

Research Project Description Steven de Groot

Title of research project

1. Researcher and supervisors

Steven Adriaan de Groot MBA
Zuster Spinhovenlaan 37
3981 CR Bunnik
Sdegroot@kultifa.nl

Promotoren: Prof. Dr. Ir. M.C.D.P Weggeman (TU/e) en Prof. Dr. Ir. J.E. van Aken (TU/e)

2. Brief project description

This research project will explore the theory of 'Aesthetics in Organizations' in practice. It aspires to describe the negative and positive aesthetic experiences (NAE's and PAE's) and of employees in their work in knowledge-intensive organizations / professional organizations and the circumstances (organizational design) in which they take place. The research will result in design principles for organizations in which positive aesthetic experiences will increase in order to improve affective commitment of employees. The design principles will be based on 'provocative' design propositions expressed in CIMO-configurations (Context-Interventions- Mechanism-Outcome; Denyer, Tranfield& van Aken, 2008). Also the relation between aesthetics and affective commitment will be examined. This research will be qualitative and quantitative as well, conducting case studies by using research methods like a BEL-book (Beauty Experiences Log Book: self report), surveys, group interviews and a Appreciate Inquiry Game.

3. The resources for the project

Promotores: Prof. Dr. Ir. M.C.D.P Weggeman and Prof. Dr. Ir. J.E. van Aken
Both professors are working at the Faculty Industrial Engineering & Innovation Sciences, Innovation Technology Entrepreneurship & Marketing (ITEM) of the Technische Universiteit Eindhoven.

Project description

4.1 Subject field (domain) and importance of subject field

This research will take place in the domains of organizational design and aesthetics. Organizational design is seemingly a design discipline in which aesthetics is not automatically part of the design principles. By using design principles of other design disciplines in which the role of aesthetics is undisputed (like architecture, product design and theatre), this research aspires to increase the positive aesthetic experiences (PAE's) of employees in knowledge-intensive organizations / professional organizations. Finally, in order to improve their affective commitment.

4.2 Literature, preliminary overview

Since Guillén (1997) wrote his groundbreaking article 'Scientific Management's Lost Aesthetic' and concluded that 'we have long neglected the aesthetic context of organizational behavior', there is a little but growing amount of articles about aesthetics in organizations. 'Aesthetics and the notions of beauty and pathos become part of the vocabulary of organizational discourse in work', Strati (1990) stated.

The field of 'Aesthetics in Organizations' initially has been explored in the '90 by Sandelands & Buckner (1989) Strati (1999, 2000), Ramirez (2005a, 2005b), Gagliardi (1996), Guillet de Monthoux (2000), Alvesson & Berg (1992) and Linstead & Höpfl (2000). Likewise stimulated by the growing attention of 'human' issues in organizations like meaning, spiritually and human development in the end of the last century and the budding challenge to combine managing with designing (Simon, 1996; Boland & Collopy, 2004). But where in working life and in organizations is aesthetics hidden? And how to influence aesthetic experiences, knowing that environmental conditions are of paramount importance for these aesthetic experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Except that terms like 'experience economy', 'aesthetic knowledge' and 'aesthetic organization' were born, these first studies on aesthetics in organizations have also described the first concepts, without testing these ideas in practice. Besides these results, the few worldwide researchers on this topic developed a research agenda with the following domains and elements, (Strati (1999), Alvesson & Berg (1992), and Taylor and Hansen (2005) :

1. The images that diffuse internally and externally to the organization and relate to events of importance for organizational identity and for identification by its members;
2. The physical space of the organization;
3. The miscellaneous set of artifacts that constitute the organization's corporate landscape;
4. Aspects less closely tied to the physical-spatial or visual, like the metaphor of manager as artist, the idea that work compromises an essential aesthetic element, the phenomenological philosophy of the eye, and strategic visions of the organization;
5. Organizational management that can learn from art more as artistic form than as artistic content.

Akkermans, Lammers, Van Aken & Weggeman, (2007, 2009) drew up a research agenda for aesthetics in organizations:

1. product or services beauty and business performance
2. process beauty & beauty of products and services;
3. personal well-being and process beauty;
4. personal well-being and the beauty of products and services;
5. organisational design beauty and organizational process beauty;
6. aesthetic sensibility and organizational design beauty;
7. education and aesthetic sensibility

And later:

8. what is a beautiful organization (what features or characteristics)
9. what conditions are needed to create organizational beauty
10. what is the relationship between beauty of organizations and work processes and performance
11. what approaches can be used to design, create or enhance and sustain organizational beauty

4.3 Gaps in existing literature

Prominent in the earlier studies about aesthetics in organizations is the descriptive and deductive way of research. Although these studies presume that employees have aesthetic experiences in their daily working life, there haven't been done any prescriptive or empirical research on this topic, like case studies. For example, the extent to which and the kind of aesthetic experiences employees have, under what conditions and with which output and outcome is still unknown. How many experiences, the frequency, what kind of, the durations of the experiences and their impact haven't been researched yet. Either the relationship with the context in which they occur - the organization design- hasn't been explored before.

