts-and-statistics

Vermeulen, F. (2007). I shall not remain insignificant: Adding a second loop to matter more. *Academy of Management Journal, 50*(4), 754-761.

Vestergaard, M., & Hansen, E. (2003). *Fremtidens mødekoncept: Fokusgruppe med danske kunder*. Copenhagen: VisitDenmark and Wonderful Copenhagen.

Vidal, R. (2004). The vision conference: Facilitating creative processes. *Systemic Practice and Action Research, 17*(5), 385-405.

Vree, W. V. (1999). *Meetings, manners and civilization. The development of modern meeting behaviour*. London and New York: Leicester University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of higher mental processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Wahlgreen, B., Høyrup, S., Pedersen, K., & Rattleff, P. (Eds.). (2002). *Refleksion og læring. Kompetenceudvikling i arbejdslivet*. Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

Walker, D. (2006). Toward productive design studies. In J. v. d. Akker, K. Gravemeijer, S. McKenney & N. Nieveen (Eds.), *Educational design research* (pp. 8-13). London and New York: Routledge.

Waugh, C. E., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2006). Nice to know you: Positive emotions, self-other overlap, and complex understanding in the formation of a new relationship. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 1*(2), 93-106.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice. Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wikipedia (2008b). Fishbowl conversation. Retrieved Jan. 13, 2008, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fishbowl_(conversation)

Wikipedia (2008c). Lightning Talk. Retrieved Jan. 13, 2008, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lightning_Talk

Wikipedia (2008d). Unconference. Retrieved Jan. 13, 2008, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unconference

Winchester, H. (1985). The conference as a learning experience. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education, 9*(2), 196-199.

Wittmann, M. (2009). The inner experience of time. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B, 2009*(364), 1955-1967.

Wittmann, M., & Wassenhove, V. v. (2009). The experience of time: Neural mechanisms and the interplay of emotion, cognition and embodiment. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B, 2009*(364), 1809-1813.

Wolfe, P. (2006). The role of meaning and emotion in learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 110*(Summer 2006), 35-41.

Zull, J. E. (2006). Key aspects of how the brain learns. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 110*(Summer 2006), 3-9.

ABSTRACT (DANISH)

Konferencer udgør en vigtig del af voksnes arbejdsliv og for nogle er de endda den primære kilde til efter-uddannelse. Men de fleste konferencer betjener sig af envejs-kommunikation som læringsform med mange præsentationer i træk, hvor oplægsholdere taler til de lyttende deltagere, der sidder på lange, snorlige rækker. Med tanke på, hvor stor udvikling der er sket inden for læringsteori og pædagogisk praksis de sidste 50 år, forekommer denne form for læringsmiljø forældet.

Denne afhandling stiller derfor spørgsmålet: Hvordan kan man tænke konferencer som et dramaturgisk læringsrum, og hvad er de praktiske konsekvenser for konferenceprogramdesign og deltagernes oplevelse af konferencen? Med udgangspunkt i ”design-based research” som forskningstilgang, forsøger dette projekt at: 1) udvikle en ny tilgang til konferencer som dramaturgisk læringsrum, 2) implementere tilgangen i praksis i samarbejde med fire forskellige konferencearrangører og 3) evaluere deltagernes oplevelser og analysere resultaterne.

Design-baseret forskning er en fremtidsorienteret forskningstilgang, som sigter mod at forbedre menneskers vilkår. Design-baseret forskning er derfor tæt knyttet til interventionsforskning og aktionsforskning men adskiller sig samtidig fra begge metodologier. I den forbindelse foreslår jeg en ny forsker-rolle, ”the expert-in-process” hvor forskerens forslag til forbedringer er teori-drevne (ligesom interventionsforskning), men samarbejder med lokale aktører om at omsætte disse til den lokale kontekst, hvori de skal anvendes (ligesom aktionsforskning).

Konferencer i dette projekt er defineret som en sammenhæng, hvor folk fra forskellige organisationer mødes ansigt til ansigt; der er to eller flere programpunkter i træk og deltagerantallet overstiger den gængse klassestørrelse.