Further, the role of aesthetics (aesthetic properties) in the design principles within the most design disciplines like architecture, product design and theatre is undeniably accepted except from organizational design. Can we design and reform organizations by adapting design principles of other design disciplines?

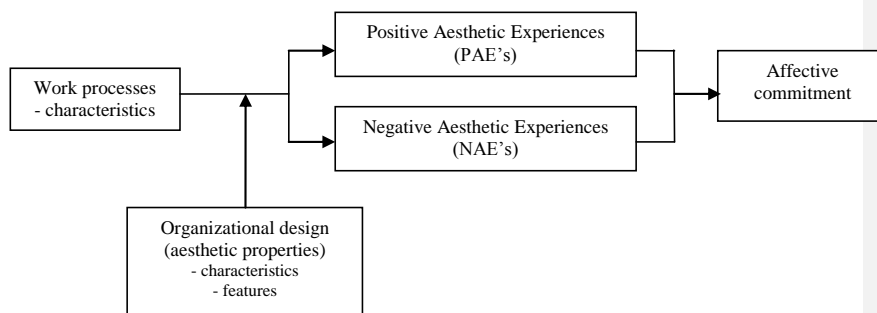
4.4 Research question or project objective; scientific and managerial relevance of research output

This research project aspires to influence aesthetic experiences of employees in their work by redesigning (uncovering and embedding aesthetics) the conditions and circumstances in which they take place (organizational design).

The literature on this subject field touches the possibility of aesthetics in organizations, without empirically describing 'what' and 'how to'.

The research question therefore is:

- What characteristics of the design of knowledge-intensive organizations / professional organizations influence aesthetic experiences of employees, resulting in an increase or decrease of affective commitment?



Subsidiary research question(s):

- What aesthetic experiences do professionals have in their work?
- Which characteristics of (professional) work processes cause:
 - negative aesthetic experiences (NAE's)
 - positive aesthetic experiences (PAE's)
- What is the relationship between aesthetic experiences and affective involvement?
- What design principles (design protocol) can be used to reform, design, create or enhance and sustain an organizational design for professional organizations which decrease negative aesthetic experiences and increases positive aesthetic experiences of professionals?

4.5 Research strategy and research design

The research can be characterized design science research – especially inductive, prescriptive and explorative research - based on the Critical Realism and Social Constructivism (positive and appreciative) paradigm. Case studies characterize the used research methodology.

Inductively deriving insights from empirical data engaging with other theories (about aesthetics, organizational design and employee commitment) an organizational design for aesthetics in organizations will evolve (Urquhart, 2007).

The arguments for this research design are located in the need for subjective interpretation to understand aesthetic experiences in organizations.

Because aesthetic experiences take place mainly outside awareness, it can be observed only indirectly (Sandelands & Buckner, 1989). They can only be investigated by using qualitative methodology (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Sandelands & Buckner, 1989). There have been experimented with several new qualitative methods the last decades like ethno-narrative approach, photography and Appreciative Inquiry (AI: (Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny) in order to describe and measure aesthetics experiences and enquire conditions under which they take place. Because of unpredictability of when aesthetic experience occurs, a *self report* might be used to report and collect them (Sandelands & Beckner, 1989).

This research project will be executed in the following phases:

- *Phase 1: Literature study (Discovery):*
 - organizational design and design principles of other design disciplines;
 - aesthetics;
 - knowledge-intensive organizations / professional organizations;
 - well-being, job satisfaction and commitment of employees.

- *Phase 2: Data collection via case studies (Discovery and Dream)*

A combination (multi-method) of the following research methods will be used in this research:

 - BEL-book (Beauty Experiences Log Book; self-report);
 - Quantitative research (select sample);
 - Group interviews;
 - Survey;
 - Appreciate Inquiry Game (Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny).

The literature on aesthetics suggests that aesthetic experiences exist by the presence of so-called aesthetic properties, such as formal properties (harmony, balance, proportioning, peak shift,), representative properties (values, meaning, symbols, style) and expressive properties (color, sound, etc). These are used in the most design disciplines (in design principles) like in architecture, dance, product design.

A *BEL-book* (self-report) will be used by respondents for their positive and negative aesthetic experiences. By using an information retrieval tool, the collected aesthetic experiences can be plotted into a *morphological map* for designing organizations. This map consists of non-aesthetic properties like structure, skills, systems (based on a generic model for organizational design such as 7S or Six box model), and the earlier mentioned aesthetic properties (formal properties, representative properties and expressive properties).

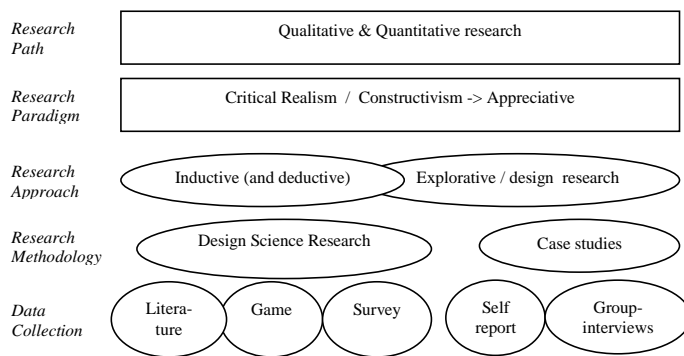
In the same organization in which the respondents work, they and their colleagues (select sample) as well will fill in a survey which asks for their appreciation of aesthetics properties in their organizations and their affective commitment.

After studying and categorizing the aesthetic experiences in the morphological map and analyzing the result of the survey, the respondents reflect on the first analysis will during a group interview. This is the first step of Appreciate Inquiry Game (Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny) in which the respondent will 'design' their own (dreamed) aesthetic experiences and conditions

(organizational design) in order to decrease their negative aesthetic experiences and to increase their positive aesthetic experiences, ultimately to enhance their affective commitment to the organization.

- *Phase 3: Design*
The dreamed morphological maps and the conditions of the several case studies form the basis a new organizational design en design principles. The characteristics of this design, the context and the interventions which are needed will be schematized in so-called *CIMO-configurations* ('provocative' design propositions).
Based on these CIMO's, new design principles (a design protocol) will be designed and tested later.
- *Phase 4: Testing*
- *Phase 5: Thesis*

The research strategy is showed in the figure (and more in detail in Appendix A).



The research project will result in a tested a design protocol for embedding 'aesthetic reinforcing conditions' in the organizational design and work processes based on design propositions expressed in CIMO-configurations (Context-Interventions- Mechanism- Outcome)

4.6 Project Phases and planning

1. Second half of 2012: Literature study & developing research methods;
2. 2013: Data collection;
3. 2014: Analysis and thesis (Spring 2015);