Det dramaturgiske læringsrum trækker på to felter, dramaturgi og voksenuddannelsesteori, og tager sit udgangspunkt i begrebet opmærksomhed:

Hvis der ikke er opmærksomhed, er sandsynligheden for at læring kan finde sted, lille. Begge felter deler en forkærlighed for "disruptiveness". Indenfor dramaturgi er konflikten (eller kriser, dilemmaer, modsigelser) den vigtigste drivkraft for at få historien til at rulle og holde folks opmærksomhed. Indenfor voksenlæringsteori betragtes udfordringer (eller forvirring, tvivl, dissonans) som et grundvilkår for læreprocesser. Med brugen af begrebet rytme anspores konference arrangører til at tænke i nye baner omkring brugen af konflikter/udfordringer, repetition, variation og kontrast. God rytme i et konferenceprogram inkluderer redundans og "noget nyt"; det er vekselvirkningen mellem at lade det kendte møde det ukendte og lade det ukendte blive kendt.

På denne baggrund er læring-gennem-rytme modellen blevet udviklet. Den tilbyder en teoretisk ramme der kan danne baggrund for at designe nye typer af konferenceprogrammer, der har til hensigt at øge deltagernes læring. De tre design-principper, som rytmen udgøres af, er: refleksion, interaktion og involvering. Refleksion handler om at give konferencedeltagere tid og rum til at fordøje konferencen oplevelsen og skabe personlig mening på et kognitivt niveau. Interaktion handler om at skabe muligheder for at konferencedeltagere kan indgå i dialog med hinanden hvilket øger potentialet for social læring og opbygningen af relationer. Involvering handler om at engagere konferencedeltagerne følelsesmæssigt og at fremkalde især positive emotioner.

Læring-gennem-rytme modellen er blevet implementeret i fire case konferencer og deltagernes erfaringer er blevet evalueret. Analysen er baseret på den primære case, ECCI X konferencen (10th European Conference on Creativity and Innovation) som blev afholdt i oktober 2007.

Projektet viser, at tre former for udbytte er vigtige for konferencedeltagere: 1) at tilegne sig ny viden 2) at møde nye mennesker, og 3) følelsesmæssig trivsel. Disse elementer synes næsten banale i deres enkelhed men projektet viser, at disse udbytte-kriterier ikke nødvendigvis er lette for konferencearrangører at opfylde i virkeligheden.

I læring-gennem-rytme modellen skabes ny viden på konferencer gennem de udfordringer eller konflikter, som er indeholdt i konferenceanslaget og de forskellige oplæg, samt af den deltagerinteraktion som er indlejret i mange af konference-aktiviteterne. Resultaterne viser, at konferencearrangører skal kvalificere den måde, de finder oplægsholdere på, og i højere grad sætte

fokus på forstyrrende elementer i plenum sessionerne. Deltagere kan sagtens blive inspireret af talere med fremragende præsentationsteknik, (selv om alle pointerne er hørt før) og refleksionsprocesser kan også let antændes af henkastede side bemærkninger fra en oplægsholder, selvom den samlede præsentation anses for at være under standard. Men det er ikke sandsynligt, at denne type refleksion producerer transformativ læring, dvs. deltagernes meningsskemaer kan sagtens blive tilpasset og ændret men de grundlæggende meningsperspektiver vil sandsynligvis forblive uændrede.

Resultatet viser også, at folk i langt højre grad deltager i konferencer for at møde nye mennesker og udvide deres netværk end for at følge op på eksisterende kontakter. Projektet viser, hvordan det er muligt at skabe et konference-program, hvor interaktion er en naturlig del af det formelle program og ikke kun reduceret til pause-snak, hvilket giver deltagere mulighed for at etablere kontakter med folk som er forskellige fra dem selv. Det sociale læringsmiljø som blev affødt af deltagernes interaktion viste sig at fremme deltagernes læring bedst, fordi deltagerne blev stimuleret til at udveksle synspunkter og perspektiver, der potentielt udfordres deres egne. Deltagerne fik ikke kun skabt nye kontakter, men lejlighed til at opbygge relationer og mulighed for at blive mæglere, der skaber bro mellem såkaldt strukturelle huller (dvs. netværk).

ECCI X-konferencen blev generelt vurderet ret højt (4,4 ud af 5) og evalueringen viser, at dette højst sandsynlig skyldes deltagernes høje grad af følelsesmæssig trivsel under konferencen (dvs. øget grad af selvtillid, selvværd og generel trivsel). Den gode konference atmosfære (som blev opfattet som åben og uformel, men professionel) vækkede positive følelser; når konferencedeltagere er i et psykologisk sikkert miljø, hvor tillid, tryghed og en anerkendende kommunikations kultur hersker, er de mere tilbøjelige til at involvere sig og være den bedste udgave af sig selv. Positive følelser udvider deltagernes opmærksomhed og kognition (fx kreativ tænkning, åbenhed over for nye og anderledes perspektiver) og bidrager til at opbygge personlige ressourcer i et langsigtet perspektiv.

Sammenlignet med det klassiske konferenceformat og Open Space konferenceformatet, placerer det dramaturgiske læringsrum sig i et tredje hjørne, som hverken bygger på en gammeldags forestilling om autoritet eller på den moderne, liberale version, hvor deltagerne er ansvarlige for deres egne

læreprocesser. I stedet bruges den magt, som konferencearrangører har til at styre form og indhold, til at øge deltagernes mulighed for personlig meningsdannelse og skabelsen af relationer gennem faciliterede processer. I den forbindelse er det vigtigt ikke at give deltagerne indtryk af, at de er "konference kvæg". Jo mere deltagere føler, at deres handlinger og adfærd er selvbestemte, jo mere vil de engagere sig i aktiviteten.

Konklusionen er, at konferencearrangører med fordel kan designe konference programmer med udgangspunkt i læring-gennem-rytme modellen og dermed tage et stort skridt i den rigtige retning mod at skabe stimulerende, engagerende, og energigivende møder.

ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

Conferences form an important part of continuing education; for some people, they are the only type of educational activity they can afford to or have the time to attend. But most conferences use the one-way communication model to induce learning processes, with back-to-back presentations and participants sitting quietly in ruler-straight rows. Considering the development within research on learning and educational practices the last fifty years, this type of learning environment seems outdated.

This thesis poses the question: How may a conference be conceptualized as a dramaturgical learning space and what are the practical implications for conference program design and participant experience? Using a design-based research approach, the research attempts to: 1) develop a new approach to conferences as dramaturgical learning spaces; 2) implement the new approach in collaboration with four different conference organizers; and 3) evaluate the participants' experiences and analyze the results.

The design-based research approach is future-oriented and sets out to achieve a new, improved condition for the people involved. It is closely tied to intervention research and action research; yet it differs from both research methodologies. I have proposed a new researcher role—the expert-in-process role—where the researcher has theoretically based ideas for improvement (much like intervention research) but collaborates with local community members to translate these into the local context (much like action research).

Conferences in this project are defined as events where people from different organizations gather face to face for two or more program elements in a row and where the participant volume exceeds standard classroom size.

The notion of a dramaturgical learning space draws on the field of dramaturgy and adult learning theory and takes its point of departure in the concept of attention: If there is no attention, there is no chance that learning will happen. The two fields share partiality for disruptiveness; within

dramaturgy, conflicts (also crises, dilemmas, or contradictions) are the key drivers in propelling the story forward and keeping the audience's attention. Within adult learning, challenges (also perplexity, doubt, or dissonance) are considered necessary for igniting a learning process. Thinking in terms of rhythm prompts the conference organizer to think in terms of conflict/challenges, repetition, variation, and contrast. Good rhythm in a conference program includes redundancy and novelty; it is the interplay between letting the familiar (known) meet the unfamiliar (unknown) and letting the unfamiliar become familiar.

Within this framework of the dramaturgical learning space, the learning-through-rhythm model is developed as a theoretical guideline for designing a conference program structure that intends to increase participants' learning. The three design principles of reflection, involvement, and interaction are the building blocks upon which the rhythm-through-learning is created. Reflection is about giving conference participants the time and means to digest the conference experience and create personal meaning on a cognitive level. Interaction is about creating opportunities for conference participants to engage in dialogue with one another and increasing the potential for social learning and relationship building. Involvement is about engaging the conference participants emotionally in the conference experience and ensuring that the emotions evoked are positive.

The learning-through-rhythm model was translated into the program designs of four case conferences and the participant experiences were evaluated. The analysis is based on the primary case, the ECCI X conference (10th European Conference on Creativity and Innovation) held in October 2007.