Literature

- Akkermans, H.A, L.S. Lammers & M. Weggeman, All ye need to know? Aesthetics from design perspective. Working paper 04.08. Eindhoven Centre for Innovation Studies, Eindhoven, 2004
- Alderfer, C.P., Human needs in Organizational Settings. Free Press, New York, 1972
- Alvesson, M. & P. O. Berg, Corporate culture and Organizational Symbolism: An Overview. De Gruyter, 1992
- Barilli, R., Course on aesthetics. University of Minneapolis Press, 1995
- Barrett, F.J., Cultivating an Aesthetic of Unfolding: Jazz Improvisation as a Self-organizing System. In: The Aesthetics of Organization, S. Linstead & H. Höpfl, SAGE, 2000
- Baumeister, Th., De filosofie van de kunsten. DAMON, 2001
- Baumgarten, A.G., Reflections on Poetry. (Ed.: Aschenberger & Holter), University of California Press, 1954
- Boland, R. J., & Collopy, F. (Eds.). *Managing as designing*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. & Robinson R. E. *The Art of Seeing: An Interpretation of the Aesthetic Encounter* The J. Paul Getty Museum and The Getty Education Institute for the Arts. 1990
- Denyer D., Tranfield, D., van Aken, J.E. Developing design propositions through research synthesis". *Organization Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 393–413, 2008.
- Dewey, J. *Art as Experience* (1934). New York: The Berkeley Publishing Group, 2005.
- Gagliardi, P., Exploring the aesthetic side of organizational life. In: S.R. Clegg, C. Hardy & W.R. Nord (Eds.), *Handbook of organizations studies*. London, Sage, 1996
- Gibb, S. *Aesthetics and HRD; Connections, Concepts and Opportunities*, 1st Routledge, 006
- Guillen, M. F. Scientific management's lost aesthetic: Architecture, organization, and the taylorized beauty of the mechanical. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 42, 1997.
- Guillet de Monthoux, P., The Art Management of Aesthetic Organizing. In: The Aesthetics of Organization, S. Linstead & H. Höpfl, SAGE, 2000
- Lindenberg, S., Framing, empirical evidence, and applications. In: E. Boettcher (red.), *Jahrbuch für neue politische Ökonomie*, jrg. 12, 1993
- Linstead, S. & Höpfl, H. (eds.), *The aesthetics of organizations*. London, Sage, 2000
- Ramirez, R., The aesthetics of cooperation. *European Management Review*, May, 2005
- Ramirez, R. & N. Arvidsson, Aesthetics of business innovation : experiencing 'internal process' versus external jolts'. *Innovation: Management, Policy & Practice*, 2005
- Reiss, S. & S.M. Haverkamp, A Comprehensive Assessment of Human Strivings. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 81(1), 2003
- Sandelands, L.E. & Buckner, G.C. "Of Art and Work: Aesthetic Experience and the Psychology of Work Feelings." *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 11: 105-131. (1989)
- Simon, H. *The sciences of the artificial*. London: MIT Press, 1996.
- Strati, A., *Organizations and Aesthetics*. SAGE, 1999
- Strati, A., The Aesthetic Approach in Organization Studies. In: The Aesthetics of Organization, S. Linstead & H. Höpfl, SAGE, 2000
- Strati, A., Organizations without walls. *Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Societies*, 1, 1995
- Taylor, S.S. & Hansen, H., Finding Form: Looking at the field of organizational aesthetics. *Journal of Management Studies*, 42(6), 1211-1231, 2005
- Van Aken, J.E., Lammers, I. and Weggeman, M. (2009) 'Designing, Creating and Sustaining Beautiful Organizations: a Research Agenda'. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, Chicago, 2009
- Welsch, R. W. Aesthetic Response and the Influence of Design Principles on Product Preferences. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 20(1): 224-228, 1993
- Weggeman, M., Lammers, I. & H. Akkermans, Aesthetics from a design perspective. *Journal of Organization Change Management*, 20(3), 346-358, 2007
- Welsch, W., Aestheticisation Processes: phenomena, distinctions and prospects. *Theory, Culture & Society* 13/1, 1996

- Zangwill, N. Beauty. In Jerrold Levinson (ed.), *Oxford Companion to Aesthetics*. Oxford University Press. 2003

Appendix A Research Strategy *Organizational Aesthetics*

Phase 1: Literature (Discovery)

Insights in:

- aesthetic properties
- aesthetic process / judgement
- design principles organizational design & other design disciplines
- ingredients (non-aesthetic properties) / model org.design
- characteristics professional organizations / work
- variables affective commitment

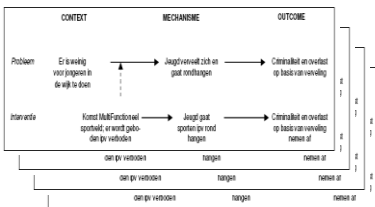
Phase 5: Thesis

Phase 4: Testing (Destiny)

Phase 3: Analysis (Design)

Design Principles *Organizational Aesthetics*
(design protocol)

CIMO-configurations



Phase 2a: Case studies (Discovery)

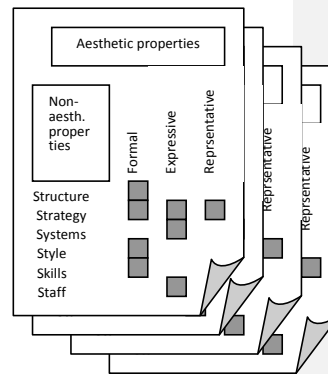
BEL-book (self-report)

- positive aesthetic experiences (PAE's) employee
- negative aesthetic experiences (NAE's) employee
- conditions aesthetic experiences

Information retrieval tool

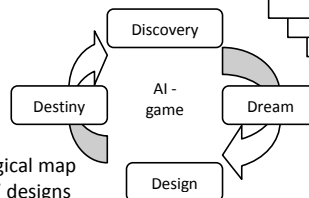
Morphological map current designs

Verwijderd: olo



Survey

- Appreciation aesthetic properties
- Affective commitment



Morphological map 'dreamed' designs

Phase 2b: Case studies (Dream)