The project shows that three types of outcome are of particular importance to conference attendees: 1) acquire new knowledge 2) meet new people, and 3) emotional well-being. These elements seem almost banal in their simplicity but the project shows that they are not necessarily easy to provide for in reality as a conference organizer.

In the learning-through-rhythm model, new knowledge is sought to be provided by the challenges or conflicts instantiated by the prelude and presenters, as well as by the peer feedback inherent in many of the conference activities. The results show that organizers need to qualify the casting of presenters and provide disruptive elements in plenary sessions. Participants

may be inspired by speakers with excellent presentation skills even though their points have all been heard before and their reflection processes can easily be ignited by small side remarks made even though the overall presentation is considered sub-standard. However, it is not likely that these type of reflection processes produce transformative learning; meaning schemes may be adjusted and altered, but the participants' meaning perspectives have probably remained the same.

The data documents that people attend conferences to broaden their networks and meet people they have never met before—not to catch up on old contacts. This project demonstrates how it is possible to create a conference program that ignites interaction during the formal program sessions and inclines participants to establish contacts with people different from themselves. The social learning environment facilitated through peer-to-peer interaction ended up being the most important learning enhancer because participants were compelled to exchange views and perspectives that potentially challenged their own. Also, participants moved beyond just creating contacts and got the opportunity to build relationships and become brokers between networks that fill structural holes.

The ECCI X conference had a high overall satisfaction rating (4.4 out of 5) and the data suggest that this is due to the high degree of emotional well-being (determined as improved sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem and general well-being) that the participants experienced. The great conference atmosphere (open and informal, yet professional) invoked positive emotions; when being in a psychologically safe environment, with trust, security, reassurance, and an appreciative communication culture, participants are more prone to becoming involved and be the best versions of themselves. In turn, these positive emotions broaden participants' attention and cognition (e.g. creative thinking, openness towards new and different perspectives) and build personal resources in a long term perspective.

Compared to the classic conference format and the Open Space conference format, the dramaturgical learning space places itself in a third corner; the result is a conference space that neither builds on old-fashioned authority nor on the modern, liberal version where participants are responsible for their own learning processes. Instead, the organizer control is used to increase participation and the participants' possibility for meaning-making and

relationship building through facilitated processes. An important insight in this regard is to be sensitive towards treating participants as "conference cattle". The more participants feel that their actions and behavior are self-determined, the more they will embrace and engage in the activity.

In conclusion, thinking in terms of learning-through-rhythm when planning a conference program, will take conference organizers a big step in the right direction toward stimulating, engaging, and energizing meetings.

CREDITS

Being a graduate from Roskilde University where problem-oriented group work is the primary mode of learning, the thought of writing a PhD alone—all alone—was not very appealing. My experience is that two plus two equals five when it comes to conducting research and writing up results. Therefore, it did not make sense to me why you should do something alone when you already know that the end result would be so much better if you were two or three people collaborating. But now I've done it anyway. And although it is my name—alone—on the cover, I am thankful to all those many people who contributed along the way. I would particularly like to credit the following for their support, optimism, collaboration and inspiration.

(name in order of appearance)

The constant appreciative & constructive supervisor	Ib Ravn
Co-supervisor, who never beats around the bush	Mette Mønsted
Financing	DPU (3 years) Philip Volmer Hansen (1,5 years)
The ECCI X conference	Arne Stjernholm Ask Agger Merete Ettrup
The Help Desk 2006 conference	Mats Berger
The Annual Meeting of the Innovation Council, Monday Morning	Lars Jannick Johansen Verner Kristiansen

The Creating Knowledge IV conference	Tina Pipa
Fantastic colleagues and kindred spirits	Nina Tange, Hanne Adriansen, Joan Rokkjær, Steen Elsborg
The PhD writers' club	Jonas Sprogøe
Transcription	Gertrud Lynge Esbensen Mia Nyegaard
Making me realize that research is fun	Flemming Poulfelt
Party planner and creative office supplies	Pia Lundgren Skelmose
Constantly asking how the PhD project is doing	Circle of friends (you know who you are!)
Proof-editing	Academicword.com
Cocktails	Kirsten, K-bar
Mom and Iron Lady	Leni Petersen
PR	The communication girls from Jutland
and	
Love and endless support	Philip Volmer Hansen

Based on a true story.
No animals were harmed during the production of this PhD.